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**MAGIC REALISM AS AN IDEOLOGICAL STRATEGY  
OF RESISTANCE TO WHITE CULTURAL HEGEMONY:  
LOUISE ERDRICH'S *THE ANTELOPE WIFE***

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## ÖZET

Gerçeği, dış dünyanın mimetik betimlemesiyle sabitlenmiş değişmez bir terim olarak değil, kültürel inanış, değer ve varsayımlara göre belli bir bağlama oturtulan ve sürekli gelişen bir kavram olarak yansıtan büyülü gerçekçi yazarları için anlamın temsili, en önemli konulardan birisi olmuştur. Bu bakımdan Louise Erdrich'in *The Antelope Wife* adlı eseri birbirinden tamamen farklı olan Batı ve Kızılderili dünyalarını eşzamanlı olarak kullanabilmesinin yanı sıra gerçek ve gerçek dışı, maddesel ve tinsel, insan ve insan olmayanı birbirleriyle bütünleştirerek Batının empirik gerçek kavramına meydan okumaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, genel olarak Kızılderili yazarların büyülü gerçekçiliği kullanmalarının ardında yatan ideolojik temelleri ortaya koymak ve bilhassa da Şema kuramının, çeşitli direnme stratejileri göstermede ne kadar değerli bir araç olabileceğini, bir büyülü gerçekçilik romanı olan *The Antelope Wife* 'da göstermektir. Şema Analizinin söylem yoluyla yeni anlama ve anlamlandırma çerçeveleri oluşturmaya çalışan her direniş metninde etkili olacağına inanıyorum.

Louise Erdrich'in insanın tecrübesi ve gerçek konusundaki yerleşik varsayımları yıkma biçimlerini çözümlerken, üç farklı "çerçeveleme" üzerinde yoğunlaştım. İlk olarak, Erdrich'in evrensel senaryoları kullanarak nasıl doğaüstü olayları doğallaştırıp, onları gerçek dünyanın doğal olguları gibi gösterdiğini ortaya koydum. İkinci olarak, başlık, alt-başlık ve karakter adları gibi metinsel çerçevelerin melez alanlar oluşturmada ne kadar etkili olduğunu gösterdim. Son bölümde ise, eğretilmeleri, özellikle boncuk dizme eğretilmesini, batının hayat anlayışı ve anlamlandırmasını ortaya koyan bir bilişsel çerçeve olarak inceledim.

## ABSTRACT

The “representation of meaning” has been a major concern for magic realist writers who have tried to reflect the “real” not as a static term restricted to the mimetic depiction of the external world, but as one of the continuously developing concepts that have been contextualized according to one’s cultural beliefs, values and assumptions. In this respect Louise Erdrich’s *The Antelope Wife* also challenges western conceptions of empirical reality since it provides a syncretic worldview that mingles the two disparate worlds of the West and the Indian as well as the real and the unreal, the material and the spiritual, the human and the non-human. The aim of this study is, then, to reveal, in general the ideological rationale that lies behind the utilization of magic realism by Native American writers, and to demonstrate, in particular how “schema theory” can be a valuable tool in displaying the various subversive strategies used in the magic realist novel, *The Antelope Wife*. For I believe that a schema analysis will be very effective in any subversive text that tries to construct new frames of understanding and meaning through discourse.

In analyzing the ways in which Louise Erdrich subverts canonical assumptions about human experience and reality, I have focused on three different types of framing. First, I show how through the utilization of universal “scripts”, Erdrich is able to “naturalize” supernatural occurrences and display them as if they were natural phenomena of the real world. Second, I reveal how textual frames such as the title, sub-titles and character names can play an influential role in creating hybrid spaces. And in the last part, I explore the realm of metaphors, especially the metaphor of “beadwork” as a cognitive frame that subverts western understandings of life and its meaning.

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## INTRODUCTION

Among the many cultural conventions that the individual acquires and puts in his enormous storehouse of knowledge is the concept of "reality." This is because "reality" is not an empirical fact of the material world but a "construction" structured by and through conventions, made up of signs and signifying practices. However, since western culture with its imperialistic and colonialist discourse, has tried to assimilate other cultures into its own set of values, positioning them within western frames of meaning, the concept of "reality" also has been understood according to the standards of western cultures. For western readers, the distinction between truth and falsity, reality and imagination springs from a tacit acceptance of the western philosophical tradition which views the relationship between "concepts" and the "world" as mimetic. For this reason, even though as readers we are aware of the fact that the "reality" of the novel does not have to be a mimetic representation of the "outside world", as Todorov points out, ". . . we still have trouble getting rid of a certain way of looking at fiction, inscribed in our speech habits, it is a vision which we perceive the novel in terms of representation, or the transposition of a reality that exists prior to it"(1980:67).

However, in magic realist narratives, reality shifts from being a stable and imposed Western definition to signifying a developing and unpredictable cultural concept that bears the imprints of the empirical and material world as well as that of the metaphysical and supernatural. Magic realism with its departure from the common linear perspective of western reality initiates a rethinking of the "real" and what it represents. For in contrary to certain canonical genres, magic realism constructs the "real" by subverting readers' expectations and assumptions about the reading process and invites them to question the concept of "reality" rather than accept it as a given fact. For this reason, magic realism has been used mostly by writers of marginalized or colonized cultures to challenge the dominant Western aesthetic tradition.

Magic Realism that challenges western hegemonic paradigms is also an appropriate mode of writing for ethnic American writers in the United States. For throughout American history, the experience of ethnic groups has been disregarded

“so as to provide a mode of totalizing the ‘United States’ as a homogeneous nation-state, a self-evident, structured and cohesive polity”(San Juan, 1992:12). As a consequence of this development, the fiction written by ethnic writers are particularly receptive to magic realism since these texts try to experiment with alternative ways of survival in a world that comprises of a variety of cultures transformed into a single national identity: A world in which as marginalized groups, they must find a way to survive without being consumed by a dominant culture. Rather than participating in mainstream institutions and assimilating into a dominant American way of life, these ethnic writers believe that their people should honor their ancestral, familial and social bonds that actually heighten self-consciousness and cooperation between individuals. Magic realism allows them to preserve these traditional values by reconciling dominant beliefs with dominated ones.

Broadly speaking, my aim, is to demonstrate how magical realist narratives by imposing their own oxymoronic view of reality that mingles the two disparate worlds of the real and the unreal, become not only sites of representation but also sites of struggle and resistance. However, as Baker suggests, this does not mean that in magic realism the “reader is clearly offered two systems of possibility, one that aligns with European rationality and another which is incompatible with a conventional Western world-view”(1993). I do not accept the generalized proposition that magic realist texts offer “two” different worlds. On the contrary, I maintain that the reader is pulled into “one” world where dualities do not exist. In this respect, I believe that magical realism offers a third space that emphasizes the unity of the opposites and refracts a new perspective based on a hybrid experience rather than a demarcated one. However, because I will not be able to cover the whole range of magical realist texts, I have preferred to do one single detailed study and have selected as my text of analysis, Louise Erdrich’s magical realist novel *The Antelope Wife* which has won the 1999 World Fantasy Award. Even though I believe that *The Antelope Wife* cannot be considered as a qualitative example of the entire tradition of magic realist writing in the United States, I hope that my cognitive and rhetorical analysis will in general, shed light upon the ideological rationale that lies behind the utilization of magic realism by Native-American writers, and in particular demonstrate how “schema theory” can be a valuable tool in displaying the various subversive strategies used in magic realist fiction. For even though Native-Americans have been forced to inhabit a dual space, that of the colonizer and the

colonized, the message of *The Antelope Wife* to its Indian readers as well as to its western readers is that of "wholeness" where dualisms and hierarchies do not exist. *The Antelope Wife* like all other narratives written in the magical realist mode challenges the hidden and naturalized cultural formations which Western reality and experience is based on. However, what is of particular interest is that even though reading *The Antelope Wife* is a challenge to the western reader, the writer by employing western and non-western frames of understanding is able to integrate the "magical" into her "text world" as if it were a natural component of American daily life.

In order to understand how magical realist texts create an alternative world where western institutional practices and common assumptions are subverted, I believe that we first have to do a thorough rhetorical reading of how these texts manipulate various world and literary schemata to produce the meaning appropriate to their oxymoronic reality. Therefore, I start my discussion with an in-depth analysis of the "schema theory." I have chosen "schema theory" because I believe that a schema or frame analysis is, indeed, necessary to any study of literature, where we confront questions about how interpretation occurs in line with the reader's expectations as well as how a writer manipulates language in order to convey his/her own ideological worldview. Schema theory depicts a theoretical framework for understanding how through various framing devices, interpretation takes place, how incoming information is remembered, restored and restructured by the reader as well as how this information is manipulated by the writer to "produce" contexts appropriate to the writer's own worldview. Furthermore, readers without referring to appropriate frames can in fact misread the signifying strategies of a writer even if s/he is equipped with the basic knowledge structures about the world. In this respect, "frames" or "schemata" should be considered as one of the most important cognitive processes in which the reader connects the text to his/her own storehouse of knowledge. For if we assume that there is no stable or determinate "text world" (since there is always a dynamic relationship between the writer, reader and the text) then "context" also changes meaning for it becomes a linguistic construct that is first "framed" by the writer and then the reader. The writer first selects the "facets of the world" (Fairclough, 1989:80) that s/he will enclose the reader in and constructs the text as his/her own interpretation of the world and in turn the reader tries to make sense of what is presented to him/her by activating his/her knowledge frames

derived from his/her world knowledge, assumptions and expectations. As a result, "frames" are used both by the writer as well as the reader "to locate, perceive, identify, and label" occurrences within their life space and the world at large (Goffman 1974: 21). To put it differently, while we may frame the reading of texts in particular ways, this activity is not independent of the devices by which texts may attempt to frame themselves. (MacLaclan and Reid, 1994: 9). In such a view, text interpretation becomes as what Fairclough asserts, "the interpretation of an interpretation"(1989:80) or as what Culler identifies as "framing the sign" (1988). Accordingly, we can see schema theory as avoiding both the extremes of total relativism in which the reader's pure intersubjectivity constitutes the act of interpretation and that of object determinism in which reality is "pre-given" and external to the reader. For this reason, the deconstruction of "frames" used by the writer in his/her act of writing and the reader in his/her act of interpretation will bring into light the various ideologies that are inherent in magic realist "text worlds" Thus, frame semantics and schema theoretic models can contribute greatly to the explaining of how a "supernatural" world is imposed to the reader as a very "realistic" construct that relates to one's real-world knowledge. As a result, I believe that by integrating "frame" theory into the text world of *The Antelope Wife*, I will be able to reveal the "schemata" or "frames" that are stipulated or activated by the writer as well as the reader so that s/he can "normalize" the "supernatural" inherent in magical realist fiction and make it seem familiar and intelligible. For as de Beugrande also has mentioned, fantastic or supernatural events will seem meaningless if they are not understood in terms of their analogy to realistic events. (1987: 61)

The second chapter makes a gradual approach to the oxymoronic meaning of magic realism, devoting space to the important literary critics who have bared a mark in the explanation of such a controversial issue. By explaining some general features of this genre, I have sought to define the importance of magic realist writing in the American ethnic scene. The most crucial is its being a subversive genre that aims to remove all social and cultural hierarchies in the western thought. Magic realism displaces rigidities that have been associated with logocentric thinking and allows for the production of texts that merge logical opposites into one semantic plane. As a result, in this chapter I maintain that magic realism threatens western modes of representation in its ability to transgress the parameters that

western reality is founded on in pursuit of a more hybrid and elastic truth that is embracing rather than foreclosing. The magic realist in his/her desire to reach beyond the limitations set by naturalized cultural norms promotes an all encompassing reality wherein magic, myth, legend and folklore play an integrating role.

Central to any work of magic realist writing is the question of how the "supernatural" is presented to the reader as a "natural" component of the real world. In other words, what kind of schemata is activated in magical realist writing that enables the western as well as the non-western reader to connect the text into his/her own conceptual system? Thus, our attention turns to the types of "frames" that are activated by the magical realist writer so that s/he can make the underlying format of magical realism analogous to the western world. The third chapter tries to address this issue by applying "schema theory" to the magical realist novel of Louise Erdrich's *The Antelope Wife*. I intend in this chapter to demonstrate how the supernatural is created from the natural through the utilization and reorganization of universal frames. I have chosen three seminal magical occurrences, a deer-husband, a milking soldier and a talking dog as my study of analysis and I maintain throughout this section that it is successively the universal "scripts" of "love", "motherhood" and "survival" that Erdrich employs to naturalize the "magic" inherent in these specific occurrences. The reader's activity of filling in the gaps is programmed by these schemas that make use of many realistic descriptions of contemporary life. Because they operate on the principles of verisimilitude and plausibility, the western reader is able to comprehend them as if they are natural phenomena of the real world. As a result, despite the presence of magical events, *The Antelope Wife* is always linked to the real world, grounded in recognizable reality.

In the fourth and fifth chapters, I focus on, successively, the use of titles, and the use of metaphor as significant textual frames that reinforce the ideological substructure of magic realism and aim to subvert hegemonic patterns of reading and understanding the world. Chapter four addresses what I see as a crucial narrative strategy; the manipulation of the book title, chapter and character names by the writer in order to control the textual field and its act of interpretation. For titles, chapter and character names are an important type of framing which writers

make use of when communicating their messages to their readers. However what is interesting about these “frames” is that even though they seem to be bypassed by the reader very rapidly, they have the capacity to carry the most obvious messages about how the text should be read since being threshold phenomena, they are the first messages that the reader encounters in the reading process. In other words, titles, sub-titles and character names of literary texts should be seen as framing devices that highlight a particular aspect of reality, rendering a certain “truth” or “frame” which the novel is organized around. As a result, in the fourth chapter of my dissertation, I argue that the lexical choices that have been made by Louise Erdrich in the book’s title, sub-titles and character names suggest that “naming” is not a neutral, objective labeling, but a powerful “frame” by which to create a hybrid world that encloses a magic-realist worldview.

The concerns of the last chapter is quite different. It explores the realm of metaphors, especially the seminal metaphor of “beadwork” that dominates the novel from its opening page to its close. Choices of metaphors reveal values and show how one sees the world. Metaphors also have the capability to create an alternative space for society where what was previously enforced and expected can transmute into something new: “A treasure of insight can be unlocked via metaphorical rather than literal or rational thinking. . . because metaphor performs a poetic as well as conservative function in ordinary language, preserving as well as creating knowledge about actual connections between different realms of reality”(Buttimer, 1993: 78). In this last section of my thesis, after briefly examining the definition of a metaphor and its ideological implications, I will try to demonstrate how Erdrich through the utilization of the “beadwork metaphor” creates a new “constitutive schema”(de Beaugrande, 1987: 59), that not only subverts existing western frames concerning life and its meaning but also invites her reader to register “life” from a Native-American perspective. The reader in order to relate his/her own real-world experiences to a “piece of beadwork” must have to understand the whole Native-American conceptual system to which it fits. In so doing, the reader selects and applies other schemas that will determine which associations will be made and which information will be used in order to understand “life” in accordance with the non-western metaphor of a beading tapestry.

## 1. SCHEMA THEORY

### 1.1 Schema-Theoretic Views of Comprehension

What happens when we read? This has been a question whose answer has differed immensely in the field of literary theory and criticism. Formalists and Saussurean structuralists have pinpointed the communicative aspect of a written text emphasizing the reading experience as an addresser/addressee relationship where the responsibility of reader is a passive one aimed to "extract" or "decode" what has been already encoded. Because structuralists were more concerned of how language as an underlying system conditioned the formulation of meanings, they undermined the historical and social context of the text as well as its conceptual representations. Other critics such as Michail Bakhtin,<sup>1</sup> have emphasized the reading process as an act of "negotiation," an interplay between the text and the reader in which the reader exists only through a dialogical interaction with the text. Phenomenologists like Wolfgang Iser have viewed the reading process as a "sense-making activity" highlighting the "constructivist" aspect of reading. In such a view, "meaning" is created by the "supposed experience of a generalized reader" (Suleiman & Crossman, 1980: 26) and "consist[s] of the complementary activities of selection and organization, anticipation and retrospection, the formulation and modification of expectations in the course of the reading process" (1980: 22). Iser together with other "reception theorists" put a strong emphasis on the reader as the producer of meaning but at the same time have acknowledged the importance of the "text" as well. For example, Ingarden (1931: 18-19) maintains that besides the role of the reader, "schematized aspects of the text" and its "represented objectives" should also be given full consideration in any act of interpretation. However, other reader-response theorists such as Stanley Fish and Norman Holland regard the reading process as a pure subjective interpretation of the reader. While the former asserts that the "reader supplies everything"<sup>2</sup> in the text

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<sup>1</sup> For a further reading on Bakhtin's dialogic aspect of language see *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson, (Austin: U of Texas P, 1981).

<sup>2</sup> For a further reading on the Stanley Fish's approach to the role of the reader during the act of interpretation and his opposing views to Wolfgang Iser see Fish, S (1981) "Why No-One's Afraid of Wolfgang Iser." *Diacritics* 11: 2-13.

and that there can be no text separate from the reader the latter stresses the psychoanalytic aspects of reading and constructs a one-to-one relationship between "reading" and "identity themes" that each reader unconsciously carries with him/her throughout his/her life and which shapes his subjectivity and the reading process.<sup>3</sup>

As a result, the reader-centered approaches in themselves carry two contradictory tendencies which have been identified by Cook as:

The first tendency is one which seeks to incorporate reader variation as an element in the construction of discourse, but regards the reader's response as delimited by nature of the text in question. The second . . . is one which rejects the existence of autonomous text, reversing the apparent direction of communication from author through text to reader, and regarding text and even author as the creation of the reader. (1994: 175)

All of the literary theories ranging from "death of the author" to the "death of the reader" have proposed diverse methods of interpretation making "the act of reading" even more complicated and ungraspable. Obviously, this "mystery" of the reading process evolves from the fact that the creation of meaning is a cooperative venture where the writer, reader and the text have important shares. A text cannot speak for itself, a writer cannot "speak" without a text and without a reader none of these can be "realized."

If we regard the reading process as a communicative act that takes place between the writer, the reader and the text, then we must acknowledge the imperative role that "cognitive processes" play during any communicative interaction. For in order to communicate, participants draw upon memory for language, its rules and prior knowledge of the world. It is the cognitive processes of information that both the writer and reader selects, stores and retrieves that make communication possible. In other words, communication whether it be oral or written, "presuppose[s] the existence of a conceptual domain of understanding jointly constructed by the producer and recipient(s)" (Werth 1999: 17). Furthermore, in any act of reading, it is assumed that "knowledge" which is stored away within the mind but appropriate and relevant to the context of the "text world" (Van Dijk, 1977a

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<sup>3</sup> For a further reading on Holland's view on how reader's "identity" effects the interpretation process see "Unity, Identity, Text, Self" *PMLA* 90 (1975).

and Werth, 1999) is retrieved and utilized by the listener or the reader. This brings us to the fact that comprehension takes place when the reader is able to integrate the text-based information with his/her pre-existing knowledge base (Werth, 1997: de Beugrande, 1980; Van Dijk, 1977; Emmot, 1994, 1997). In other words meaning is created through the interaction of the reader's background knowledge and the text and is neither wholly constructed by the reader nor the text alone. Reading comprehension is not simply a matter of 'extracting' from a text what a writer has put 'into' it or what a reader wants to decode from it. As Marilyn Adams and Allan Collins put it, 'a text only provides directions for the listener or reader as to how he should retrieve or construct the intended meaning from his own, previously acquired knowledge' (in Singer & Ruddell, 1985: 406). Ingarden also implies a similar view when he asserts that successful "concretization" of a text depends on the "representation" of previous experience of the reader (1931: 255-65) putting emphasis on the fact that comprehension of the text is based not only on the reader's linguistic knowledge but also on his/her prior knowledge of the world. Given that the reader's linguistic and world knowledge bear an influential marking on his/her act of interpretation, I believe that an analysis of "schema theory" will not only be fruitful in revealing how meaning is generated and formulated by the reader, but also of how deviant texts such as those that belong to the magical realist genre, construct an "intelligible" and "familiar" fictional world by making use of existing schemata.

One of the most used cognitive processes in the comprehension of texts is the utilization of what many cognitive scientists and linguists identify as "schema," variously called as "framing" (Minsky, 1980; Fillmore, 1976; Bateson, 1972, Goffman, 1974, Winograd, 1975), as "scripts" (Schank and Abelson, 1977) or "schemata" (Bartlett, 1932) and which also has similarities with Fauconnier's "mental space" (1985) concept and Lakoff's "idealized cognitive model" (1987).<sup>4</sup> Schema

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<sup>4</sup> References to the conception of framing processes can be readily found in psychology, particularly cognitive psychology (Rumelhart, D.E., (1975) "Notes on a Schema for Stories", in D.G. Bobrow and A. Collins, (eds.) *Representation and Understanding*. New York: Academic Press); Mandler, J.M. (1984) *Stories, Scripts, and Scenes: Aspects of Schema Theory*. Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum), anthropology (Bateson G. (1972) *Steps to an Ecology of the Mind*. New York: Ballantine) linguistics and discourse analysis (Tannen Deborah, (ed.) 1993. *Framing in Discourse*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press; Fillmore, C.J. (1976) "The Need for a Frame Semantics within Linguistics", in *Statistical Methods in Linguistics*. Stockholm: Skriptor) communication and media studies (Entman, Robert M. 1993. "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm" in *Journal of Communication*

theory has been used in a variety of fields ranging from linguistics to AI (Artificial Intelligence), from cognitive psychology to sociology. Schema theory posits that clarity and comprehension of reading material is dependent on the reader's pre-existing knowledge. The goal of the schema theory has been indicated by critics as "to specify the interface between the reader and the text –to specify how the reader's knowledge interacts with and shapes the information on the page and to specify how that knowledge must be organized to support the interaction"(Adams and Collins, 1979: 3). Because the devising of schemata plays an essential role in narrative comprehension it will be reasonable to give place first to some of the definitions that are offered by various theorists concerning "schemata" or "frames":

When one encounters a new situation (or makes a substantial change in one's view of a problem, one selects from memory a structure called frame. This is a remembered framework to be adapted to fit reality by changing details as necessary. (Minsky, 1980: 1)

A schema then, is a data structure for representing the generic concepts stored in memory. These are schemata representing our knowledge about all concepts; those underlying objects, situations, events, sequences of events, actions and sequences of actions. A schema contains, as part of its specification, the network of interrelationships that is believed to normally hold among the constituents of the concept in question. (Rumelhart, 1980: 34)

By the term "frame" I have in mind any system of concepts related in such a way that to understand any one of them you have to understand the whole structure in which it fits. When one of the things in such a structure is introduced into a text, or into a conversation, all of the others are automatically made available. (Fillmore, 1982: 111)

All three definitions highlight the fact that we perceive the world by making use of "frames" or "schemata" which not only represent our experiential or cultural background knowledge but also function to organize our experience and guide our action. Since we cannot identify each new person, object, or event as unique or separate, we attempt to sift through a remarkably large amount of information so that we can give meaning to the "reality" out there in connection to a frame, schema or script we already know. As Tannen asserts, ". . . people approach the world not

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43 (4): 51-58 ; Pan Z and Kosicki G. M. 1993. "Framing Analysis: An Approach to News Discourse", in *Polit. Communication*. 10 :55-75 ; Scheufele D. A. 1999. "Framing as a Theory of Media Effects", in *Journal of Communication* 49:103-22), and policy studies (Schon D. A. And Rein M. 1994. *Frame Reflection: Toward the Resolution of Intractable Policy Controversies*. New York: Basic Books. )

as naive, blank-slate receptacles who take in stimuli as they exist in some independent and objective way, but rather as experienced and sophisticated veterans of perception who have stored their prior experiences as 'organized mass'<sup>5</sup> and who see events and objects in relation to each other and in relation to their prior experience" (1979: 144). In this respect, schema theory views organized knowledge as a hierarchical network of mental structures which represent one's understanding of the world, and reading as an activation/construction process in which new information is assimilated into preexisting "schemas." In other words, this theory claims that "knowledge of the world" plays an important role in the interpretation of any text for reading involves active participation on the part of the reader, who maps the information in the text against her or his own stored knowledge to make sense of it: "understanding is a process by which people match what they see and hear to prestored groupings of actions that they have already experienced" (Schank and Abelson, 1977: 67). In this prestored associative network of hierarchically and thematically connected concepts, the "representation at the top of the hierarchy is sufficiently general to capture the essential aspects of all members of the class. . . . The power of this structure derives from the fact that the top level representation of any schema simultaneously provides an abstraction of and a conceptual frame for all the particular events that fall within its domain"(Adams and Collins, 1979: 3-4). Another important characteristic of a schema is the concept of "slots." According to Minsky's frame theory, during comprehension the individual not only maps incoming information onto an appropriate schema but also "fills out" the details of the schema with explicit features of the specific situation. Such activation involves "slots" in the schema being "instantiated" with any of the range of values that are compatible with its associated schemata. (Minsky, 1975) Formulated in this way, the cognitive process of "instantiation" plays a pivotal role in the (re)construction of schemas. As Rumelhart proposes, ". . . , a schema is instantiated whenever a particular configuration of values is bound to a particular configuration of variables at a particular moment in time Interpreting a situation to be an instance of some concept, . . . , involves, . . . , the instantiation of an appropriate schema, . . . , by associating the various variables of the schema with the various aspects of the situation"(1980: 36). Furthermore, "instantiation" also serves the purpose of filling out the details of a schema that are not expressed explicitly. Thus, the process of

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<sup>5</sup> Deborah Tannen borrows the phrase "organized mass" from Bartlett who uses it to describe the past as operating in "an organized mass rather than as a group of elements

"instantiation" also functions to assign "default values"(Minsky, 1975) to any particular situation or story. MacLachlan and Reid have given the "cinema-going frame" as an example, and have maintained that when such a frame is activated in a text, "it can be assumed by default that watching a film presupposes buying a ticket and taking one's seat; such details do not have to be specifically mentioned by the writer. Readers constantly and automatically supply default elements of this kind whenever they read"(1994: 72). A characteristic of "default elements" is that they are expectation-driven. Readers supply details that are not explicitly stated on the basis of expectations derived from previous experience and world knowledge.

An educational psychologist, Richard Anderson, pinpoints the significance of "schemata" in the act of interpretation and adds that schema theory sharply contrasts with "the conventional view that comprehension consists of aggregating the meanings of words to form the meanings of clauses, aggregating the meanings of clauses to form the meanings of sentences, aggregating the meanings of sentences to form the meanings of paragraphs, and so on. . . The meanings of the words cannot be "added up" to give the meaning of the whole. The click of comprehension occurs only when the reader evolves a schema that explains the whole message' (Anderson, 1985: 373, 375). In other words, we do not simply start at the beginning of a story and proceed word to word until the very last page; on the contrary, our mind searches for organizing patterns that will give meaning to our present reading experience. Therefore, interpretation is more than just an exercise of our linguistic knowledge, it involves "cognitive framing" which readers are generally unaware of and which determines the kind of background knowledge that is utilized during the reading process. Therefore, inferences based on world knowledge and context are essential ingredients for building meaning.

However, the reader when interpreting the text not only makes use of his/her real-world knowledge frames but also his/her knowledge about typical text structures which have been labeled by some as "story grammars" or more generally as "story schemata" (Rumelhart, 1975; Mandler and Johnson: 1977; Thorndyke, 1977). A story grammar can be defined as "a rule system which specifies canonical sequences of units occurring in stories and the conditions under which they can be changed, deleted or moved. A story schema based on the grammar is a mechanism

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each of which, retains its specific character"(1932: 197).

which has incorporated some of all these regularities and makes use of them during processing”(Mandler,1983: 307). The story schema contains the reader’s knowledge about the conventional construction of stories in his/her culture. It is assumed that knowledge about the conventions of storytelling and its rules facilitate reading comprehension and enable the reader to recognize the rhetorical organization of the text and to process it. For example, Rumelhart (1975) proposes eleven grammar rules of a story in which at the highest level we come across the story as being comprised of an event and an episode, with the episode comprising an event and a reaction, and so on. Rumelhart argues that a detailed structural knowledge of this type will facilitate comprehension since the reader will be able to fit the objects and events described in the text into these already established general schemas.(In fact, it is by means of such schemas that we are able to define what a plot, a setting or an episode is.) Another example for story schemata is given by Lichtenstein and Brewer. (1980) They maintain that among the common properties that are shared by most narratives are the presentation of the major characters and the location at the beginning and the enactment of the moral at the end of the story. These common conventions are picked up by readers during the reading process and are developed into a schema that represent their own concept of how a typical story is structured from beginning to end. (Mandler, 1983; McConaughy, 1980) That is, readers recognize a text as an example of story by what is in it and how it is organized. Readers use this schema to understand and remember stories that they have read or heard and to predict what would happen in other similar stories.

In short we can say that “story schemas” are “formal rule systems for describing the regularities found in one kind of text (Mandler, 1984: 18) and which in turn reflect the story grammars we discover or construct, and which enable us to recognize general formats of various types of texts such as fairy tales, thrillers, detective stories, TV news programmes, recipes and so on. It would appear that through repeated exposure to stories of various general types we internalize idealized schemata for them, making it easier for us to comprehend them, to represent them in memory and to recall them. For instance, stories told in the order we normally expect are recalled more easily than those which defy these expectations. (Mandler and Johnson, 1977; Stein and Glenn, 1979, Thorndyke, 1977) For it is through these story grammars that we develop expectations and constructs for what we are likely to encounter in the act of reading. To each new

story that we read, we try to map onto it the rules and relationships of the idealized framework of story and replace the real characteristics of the story with the prototypical ones provided by the framework. However, because storytelling conventions can also differ from language to language, from culture to culture, "story schemata" may also vary in different parts of the world.

Six key functions have been proposed for schemata:

- As 'ideational scaffolding' for assimilating text information. Information that fits the slots in the reader's schema is easily learned, perhaps with less effort.
- For facilitating selective allocation of attention. They help to determine the important parts of a text, and guide the reader regarding where to pay close attention.
- To assist inferential elaboration. To allow readers to go beyond the information which is explicit in a text.
- To allow orderly searches of memory. Acting as a guide to the types of information that need to be recalled.
- To facilitate editing and summarizing (since it includes a key to items of importance).
- To permit inferential reconstruction where there are gaps in recall.

(Anderson, 1985: 376-7).

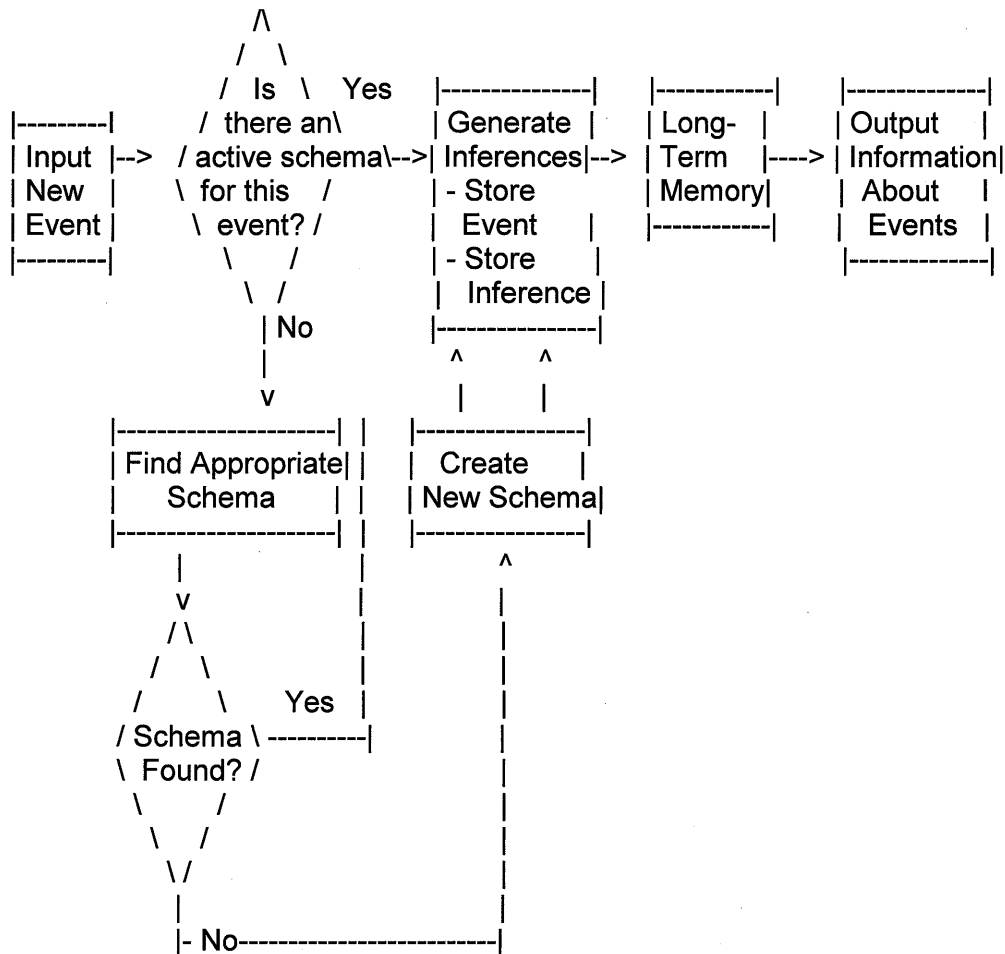
Within schema theory, the interaction of both top-down and bottom-up processing modes is crucial for an understanding of text processing as an active procedure, rather than as a passive receptive skill based on decoding. A skilled reader will use both bottom-up processes (the understanding of discrete units) and top-down processes (building up a meaning through a holistic understanding of the world) simultaneously during his/her act of interpretation. While bottom-up processes facilitate the "instantiation" of in-coming information into appropriate "slots" of a schemata, top-down processes help the reader "to assimilate" the consistent data to the reader's conceptual system or to "resolve ambiguities" and "select between alternative possible interpretations" when a mismatch occurs. (Adams and Collins, 1979: 5) What this indicates is that while our bottom-up processing can be useful in handling familiar situations, they cannot deal with unfamiliar or totally new situations. It is the top-down processes that help the reader

to make predications about the intended meaning of phenomena that seem apparently contradictory, illogical and meaningless at lower processing levels. The idea of different processing levels in the activation of "frames" or "schemas" allows for an account of text understanding as a dynamic process that can change throughout reading. For matching a feature in a situation, concept or object with an already existing schema is not a "static" or a "deterministic" cognitive process. In contrary to the claims of many artificial intelligence researchers (Minsky, 1975; Charniak, 1975) schemas are not fixed "data structures" but are, as Bartlett has proposed, "constructive" knowledge structures" which are "active" and "developing"(1932: 197-201). Kintsch also maintains a similar view when he asserts that "the comprehension process is controlled not merely by a single (conventional schema) that is imposed on the process in a top-down fashion, but by several different schemata that derive from the reader's apperceptive mass and that are activated in a bottom-up fashion from the text itself, or that are indeed constructed while reading a story from the information so far processed, an interaction with the apperceptive mass"(1980: 98). In other words, "framing" is not merely "a process of fitting what one is told into the framework established by what one already knows"(Charniak, 1975) but is a developing construction when "combined with the experience of a particular piece of discourse, leads to the constructive processes in memory"(Brown and Yule, 1983: 249). Because knowledge is always relative and open to interpretation, so are framing processes. We modify frames and scripts in the light of new experiences and in turn these modifications become part of our memory, used for understanding subsequent events:

New experiences rewrite our storehouse of narrative expectations, and we improvise on old stories to respond to them. In this fashion our cultural software is continually rewritten. An increasing variety of narratives add flexibility to our framing of events and consequently our understanding of them. A person who has 'seen it all' is a person who has many different stories [frames] to draw upon. (Balkin, 1998: 197)

Thus, the act of framing is not a static process but a dynamic one in which we improvise, revise or create new frames of understanding from our existing storehouse of knowledge. Because experience is always subject to (re)organization or (re)framing according to different interests and different points of view, framing is not only a process of association and transition but also of "transaction"(Genette,

1991:261). The following chart represents the ways schemata are thought to operate (Deaux & Wrightsman 1988: 22):



**Figure 1: Schemata Chart**

Thus, schema theory emphasizes not only how readers make active use of schemata in the processing of texts, but also how texts can change pre-established mental representations by evoking new schemata. To elaborate more on how the reorganization of schemata can result in cognitive change I will refer to Cook's framework (1994) which categorizes schemata into three levels: language schemata, text schemata and world schemata. Cook maintains that the dynamic interplay between linguistic and text-based structures on one hand and schematic representations of the world on the other hand can initiate a change in the schemata of the reader:

So far, the description of schema theory has emphasized the role of schemata in creating coherence during the processing of texts. The influence described has been one-way. Schemata have been represented as relatively fixed structures acting upon texts to create discourse. There is, however, another side to this process. Text may change schemata. The interaction may not be one-way, but reciprocal and dynamic. While any interaction with new experience or text may be of this kind, and may effect changes in schemata, there may also experiences and discourses whose primary function is to alter schemata, making the mind better equipped for processing in future. (Cook: 1994, 183).

According to Cook, discourse can affect the schematic knowledge of the reader in three ways: it can reinforce, preserve or disrupt already existing schemata. In the first two cases, writers may use language, text and world knowledge bases to confirm or promote existing schemata. Discourse that disrupts schemata on the other hand, destroys existing schemata either by constructing new ones or establishing new connections. Cook refers to these processes as "schema refreshment"(ibid, 191). Furthermore, he adds that schemata refreshment which is subject to reader variation and change throughout time should be considered as the basis of discourse deviation: "Where there is deviation at one or both of the linguistic level and text-structural levels, and the deviation interacts with a reader's existing schemata to cause schema refreshment, there exists the phenomenon which I term 'discourse deviation'"(ibid, 198). Cook maintains that discourse deviation is a dynamic process between the reader's representations of language, text and world schemata and the ones evoked by the text since it involves a constant updating and restructuring of information.

The notions of "deviance" and "schema refreshment" used by Cook is important to understand how literary texts are able to cause "cognitive change" in the reader by means of schema change and how they provide a new means of interpreting experience. When a text strikes us as unusual, challenging or difficult it is because the text has been able to challenge our conventionalized way of thinking by deviating from either one or more of the schemata that organizes our language, text and world knowledge.

## 1.2. Construction of Schemata and the Encoding of Ideology

Since schemas are configurations of background knowledge, they also incorporate the ideological properties of knowledge bases, i.e. they also constitute both a vision of the world and a system of values. However, when readers activate "schemas" in order to make sense of what they read, they are mostly unaware that these highly complex network of mental representations carry in them the dominant ideologies of institutional, societal and cultural systems. For example, the conventionalized way in which texts are structured (story grammars) reflect a canonical view of literature that stipulates what is or is not normally expected. A text can stand as a "story" type, an "advertisement" type or a "report" type if only "people routinely apply to it a *consistent set of processing schemas* (italics are not mine) that constitute both structure and content"(de Beaugrande, 1987: 56). In other words, because schemata represent our conventional knowledge of the world, they determine what is normal in a given culture in a given situation. (Van Dijk, 1977b: 13) Trandis' definition of schemata is also useful in highlighting the close affinity between schema activation and ideological positioning: "Schemata are organized categories held in a cognitive framework, possessing effect and forming values, attitudes, expectations, norms, roles and unstated assumptions"(1987:265). Bearing this in mind, the producer of a text can manipulate the "schematic" knowledge of a reader to reproduce "common-sense" assumptions of reality or to challenge them. If literary works tend to challenge existing frames, this can lead to schema change and the creation of new schemata. In this respect, schema theory can contribute greatly to the demonstration of how ideologies are perpetuated and maintained in "text worlds" since literary texts not only evoke "frames" drawn from real-world knowledge and experiences but also utilize those same "frames" to reinforce or challenge power relations operative in institutional and societal processes.

I will try to demonstrate how "schemas" contribute to encode ideology by referring to its two significant features, that of prototyping and that of selection and salience. Both features play an essential role in the representation of mainstream literary conventions, values and belief as the "normative." As a result, after briefly touching upon these two features, I will shift my focus to the most important outcome of schema activation which is the process of "naturalization" whereby a

network of discursive, social, cultural and political practices are represented as common assumptions or as the "natural" criteria.

### **1.2.1. Prototyping**

The feature of "prototyping" or "stereotyping" plays an important role in understanding the activation of frames and the ideology lying underneath them. Rumelhart when defining what a schema theory is, underlines the fact that without a "prototype theory of meaning" a schema theory cannot be explained since meanings are encoded in terms of their prototypes: ". . . inasmuch as a schema underlying a concept stored in memory corresponds to the meaning of that concept, meanings are encoded in terms of the typical or normal situations or events, that instantiate that concept"(1980: 34). Besides Rumelhart, Fillmore also emphasizes the one-to-one relationship between "framing" and the activation of standard or prototypical scenes or contexts. A "frame" in Fillmore's usage refers to the "system of linguistic choices . . . that can get associated with prototypical instances of scenes"(1975: 124). Furthermore in his article "Frame semantics", he observes that "the frame or background against which the meaning of a word is defined and understood is a fairly large slice of the surrounding culture, and this background understanding is best understood as a 'prototype' rather than as a genuine body of assumptions about what the world is like"(1982: 117-118). Others like Minsky and Schank & Abelson in place of the term "prototype" have used the term "stereotype" when defining what a frame or script is:

A frame is "a data-structure for representing a stereotyped situation"(Minsky, 1975: 212)

A script is "a predetermined, stereotyped sequence of actions that defines a well-known situation"(Schank and Abelson, 1977: 41).

Interestingly enough, since it is the "prototypes" that determine the meanings of other related concepts, and since they are used to represent an entire category and provide a normative model for the category they serve to be very powerful ideological weapons. In the act of framing, prototypical or stereotypical examples are more likely to be used not only as reference points but also as the "norm" or "ideal" type to which all other concepts are related. What this implies is that any member of a category that fails to match the prototype will be viewed as "imperfect,

deficient, less valuable, or abnormal”(Balkin, 1998: 255). For example, Lakoff has shown that in the western, culture the notion of motherhood is based on the concept of nurturance. (1987: 85-6) Framing motherhood in terms of nurturance yields a prototype, the housewife mother, who provides for her children and takes care of them. Consequently, it becomes the housewife mother who begins to represent the set of norms that define the motherhood frame. As a result, all mothers and women who do not correspond to this model are viewed as deficient, lacking or insufficient. Thus, frames have ideological power because they can in fact be utilized in literary discourse to enhance commonsense assumptions by implicitly demarcating normal, natural and privileged associations about the world. Furthermore, because people usually view prototypes or stereotypical examples as the most common version of a category they will also use them as “gap fillers” to “flesh out or supply features of unknown or partially known events or members within a category”(Balkin, 1998: 253).

### **1.2.2 Selection and Salience**

The feature of “salience” is also another ideological aspect of “framing.” As Gregory Bateson puts it, we can consider the frame around a picture “as a message intended to order or organize the perception of the viewer” a message which “says, ‘Attend to what is within and do not attend to what is outside.’ . . . Perception of the ground must be positively inhibited and perception of the figure (in this case the picture) must be positively enhanced”(Bateson, 1972: 187). As “messages intended to order or organize the perception of the viewer,” frames permit the inclusion of certain messages and relations while excluding others. When thought in this way, then frames should be seen as a “focusing device”(MacLachlan and Reid, 1994: 20) that have the power to affect the reader with what they enclose. As a result, schemata or frames can be understood as those “persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse” (Gitlin, 1980: 7) and construct “reality.” For what a writer is doing when s/he is employing a particular schema or frame in his/her text, is actually selecting some aspect of a perceived reality and making it more salient. By doing so s/he also promotes a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and or treatment recommendation (Entman: 1993, 52). Therefore, a writer by employing certain frames not only

conveys his/her own worldview by "sizing-magnifying or shrinking elements of the depicted reality"(Entman, 1991: 9) but also defines a problem in a specific manner and prescribes particular solutions. For example Entman contends that the "cold war frame" which was used by the United States until the decline of the Soviet Union, "highlighted certain foreign events –say, civil wars –as problems, identified their source (communist rebels), offered moral judgements (aesthetic aggression), and commended particular solutions (U.S. support for the other side)" (Entman, 1993: 294). In this respect, even though the framing process can be seen as similar to metaphorical mappings that highlight or conceal certain categories of experience in the conceptualization of reality, frames are broader than metaphors and may include many metaphors within them.

As a result, because frames and schemata constitute principles of selection, emphasis, prototyping, and presentation that organize the social construction of reality, they are powerful cognitive tools that can convey particular messages with ideological meanings or implications.

### **1.3 Frame Semantics, Naturalization and Magic Realism**

We activate a particular frame consistent not only to our knowledge structures but also to our expectations. As Minsky has foregrounded a frame gets evoked when "evidence" together with "expectation" "make it plausible that the scene in view will fit in"(1980: 5). Consequently, the notion of expectations play a pivotal role in determining which frames the individual will activate and recall from memory in the course of understanding and interpreting discourse. For example, a person's expectations about the type of text s/he is reading will generate a "generic framing" which in turn will lead him/her to interpret the text according to the formal and linguistic properties of a genre. In fact these can be considered as text structure frames that constitute one's background knowledge about the conventional construction of stories. (I will elaborate on this issue in more detail when dealing with the concept of "story schemata") As long as an individual's expectations are met and reinforced through various frames and schemas, s/he will not question things and her/his perception of the world will proceed automatically. (Tannen, 1979: 140). To put it more simply, we can say that we understand a story against a background of cultural expectations. These expectations play a dual role. First, we

frame our understanding of a particular text in terms of the familiar and the ordinary. When texts do not fit our stock of existing expectations we label them as deviant, unexpected and extraordinary and tend to "omit" them "in recall"(Bartlett, 1932: 68) or try to transform them by "changing the relatively unfamiliar into the relatively familiar" (Bartlett, 1932: 89). In other words, we try to assimilate the "exceptional" and the "unusual" by organizing it into a comprehensible form.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, what we actually do when we categorize experience and store them into memory by way of familiar frames is actually "bestow legitimacy and authority on the expected"(Balkin, 1998: 191). Thus, behind most frames lie understandings of what is canonical, expected and ordinary. However, a text that breaks away from a reader's set of expectations can also lead to a "model of learning"(Kintsch, 1980: Bobrow and Norman, 1975) For when there is a "mismatch between data and processes or expectations and occurrences, conscious processes are brought in" (Bobrow and Norman, 1975:148). Learning in this view is a stage that is set up in response to a "conceptual gap" or "conflict" that arises when a disparity emerges between reader's expectations and the text that is being read. This gap can arise from the use of "deviant language"<sup>7</sup> or from the utilization of what Beaugrande defines as the schema of "alternativity"(1987). De Beaugrande defines "alternativity" as a state where "the participants in the literary communication are free and willing to contemplate other worlds beside the accepted 'real world'"(ibid, 58). If the reader accepts "alternativity" to be his/her constitutive schema by means of which the selection and application of all other schemas will be controlled, his/her reading will shift from an automatic to attentional processing. (ibid, 59)

This is a crucial feature of the "framing process" which I believe has to be pointed out especially if one is dealing with magical realist "subversive texts" that aim to challenge reader's expectations about what is "normative" and what is not.

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<sup>6</sup> Tannen's experiments carried out in ten different countries is also consistent with Bartlett's view that individual's organize and alter what they read in accordance to their "expectation structures." For a further reading on the close affinity between reader's expectation and the act of interpretation see Deborah Tannen (1979) "What's in a Frame: Surface Evidence for Underlying Expectations", in Roy O Freedle, *New Directions in Discourse Processing*. Norwood, N.J.; Ablex. 137-81)

<sup>7</sup> For a further reading on "deviance" as a highly salient and unconventional pattern found in poetic discourse see J. Mukarovsky,(1964) "Standard Language and Poetic Language", in P Garvin, (ed.) *A Prague School Reader on Esthetics, Literary Structure and Style* (Washington DC; Georgetown University Press.)

For a magical realist text will seek to deconstruct the logocentric frames that reproduce the dominant view of "reality" of the western world by presenting an alternative worldview.<sup>8</sup> However, what is of major importance is this "alternative world" should not be far-fetched from the actual world since as I have mentioned before, any piece of literature that is incomprehensible and unfamiliar to reader's expectations will be "omitted" from recall. De Beaugrande also implies the same fact when he asserts that the most famous literary stories "are those which offer stimulating mixtures of confirmation and violation of what people expect"(1987: 55) and maintains that fictionality is a relative notion that is established by comparison with reality: "Nearly all works contain at least some elements that have correlates in the accepted model of reality. Even the fantastic world of Shakespeare's *Tempest* has a 'Duke of Milan' and a 'King of Naples.' . . . In general, fantastic events would be meaningless if they could not be understood in terms of their analogy to realistic events"(1987: 60-1). What this foregrounds is that producers of magical realist texts have to create the "magical" from the natural by either making use of existing frames to reorganize commonplace principles of reality, or by creating "new frames" that can be understood in terms of their analogy to the actual world. In other words, since text processing is guided by "frames" drawn from a person's expectations and world knowledge, the magical-realist writer has to systematically relate the "supernatural" to one's real-world knowledge. Otherwise, if readers feel that they have abruptly crossed some borderline into a totally unknown realm, they will be unable to impose a meaning on the text and will not read any further.

In this regard, "framing" can be seen as one of the many cognitive processes by which text-internal *vraisemblance* or verisimilitude is applied to the production of literary works as well as in the act of their interpretation. Todorov defines "*vraisemblance*" as,

One can speak of the *vraisemblance* of a work in so far as it attempts to make us believe that it conforms to reality and not to its own laws. In other words, the *vraisemblable* is the mask which conceals the text's own laws and which we are supposed to take for a relation with reality. (recited in Culler, 1975: 139).

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<sup>8</sup> For a further reading on how binary logic is a development of Western logocentric thinking and how it establishes a relation of dominance see S.Yağcıoğlu, (1994) 1994). 'Dil. İdeoloji ve Sosyal Sınırlar', *Edebiyat Eleştirisi*, 5: 86-90.

Vraisemblance may denote the means adopted in a text to convince the reader that the text is a true and faithful representation of reality as well as it can refer to the interpretative maneuvers readers adopt so as to make sense of "disturbing texts" in accordance with their "common sense" beliefs and assumptions. Thus, as critical readers, if we can unveil this process of naturalization, we may as Lawrence Hogue points out,

. . . see not just how literary texts, canons, standards, myths, and conventions are produced, but also how culture, as well, is produced or invented, rather than being "natural," absolute or eternal. . . Without demasking the process of naturalization, a "natural" or mainstream definition of literary 'experience' will continue to universalize the ideological and historical forces that produced it. Its agents will continue to assume that literature reflects or mirrors the social reality rather than being a production of it. They will continue to measure the literary text's value and worth, rather than seeing its worth as determined within a cultural or ideological context. (1986, 6).

Jonathan Culler in his discussion of "naturalization" and "vraisemblance" in *Structuralist Poetics* (1975:131-60) pinpoints the fact that in order for a writer to make his/her text "readable" and "intelligible," s/he must "bring it into relation with a type of discourse or model which is already, in some sense, natural and legible" (ibid: 138). In other words, what Culler indicates is that the "notion of correspondence" plays a vital role in the process of naturalization. Then he proceeds to distinguish five levels of vraisemblance:

First there is the socially given text, that which is taken as the "real world." Second, but in some cases distinguish from the first, is a general cultural text: shared knowledge which would be recognized by participants as part of culture and hence subject to correction or modification but which none the less serves as a kind of 'nature'. Third, there are the texts or conventions of a genre, a specifically literary and artificial vraisemblance. Fourth, comes what might be called the natural attitude to the artificial, where the text explicitly cites and exposes vraisemblance of the third kind so as to reinforce its own authority. And finally, there is the complex vraisemblance of specific intertextualities, where one work takes another as its basis or point of departure and must be assimilated in relation to it. (ibid: 140)

Culler while elaborating on these five types makes it clear that even though social vraisemblance may be confused with that of the cultural, they have their

differences. Culler differentiates "social" *vraisemblance* as more universal, deriving from "the structure of the world" whereas cultural *vraisemblance* makes use of cultural knowledge frames or schemata and derives from the common assumptions, generalizations and stereotypes perpetuated by its institutionalized structures. The former uses "the text of the natural attitude of a society,"(ibid: 140) and does not need no justification of any sort; for example, we think of people as having "minds and bodies, as thinking, imagining, remembering, feeling pain, loving and hating, etc."(ibid: 140). The latter on the other hand, involves "cultural references and stereotypes which are accepted as *vraisemblable* within the culture" and therefore are "still open to question"(ibid: 141-42). This is the level at which we interpret motive, character and significance from descriptions of action, dress, attitude and so forth. Then Culler proceeds to expand upon the third and fourth types of *vraisemblance* which he labels the former as the "models of a genre" and the latter as the "the conventionally natural." The third level comprises of the set of literary norms to "which texts may be related and by virtue of which they become meaningful and coherent." These genre conventions that are established between the reader and the writer, in a way, function as an implicit "contract" that makes "certain relevant expectations operative" and thus permit "both compliance with and deviation from accepted modes of intelligibility"(ibid: 147). In other words, if a reader knows that s/he is reading science fiction, encountering extraterrestrial creatures with three eyes or four mouths will not surprise him/her since the conventions of that particular genre require that such fantastic facts be considered as a natural component of the world. The fourth level of *vraisemblance* involves "an implicit or explicit claim that one is not following literary convention or producing texts which find their intelligibility at the level of generic *vraisemblance*"(ibid: 148). For instance, the narrator may claim that he is intentionally violating the conventions of a story, that he knows that this is not the way it should be done according to the conventions, but that the way he is doing it serves some higher or more substantial purpose. As an example for the application of such a type of naturalization, I would like to give a quote from a magic realist Australian novel, *Illywhacker* (1985) by Peter Carey. The narrator of the novel before recounting the appearance of the ghost of his father tells the reader that, "A man who wishes his tale believed does himself no service by speaking of the supernatural; I would rather have slipped in some neatly tailored lie to fill the gap, but the gap is so odd, so uniquely shaped, that the only thing that will fill it is the event that made it" (194). In a way, the narrator

makes it clear that like the reader he is a reasonable man who knows the distinction between what is real and what is improbable; however, his frankness and honesty should convince the reader that such an improbable event in fact has happened.

In short, we can say that making sense of the world is not based on reality itself but on models the human mind constructs to make the world intelligible. The assimilation of the text to these models is called "vraisemblance" by Culler. If we relate all of these five types of "vraisemblance" to schema theory then what comes to the fore is that writers by employing and activating familiar schemata in their texts, whether this be social, cultural or genre-driven, in fact can render their worldview or their "reality" as the "natural." For the construction of the reading process on the basis of familiar models can in fact be translated as the active use of schemata by readers to make sense of the text. As I have mentioned earlier, such schemata constitute the accumulated back-ground knowledge of the reader which include recognition of genres or discourse types as well as specific "local" knowledge and socio-cultural or world knowledge of the broadest kind. However, because I find the first and second as well as the third and fourth levels of "vraisemblance" in Culler's discussion to be very similar, I prefer to use Rimmon-Kenan's two naturalization models which are simply distinguished as "reality models" or "literary models"(1988:123-25) in my subsequent discussions of magical realism. Rimmon-Kenan, unlike Culler, does not differentiate between the social or cultural types of naturalization as far as they help to govern the reader's perception of the world. He calls them "reality models" which are "so familiar that they seem natural and hardly grasped as models"(ibid: 124). The second type which he terms as literary models, make elements intelligible not by reference to our world knowledge bases, but by reference to "specifically literary exigencies or institutions"(ibid: 124). In this second type he includes literary conventions and genres.

The two types of naturalizing processes also enable us to see the major difference between the magical realist literature written in Latin America and that of the United States. For even though, there has been a general tendency to regard all magic realistic literature as sharing the common features found in Spanish or Latin American magic realism, I believe that such a generalization will be off-rooted since the schemata they activate or the models they employ in order to "naturalize" the real differ immensely. Regarding most magical realist writings, it has been asserted

that the "genre" itself functions as a literary model so that readers when confronted with magical occurrences do not feel a sense of wonder and disbelief. For example, Todorov in his well-known structural study of fantastic literature, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach*, (1973) defines magic realism as a genre where the coexistence of the supernatural and the natural does not generate a sense of wonder or surprise on the reader since they both are an inherent part of the real. Thus, a writer can make a human being flying in the air seem intelligible and acceptable if his /her text belongs to the genre of the Marvellous. However, what is of major importance here is that when talking about magic realist Latin American writing, we should take into consideration that in that culture "magic" itself functions as a "reality model" and not as a "literary model." This is obvious in Alejo Carpentier's famous saying, "After all, what is the entire history of America if not the chronicle of the marvelous real?"(1949:88). Luis Leal in his article, "Magic Realism in Spanish American Literature" brings a similar interpretation when he maintains that magic realism should be seen as an "attitude toward reality . . . expressed in popular or cultured forms"(1967:121) rather than a distinct genre with a specific definition. In fact, most if not all of Latin American fiction have incorporated in some way or another the "marvellous" as an essential component of their writing not because they are writing in the magical realist mode but because the "marvelous" is "real" to them as science is "real" to the western reader. Thus, to label most Spanish writing as "magic realism" only helps the sense-making activity of the western reader since it renders magical events as plausible and believable within the genre. As a result, in order to make sense of the literature written by Spanish magic realist writers such as García Marquez, Isabelle Allende, and Laura Esquivel, the western reader activates his generic schemata related to magic realism whereas the Latin American employs his/her cultural world schemata.

However, when we come to the United States, we come across a very different situation. The magic realist ethnic writer addresses two different audiences, an ethnic and a mainstream, who occupy the same social space, (or in Bourdieu's term "field") but differ immensely in their socio-cultural practices and ideological orientations. This difference is also manifested in the utilization of different types of "discourse and genres"<sup>9</sup> that are available for each individual. What this points out is

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<sup>9</sup> A very interesting and valuable study has been made by Semiramis Yağcıoğlu and Ayşen Cem-Değer (2001) in which Bourdieu's concepts of "field" and "habitus" has been

that magical realist writers in the United States like Louise Erdrich, Toni Morrison, Gloria Naylor, Ana Castillo and who usually share different ethnic backgrounds not only have to appeal to their own particular ethnic group but to the western reader as well. Therefore, these writers must be very careful and subtle in their attempt to "naturalize" the unreal and make the "magic" seem as an "expected" or "believable" component of western reality as well. This is not a concern for the Latin American writers who know that their Latin-American audience already perceive the "real world" as "lo real maravilloso americano" (marvelous American reality),<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, magical writers in the United States have to "pull" the western reader into their magical-realist "text world" and render their ethnic beliefs, values and worldview through the utilization of familiar western frames that will facilitate the reader's sense-making activity. Otherwise, a western reader rather than trying to grasp the "metamessages" that are given in the text through the "mingling" of the real and the supernatural, the physical and the spiritual, will simply cast it as a "ludicrous type of a literary genre"<sup>11</sup> or view it as "babyishly cradled in magic"<sup>12</sup> and will not consider the genre as reflecting a "serious social commentary."<sup>13</sup> As a result, ethnic American

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incorporated into Bernstein's concept of "voice" in order to reveal the ideological rationale behind two belief systems, the religious and the secular and its representation in Turkish media. For a further reading see S. Yağcıoğlu and A. Cem-Değer (2001) *Discourse and Society* 12.6: 817-852.

<sup>10</sup> For a further reading on the "marvelous" as an inherent part of Latin-American reality see, Alejo Carpentier, (1995) "On the Marvelous Real in America", in L.P. Zamora and W.B. Faris, (eds), *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, Durham, Duke University Press.

<sup>11</sup> Bate, Jonathan (1999) in his review in *Sunday Telegraph* "Millenium Reputations? Which are the Most Overrated Authors, or Books, of the Past 1,000 Years?" criticizes García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* as "The New York Times described Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) as 'the first piece of literature since the Book of Genesis that should be required reading for the entire human race.' This is the most ludicrous gesture of literary type I have ever encountered. Required reading? The book is so in love with its own cleverness that it is profoundly unreadable. It is generally credited with inaugurating the genre of "magic realism" novels which combine the matter-of-fact narrative style of conventional realistic fiction with fantastic nonsense such as levitation and alchemy. . . . Let us hope that *One Hundred Years of Solitude* will not generate one hundred years of overwritten, overlong, overrated novels. Enough that it has already inspired such excrescences as Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*." <http://www.themodernworld.com>

<sup>12</sup> James Wood in his critique of Toni Morrison not only labels her fiction as "babyishly" magical but also asserts that magic realistic fiction can very easily lapse "into the magic kingdom of fairy tale, in which happenings have an unexplained extremism that seals them from rational inspection." For a further reading see James Wood (1999) *The Broken Estate: Essays on Literature and Religion*. New York: Random House.

magic realist writers with their desire to construct the "real" and the "magic" on the same semantic plane, have a double task to accomplish. The first one is to subvert the "common-sense assumptions" which western empirical thinking has sanctioned concerning the mimetic nature of "reality." The second one is to "naturalize" this process of subversion so that readers will not question the "magical" component inherent in magical realism and become active participants by granting credibility to the supernatural occurrences. In short, we can say if seeing the nature of reality as mimetic and scientific is a naturalized phenomenon in western culture, then the drive of magic realist writers should be to transform those common assumptions. Since the concept of "reality" is a "construction" and since it is structured by and through conventions, made up of signs and signifying practices, the important issue for any magic realist ethnic writer is to manipulate and restructure the types of world schemata that is activated by the western reader in the comprehension of the "real." For it is only then can magic realist "text worlds" become sites where power and meaning is constructed and existing social relations challenged.

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<sup>13</sup> Chalton Heston in his speech at Georgetown University on March 27, 2000, when criticizing Garcia Marquez asserted that when "'magic realism' is within the covers of a novel, however boring, we are unlikely to confuse it with serious social commentary." <http://www.nationalonlinereview.com>

## 2. MAGICAL REALISM AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN ALTERNATIVE REALITY

### 2.1 Challenging Western Modes of Representation: Magic Realism as a Subversive Discourse

For 75 years, especially after Alejo Carpentier's essay "On the Marvelous Real in America"(1949) and Angel Flores' "Magic Realism in Spanish American Fiction"(1955) which asserted magic realism as distinctive of Latin American fiction, magic realism began to be debated throughout a diversity of disciplines ranging from art to literature. Angel Flores used the conventions of magic realism as a critique of Latin American fiction and Alejo Carpentier termed it as "lo real maravilloso americano"(marvelous American reality), depicting the literary mode as an inherent characteristic of Latin American reality: "After all, what is the entire history of America if not the chronicle of the marvelous real?"(1949:88). Both writers played a crucial role in the conceptualization and acclamation of magic realism in academic and literary circles. However, no single definition was able to be attached to this term. Some critics situated the mode with surrealism<sup>14</sup> and some with the fantastic.<sup>15</sup> In fact, one critic went so far as to claim that magic realism could be used interchangeably with the movement of postmodernism: "...what is postmodern in the rest of the world used to be called magic realist in South America and still goes by that name in Canada"(Lernout, 1988:129). Some critics stressed the fact that magical realism should be seen as a supplement to realism while others totally avoided using the term, emphasizing that magic realism "gave too much credence to

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<sup>14</sup> Alejo Carpentier in "Baroque and the Marvellous Real" maintains that marvelous real has more affiliations with Surrealism than magic realism which was coined by the art critic Franz Roh in 1925 to describe expressionistic painting. He asserts that the only difference between Surrealism and the marvelous real is that Surrealism in its pursue of the marvelous was "premeditated" and "calculated." It was a "manufactured mystery" whereas the marvelous was "encountered in its raw state, latent and omnipresent, in all that is Latin American"(103-04).

<sup>15</sup> Angel Flores in his article "'Magic Realism in Spanish American Fiction"(1955) cites novels written in the fantastic mode as examples of magic realist texts. This confusion between the magic realist and the fantastic is also apparent in Frederic Jameson's article "On Magic Realism in Film"(1986). In discussing magic realism as being a supplement to realistic fiction Jameson criticizes the term real maravilloso as producing a "reality which is already in and of itself magical or fantastic"(302). Brian McHale in his book *Postmodernist Fiction* (New York: Methuen, 1987) doesn't differentiate between magic realist and fantastic literature either.

realism as a norm."<sup>16</sup> Jose David Salvador coined the term "blurred genre"(1991:533) when describing magic realism and Emily Hicks preferred to use the term "border writing," claiming that magic realism was too much dependent on the "literary categories of dominant cultures"(1992:xxvii). The inability to draw limits to the boundaries that magic realism designated became an issue of controversy and uneasiness in critical circles. Every genre until postmodernism was neatly categorized and labeled by literary critics; their place within literary expressions being clarified and their philosophy discerned and exposed. In this respect, magic realism like every oxymoron whose parameters cannot be precisely framed challenges Western dominant paradigms.

Because its exact place within literary practices could never be precisely defined, magic realism began to enter literary debates as an alternative mode of resistance to hegemonic literary canons such as realism, naturalism and modernism. Stephen Slemon's essay titled "Magic Realism as Post-Colonial Discourse," (1995) posits magic realism to be operative in cultures which have experienced colonialization and imperialism and D'haen links the term to postmodern writing, maintaining that magic realism unlike its predecessors has been able to represent the voice of the margin because it has managed to "dis-place" hegemonic patterns of western thought and "discursive formations"<sup>17</sup>:

It is precisely the notion of the ex-centric, in the sense of speaking from the margin, from a place 'other' than 'the' or 'a' center, that seems to me an essential feature of the strain of postmodernism we call magic realism. . . .To write ex-centrally, then, or from the margin, implies dis-placing this discourse. My argument is that magic realist writing achieves this end by first appropriating the techniques of the "centr"-al line and then using these, not as in the case of these movements, "realistically," that is, to duplicate existing reality as perceived by the theoretical or philosophical tenets underlying said

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<sup>16</sup> Young and Hollaman have cited Gregory Rabasasa 's statement in the introduction of their magic realist anthology.

<sup>17</sup> This is a term used by Michel Foucault to explain the orders of discourse and the material practices of a specific social institution or the society as a whole which govern individual action and maintain his/her surveillance. Foucault in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) defines discursive formations as ". . . whenever between objects, types of statements, concepts, or thematic choices, one can define a regularity (an order, correlation positions and functionings, transformations) we will say that we are dealing with discursive formations."

movements, but rather to create an alternative world correcting so called reality, and thus to right the wrongs this "reality" depends upon. Magic realism thus reveals itself as a *ruse* to invade and take over dominant discourse(s). (1995:195)

As D'haen points out, literary movements have in fact functioned not as a challenge but as a continuation of the already existing status quo. Until postmodernism, every literary trend that emerged as a reaction to the previous one and whose goal has been to demolish the latter's very foundations, has only functioned to perpetuate canonical discourse issued from "privileged centers." Their "truth claims" have changed but their perspectives have been launched from the same vantage point; a vantage point where the weapons are set up by the dominant culture and its belief-systems.

Of course in order to understand why magic realist texts are written, as D'haen puts it, from the "ex-centrical" perspective and why these texts have been regarded as one of the few literary sites of struggle where hegemonic practices are being subverted and their "truth claims" questioned, we must first unfold the enigmatic relationship between magic realism and "reality." For the inability to define magic realism lies also in the word's oxymoronic associations that bridge two disparate realms into one—the "magic" and the "real." I start my discussion with the status of the "real" as it is the realm shared commonly by humanity. Nevertheless, an examination of reality will inevitably lead towards the fact that reality and representation can be used quasisynonymously since we get to grasp the "real" through the representations we make of it (Bakhtin, 1981). Construction of reality and its representation cannot be presented as two opposing views because both are ways of imagining a world. Representation, constructed in and by discourse, is also a dynamic process rather than a mere reflection of events. Thus, it is when we hold reality not as transparent to the real but as a "mediated re-presentation" will we be able to dissect its discursive and ideological constituents and unveil western modes of thinking that underlie its very foundations. For as one critic points out, the "real" is not an undistorted mirroring of the world but "a matrix of interactions between "subjects" and "objects"(Hicks, 1992: xxix).

According to Whorf, an individual's conception of reality is determined unconsciously by the structure of his language and the values of his culture.<sup>18</sup> Besides Whorf, many critics have also pointed out how language operates on the symbolic level<sup>19</sup> and how it controls the individual by constructing his/her "social consciousness." By using language the individual selects, classifies and categorizes his/her experiences and attributes to them meanings relevant to the hegemonic organization of his/her social world. In fact, while acquiring a language, we also acquire a conception of the world which itself is partial and subjective. When we represent what we see, we process the reality "out there" through our culture's linguistic system and encode it with meanings relevant to the hegemonic thought structure of our society. As Rimmon-Kenan argues, "In stead of a thing-in-itself, reality is now considered an absence, and language replaces, rather than reflecting or even conveying, this absent reality"(1996:10). Therefore, the term "reality" becomes very ideological in the sense that by re-presenting the "naturalized real" it contributes to the constitution of a particular worldview. In short, we can say that if language constructs reality and if the "real" is a construction of dominant discursive practices, then "reality" becomes one of the many "discursive formations" that shapes the way the individual perceives the world. It connotes different meanings in different systems of belief and power structures. Thus, it is pivotal to understand whose definition of "reality" we are referring when talking about realistic representation or reality.

In canonized literature, the "real" has always been associated with the dominant view of reality produced, structured and controlled by Western discourse. This Western reality, which has its philosophical basis on post-enlightenment rationalism<sup>20</sup> and positivism, has been held true for all humanity. Post-enlightenment

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<sup>18</sup> Whorf's linguistic relativity hypothesis claims language to be the chief influence in the way human beings perceive reality. Even though the role of culture is not ignored, its importance is undervalued. For a detailed reading see Benjamin L Whorf's *Language, Thought and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf* (New York: Wiley, 1956), edited by J.B. Carroll.

<sup>19</sup> For a detailed study on how language is perceived as a "symbolic act", see Kenneth Burke's *On Symbol and Society* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1989), Roger Fowler's *Literature as Social Discourse: The Practice of Linguistic Criticism* (London: Batsford, 1981), Pierre Bourdieu's *Language and Symbolic Power*, (Cambridge: Polity, 1988) and Robert Hodge And Günther Kress's *Language as Ideology*(New York: Routledge, 1979).

<sup>20</sup> Post-enlightenment rationalism posits a scientific view of man and society holding scientific and materialistic knowledge to be the "truth" of all societies. By claiming that

rationalism with its emphasis on scientific inquiry and empirical knowledge reproduces a universe that can only be "understandable" and "real" if space, time and causality are construed according to the "objective" truth claims of Western modernity. Cultures that do not share such a worldview are labeled as "traditional, "static" and "pre-historical" and are seen as locked in the "subjectivity" of their past unable to comprehend the superiority of empirical and materialistic knowledge. For it never occurs to the Western rational thinker that the conventions of his/her own "objective reality" may in fact have no significance in other cultures. By taking granted Western realism as the dominant and objective one, these thinkers not only legitimize existing power relations and their structures of knowledge but also sanction their continuance. A positivist western view of the world also corresponds to a particular view of language. It presupposes or evokes a "realistic" model of language which holds that "there is a direct connection between the language and the thing in the real world that the language stands for"(Hayles, 1993:39).

Magic realists, however, try to reach beyond the limitations set by western modes of representation by transgressing its parameters in pursuit of a more hybrid and elastic truth that is embracing rather than foreclosing. They posit that an empiricist and restrictive notion of reality does not mirror all levels of experience. They argue that "objectivity" has been used to naturalize and to deny the rich and diverse experience and knowledge of non-western cultures. According to magic realists, the real is to perceive everything in the universe as related to each other. Rather than an objective truth or a "particular event" we have instead an interrelated experience influenced by legends, myths, ancient beliefs and folklore. As one critic claims, "It is not the particular event, but the perceived relationship among events that gives meaning to experience"(Chanady, 1995:139). It is the sense of unity, a wholeness that blurs the distinctions between space and time, the real and the imagined and the human and nonhuman. In this organic cosmology, "faith" which is commonly regarded as lying outside the parameters of reality in the Western World

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science and empirical knowledge had universal validity, that they were the only source of reliable knowledge, post-enlightenment rationalism dismantled old hierarchies and put scientific inquiry above Biblical authority, reason above faith and objectivity above mysticism. For more information on this topic see Perry, Marvin. *Sources of the Western Tradition* (Boston: Houghton, 1991), *Knowledge and Belief in America : Enlightenment Traditions and Modern Religious Thought*, eds, William M. Shea and Peter A. Huff. and Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment, An Interpretation*. (New York: Knopf, 1966), Brown, Robert, *The Nature of Social laws : Machiavelli to Mill* ( Cambridge: Cambridge UP , 1984).

becomes an inherent part of human experience and a necessary component of survival. As Alejo Carpentier maintains, “. . .the phenomena of the marvelous presupposes faith. Those who do not believe in saints cannot cure themselves with the miracles of saints”(1949: 86). This element of faith in magic is so intense and its depiction so realistic that the reader starts to believe the unbelievable and finds him/herself participating actively in its making.

Magic realists challenge not only the “myth of objectivism”<sup>21</sup> on which western rationalism is founded, but also its system of differentiation that authorizes the West to construct a system of binary oppositions with itself and the rest of the world. For even though post enlightenment rationalism has dismantled the hierarchy of the Church, its Manichean<sup>22</sup> binarism of good and evil that foregrounds dualistic thinking still continues to be one of the essential aspects of Western thinking. By constructing binaries between themselves and the others –the West and the rest, colonizer and colonized, center and peripheral, civilized and native –Western culture uses “demarcation” as a means of maintaining hegemony. In so doing, it also highlights the necessity of binary thinking in the conceptualization of reality and presents the “real” as Western reality and the “unreal” as non-western. It is this commonsense division that separates reality into the physical and the supernatural, the western and the non-western that magic realist texts try to subvert. Most of these texts try to destabilize Western dualistic thinking that has been purported as normative throughout canonical literature and establish alternative structures where boundaries are erased and reality blurred.

By erasing the slash that divides reality into opposite realms, magic realism also removes the hierarchical positioning inherent in binary oppositions where the first term is always prioritized. It modifies the dialectic between the “real” and the “magic” by creating a new site of symbolic-cultural struggle in which no term is privileged over another. The dichotomization between the value structures of traditional cultures (that emphasize magic as an inherent part of reality) and

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<sup>21</sup> .A phrase used by Lakoff and Turner in their book Metaphors We Live By (1980). According to this myth, science provides human beings with factual knowledge and helps them to achieve universally valid and an unbiased point of view.

<sup>22</sup> Manicheanism was a gnostic religion that was founded and spread by Persian Mani at the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. It preached a radical dualism of good and evil in which spirit was represented

Western monolithic thinking (that defines reality through empirical epistemology), is dissolved by a hybridized nature of experience that does not prioritize one system of belief over the other. It contests any monocentric worldview that perpetuates a biased and hierarchic representation of history and cultural production. History and mythology, mimesis and poesis, the real and the marvelous, objectivity and subjectivity coexist on the same realm with none of them employing a controlling position.

Other hegemonic aspects of Western reality that magic realists try to subvert are the Western paradigms built on the Darwinist, evolutionist views of "progress," that also emerged as a result of the scientific and empirical worldview of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Enlightenment. Among the most important are Euro-centrism and linearity, in which the former displays progress as the source of Euro-American superiority and the latter posits progress as a movement that can be perceived only in linear form. The former becomes a thematic concern for magic realists whereas the latter happens to be more of a narrative one. I will first discuss how "progress" as a prevailing norm in Western discourse lends itself easily to the legitimization of "universalism," then I will analyze progress as the controlling principle of linear time which, in fact, has become one of the primary conventions employed in realistic novels.

As a model, the "the myth of progress" underlies the ideological framework that sustains the hierarchical structure of Western thinking. The West that claims to "carry the seeds of all human advancement"(Meszaros, 1989: 5) sees itself in a positional advantage to set the standards for the world. Those who cannot "achieve" these standards are labeled as "primitive" "backward" or "developing." In other words, the "myth of progress" allows the West to project its values, assumptions and norms as normative and universal. The materialization of the "universal" is also inherent in the field of literature, especially in literary works that belong to the canon. For the criteria that designates the value or "greatness" of a writer's work is whether it can or cannot depict the "universal" human condition. By this means, the link between the universal and Eurocentric becomes quasisynonymous with the link

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by good and matter by evil. The two realms of spirit and matter were always and externally separate.

between universality and mainstream literature that fails to acknowledge or value cultural difference.

Apart from being a thematic ideological construct, the idea of progress also plays an important role in the Western conceptualization of linear time. Lakoff and Turner present "progress" as identical with the journey metaphor (1980: 92) that has a starting point and an end. A person who starts his/her journey will always aspire to move towards his goal; he will try to "progress" in a linear movement from one particular point to another. I believe this metaphoric schema of progress that structures Western experience is the foundation of linear narrativity that Western realism so heavily relies on. For progress can be best represented through a linear, historicist time which has a beginning and an end. Likewise, time can also be presented as a dynamic progression, "flow[ing] always forward"(cited in Danow, 1997: 79), in the sense that new goals will be achieved and present circumstances improved with its passage. Of course, such a conceptualization of time will prioritize linear narrativity over all others. This brings us to the fact that "time" which is an essential component of reality can also serve as an ideological construct that can highlight or conceal certain aspects of cultural norms and values, thus, naturalizing our worldview. As Holquist asserts, "The deepest layers of our assumptive world are probably those where we unreflectively conceive the nature of time and space"(1990: 142).

Magical realists also use "time" in their fictive world as ideological constructs since they make use of it to display their own cultural understanding of the world where time usually functions to diffuse the sharp distinctions between linear and circular thinking. Magic realistic novels often present a "cyclical model" where time is envisioned not as dynamic or static but as recurrent. David Danow defines the cyclical conception of time in his book *Models of Narrative* as,

Conceived here as rounds of repeated recurrence, events appear iterative, while corresponding ideas are formulated and reformulated, consistently emerging on an advanced, higher plane. Instead of proceeding along a certain continuum, time in this sense may be understood to traverse, as it were, the circumference of a cone, (underlining is mine) whereby each of its loci corresponds to others in a distinctly upward movement that likewise reflects an inherent sense of progress. The recurrence of an event therefore implies at least the possibility for those witnessing or participating in the event to attain a

higher understanding than had been previously achieved . . . .*Before* and *After* thus move beyond the oppositional distinction of primitive thought to become cultural markers that reveal an intended or assumed progression toward the attainment of knowledge of oneself, the world, and one's place in the world. Here, in this cyclical domain, "improvement" is eminently possible. (1997: 21)

In magic realist fiction, the rational, linear view of Western reality is placed against an alternative worldview that views space as "spherical" and time as "cyclical." The circular concept of time does not distinguish any "moment" as more significant than others. Each and every phase in an individual's life plays an important role in the understanding of the self and his/her place in the universe. Therefore, in magic realist fiction, the western reader's habits of time and space is reoriented. (Faris, 1995: 174).

As a conclusion we can say that magic realistic writers challenge the ideology underlying the empirical view of reality grounded on dualistic thinking, hierarchical structuring, and mimetic representation. As Barthes puts it, "Realism. . . cannot be a copy of things, but the knowledge of language; the most 'realistic work is not which paints reality, but which . . . explores as deeply as possible the unreal reality of language'"(quoted and translated in Brown 1995: 137). Therefore, it is only when we place magical-realist discourse in the center of our reading rather than our own hegemonic politics of representation, will we be able to identify the kind of associations that are processed, stored, retrieved and naturalized by magical realist writers. For by imposing its own oxymoronic view of reality that mingles the two disparate worlds of the real and the unreal, magic realistic narratives should not only be seen as sites of representation but also as sites of struggle and resistance.

### 3. FRAMES OF RESISTANCE: LOUISE ERDRICH'S *THE ANTELOPE WIFE*

In Louise Erdrich's novel *The Antelope Wife* (1998), reality shifts from being a fixed stable Western definition to signifying a continuous transition between the real and the unreal. Louise Erdrich does this through the employment of various cognitive frames, narrative and linguistic devices, thematic and cultural images. Once the reader finds himself within this invisible however ideological network, he never questions whether something is logically possible or not, since "logic" has also changed its apparel. "Logic", in the textual reality of *The Antelope Wife*, is a new understanding, a new paradigm of interpretation and representation that dismantles Western polarized thinking in favor of an all-inclusive reality that blurs the distinctions between space and time, the real and the imagined and the human and the non-human. This new way at looking at things is gradually appropriated by the reader during the reading process, however, it is the writer who programs this "ideological patterning" with the linguistic and narrative devices he/she employs. In the process of representing a magico-mythic worldview to the reader, Louise Erdrich, in her novel *The Antelope Wife*, makes use of both Native and Western cognitive frames and questions pre-established notions of time, space and identity. Thus, in this section I will analyze the "frames" and schemata that are activated by Louise Erdrich, in order to subvert the "naturalized real" of western reality and its patterns of thought that has been pivotal in its construction. To illustrate how the use of textual and world schemata in *The Antelope Wife* serve to create an alternative world where Western paradigms built on binary oppositions, linear time and "mimesis" are challenged, I will first deal with the "universal scripts" that are employed to naturalize the "supernatural." Later, I will focus on, successively, the use of titles, the use of story line and the use of beadwork metaphor as significant textual and world schemata that reinforce the ideological substructure of the text and aim to subvert hegemonic patterns of reading and understanding the world.

### 3.1 Framing the "Supernatural"

Louise Erdrich with her desire to construct the "real" and the "magic" on the same semantic plane not only has to subvert "common-sense assumptions" concerning the mimetic nature of "reality," but also has to "naturalize" this process so that readers can grant credibility to the "magical" occurrences that emanate from her novel. I believe that the rendering of the "supernatural" as a natural component of everyday life in *The Antelope Wife* relies heavily on Erdrich's portrayal of supernatural events within the frame of what Culler calls as "vraisemblance"(1975). From the five levels of vraisemblance that Culler identifies, the one that is mostly used by Louise Erdrich in her novel is "the socially defined text"(ibid; 140) that is taken as the real world. It is the inclusion of the "real" material that "requires no justification because it seems to derive directly from the structure of the world:

The first type of vraisemblance is the use of "text of the natural attitude of a society (the text of l'habitude), entirely familiar and in this very familiarity diffuse, unknown as text. . . . We speak of people as having minds and bodies, as thinking, imagining, remembering, feeling pain, loving and hating, etc. and do not have to justify such discourse by adducing philosophical arguments. It is simply the text of the natural attitude, at least in Western culture, and hence vraisemblable. (ibid:140-41)

In *The Antelope Wife*, "vraisemblance" is achieved by the use of realistic conventions that designate a "true" reflection of the world. Louise Erdrich makes repeated analogues to the familiar realistic world in order to "naturalize" the supernatural components in the novel that would otherwise seem irrational and unbelievable. By depicting the "supernatural" in an explainable and realistic domain and circumscribing it within the texture of universal values and feelings, Erdrich provides a context of "intelligibility"(Culler, 1975: 141). In this context of "intelligibility" the reader neither questions the plausibility of the marvelous occurrences nor its subversive thought patterns underlying its very construction. As a result, even though the appearance of the "supernatural" in *The Antelope Wife* actually subverts the empirical rationale of Western thinking grounded on scientific objectivity, the novel is not labeled as "fantasy" or "science-fiction."

In order to demonstrate how Louise Erdrich succeeds to make a subtle and smooth transition from the real to the unreal without raising questions about the

“supernatural” I have chosen three “marvelous” chapters. The first chapter of the opening chapter in “Father’s Milk” is entitled “Scranton Roy” and in this section we come across an anonymous storyteller recounting a “spectacular cruel raid” in which a cavalier soldier experiences “motherhood” in a very realistic yet unfamiliar way. In the second chapter, “The Girl and Her Deer Husband”, the past is fused with the present, the human with the non-human in order to capture the essence of all human dispositions which have “in their doing the seed of their undoing”(Erdrich 59). The third chapter I will be dealing with is titled “Almost Soup” and is narrated by a dog who represents the unique combination of Western pragmatic wisdom and Native American spiritual guidance. In his storytelling we come across a “hybridized” nature of experience that conceives humans, animals and spirits as interrelated and interdependent to each other.

### **3.1.1 Father’s Milk**

Deep in the past during a spectacular cruel raid upon an isolated Ojibway village mistaken for hostile during the scare over the starving Sioux, a dog bearing upon its back a frame-board tikinagun enclosing a child in moss, velvet, embroideries of beads, was frightened into the vast carcass of the world west of the Otter Trail. A cavalry soldier, spurred to human response by the sight of the dog, the strapped-on child, vanishing into the distance, followed and did not return.

What happened to him lives on, though fading in the larger memory, and I relate it here in order that it not be lost.

Private Scranton Roy was the youngest son of a Quaker father and a reclusive poet mother who established a small Pennsylvania community based on intelligent conversation. . . . (Erdrich, 1998: 3)

The chapter starts with a familiar introduction used in fairy tells or children stories, but this time the very popular “Once upon a time” cliché is replaced by the more realistic but equally remote “Deep in the past” phrase. The first paragraph which functions as a brief synopsis of the story that the narrator will be recounting not only carries the remote temporality of a fairy tale, but also its strange and obscure setting. A cavalry soldier, a child and a dog are described as “vanishing” into the “vast carcass of the world” and not returning. The readers are pulled into a space where their usual connections to the “logical” and “real” are suspended. However, Erdrich also by portraying these events within a realistic frame blurs the borderline between the real and the unreal. For she sets this “vast carcass of the

world" within definable borders, indicating that it is west of the "Otter Tail River." She provides a vivid and detailed description of this strange and mysterious baby describing her as "strapped-on" to a "frame-board tikinagun" wearing a "moss, velvet, embroideries of beads." And last of all she adds both a factual and a native-American dimension to the "storytelling" through the employment of such terms as "Ojibway," and "Sioux."

However, what is more interesting is the second paragraph of the story where we come across an abrupt change from a past-tense third-person omniscient narration to a present-tense first-person dialogue. This odd intervention of the narrator interrupts the temporal continuity of the story and functions as an evaluative device that indicates the point of the narrative, in Labov's term "its *raison d'être*" (1972:366). The text shifts at this moment from the story-telling mode to the communication mode in which the narrator steps out from the collective anonymity of the storyteller in order to make an external commentary on the importance of the transmission of oral stories. The narrator states implicitly that the maintenance and continuance of oral histories depend on "natural memory" and collective understanding, therefore, what does not get structured narratively suffers "loss" in memory. Furthermore, through the use of the diectic "here," the storyteller not only succeeds to bring his/her remote and distant tale which is about to "[fade] in the larger memory" to the "now" of telling but also incorporates the power of "oral storytelling," into the "act of reading" in which the reader is indirectly given the responsibility of the "storyteller" who will pass this story on to the next generation. He induces in his/her readers a sense of immediate involvement and anticipation. The reader actively participates in the dynamics of the story's creation by accepting the role of the listener who will in respect "relate" this "vanishing history" to others. Thus, from the beginning pages of *The Antelope Wife*, we come across a merging rather than a division between the real and the unreal, the past and the present, fact and memory, the teller and the listener.

The "story" which is in danger of "fading in the larger memory" is that of Scranton Teodurus Roy, the youngest son of a "Quaker father and a reclusive poet mother." Scranton Roy after falling in love with a thespian woman, follows her path as it leads to the west where he enlists in the U.S Cavalry and partakes in a "spectacular cruel raid upon an isolated Ojibway village mistaken for hostile during

the scare over the starving Sioux"(3). Erdrich depicts this barbarous attack with all its vividness and brutality; however, the issue that is in stake is not the slaughtering of innocent Indians by cold-blooded whites, but the loss of humanity and compassion in general. What makes it more striking is that Louise Erdrich subverts the binary logic of us/them, white/non-white oppositions of western thought, by actually using a scene that thrives on the existence of dualistic thinking. For if we categorize this raid in terms of its prototype which is "war," or its subcategory which is "massacre" the properties which will be associated to such a term can only exist if there is an actor and an agent playing the oppositional roles of the ally and enemy, the winner or the loser, the survivor or the casualty. However all the heart-rendering details of this raid are not arranged to bring up a dialectic between the west or the non-west, the hunter or the prey where the reader sympathizes or sides with one or the other, but to highlight the semantic associations that are implicit in such a cruel act. "War" whether it be seen as a "massacre" or a "battle" serves as an instrument of "devastation" and "dehumanization." This is clearly obvious in the passage that describes the raid:

The village his company encountered was peaceful, then not.  
In chaos of groaning horses, dogs screaming, rifle and pistol reports, and the smoke of errant cooking fires, Scranton Roy was most disturbed not by the death yells of old men and the few warriors shocked naked from their robes, but by the feral quiet of the children. And the sudden contempt he felt for them all. Unexpected, the frigid hate. The pleasure in raising, aiming. They ran fleet as their mothers, heading for a bush-thick gully and a slough of grass beyond. Two fell. Eager, he bayoneted an old woman who set upon him with no other weapon but a stone picked from the ground. (4)

The first sentence is demarcated from the rest of the paragraph and stands alone as a "chunk," as a linguistic or narrative device that functions as a "topic marker" and actually highlights the result of the "unexpected attack" rather than its "performers." If we remove the sub clause (syntactically the inessential component), the sentence will remain "The village was peaceful, then not." What this signifies is that this raid is not about one "company" killing another or the meaningless butchering of Ojibway Native Americans by blue uniformed white soldiers, rather it is about the destruction of "peace" and all the affirmative values attributed to its preservation. Scranton Roy is not only positioned as the "hunter" but also as the "hunted" who is deeply disturbed by the innocence, helplessness and vulnerability he sees around him. The enemy for Scranton Roy is not the Ojibway people, but the

"feral quiet of the children"(4) the unnatural peace that contests with all the uproarious and violent nature of the raid, causing him to experience a stage of frenzy and hate. In order to justify his "own dark act" Scranton Roy begins to see desperate fleeing mothers as "broken sacks of hay ...used for practice"(4) and innocent children as "targets" that should be executed. In other words, it is not Erdrich's intention to foreground the polarized relation between the participants that engage in "war" but to draw attention to the "dehumanizing" effect of the "process" itself. All of the "actants" who engage in this process (whether it be the slayer or the slayed) simply occupy one slot and that is the slot of the "victim."

When Scranton Roy envisions his mother in the dying eyes of the elderly woman and later sees a dog carrying an innocent and unprotected baby strapped on his back, he is "spurred to human response"(1). It is as if the dog has more potential to kindness and caring than any human being can have. It is this loss of "human response," the loss of basic universal values such as compassion, kindness and mercy that invites the "marvelous" into the novels setting. Erdrich prepares the reader to a spiritual encounter by foreshadowing what is to come in a very subtle way. Scranton leaves the "ruckus of death,"(5) the "evil confusion"(5) of this stark reality to vanish "into the distance,"(1) "into open space,"(5) "into the emptiness,"(5) into the "sky-filled land"(6) which is "past civilized judgement"(7). In this sky-filled land in which the dog, the child and the cavalry soldier "infinitesimally" disappear, the reader witnesses the strange but intense, bizarre but insightful bond between man and child. Scranton Roy does not occupy the slot of the relentless cavalry soldier anymore. In front of such a moving sight, he assumes a humanitarian role where such feelings as compassion and sympathy are prioritized. For even though Scranton Roy is bewildered and confused in this strange land he does his best to gain the friendship of the dog and to protect this innocent child who is unpolluted of the savagery and sterility of civilization. However, Erdrich stresses the fact that in order for Scranton Roy to be acknowledged and welcomed by the dog and the child he has to "diminish his whiteman's (underlining is mine) scent."(5) Scranton Roy in this context does not represent a certain race, a certain gender or a certain agent. He stands for the universal subject who by not belonging to any group elucidates the border-free parameters of magic realist texts. From the very first pages of the chapter to its last we are confronted with a character who frequently changes roles in order to adapt to the shifting realities of his environment. In the first phase, we

see the "aggressor" who feels pleasure in killing and destroying being transformed into a "guardian angel," who completely devotes himself to protecting lives. Brutality and mercilessness is replaced by compassion and sympathy. In the second phase we see a male occupying the slot of the "mother" both biologically and psychologically. In the third phase, the instructing role between an adult and a child is turned upside down, where the grown-up takes the position of the recipient, the beneficiary and the baby becomes the teacher who hand outs a very valuable commodity which is "faith."

Scranton Roy's experience of motherhood, his miraculous nursing of an infant child is a turning point in his life in which Scranton Roy amidst all the ruin and decay witnesses a story of survival. A newborn baby with her "immense faith" is able to create a miracle in which Scranton Roy plays an active role:

... The word *faith* hooked him. She [the baby] had it in such pure supply. She nursed with utter simplicity and trust, as though the act would produce her wish. Half asleep one early morning, her beside him, he felt a slight warmth, then a rush in one side of his chest, a pleasurable burning. He thought it was an odd dream and fell asleep again only to wake to a huge burp from the baby, whose lips curled back from her dark gums in bliss, whose tiny fists were unclenched in sleep for the first time, who looked, impossibly well fed.

*Ask and ye shall receive. Ask and ye shall receive.* The words ran through him like a clear stream. He put his hand to his chest and then tasted a thin blue drop of his own watery, appalling, God-given milk. (7).

The western reader can be "appalled," in the same way as this cavalry soldier, at the sight of such a supernatural occurrence. However, the scene is conveyed in such a realistic way (the warm burning of rushing milk, the burping of a well-fed baby) that it becomes a natural outcome and the reader accepts it without questioning. "Faith" which is the mysterious force behind this miraculous event is substantiated by biblical references, presented to the reader as a "spiritual evidence" that needs no clarification. The reader is led to believe in something he strictly denies.

Nevertheless, I believe that rather than the issue of "faith," it is the activation of the "motherhood" schemata upon the reader that "naturalizes" this unnatural event and makes it a convincing and excellent example of the magic realist mode.

For it is the intimate relationship that can only be experienced between mother and child and its rooting in intense and sincere emotion that prepares the reader to the "marvelous." As readers, we feel a deep empathy towards this male character whose sole concern is to comfort and protect this innocent and vulnerable newborn. Scranton Roy's experiencing motherhood, is filled with details that are not only true-to-life but also very universal in the sense that they can be applied to any mother nurturing her child and to any hungry baby desperate for milk:

Her [the baby's] cries filled a vastness that nothing else could. They resounded, took over everything, brought his heart clean to the surface. Scranton Roy cradled the baby, sang lewd camp tunes, than stalwart hymns, and at last remembered his own mother's lullabies. Nothing helped.

It seemed, when he held her close upon his heart as women did, that the child grew angry with longing and desperately clung, rooted with its mouth, roared in frustration, until at last to near insanity, Roy opened his shirt and put her to his nipple. She seized him. Inhaled him. Her such was fierce. His whole body was astonished, most of all the inoffensive nipple he'd never noticed or appreciated until, in spite of the pain, it served to gain him peace. (6)

The "cognitive frame" which we draw upon in our act of interpreting Scranton's Roy's relationship with this newborn baby is that of "motherhood." The narrator supplies the reader with realistic evidences and descriptions so that the reader can reconstruct the relationship between Scranton Roy and the new-born baby in the semantic frame of "mothering" of which nurturing and comforting are among its thematic features and breastfeeding and lactating are among its physical ones. For indeed, the narrator furnishes the reader with particular details that can only apply to an individual who is secreting milk and suckling a young. "Smearing grease"(6) on sore nipples can be associated to rubbing lanolin on nipples to subside the experience of irritation and discomfort. Making a "sling"(7) in the shirt can be associated with mother's wearing special nursing bras and nursing blouses so that breastfeeding will not become a tedious errand of taking off and putting on clothes. Falling asleep with "the baby tucked beside him"(6) is a common scene experienced by most mothers whose babies love to be nursed to sleep. These elements do not advance the plot or add to characterization, but simply provide an atmosphere of reality that will authenticate the forthcoming marvelous episode. Such coherent sequencing of events and their factual contents, drive reader's expectations gradually and subtly towards the resolution of the action rather than its

agent. All of these realistic details also remind us that they are deliberate lexical choices that are employed by the writer in order to activate the "mother" script.<sup>23</sup> Because we activate the "mother" script when we come across the breastfeeding scene of Scranton Roy and the Indian baby, we comprehend them not in their actual existence, as a soldier and an Indian child, but in their situation roles as a mother and a hungry newborn. As a result, all the actions of Scranton Roy, his breastfeeding the baby, singing lullabies, trying to comfort him with his scent are framed in the semantic field of "nurturing" thus, enabling the reader to disregard the "actant's" gender. In turn, the reader does not question the plausibility of such a "supernatural" event. While the reader realizes such a phenomena is logically impossible, he accepts its integration within the fictitious world of the novel.

### **3.1.2 The Girl and Her Deer Husband**

The chapter entitled "The Girl and Her Deer Husband" starts out as Cally's personal narrative in which she tells the reader about her "deer mother," her "deer great-grandmother" and their "deer lovers." Even though we are introduced to Cally in the previous chapters, this is the first time that we come across her as a narrator. Cally belongs to the fifth and the youngest generation of survivors of the Ojibway "massacre" and she and her twin sister Deanna are the daughters of Rozina Roy Whiteheart Beads who is also a twin descending from a twin mother, Zosie Shawano Roy.

Cally's narrative consists of nine different stories which fluctuate between the past and the present, the narrator and the "narrated." The transition from one story to the other is illustrated by roman numerals so that the reader can recognize the shift in narration. However, such a stylistic clue is not enough to disentangle the intertwined and multifaceted points of view that beset the reader from the beginning to the end of the chapter. Even though Erdrich distinguishes the chapter as Cally's personal narrative, it is very difficult for the reader to identify when and where Cally is speaking because Cally either uses the pronoun "we" referring to herself and her twin sister or her "I" narration quickly dissolves into the voice of a anonymous storyteller.

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<sup>23</sup> A script is defined by Schank & Abelson as "a predetermined, stereotyped sequence of actions that define a well-known situation"(1977: 41).

All nine stories in this chapter whether they be supernatural occurrences or not serve as essential stages in either the construction and maintenance or loss and bereavement of love. The first story focalizes on Cally's mother Rozin as the elicitor of a forbidden and secret love affair. A routine walk in the city park by a father and his twin children becomes a turning point when they catch their mother in the arms of another man. In the second story, Cally, the "I-speaking-now" narrator of this surprising event steps out of the story world and leaves her place to a third-person omniscient narrator who describes the love-making act itself which takes place between a woman (which we assume to be Rozin) and her lover who is metaphorically described as part deer, part human (whom we assume to be Frank). However, when in the subsequent stories the legendary love tale lived between Cally's great great grand-mother, Blue Prairie Woman, and her deer lover is revealed, this brief but poetic narrative can be easily read as the miraculous consummation that has taken place long ago between this legendary character and her deer companion. This supernatural love that has prevailed between these two lovers and its tragic outcome becomes the subject of the fourth and sixth stories. In the eighth story, a third-person omniscient narrator narrates how Rozin's marriage lacks the sustained and authentic intimacy of a caring and loving relationship. Richard from Rozin's perspective is portrayed as an insensitive and arrogant husband who with his "deep-clawed"(58) and "hungry"(58) love has a crippling effect on everything he touches. The reader gets a glimpse on how love happens to be damaging when it ceases to be constructive and affirmative in the hands of possessive lovers. In short, all throughout the chapter, a constant shift in focalization together with a continual modulation of narrative voice, enables the reader to perceive "love" in different forms and various ways. Each story allows for a specific presentation of the "love" theme integrating the historical time with the immediate, the first-person with the omniscient. The fragmented chronology, ellipsis in plot and leaps in time all serve as magical realist devices that fuse the real with the supernatural, the historical with the contemporary, the written with the oral.

Erdrich uses the supernatural to create those moments of true love and enrichment that give peoples' lives meaning. The manner in which the narrator describes the genuine love shared between Blue Prairie Woman and the "deer" enables the reader to feel empathy towards both characters and their effort to

protect and treasure something very valuable. In spite of the fact that such a phenomena as a deer lover is not plausible by western standards of verisimilitude, Erdrich successfully creates a coherent worldview by framing it in the schemata of universal love. It is the capturing of such a genuine and profound love that brings the marvelous into the novel's setting:

And then she was joined out in the woods.

As her own mother tells it, and she would know, Apijigo was cooking a fine pot of stew when a deer approached, stood by the edge of the camp. Just waiting. Aijipgo thought, Should I eat him or should I share with him? Which? She picked up her killing hatchet but when she finally advanced toward the deer and looked him in the eye, she felt ashamed. . .

. . . .

He loves me, she thought. He loves me and I love him back. Right down to the ground. Who he is. No different. Of course, too bad that he's a deer. Still, she made a bed out of young hemlock branches and curled against his short, stiff pelt. She began to live with him, stayed with him in the woods, and traveled with him on into the open spaces. Became beloved by his family, too. Got so that she knew how to call the hooved ones toward her. (56).

The reader cannot dismiss the above statements as the hallucination of a love-stricken woman since her relationship with the extraordinary deer is clearly described by a third-person narrator. Because the narrator does not invalidate the authenticity of the phenomena, the reader enters into a clearly defined and unambiguous 'contract' with the author. In this 'contract' the reader's role is to participate in the actualization of the supernatural without questioning it. By placing supernatural events on the same level as ordinary occurrences and by fusing the two levels with a third-person omniscient narrator, Erdrich integrates the supernatural very subtly into the code of the natural.

Besides the use of a third-person omniscient narration, Erdrich draws on other linguistic devices to "naturalize" the supernatural. For example, by singling out the phrase "And then she was joined out in the woods" from the preceding paragraph, Erdrich uses it as a topic marker that helps to develop the common theme of the following paragraphs. The sentence is written in the passive voice and draws attention not to the agent but to the action that is performed. Neither the deer nor the woman is the subject of focalization. What is foregrounded is the act of "joining" somebody else, connecting to someone whether physically or emotionally.

In other words, Erdrich manipulates the syntax of the sentence deliberately so that such a supernatural phenomena as a deer lover can remain in the background of the reader's consciousness while at the same time a smooth transition to the theme of love can be facilitated. In the further paragraphs, we see Erdrich developing this theme by providing the reader with particular details that activate the schema of a loving relationship: "Curling against" or cuddling up with your lover, introducing him/her to your family and being "beloved by his family" and sharing time together by "traveling" into "open spaces" can all be considered as predetermined, stereotyped sequence of actions that distinguish the stages of courtship. In return, the reader does not question the plausibility of a deer lover since all the other details fit in so neatly to the context of courtship and romance. It is not important whether the object of love is an animal or a human being as long as s/he performs the role of the true lover whose companionship and support brings fulfillment and reassurance. By activating the schemata of romance and courtship, Erdrich asks the reader to comprehend this extraordinary tale in terms of a very well known situation –that of unrequited love.

Apart from these, the circumstances that have established a suitable background for the eruption of such an intense love also play a significant role in preparing the reader for the inexplicable. The reader learns that the former name given to Cally's great great grandmother was Apijigo Bakaday (So Hungry) due to her never-ending appetite that compelled her to devour every victual that she lay her eyes upon. Her constant hunger that could never be fulfilled, let people to think that she was a windigo. It was this yearning to feel complete, to feel "full" that propelled her to wander into the depths of the woods where she verged upon a deer whose "eyes were steady and warm with a deep black light"(56) and whose "heart shone right out of his eyes"(56). It is this spark of genuine love that she comes across in the deer's eyes that ends the physical hunger that had assaulted her. Erdrich makes it very obvious that the issue here is not whether a deer can love a human being but the spiritual satisfaction and oneness that emerge when one finds his/her soul-mate. So Hungry's ceaseless craving for food is satisfied when she is captured in the seamless web of love:

. . . She ate the whole stew, mopped up every trace of it with bannock, pikwayzhigun, then sat quietly looking at him, crescent of horns, waiting. Unafraid. She had this feeling. Full. So this was what

other people felt. She looked over the deer. His eyes were steady and warm with a deep black light. His heart shone right out of his eyes. (56)

In Cally's narrative, the affair between Cally's mother Rozin and her illicit lover Frank is narrated to the reader as the modern version of this legendary love story that took place between So Hungry and the deer. The intense love and yearning that has occurred between Cally's great great grandmother and her deer lover resurfaces in the present moment between Cally's mother and her lover Frank. In a way, the mythic and legendary becomes an actual presence in contemporary life. The opening story sets the time when Cally, her twin sister Deanna and their father Richard Whiteheart Beads first spot their mother, Rozin, with Frank whose appearance suddenly summons up for Cally the spirit of the legendary deer lover. Cally describes Frank as having a "deer head on his shoulders" and having "hooves" which "[strike] flames from the tree roots"(53-4) and highlights his sweeping impact on their mother whose radiance and happiness can be detected from miles away. Even though the story of Rozin and the story of So Hungry are separated by time and context, they share a common ground due to the fact that they expose love as the basic human feeling that unites all human life into a mythic whole. All characters, whether it be a human or an animal, carry significance only as potential lovers whose love transcends person, time and place. The universality of their characters is clearly emphasized in the second story when the narrator chooses to address the actants not by their proper names but by pronouns obscuring their identity. The second story immediately starts with the pronouns "he" and "she," and the reader is not supplied with any contextual clues except a very vague description of the male lover that can stand as fact or allegory. In other words, there is no linguistic expression that can be treated as the direct antecedent for both pronouns. Thus, the lovemaking act in the second story can easily be read as an act that has taken place in the remote past between So Hungry and her deer lover or in the present time zone between Rozin and Frank. Moreover, Erdrich's poetic discourse also contributes to the fusion between the past, the present and the future and substitutes a timeless and preeminently an "oral" mode of organization. With its ambivalent time structure and indistinguishable protagonists and its highly elaborated and poetic language, the story becomes a lyrical fusion of myth and reality:

## II

When he knelt over her, she saw the kind hunger in his eyes. Moody grays and yellows. A haunting of bees. His hands were callused in touching her. He had shaken off his winter coat and the dun patches lay all around them in strips and singleton hairs. Magnetic warmth. Riches of gentle trusting sleep. Making love, their hearts were sunk deep in earth and yet alert to the strangeness of who we are as human animals, as people reaching desperately through the wounds and synchronicities, as furtive unfortunates half drunk on the message of our mortality.

*Drink from the clear stream. Drink slow. Drink deep. For when you reach the other side, you will forget you ever dreamed this beautiful life.* [italics are not mine] (54-5)

The sentence that begins with love making and concludes with an authorial commentary that carries spiritual nuances, dissolves the sharp distinction between the physical and the eternal, the matter and the spirit, that has been the origin of Western polarized thinking since Manicheanism. In this sentence we not only come across the heart, the selfless love united with the great spirit, the mother-earth, but also the mind, who is "alert" to the fact that he can only coexist as "human animals," as mind and body. In addition to this, the italicized statements in the end of the story that emphasize eternal life abolish profane, chronological time and recover the sacred time of myth. As a result, "lovemaking" is associated to spiritual growth and such a correlation highlights the fact that the "love" schema which Erdrich brings on to the text has a two-fold dimension. It should not only be perceived within the frame of romantic love that fosters intimacy, devotion and sensual satisfaction between two lovers, but also within the frame of spiritual love in which the souls transcend conventional time and space and "s[i]nk deep"(54) into mother-earth, the great spirit. In this respect, lovemaking becomes more like a ritual in which its participants, whether it be a deer or a human, have significance only as souls who experience a spiritual cosmic relatedness.

This slippage from the individual to the collective to the cosmic causes the reader to evaluate the stories from a mystical point of view linking it to Native-American traditions and beliefs. For only when the reader scaffolds meaning appropriate to the synchronized Native-American religious worldview and associate love to an all-inclusive reality that celebrates the harmony and synchronicity between inner and outer worlds, will s/he be able to partake in the construction of the text's reality. The Native-Americans believe that matter and spirit, the immediate

and the transcendent are equally present in the world and that their simultaneous existence are not coincidental but are meaningfully related. For the psyche to be healthy and whole and not "half drunk"(56) it must build a bridge between the physical and the spiritual for it is only in this way that love or any human disposition can gain a significance. It is also only in this way that the dangers of polarization can be prevented and the individual can move beyond the polarity of good/bad, dark/light, life/death, beginning/end, human/animal and view all things as interrelated. As one Native-American remarks, the universe, "is a Universe of energies, of vibrations, of webs of relationships, of currents and flows and cycles, of rapture rather than a Universe of things and objects."

Once the reader employs this schema of "interconnectedness" into his/her reading process, the issue of love will gain a broader significance for it will become a prototype of all human feelings and all human actions that carry in themselves their complementary opposites. Like the profane which also carries in itself the sacred, like the present which also carries in itself the past, like the human which also carries in itself the animal, love carries in itself its "split cotyledon" (59) which is hate. In this respect, love should be regarded not only as a feeling that brings value, meaning and enrichment to people's lives but also misery, grief and pain. Interestingly enough, in this chapter, Erdrich not only portrays the union of "hearts," but also their separation. The fifth story is an inquiry about human pain when Rozin's grandmother contemplates about the "misery love causes"(56), the seventh story indicates So Hungry's grief and distress when her deer-lover, "her man"(57) is killed by "three arrows and one bullet" and the eighth story is about how love turns into self-destruction when it is driven by the right to possess, restrain and bind. Richard, Rozin's husband is compared to a killer bee who first "searches for the honey"(58) and then "st[i]ng[s]" Rozin "with his lips"(58).

In other words, the schema of interrelatedness entails with it the schema of complementary oppositions. It is only when the individual realizes that the nature of existence is one of interconnectedness, in which dualities are not binding but are coexisting, can s/he live in complete harmony with the outside world. However, the central problem of the human condition actually stems from the inability to accept these polarities as complementary forces. In the chapter's last story, Cally becomes the truth-seeker who voices this human dilemma and draws attention to the nature

of existence in which everything is manifested around two opposing yet complementary principles:

All of our actions have in their doing the seed of their undoing. So with my mother's heart. And I marvel: That it should be a heart of rag wool knit and unknit by one same needle. That it should be a cloth first woven and then unraveled by its loomed strength. That in her creation of her children there should be the unspeakable promise of their death, for by their birth she had created mortal beings. That in her love there should be failure to love. That in the sudden hatred she developed toward our father there should be the split cotyledon, the tongue, the trembling shoot of a sunless white passion. (59)

Cally's chapter which ends with such thought provoking statements that stress the creation of existence and balance, compels the western reader to reconsider the function of polarity and reevaluate his/her system of classification based on binary oppositions. Birth and death, love and hate, destructive and creative energies are projected as two aspects of the same coin, "knit and unknit by one same needle." In this sense, the text becomes highly ideological for it challenges the hegemonic organization of the western social world that has ignored the complementary aspect of all dualities and has insisted on an either/or representation of the world. In place of a western thought structure that sees conflict and opposition as the natural paradigm for all human behavior, we come across an all-embracing reality based on reconciliation and harmony.

The cognitive frame that provides the thematic organization of Cally's chapter is that of "love." The romantic love that exists in the first story between Rozin and Frank is transformed in the second story into an archetypal love that unites all entities, animal or human. The following stories depict different love scenarios, expanding our conceptual understanding of love by integrating its binary opposition which is hate, misery and destruction. At the end of the chapter, Erdrich asks us to contemplate not only on love but on all human dispositions which coexist with their binaries and requires that the reader view the world from a non-western perspective, outside the system of differential oppositions. For in such a worldview where social relationships, events and phenomena are not perceived in hierarchical and dualistic terms, the fact whether an animal such as a deer can be a lover or not will also lose its importance.

These subtle and smooth transitions in which love ceases to denote its initial meaning brings to mind immediately Barthe's discussion of "mythology" in which he elaborates on mythical signifiers as having a "second-order semiological system" based on a "first-order" system of denotation:

But myth is a peculiar system, in that it is constructed from a semiological chain which existed before it: *it is a second-order semiological system*. That which is a sign (namely the associative total of a concept and an image) in the first system, becomes a mere signifier in the second"(3). . . . myth wants to see in them only a sum of signs, a global sign, the final term of a semiological chain. And it is precisely this final term which will become the first term of the greater system which it builds and of which it is only a part. (1972:3)

Barthes asserts that there are two semiological systems in a relationship, the first a linguistic system and the second a mythic (ideological) system produced by it. At the end of the chapter "The Girl and Her Deer Lover" the concept of love transgresses from its familiar semantic domain (that of romance and courtship) and by virtue of the various connotations immediately linked to it such as receptiveness, harmony, unity, wholeness, it is used by Erdrich as an ideological sign that can serve not only to naturalize the supernatural but also to produce a system of higher-order significations in which Native-American "mythologies" will prevail. Nevertheless, a transition from a primary signification system to a higher-order ideological system will also entail the employment of a culture-based schema. It is for this reason that the "love schema," the cognitive frame used by Erdrich to substantiate the supernatural occurrences, is later on replaced by a more comprehensive schema—that of "interrelatedness." As a result, when the reader reaches the very last sentences of the story, s/he finds his/herself trying to interpret the chain of events and prevailing concepts in relation to Native-American belief system of undifferentiated wholeness. From two lovers experiencing the wholeness of feeling one, we move to an organic worldview that identifies people, events and actions as the parts of an ultimate whole.

By incorporating Native-American cultural knowledge and beliefs that emphasize an undifferentiated wholeness of life, and by showing its validity and importance through the schema of love, Erdrich successfully subverts hegemonic paradigms that have reinforced polarities, oppositions and hierarchies. Thus, the love schema not only functions as a cognitive concept related to a particular human

behavior but also has an ideological sign that conveys operative ideas and values in Native-American culture. In short, through the utilization of such a comprehensive framework as love, Erdrich is able to fuse the real with the supernatural, the sacred with the mundane, the personal with the political.

### **3.1.3 Almost Soup**

The two marvelous chapters I have dealt so far do not openly deal with Native Ojibway worldview in which magic is an intrinsic part of the real, nevertheless, by presenting magical occurrences within universally shared schemas such as motherhood and love they succeed in constructing a cognitive plane where the "real" and the "magic" can coexist. In the latter chapter, "Almost Soup," Erdrich goes one step further and not only portrays the magic as "perfectly normal" but also conveys explicit information concerning the beliefs, myths and wisdom that play a vital role in its making. By familiarizing the western reader with Native-American legends, myths and ways of thinking, Erdrich is able to quicken the sense-making activity of the reader and thus facilitate the decoding of signifiers that presents problems to him/her. In other words, Erdrich implies that reading is itself a "highly politicized and culturally circumscribed act" and that readers cannot " 'read' other cultures or decode their texts without first, . . . , learning new ways of seeing, new ideas and information, and new habits of interpretation" (Rainwater, 1999, 13). Consequently, one of the functions of this chapter is to clarify notions and viewpoints alien to the empirical value system of the western world and help the reader to "realize" that there can be a very different world besides his/her own.

This brings to mind the fact that "knowledge," whether scientific or ideological, is the production of a practice and not the reflection of the "real." Knowledge has to be represented in speech and language to acquire meaning. (Hall 1985). Erdrich chooses a dog character whose storytelling will be a good example of Native-American worldview that views all categories of experience as interrelated not differentiating between the human and animal realm. This magical talking dog becomes our indirect access to the world of Native-American thought that supports a cosmic relationship between the humans and other species of the natural universe. For in fact, upon a closer reading, we will realize that this character has no role in the formation of the plot or in the logical correlation of sequences.

Nevertheless, he plays a very crucial role in the thematic structure of the novel. This dog narrator not only fills the slot of the commentator who will pass on to the western reader, the communal beliefs, myths and legends of the Ojibway people but also acts as a vital source of guidance for Native-Americans as well. In between the lines, his stories pinpoint survival strategies and offer solutions to Native-Americans on how to live in 20<sup>th</sup> century modern America without renouncing one's heritage, tradition and history. On one hand with his down-right, humorous and witty dialogue this dog character represents the cunning modern trickster who will do anything to survive. On the other hand with his strong reverence to his familial and ancestral ties combined with his vast span of knowledge he represents the "wise old man" who will pass on to the future generations the insight, wisdom, cleverness and intuition necessary to survive in a world of encroaching white values. As the dog narrator himself indicates, his name has given "so many of our breedless breed hope" and it will "live on . . . through the generations"(79).

The dog's two names "Almost Soup" and "Windigo Dog" demonstrate the two-fold character attributed to his personality. While his down-to-earth and practical wit is highlighted by his worldly name "Almost Soup," his vast ancestral knowledge and spiritual powers are distinguished by his non-western name "Windigo Dog." The name Almost Soup is given to him by Cally when he is a little pup and serves as a reminiscence of the day when he is inches away from being made into dog soup. As a matter of fact, it is Almost Soup's own dog wit and strong determination to live that makes him exceptional and clever enough not to wind up in the stewpot like most reservation puppies:

A puppy has just one weapon, and there really is no word for it but puppyiness. Stuck in that bag I muster all my puppyiness. . . . The bag loosens and a grandma draws me forth and just quick, because I'm smart, desperate, and connected with my ancestors, I look for the nearest child in the bunch around me. I spot her. I pick her out. . . . Now it's time for me to wiggle, all over, to give the high-quotient adorability wiggle all puppies know. This is life or death. I do it double time, triple time, full of puppy determination, desperate to live. (78).

Almost Soup throws his most charming "puppy grin," "tail wags" and "love licks" -the only "weapons" that a dog owns in a world dominated by humans, and is able to save his life. When he faces the threat of being eaten by human beings, he demonstrates his will to survive at its foremost and does his best to win the heart of

a little girl who is the only one that can rescue him from the "ancient dog-cooking fingers"(78). "Desperate to live" he displays practical wisdom, quick decision-making and self-determination and is able to make it in the harsh and relentless world of the human beings. His quick decision-making and self-centered actions are traits that can be easily applied to any individual living in the 20<sup>th</sup> century metropolitan America. Almost Soup's common sense has taught him to act by the rule of thumb and to avoid anything that can be a potential threat to a dog's life. This ranges from the "deadly wheels of reservation cars"(79) to "poisons, powwows, bats, snakes, and medicine men"(79). He has also learned the do's and don'ts of the human world and has managed to survive to his "tranquil old age." His survival list is a long one filled with valuable advice and serves as a basic manual for any dog who wants to adapt and endure the rapid changes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century:

. . . Do not sleep under cars. Or with horses. Do not eat anything attached to a skinny, burning string. Do not eat lard from a table. Do not go into the house at all unless no one is watching. Do not, unless you are absolutely certain you can blame it on a cat, eat any of their chickens. Do not eat pies. Do not eat decks of cards, plastic jugs, dry beans, dish sponges. If you must eat a shoe, eat both of the pair, every scrap, untraceable. . . . Don't forget to leave in return a polite and respectful hello. You never know when it will become handy, your contact, your friend. You never know whom you will need to rely on. (80)

Fundamental to the insights and wisdoms that Windigo Dog gives, is a vivid portrayal of the world as highly structured. By knowing the do's and don'ts of the "other" culture, the human, Almost Soup can master his own destiny by defining and categorizing the spaces in which he can or cannot move. His experience with the complexities of life has shown him the things he must stay away from, abide or immediately act upon. He will use every tool available to him, whether it be the tools of contemporary American culture or the tools of his traditional ancestors. The experience of almost becoming a soup has taught him valuable lessons concerning the trials and tribulations of life. He has realized that to maintain a separate social self unaffected by the existing hegemonic order is impossible. For him the hegemonic structure is the one built by humans, for Native-Americans it is the one constructed by the whites. As Almost Soup himself indicates, every pure white dog has two options: They will either "end up puppy soup,"(75) in other words face obliteration or survive through "dog magic" or "dog wit."

Almost Soup's life experience has become a sort of ordeal where he has undergone numerous survival tests; nevertheless, it is evident that he still can envision a world beyond this highly rationalized and structured human world. For as the story progresses we see that Almost Soup's egocentricity, which also defines western existence, gives way to the Indian spirit of collaboration and connectedness. His potential to experience the state of relatedness and connectedness lies in his ability to stay in tact with his ancestral and familial ties. Apart from his pragmatic and cunning nature which is very suitable to our present-day circumstances, Almost Soup also relies heavily on the vision and guidance of his ancestors: "I call my tail wags and love licks up from *deep way back*, from the *dogs going back unto the beginning of our association* with these strange exasperating things called humans"(77). Almost Soup indicates that he owes his life to his "age-old Original Dog puppyness" (78) and in a way emphasizes the reaffirmation of ancestral traditions and beliefs and their maintenance as a requisition for survival. It is his being "connected with his ancestors,"(77) his lineage that has protected him from the evils of the world.

Besides Almost Soup's own words, his other name "Windigo Dog" is also another textual clue that emphasizes survival and continuance as contingent on the presence of tribal understanding and communal ties. His name designates an Ojibway archetypal figure, the windigo, who still has an important influence upon the lives of Native-Americans. The windigo is said to be a man-eating monster famous for its never ceasing hunger. However, in this chapter, the name Windigo Dog rather than connoting its anticipated meaning which is a devouring evil spirit, actually implies the breed of dogs who "bound to the human" carry the responsibility of keeping them away from all dangers including the windigos. The dog narrator describes his dog relatives and friends as the guardian angels who have sacrificed their own lives in order to protect human beings from their own follies:

My friends and relatives, we have walked down the prayer road clearing the way for humans since before time started. We have gone ahead of them to present their good points to the gatekeeper at that soft pasture where they eat all day and gamble the night away.. Don't forget, though, in heaven we still just get the bones they toss. We have kept our humans company in darkest hours. Saved them from starvation -you know how. We have talked to their godson their behalf and thrown ourselves in front of their wheels to save them from idiotic journey's, to the bootlegger's, say. (81)

However, Almost Soup's transformation to a constructive windigo dog does not happen easily. For a long period Almost Soup resists to help anybody but himself. However, when Cally who has saved his life and loves him "up their with her human loves"(81) gets sick and suffers convulsions, Almost Soup's selfishness and egocentricity gives way to an ardent desire to take care, protect and save this "sweet child of [his]"(84). He becomes Cally's windigo dog, her guardian spirit and saves her life by partaking in a magic-realistic event. When Cally is taken to the hospital, Windigo Dog puts back Cally's "life inside her again"(90), the life that he had taken inside him to "keep it safe"(90).

As a result we can say that there is not **one** but **two** stories of survival. The first story of survival takes place in the "prairie" and it results with the dog taking on the name "Almost Soup." The second story takes place on the "reservation" and it results in "giving up" that name to save someone else's life. Almost Soup "gives" his name "up" in behalf of Cally's life and earns the name "Windigo dog" for by dedicating himself to a "human," he "walks alongside" his ancestors and acts out his hereditary responsibility. However, this transformation is not a total renunciation of the material self. For in the next chapter, we see the reappearance of Almost Soup as the narrator of that chapter which indicates that both "selves" have an important role in the bearing of his identity; the spiritual and collective conscience of the "Windigo Dog" and the blood and flesh individuated self of "Almost Soup."

In a way, a talking dog and his storytelling becomes our passageway to the mythic landscape of the Ojibwa Indians. However, it is ironic that Erdrich lays such an important responsibility on the shoulders of a dog character whose verbal ability to communicate is itself a marvelous occurrence and has the risk of complicating the reading process rather than facilitating it. For by having a dog speak to us, Erdrich makes the interpenetration of the magic and the real no longer metaphorical but literal. And if we assume that the western reader will correspond to the text's given reality with his/her own empirical way of thinking, wouldn't a talking dog conveying information about the history, values and beliefs of his own breed seem "fantastic" and "improbable"? However, when we finish reading the chapter, we are not startled and imbued with wonder, on the contrary what we read not only seems realistic but also illuminating and striking. Then there are two questions we need to ask. The first

one is why has Erdrich chosen this dog character amid all the human characters in the novel as the orator of Native-American beliefs? And what narrative strategies does she use to initiate the naturalization process so that the reader does not question the “supernatural” component inherent in such a phenomenon as a talking dog?

I believe that the answer for the first question is that this dog narrator who is encoded with both Indian and western characteristics also becomes a key to understanding the magical realist discourse of identity. For by personifying a dog, Erdrich in a way has given a “body” and a “mouth” to magical realism and literally illustrates how the magic and the real can co-exist in the same “body.” First, by choosing an animal narrator and naming him a “windigo,” the ghost of starvation, Erdrich very tacitly implements into the reading process the Native-American attitudes and practices involving the world as the habitation of both the living and the dead, the human and the animal. Second, by dressing this mythic character with 20<sup>th</sup> century cosmopolitan garments, Erdrich is able to portray it as acceptable and non-threatening to the world of reason. She makes a dog and his mythic powers as well as the socially constructed nexus of western denominators mutual participants in the construction of a magic realistic worldview. In the previous two chapters, it had been stated that uncanny or supernatural events were made intelligible by reference to the concepts of “love” and “nurturing.” However, in this chapter, we see that rather than a specific event, it is the character and its act of narration that is “marvelous.” Hence, the cognitive frame that naturalizes supernatural elements is not a particular concept or event, but the discursive formulation of the narration. Thus, what I will focus on will not be a certain magic-realist event, but the entire “discourse world” that is constructed through this dog’s storytelling. I will especially scrutinize the discursive practices and cognitive frames that are manipulated by the writer, not only to illustrate how the process of naturalization occurs during the reading process making the “supernatural” (in this case a talking dog) seem intelligible but also to reveal the ideological rationale lying behind the creation of such a marvelous real character.

For Brown and Yule, discourse models or discourse representations are particular pieces of discourse that reflect a particular way of seeing the world, “. . . , in paying attention to a particular piece of discourse, as a sample of experience of

the world, the individual may build a specific representation of this particular experience of the world which, of course, will be integrated, to a degree, within his more general representations of the world. This specific representation, or model, arising from a particular discourse, we can characterize as the individual's discourse representation"(1983: 206). In a discourse representation, a particular perspective is mediated to the addressee and during this mediation "staging," a metaphor introduced by Grimes, plays a very crucial role: "Every clause, sentence, paragraph, episode, and discourse is organized around a particular element that is taken as its point of departure (Grimes, 1975: 323). Because linear organization is the "heart" of the staging process (Grimes, 1975:323 ; Brown &Yule, 1983: 134), what the narrator puts first in his narrative story will influence the interpretation of everything that follows it. Brown & Yule underline the pivotal position that the title, the first sentence and the first paragraph carry in constraining the interpretation of the whole text (1983:133-34). Successively, I will try to demonstrate how, the title, the first sentence and the first paragraph function in constituting an overall "discourse model" that advocates the coexistence of the magic and the real. And in respect, how this "discourse model" serves as a narrative strategy that functions to naturalize the supernatural by having the reader actively participate in the actualization of the supernatural occurrence itself.

The eighth chapter with its twofold title, "Almost Soup" and "Windigo Dog," highlights the importance of this dog character in the overall thematic structure of the novel.<sup>24</sup> The initial title, "Almost Soup", connotes a narrow escape from death, a survival impulse and "Windigo Dog" which is the sub-title of the chapter, stands for an Ojibway archetypal ghost figure. Both titles serve as guiding norms in the comprehension of the "discourse model" that will be conveyed to the reader throughout this chapter. As a matter of fact, when we begin reading this chapter, we realize that the narrator of the chapter also becomes its subject matter; for a windigo dog, tells the reader of how he has acquired his earthly name, Almost Soup and what this implies is that the "focalizer" and the "object of focalization" is the same single character. However, what is more interesting is that because the "narrator" is specified by the writer as Windigo Dog (all throughout the book, Erdrich uses sub-

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<sup>24</sup> Most of the chapters in *The Antelope Wife* have two titles: the first written in bold and big letters refers to the theme or the subject matter that the chapter will revolve around, and the second title written in smaller letters usually identifies the narrator of the chapter.

titles as linguistic indicators of narrators' identities) we assume that it is Windigo Dog who is reflecting, reorganizing and deciding upon the points of focalization. Nevertheless, in the act of narration, the "I" never refers to himself as Windigo Dog. It is "Almost Soup" which is foregrounded as the speaker to whom the reader should attribute the spoken words to. As a result, Erdrich by attributing two different names to this dog character ascribes the point of view through which the story is oriented, the "narrative mood"(Genette, 1980: 186) to Windigo dog and ascribes the identity of the voice that is verbalizing that point of view, the "narrative voice"(Genette, 1980: 186) to "Almost Soup" and makes the reader aware of the fact that "in first-person narration the grammatical "I" is a linguistic mark of two subjectivities: That of the narrating-I and that of the experiencing I"(Fleischmann, 1990: 219).

What this implies is that the "I" of the narrator begins to carry a dual voice, the "I" of the Windigo Dog and the "I of Almost Soup, and when used simultaneously they bring a spiritual and mythic dimension to the narrator's down-to-earth and contemporary existence. The narrating "I" is a "Windigo dog," the spiritual self that represents the collective unconscious, the "we" that often intrudes in the story and whose comments are pertinent to a "group history" and a "group identity" and the "experiencing-I" is the white Indian dog, who has experienced the trauma of being "almost soup" and who has realized that the "spaces" that he can inhabit are determined by an already existing hegemonic order. While the former's remarks provide a context for interpreting Indian cultural frames which the western reader is not familiar with, the latter with his survival instincts, self-determination and practical wisdom is more like a verbal or visual icon drawn from the dominant culture. However, due to the constant shift in tenses from the past to the present to the historical present and the frequent switch of referential pronouns, from the "I" to the "we", it is very hard to differentiate between these two voices:

I was underneath the house one hot slow day panting in the dirt. I was a young thing. Just chubby, too, and like I said white all over. That worried my mother. Every morning she scratched dirt on me, threw me in the mud, rolled me in garbage to disguise my purity.

.....

Like I say, born pure white you usually don't stand a chance, but me, I took my mama's advice. After all, I was the son of a blend of dogs . . . We sprang up here. . . We know who we are. Us, we are descended of Original Dog. . .

I think about her lots, and also about my ancestor, from way way back, the dog named Sorrow who drank a human's milk. . .

I hear these words –Get under the house, Melvin, fetch that white puppy now. Bam! My mama throws me in the farthest house corner and sits down on me. I cover up with her but once Melvin is in play I can't help it. . . . I peek around my mother's tail and whoops, he' got me. He drags me out and gives me to grandma, who stuffs me in a gunnysack and slings me down beside the fire. (76)

If one does not do a very close reading of the text, it will be very difficult to understand when the extradiegetic world of the narrating-I (sender) stops and when the diegetic world of the experiencing-I (subject) begins. For the voice that speaks to us belongs to both the "I" who intrudes in the story to make comments on his ancestral heritage, his mythical past, and the "I" who "experiences" his own story first in the material world of the immediate now. The intermingling of these two voices convey to the reader a "storytelling" that resides between the two worlds of the spiritual and the material. As a result, the dual voice of the linguistic-I is used by Louise Erdrich as an ideological strategy for fusing myth with reality since these two "voices" used interchangeably designate not only a unification of focalizer and speaker, but also the unification of the magical and the real in one single entity. They mediate to the reader a specific representation of the world; a representation that embraces both the real and the unreal, the physical and the spiritual. Therefore, they can address western and non-western readers alike and become familiar icons that both Native-American and western readers can distinguish. In other words, the "discursive site" inherent in *The Antelope Wife* becomes a good example of contemporary American narrative that "incorporates ethnic signs and nonwestern worldviews, yet achieves its full meaning under social and textual conditions defined within the dominant culture"(Rainwater, 1999: 10).

The opening statements of the chapter, "You will end up puppy soup if you're born a pure white dog on the reservation, unless you're one who is extra clever, like me. I survived through my old age through dog magic," establishes the thematic unity which will run through Windigo Dog's storytelling: everything that Windigo Dog recounts contributes to the theme of "survival" and the resources that are required for its subsistence. This theme is embodied already in the very title – Almost Soup that indicates a close call to becoming a soup, a liquefying in a stewpot, a narrow escape from death. In fact this title along with the opening phrase "You will end up puppy soup" which connotes a "melting," a "disintegrating" into something to be consumed can be also read as an open criticism to the enduring

power of the melting pot myth. Crèvecoeur's metaphoric description of America as a place where ". . . individuals of all nations are melted into a race of men" is in a very ironic way rephrased by Louise Erdrich as "boiling" down to "soup"(76). Erdrich with her new metaphor "Almost Soup" shows how this western frame of reference, this cultural myth, has turned into a masking of racial and ethnic superiority where marginal groups are expected to "boil" into conformity with the dominating culture. However, what is more interesting is that by choosing a non-human and "pure white" character as the "dominated" subject and by placing him in a reservation camp, Erdrich offers a semiotic refiguration of power relations. By showing the quality of "pure whiteness" as a cause of extinction, Erdrich eradicates western myths of "racial purity" that generate a hegemonic order consistent with the "natural supremacy" of white Anglo-Americans. In other words, "pure whiteness" can be read as an ironic subversion of "race consciousness" that has prevailed in the United States as a key determinant in conceiving "people of colors" as social constructs that has to be subjugated into the dominant white system.

An Indian white dog subverts western dominant discourse that perceives social relations, events and phenomena in hierarchical and dualistic terms. Rather than being caught up in binaries, we have a dog character that embraces both the white and the Indian, the human and the animal. His survival strategies are for anyone who does not want to be completely disintegrated in the prevailing social and cultural institutions of the dominating class. The white as well as the Indian, the animal as well as the human, the speaker as well as the listener can all be subjugated into this hegemonic system. The important thing is not to be "simmered" in this hegemonic stewpot and end up as one of its many appetizing ingredients. This "survival impulse" can also be seen as a semantic frame that enables the reader to disregard the narrator's identity. In such a conceptual framework, it is not important whether the narrator is a dog or a human, as long as he fills in the slot of the "survivor" from whose knowledge and experience others will benefit.

If we reduce the characters to the roles they perform and see them as "actants" who perform a specific function, then Greimas (1975) linguistic model that divides character roles into three general categories -sender/receiver, subject/object, helper/opponent, will be helpful in understanding more precisely how the narrator fills the slot of the survivor. For when we apply Greimas model to the

opening paragraph of this chapter, we can scrutinize the ideological rationale underlying Windigo dog's discourse world which prompts us to view "Windigo Dog" as a "survivor" and his "knowledge," the blending of magic and wit, as a valuable commodity that will enable not only the acknowledgement of differences found between native and western cultures, but also the building of alliances and connections among them. The first paragraph is as follows:

### WINDIGO DOG

You will end up puppy soup if you're born a pure white dog on the reservation, unless you're one who is extra clever, like me. I survived into my old age through dog magic. That's right. You see me, you see the result of dog wit. Dog skill. Medicine ways I learned from my elders, and want to pass on now to my relatives. You. So listen up, animoshug. You're only going to get this knowledge from the real dog's mouth once. (75)

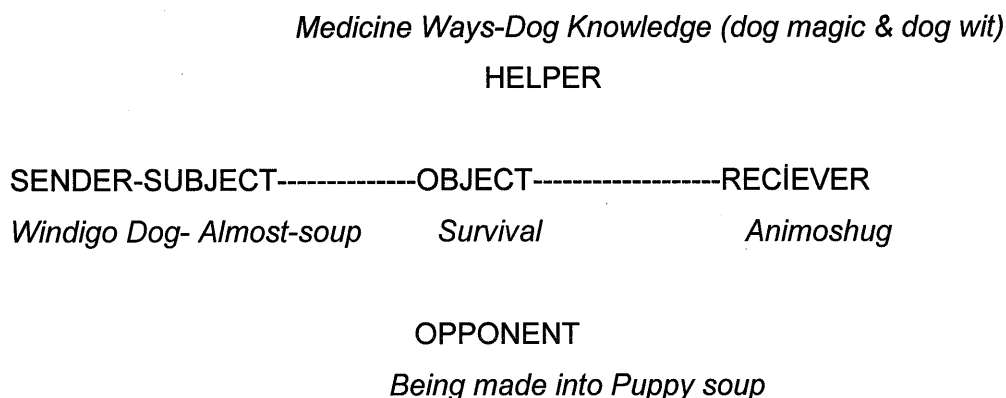
The "subject" of the story is the nameless white Indian dog and the "object" of the story is "survival" for what the subject desires and seeks is the "survival" of his fellowmen, the "animoshug,"<sup>25</sup> and it is for their own good sake that he is narrating this story. Because this story is also the "subject's" own life story, in other words, because the narration is in first-person, the "subject" also fills the slot of the "sender" for he offers his narrative as a "medicine bundle"<sup>26</sup> that can guide and "cure" his fellowmen. Thus, the "story of survival" becomes the goal of both the "subject" and the "sender," and the "opponent" that operates as an obstacle to its attainment is the act of "being turned into puppy soup," in other words, "the deadly process of assimilation." If the narrator's relatives, do not want to end up as "puppy soup" as well, they must seek his advice —become the "receiver" of his valuable guidance. And last of all, the "medicine ways"(75) which is a blend of "dog wit" and "dog magic" serve as the "helper" of the narrative, the "actant" which has prevented the "eradication" of the "subject," and which will help the animoshug to "survive" as well. Of particular interest is the fact that the role of the "opponent" is not filled by an

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<sup>25</sup> In Ojibway language "animosh" means dog. Animoshug or animoshag is its plural form.

<sup>26</sup> Catherine Rainwater likens Native-American narratives to "medicine bundles" that have the power to heal and cure for its contents like the contents of a medicine bundle are "semiotically and cabalistically significant to an individual's or a group's power, history and identity"(135). For a further reading on narrative as "medicine bundles" read Rainwater's *Dreams of Fiery Stars: The Transformation of Native American fiction* ( Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1999).

“entity,” but by some quality or state associated with it. In other words, for the windigo dog, the opponent is not the “human,” but the act of “being consumed” by the human. For as Windigo Dog later comments, his breed “is bound to the human. Raised alongside the human. With the human”(81). What this implies is that the enemy is not the individual but any hegemonic practice that “absorbs” differences and legitimizes the “appropriation” of its subjects for its subsistence and continuance. The six roles can be diagrammatized as follows:



**Figure 2:** Application of Grimes' Model

What I will focus in detail will be the helper agent and I will illustrate how this “agent” this remedy which is identified as the mingling of dog magic and dog wit actually stands for the two different cultural “self” models that the narrator adopts while recounting his story of survival. The first “self” is the voice of the Windigo Dog who is the cosmic voice informing the reader about the mythico-historical particulars of the narrator’s life. He is the voice that distinguishes himself with his ancestral past that ties him to “Original Dog” and to the magical dog “named Sorrow who drank a human’s milk” (76). He is the “we” that intrudes in the story and engenders the reader to have access to the spiritual realm; the more generative, deeper accumulated sense of reality. He is the dissenting discourse that challenges the traditional assumptions about the “truth” of America’s past. He is the voice that imbues mainstream reality with ways of seeing the world that originate with America’s indigeneous peoples, “. . . I was the son of blend of dogs stretching back to the beginning of time on this continent. We sprang up here. We had no need to cross on any land bridge. We know who we are. Us. . .”(76).

The second "self" is the nameless Indian dog who has acquired the name Almost Soup after experiencing a close call to death. By displaying practical wisdom and self-determination this "self" has "survived" in the cruel, unreliable and unjust world of the human beings and has earned the name "Almost Soup." He is the "blood and flesh" character who inhabits the present, material world of which he speaks. He is the "I" that never partakes in the "we," always resisting to help anybody but himself: "We have always given ourselves. We have always thought of humans first. . . Not me. Not Almost Soup. Bungeenabop. In the Ojibwa language, that is my name and I refuse to give it up for human mistakes and human triumphs" (81). His survival list provides scripts that tell us how to cope with social situations, engage in social conventions and assume social roles.

The dog's two names "Almost Soup" and "Windigo Dog" not only are analogous to the "dog magic" and "dog wit" that make up the essence of the narrator's survival strategies but also are key denominators in blending Indian and Western codifications of identity. The Windigo Dog is the voice of the collective consciousness that interweaves the Ojibwa culture and heritage to the diegetic world of storytelling. Almost Soup is the materially anchored and sustained social consciousness of the western world. He is the "individuated" concept of self who structures his world through his either/or discourse and whose list of survival strategies is nothing but one more set of binary oppositions. While the former represents a collective sense of shared experiences, the "we" that intrudes in the story now and then to underlie group solidarity, a sense of inclusiveness that grounds identity, the latter is the social product that has come to existence through an ongoing and endless negotiation with the dominant culture. Due to experiencing the trials and tribulations of life "Almost Soup" has become the pragmatic "fluid" self that has constantly molded and adjusted to the shifting realities of global America. His name designates a frame of experience analogous with "doing anything" to survive ranging from "staying cute but elusive,"(79) to "return[ing] polite and respectful hello[s](80) to "stay[ing] ready" to get food (79). The intermingling of both "selves" in one body stand for the "medicine ways" that are highlighted as the antidote of survival. The two kinds of discourse apparently merge to imply that it is the "discourse world" of both the Windigo Dog and Almost Soup that provide the scripts for the formation and sustenance of an Indian community.

In short, we can say that Almost Soup with his twofold character that embodies both Ojibwa and western traits, becomes a key to understanding Native-American survival. This dog character not only preserves his own dog traditions, dog myths and dog history but also devises ways that can effectively interact with the dominant human world. His salvation comes from his ability to intertwine modern realities with mythic ones. With the portrayal of such a character, Erdrich offers a new solution where adaptation to the mainstream society does not imply rejection of Native spirituality or Indianness. The western autonomous individual placed against and victorious over social and physical obstacles is harmonized with the Native-American communal sense of belonging, of history and traditions. In other words, by mingling the Western heroic model of individuality that relies heavily on the notion of the "survival of the fittest" with its alternative Native-American collective individuality that celebrates a "psychospiritual tradition"<sup>27</sup> Erdrich creates a magic realistic protagonist. Rather than being caught up in binaries, we have a dog character that embraces both western and Indian culture and as a result is able to fuse his ages-old cultural strengths with modern realities.

The first paragraph is also particularly useful in exposing how the process of naturalization is initiated so that such a supernatural phenomena as a talking dog can seem intelligible to the western reader. The "solidarity" that is established between the dog narrator and the "implied reader" by means of diectic and referential elements such as "you," "my relatives" also serves as an important narrative strategy utilized by the writer for ideological purposes. The "you" or "dear listener" who is addressed by the narrator is obliged to listen actively –to understand, remember and contemplate. In other words, the reader is asked to become an active participant in the storytelling process which leads him/her to unconsciously inherit the responsibility of passing on these valuable insights to the future generation and become a primary means of cultural memory. (For it should not be forgotten that that one of the main purposes of oral storytelling is to keep the memories of the past by maintaining and transmitting it to successive generations.) However, what is more interesting is that the "you" or "dear listener" who is

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<sup>27</sup> Paula Gunn Allen describes the psychospiritual tradition as "individual experience is not isolate but is part of a coherent and timeless whole, providing them with a means of personal empowerment and giving shape and direction to their lives" in *Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (Boston: Beacon, 1986), 100.

addressed by the narrator is also linguistically implicated in the text, and not just present in the pragmatic context.<sup>28</sup> In other words, within the "diegesis" of the story, the narrator who identifies himself as an Ojibwa reservation dog"(75), addresses his story of survival to an audience whose presence is linguistically inscribed in the story as "animoshug"(75). By accepting the role of the "animosh" listener (even if the western reader does not know what "animoshug" means, it is obvious from the repetition of the word "dog" and from the juxtaposition of the terms "my relatives," "you" and "animoshug" that this term represents the "dog breed" or more vaguely the animal realm), the reader accepts to be labeled as an "animosh" and vision the world through the eyes of an "animosh." The naturalization of the reader is also generated by the frequent pronoun shifts that occur in the discourse of the narrator. The switching from the "I" to a "we" elicit audience participation since it compels the listener to take part in the "animosh" world." Moreover, the use of the "dialogic we" implies the coming together of the speaker and the listener, the meeting of their minds. It can be seen as a "referential frame" that assumes listeners as its dialogic partners who have the same knowledge structure, who perceive the same reality, who share the same common interests. In a way, Erdrich tries to legitimize the existence of a magical reality by making it seem as normative through the active participation of the "animosh" reader in the text's imaginary world.

The result of such an acceptance is two-fold. For the Native-American reader, the referential structure of the world which is specified, schematized and made available by this dog character leads him/her to reinterpret reality as a semiotic construction embodying the collision of both Eurocentric and Indian worlds. The Native-American reader understands that Native frames of reference should also constantly go under revision. For example, Erdrich revises traditional Ojibwa beliefs concerning the windigos as evil cannibalistic monsters who prey upon human flesh. Ojibway scholar Basil Johnston describes windigos as:

Weendigo (weendigook or Weendigoes): A giant cannibal (or cannibals). These manitous came into being in winter and stalked villagers and beset wanderers. Ever hungry, they craved human

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<sup>28</sup> Russian formalists have defined this mode of storytelling that imitates direct speech and in which the audience is linguistically inscribed in the text as "skaz." For a further reading on "skaz" see Mikhail Bakhtin's article "Discourse Typology in Prose" in *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views*, eds, Ladislav Matejka and Krystyna Pomorska (Cambridge: MIT, 1971).

flesh, which is the only substance that could sustain them. The irony is that having eaten human flesh, the Weendigos grew in size, so their hunger and craving remained in proportion to their size; thus they were eternally starving. (1995:247)

Louise Erdrich treats this mythic archetype as a symbolic manifestation of spiritual hunger, a "[b]ad spirit of hunger and not just normal hunger but out-of-control hunger. Hunger of impossible devouring"(127), that comes to the fore only when the individual is in a whirlpool of unsatisfied needs. In other words it is a psychological hunger that the self afflicts upon itself causing destruction and spiritual death. As a matter of fact, the windigos may not only be animals but humans as well. Interestingly enough, besides Klaus's windigo dog who appears in the novel as Klaus' obsessive side, Richard Whiteheart Beads, is also depicted as a windigo, who "could devour whatever grazed, pecked, crawled, rooted over earth, or swam in the sea"(153). Conversely, in the case of Cally, her windigo turns out to be a life-sustaining figure who devotes his life to protecting her from forthcoming harm and dangers.

Erdrich also emphasizes that Native peoples can survive if they dissociate themselves from the "Indian" stereotype that dictates a static identity which excludes growth, change and adaptation. This is best foregrounded in an anecdote told by Windigo Dog himself when Windigo Dog indicates that among the Norwegian, the Swedish and the Ojibwa dogs, it was only the Ojibwas that did not escape the unlatched dogcatcher trucks by "pushing and wiggling" and "open[ing] the doors behind the loose chain just enough to squeeze out, carefully, one at a time"(223). These Ojibwa dogs preferred to stick to their "rez"(224) in the expense of their freedom. What this implies is that communal integrity should not be "pull[ing]" someone back "every time one of them tries to sneak off"(224) but the building of sovereignty that is contingent on tribal heritage as well as mainstream realities. In other words, native cultures will survive not only by the power of tribal traditions but also by their self-determined adaptations to new contemporary situations, their commitment to instant solutions and their sense of solidarity based on mutual understanding and cooperation. Native Americans should be vital and should be able to assert control over their own destinies. If the "Indian" does not survive, it will be at the expense of Native people themselves. In short, we can say that in this "animosh" world in which the Native-American reader is also asked to participate, the sign "Indian" and what it should represent is "rewritten."

On the other hand, for the western reader, his involvement in, rather than his detachment from the world of the text enables the magic to be possible. The windigo dog inscribes the western reader into a magical world where the "coyotes," the Wenabobo's (81), the "man-monster-cats"(80) are all a part of the real and lets him/her vision the world from a non-western perspective. Rather than being what Rainwater asserts as a "cultural outsider"(9) who positions him/herself in a highly critical and detached stance, the western reader acknowledges to be the responsible listener, the receiver of knowledge. As a result, the western reader, immersed in a non-western reality, not only accepts these "supernatural" elements as normative and plays an important role in their acknowledgment and transmission but is also led to reconsider the western cultural myths that have sanctioned "common-sense assumptions" concerning the mimetic nature of "reality." Of course, if Erdrich hadn't drawn a dog character whose speech and survival instincts were very familiar and realistic to our modern times, the western reader could have dismissed a talking dog as "illogical" and "bizarre" and could have instinctively distanced him/herself from the text. By updating *Almost Soup's* storytelling with colloquial jargon and imbuing it with witty, humorous and candid remarks Erdrich is able to construct a realistic and familiar character.

Thus, Erdrich by choosing such a hybrid character as a white Indian talking dog that embraces human as well as non-human characteristics, western as well as non-western traits puts into question all existing institutions and practices and initiates a rethinking of the "real" and what it represents. By playing with the notion of a dual voice within a single character, Erdrich maintains a fluid passage between what's natural and supernatural, material and spiritual. She manages to pinpoint "survival strategies" without bringing up a dialectic between the human and the non-human, the white and the non-white implicit in western culture and its discourse. She has created a unique character that can reconcile his western individualism within the framework of a tribal sense of community. And last of all by establishing a "solidarity" between this dog narrator and the reader, by making the speaker and the listener mutual participants in the dramatization of a magical "animosh" text world, Louise Erdrich is also able to "naturalize" the unreal and initiate a "process of subversion" in the western line of reasoning.

### 3.2 Titling the "Reality" and Blurring the "Real"

We first try to understand a title using our hermeneutic code, connecting it to bits of information that we have piled in our enormous storehouse of knowledge. For titles happen to be the first textual clues that initiate a cognitive framework appropriate to the general message of the complete text. Conventional titles can serve to highlight the overall theme residing in the text whereas unconventional titles function in the opposite way, as narrative devices that conceal and disrupt thematic unity, making it harder for the reader to "reconstruct" the plot and unfold the "story.". As Schwarz and August Flammer point out, "A thematic title is expected to select and activate a schema from an already existing repertory of schemata at the beginning, to protect the elements from being dismissed before their contribution to the whole is understood, and to permit the reader to concentrate on the encoding of the important ideas"(1981:61). In this respect, because each title is crucial in guiding the reader's interpretations, inferences and expectations they should be regarded as influential narrative devices used by the writer to control the act of interpretation. In fact, critics have stressed the importance of such title framing cues in respect to the "metamessages" that the text aims to enclose and have emphasized the fact that such frames should be seen as "preliminary statements" that direct the reader to a particular kind of interpretation. (MacLachlan & Reid, 1994) Consequently, detailed rhetorical analysis of such title and chapter names may help to reveal the writer's various ideologies charged with cultural, social and political intensions.

In Erdrich's novel *The Antelope Wife*, titles become the first indicators of a magical reality that aim to blur the clear-cut rationalism of Western post-enlightenment thinking. The book's title and its chapter names embedded with magic realist imprints, are exceptional and peculiar and do not adhere to western cultural norms. The book's very title, *The Antelope Wife*, provokes a sense of wonder and mystery, for the antelope, which is an animal found only on America's Great Plains, an animal characterized by its gracefulness and swiftness is juxtaposed with a woman's social status where subordination, docility and fecundity become its key determinants; a social status that highlights the individual as a commodity held in possession in archetypal societies. While the former term evokes the vast landscape of the prairies on which the antelopes roam freely, the latter reveals the confined space of domesticity in which the female is obliged to perform a

social role. As a result, with such a title as "The Antelope Wife", we come across a "hybrid space" in which nature intersects with civilization, freedom with conformity, the animal with the human. Moreover, it is also a title that blurs the clear-cut borders between tradition and change, the past with the present, the archaic with the contemporary. For the antelopes that populate the pages of Erdrich's novel are among the rare species that have preserved their archaic form dating back to the Age of Mammals, over one hundred million years ago. And because of this unique characteristic, they can be seen as symbols of historical continuity epitomizing the indigenous traditions that have survived the rapid changes of urban technology and white colonialism. Furthermore, these antelopes have shared a similar fate with the indigenous people of North America. Both have suffered major losses and declined immensely in population when once they had been the "roamers" of the unlimited vacant lands.

Interestingly enough, the character who the novel is named after, becomes a literal illustration of the crisscrossing between the animal and the human, nature and civilization, the physical with the spiritual. All throughout the novel, we are given numerous hints as to the magic realist nature of the Antelope Wife. Her physical characteristics resemble that of the antelope. She has "springy, tireless legs"(23), "black, melting eyes"(23), "a sloping deer-haunch bottom"(105), a smell that induces the scent of grass and sage, (31) and a walking that resembles the "tap of heels"(105). Her dress is made out of doeskin, her jewelry out of bone (23) and her fan out of the feathers of the red-tailed hawk, the bird that "follow[s] the antelope to fall on field mice the moving herd stirs up"(24). Furthermore, like an antelope, she is a "light stepper with a gravity of sure grace,"(24) very swift, "float[ing] above everyone"(23), very graceful with her "long and free hair"(24) and "fine-boned" taut-body (46), and is an integral part of nature, "her perfume smells like grass and wind, . . . her scent is like sun on my back, like cool rain, like dust rising off a waterless, still nowhere leading road"(107-08). When she gets angry she gives "a flick of her white-flag tail"(98) and she is described as someone who "Lives in another body, walks in a different skin"(155). Her place of residence is not the reservation nor the city but the "grazed-down pastures" of brush, sage and weeds. (25) She is the only character in the novel who with her swiftness is able "to catch the distance" where the "sky meets earth"(32); a spatial metaphor that designates the meeting of the spiritual and the physical, the heaven and the earth. As a result, she can be

considered as a representative of two different realms, the spirit and the flesh. (Interestingly enough, the antelopes were referred to as "prairie ghosts," due to being the second fastest animal on earth.)

Above all, when Klaus Shawano, a sanitation engineer who also does trading in powwows, wants to catch the attention of this "dreamlike" woman, he thinks of himself as an antelope hunter and asks Jimmy Badger, an old medicine man, to give him "antelope medicine"(26). And interestingly enough, it is the antelope hunting strategies Klaus employs that helps to capture this mysterious character who is wild, free, curious and impulsive like a real antelope. And according to Jimmy Badger, this woman character who Klaus longs for desperately, is literally an antelope woman who "lived summers with the antelope" and in "the winters . . . brought her human daughters to the camp"(29). Throughout the novel we are given numerous hints about the title character's antelope lineage, the most evident is the one that links her as the possessor of the same northwestern blue beads which Matilda, the girl who was left to live among the antelopes, carried around her neck. Furthermore, the true origins of this woman character can never be traced and like the antelopes who appear in a "spinning cloud light" (19) disappearing into the "west", the antelope Wife also remains evasive throughout the novel.

All of these textual clues link the "Antelope Wife" to real antelopes and hence provide a cognitive frame in which the reader is asked to reorganize the reading material not according to his western pre-existing knowledge based on scientific facts and canonical assumptions but on a Native-American representation of the world; a worldview that embraces the human and the animal, the past and the present and acknowledges them as inseparable parts of a whole.

In the same way, such chapter titles as "Father's Milk," "The Girl and Her Deer Husband" and invented terms such as the "Seaweed Marshmallows" create "hybrid spaces" and subvert hegemonic thought patterns by constructing a world where miracles and facts, animals and men, nature and civilization coexist. These chapter names serve as mysterious and two-fold ventures that push the reader to new domains of experience untouched with western signifiers and presuppositions. For example with such a chapter name as "Father's Milk," Louise Erdrich subverts canonical assumptions of fatherhood by associating "fathering" with "breastfeeding."

In her depiction of a soldier breastfeeding a baby in which feelings of intimacy between man and child is shared, Louise Erdrich revises western definitions of gender roles. Such traits as "fertility," "nursing" and "mothering" signified by "milk" is inscribed to the male body rather than to the realm of the feminine. Hence, the western practice of demarcating a line between genders is eradicated by a chapter name that fuses the real with the imaginary, the man with the woman.

In the same way, such titles as "Seaweed Marshmallows," or "Kamikaze Wedding" will also challenge a reader who tries to classify and categorize concepts according to the binary logic of Western thought. If the reader aligns duality into his intrinsic order of reading he will not be able to comprehend the paradox of the union of opposites. If he does not have a synchronized perspective of life (a very common Native-American worldview) such title names as "Seaweed Marshmallows" or "Kamikaze Wedding" will seem meaningless and irrelevant. However, a candy which is salty and sweet, dark and light, natural yet man-made or a wedlock where life and death, joy and pain, creation and destruction, love and hate are experienced simultaneously, serve not only as unique but also pivotal metaphors that reflect the "reality" of magic realist text; a reality where dualities merge and coexist in the same plane.

It is only when the reader grasps the fact that what he is dealing with is an all encompassing reality that unites the salty and the sweet, the male and the female, the man and the animal, the author and the reader, the real and the imaginary, will the titles gain significance and lead him to a better understanding of the novel. In other words, the book's title and its chapter names suggest that the western reader put aside his/her existing repertory of knowledge structures based on dualisms and dichotomies and comprehend the novel from a new schema of "interrelatedness." By eliciting such "wholeness," the titles open the way of the imagination rather than of the intellect and emphasize "continuity, circularity and completeness" instead of "segmentation, discontinuity and linearity" (Allen, 1987: 563-64). They become powerful linguistic signs that place reality in the realm of the imaginary and invite the reader to comprehend the upcoming scenes, characters, events according to a magical reality very distant from that of rationalistic thinking. In short, we can say that these oxymoronic titles that emerge as a result of a new

hybrid sense of reality, serve as ideological weapons that construct fluid boundaries in which "signifiers" cease to have fixed, stable western meanings.

Louise Erdrich uses the titles of her book as narrative devices which subvert not only canonical realism but also western reading paradigms and their conventions. Such titles as "The Antelope Wife," "Father's Milk," "A Girl and Her Deer Husband" by shattering western patterns of logic also dislodge the linear movement of western reading. Given his western prestructured understanding of the world, the reader will not apprehend these titles in terms of their literal meanings for such expressions are outside the domains of western reality since they are events that are experientially impossible and empirically unverifiable. As it is impossible for a father biologically to produce milk and breastfeed a baby, it is also impossible for a deer to become someone's husband. Thus, the reader will try to scrutinize the chapters with an expectation of coming across signifiers that will explain the metaphorical meanings anticipated in the book's chapter names. However, as the novel unfolds he/she will realize that in fact these title names are used literally word-for-word, emphasizing that indeed a father's nipples can "toughen" and a gush of warm burning "god-given milk" can come out, (9); that a deer can also love and caress and show devotion as much as a human lover can (56-7).

Another strategy that Erdrich employs to subvert canonical assumptions about the reading process is her use of titles that encode Native-American traditions such as "Lazy Stitch" and "Windigo Dog," and therefore require "knowledge structures" unique to Indian cultures. In this respect, such titles can be considered as "ideological signs" that are a source of disturbance to the western reader since they do not offer the reader with a starting point of comprehension and leave him/her in a vacuum, perplexed and confused. As a result, the western reader in order to fill in the slots and draw the appropriate connections must do what Culler identifies as "double reading"(1981) always looking backward as well as forward, actively restructuring the past in light of each new bit of information. The reader, in order to comprehend the text, understands that s/he must be a critical reader actively participating in the reading process and drawing inferences outside his/her domain of western knowledge. In his/her struggle to decode unfamiliar chapter names the western reader, is tacitly "pulled" into the world of Ojibway culture and beliefs. As an example for a chapter title that reflects Native-American traditions, I

will briefly elaborate on the chapter title "Lazy Stitch." "Lazy Stitch" is a type of a Native-American beadwork which gets its name from the fact that it is one of the easiest and most common Native-American crafts. Due to the fact that this type of beadwork stitch can be applied easily to any kind of material ranging from canvas to leather, it is known by many Native-Americans. Nevertheless, for the western reader, whose notion of Native-America art and craftsmanship is very limited, this title will not be of any significant value. Thus, for the western reader, such a title as "Lazy Stitch" does not serve as a cognitive schema that can provide a framework of existing knowledge which can aid him/her in adding up the "pieces" together and extract the overall design. It is only when the reader finishes the chapter does he grasp the fact that "stitching" is used as a metaphor that explains the process of creation in which everything human, animal and spirit is interconnected and "stitched" into a pattern. Furthermore, very different from Western society which prizes only the finished artifact and ignores the process of creation, Erdrich emphasizes that every act of creativity bears in itself its creator's intense endeavors; his/her life pattern filled with anguish, cruelty or agony. Therefore, in such a creation, it is not the product but the process that should be valued and appreciated, as Cally remarks, "There's nothing lazy about it!"(91). (In the forthcoming chapters, I will analyze in detail how this metaphor in relation to "beadwork" is used by Erdrich as an ideological signifier that besets Western worldview based on dualistic thinking.)

The use of Native-American Ojibway and German terminology in some chapter titles like "Gakahbekong," "Nibi" and "Biltzkuchen" also function as a narrative device that moves the reader away from the familiar world of western labels and prevent him/her from maintaining a starting point of comprehension. Not knowing linguistically what the chapter names stand for, the reader will look ardently for textual clues that will explain their meaning. As a result, the titles written in Ojibway language by not being circumscribed to a familiar linguistic code prevents the reader to use his enormous storehouse of knowledge and activate appropriate schemas. In this respect, the utilization of non-English names as title labels can be seen as an ideological strategy of resistance to western norms of categorizing the world. Encountering these foreign names "the reader is forced to acknowledge that he or she is confronted with another language, another epistemology, another way of knowing"(Owens:1998, 63). For we should not forget that language constitutes reality and mastery of language is equal to mastery of power. The western reader

not knowing what these Ojibway names stand for, cannot engage any frames of reference and thus, is moved from his/her "privileged" center where he/she cannot assert control over his/her reading. In fact, the reader waits to be instructed on how to decode the meaning of these Ojibway words and looks for textual clues that can explain explicitly or implicitly the content of messages inscribed within such "non-English" labels. In short we can say that the use of Ojibway terminology becomes an ideological attempt on the part of the writer to "appropriate" the semiotic space of the novel with Native-American frames of reference and challenge hegemonic modes of conceptualizing the world.

Familiar chapter names that activate a schema in the western reader's cognitive domain are also used by Erdrich as subversive linguistic devices that require the reader to modify his mode of thinking and adapt a non-western perspective. In other words, familiar title names are used as "transitional devices" that serve to naturalize the "supernatural" inherent in magico-realist texts and bring about a renewal of perception; a perception that blends the rational, empirical and materialistic worldview of the West with the sacred, spiritual and organic worldview of the Native-Americans. As an example for such a title, the chapter name "Gravitron" can be seen as a suitable ideological label that unites scientific thought with the mythical. "Gravitron" is introduced to the reader as a carnival ride that spins very fast and gets its name from the tug of gravity that results from such a high-speed rotation. In fact, the spin is so intense that it "flattens[s] the faces of the screamers into one green dimension" (145). The ride becomes a turning point for Cally's mother, Rozina Whiteheart Beads, when it gets out of control due to an "overdosed" operator who in the middle of a heroine seizure accelerates the ride. As a result, for Rozina, the ride literally becomes a journey that crosses the boundary between life and death. After experiencing the call of death, all that sheer horror and chaos, Rozina is once and for all able to set loose all her feelings and thoughts that has troubled her since her twin daughter Deanna's death and accept life with all its flaws and rewards.

However, what is interesting is that Erdrich by naming this chapter "Gravitron" uses the terms of positive science to explain such a spiritual awakening. Such a title as "Gravitron" enables the western reader to conceptualize the nonphysical in terms of the physical for it uses the laws of physics to explain a

spiritual experience. Any reader who comes across the term "Gravitron" will first immediately associate it with "gravity," a scientific term that plays an important role in the quantum of physics. On the other hand, a reader with a broader knowledge of positive science, will relate it to the term "graviton" which describes a hypothetical particle with zero charge and rest mass held to be the center of a gravitational field. As the reader pages through the chapter, s/he realizes that the title "Gravitron" is used by Erdrich metonymically to describe the process in which Rozina after being "pulled into" the abyss of the world, into the center by a centripetal force "comes out" literally as a "graviton," weightless being "stripped" from all the "gravity" that society had induced upon her with its network of social conventions, rules and obligations. As Cally remarks, her mother has been "scuffed off" from "all the scales of convention" and "boney armor" and has "undone all her strings"(147). After being "stripped by centrifugal force and jumbled up inside"(147) Rozina is able to get rid of all the pressures and bring balance and harmony to her life. She is freed from the inexorable painful past and grief that had "pulled" her since the death of her beloved twin daughter, Deanna.

The "gravitron" ride can also be read as a mythical journey that results in the spiritual "rebirth" and "renewal" of Erdrich's protagonist, Rozina Whiteheart Beads. The writer while describing the gravitron ride foreshadows what is about to come by applying a magical gloss to reality:

The Gravitron starts slowly with the purr of a giant motor and a lurch of gears. The deep brass throbs to life, heavy rock beat, a flame of guitars. Strapped in standing, hands at their sides, the riders are hugged by welded bars to the inside of a gigantic pie plate that starts turning . . (145).

The ride is described as having a life of its own, "purring," "throbbing to life," "hugging" the people inside it. Furthermore, the ride is depicted by Erdrich in a very nightmarish manner, as having monstrous "cages" that close over the riders "like alien claws"(146) "against the night"(145-46) and its operator as its evil and sinister "dummy" who "blow[s] froth bubbles," gives a nasty "screech of Wolfman laughter,"(146) Such descriptions bear the "ride" a symbolic weight that moves it beyond its literal meaning. It brings into mind what Mircea Eliade identifies as the "initiary rites" of non-western cultures; symbolic ordeals that prepare the individual into a new mode of being. (1976:164-74). In this respect the chapter can also be

read as a "rite of initiation" and the "gravitron" as the symbol of the "monster of death," the "killer"(146) that "comes to life"(146) and whips Rozina "mercilessly through time and space"(146) and at the end lets her return to the fellowship of the living as a changed person, assuming another mode of being: "She steps out of her cage, doesn't falter, not a single misstep. . . The way she acts is so different, so natural, so real, so warm and naked. . . (147). Rozina's escape from the "inner circle of the gravitron"(146) can be resembled to the heroic act of "breaking through the monster's belly"(Eliade, 1976: 175) and "return[ing] to life a new man"(Eliade 165). Such a transitional experience from life to death enables Rozina to gain the inner strength to confront her fears, guilt and anxieties and to start life all over "renewed" and "weightless." In a way, Erdrich lets her readers draw associations from the cognitive plane of both western science and myth to understand the physical and spiritual transformation that Rozina Whiteheart Beads has gone through. Thus such a title as "Gravitron" becomes a suitable framework that integrates the supernatural within the codes of physics where "the laws of logic and verisimilitude are constantly infringed without affecting our 'normal' perception of reality" (Chanady, 1995: 130).

Most titles in the *The Antelope Wife* serve not as points of departures but as empty and unmarked sheets of paper waiting to be rewritten in the semantic plane. Thus, the western assumption that the reading process moves from a beginning to an end in a linear progression -both temporally and semantically- is subverted on behalf of what I call a "spiral" kind of reading that blends the dynamic progression of western linearity with the recurrent circularity of non-western thought. Information unfolds in a circular yet escalating order. The reader is denied of a beginning and a conclusion and is impelled to make his own pattern by patching bits of information here and there, moving to and fro in time and space, from titles to conclusions, from beginnings to endings. However, this circularity does not stop him from attaining a higher level of understanding where new information is built on top of former ones and a "progression toward the attainment of new understanding and greater knowledge of oneself, the world, and one's place in the world"(Danow,1997: 21-22) is achieved. As a result, we can say that Louise Erdrich uses the title of her book and its chapter names as narrative devices that highlight the ideological subtext of the novel; an ideology which is grounded upon the reappropriation and redefinition of western paradigms and conventions. Only when the reader is willing to put aside

his western background of logic and start afresh will he be able to understand the magico-realist world inherent in the *The Antelope Wife*.

### 3.3. Titling the "Self" and Reinscribing the Terms of Subjectivity

Thomas Sebeok in his article "The Semiotic Self Revisited" asserts that the "self" emerges in response to a "narrative schema"(1989:9) that the individual builds partly through his/her interaction with his environment and partly from memory. This narrative schema operates as a framework that records the individual's significant interactions with his environment and organizes his experience syntactically according to the rules of language:

Language is . . . a modeling device, a mental representation of the world which. . . is different from all the animal models in that it has a feature that linguists call syntax. . . with syntax human beings are able to dissemble the model as if it were made of Lego building blocks. You can reassemble them in an infinite number of ways. With syntax you can take sentences apart and hook them together in different ways. And just because humans have this ability they can produce not only worlds in the way in which animals produce them, but they can produce possible worlds"(1989, 101-02)

What this implies is that the "self" like the concepts of "truth" and "reality" is not static and fixed but rather a "semiotic construction" that constantly undergoes revision.<sup>29</sup> If we think in terms of the "self" as a product of a semiosis exchange with the environment, then we must acknowledge the semiotic frameworks involved in the formation of self and social reality, the most important being the act of "naming reality." For as one critic points out, ". . . from a word, a group of words, a sentence and even a name . . . one can glean the social norms, attitudes and values of a people"(Okra, 1963: 15).

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<sup>29</sup> For a further reading of the "self" as a "semiotic construction" see Kaja Silverman's *The Subject of Semiotics* (New York: Oxford UP, 1983), Roland Barthe's *The Semiotic Challenge* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1988), Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1976), and Benjamin Lee and Greg Urban's *Sign, Self and Society* (Berlin: Mouton, 1989). Western concepts of the "personal identity" which originate primarily with Enlightenment philosophers such as Locke, Hume and Berkeley contrast with the structuralist definitions of the "self" as a product of semiosis. Locke believes in the dichotomy between body and mind, emphasizing the individual intellect as the basis of identity, Hume regards the self as a "bundle or collection of different perceptions" putting identity in the same category as perception.

In Ojibway culture, one of the most crucial semiotic processes that bear a pivotal mark in the individual's "narrative schema" are the "dream names" that play an important role in the formation of one's self-worth, self-history and self-definition. For the Ojibways, as well as for all Native-Americans, a name has a meaning with connotations of nature, ancestry, character, hopes and desires thus serving as a symbol that links the past, present and future. It is not only a celebration of the newly born but of survival, of continuity, of human life. Thus, names have a suggestive power beyond their immediate and lexical meaning. According to Densmore, Ojibway naming practices fall into six categories: (1) the "dream name" given ceremonially by a "namer," often a shaman, who had received spirit power in a dream (2) the "dream name" acquired by an individual during the individual's puberty vision quest and associated with the spirit involved in the vision (3) a "namesake name" given by parents but carrying no spirit power with it (i.e. this involved naming a child after someone the parents respected) (4) a short and often humorous "common name" or "nickname" (5) the use of a kinship group's name. (1979: 52-53). Especially dream names which were given by the tribe's elders or shamans after a "vision quest" had profound influence in determining the course the individual would take in his/her interaction with the world around him/her. Erdrich by giving place to Ojibway naming practices and by enlightening the reader about the "spiritual power" inherent in dream names and the meanings they connote pulls the western reader into the unfamiliar Ojibway world of naming. From the opening pages to its closing, Erdrich constantly emphasizes how one's spirit name shapes one's identity and self-worth furnishing him/her with a specific history, a specific relationship to the world:

But the old ones did know, agreed between them, that the wrong name would kill what was in there and it had to go –like a husk dried off and scattered. Like a shell to a nut. (13)

Should have kept the protection. Should have kept the names that gave the protection. Should have kept the old ways just as I could, and the tradition that guarded us. (35)

Just a few people at one time are born to name. They have to dream certain dreams, hear them in the wind, get the instructions just so. I do know that my grandmas' dreams were big-time powerful. They got a lot of names you never heard, as well as some brought to them as spirit gifts. New names. Old ones. . . Names of the sun and weather. From the mouths of animals. Thin air. (110)

Our spirit names, they are like hand-me-downs which have once fit other owners. They still bear the marks and puckers. The shape of the other life. (217).

In this section, I will first demonstrate how Erdrich uses names, whether they be the character's personal or dream name, as semantic frames that reflect the "cultural icons" that have shaped Native-American identity. As a result, the western or Indian names become representations not only of the "self" but also of the dominant values and beliefs that play an important role in the shaping of the individual's worldview. Second, I will illustrate how the western reader is led to appreciate the "power" inherent in each and every "name" when s/he understands that s/he must learn to read these as "ideological signs" that are reflective of a whole network of cultural beliefs, customs and traditions. In this respect, Cally's depiction as the next "namer" who will mediate between the Western and Ojibway worlds, bearing the responsibility of creating new ways of thinking that will bring sense to the past as well as the present, gains an utmost significance in understanding the magical reality of the novel.

Most of the characters in Erdrich's novel experience a dual existence in two different realms whether this be an experience moving back and forth between the spiritual and the physical, the animal and the human (as in the case of Antelope Wife) or between native and western cultures (as in the case of Cally, Rozina, Klaus etc.). Most of these characters try to sustain their tribal values while attempting to live by the rules of the dominant white society. In parallel to their identities which are mixed-blood, their names also become key denominators in the conveyance of a reality both native and western. Erdrich employs lexical strategies to demonstrate the significance of both Native and western cultures in the formation of her character's identities. She presents the characters' either by giving their names in both English and Ojibway language (like Apijigo Bakaday for So Hungry, Midassbaupayikway for Ten Stripe Woman, or Ozhawashkwamashkodeykway for Blue Prairie Woman) or by presenting them with their "real" and "dream" names (Blue Prairie Woman for Cally, Other Side of the Earth for Deanna, or Dawn Woman for Rozina). The former strategy of presenting character names in both languages, English and Ojibway, is also applied in the labeling of chapter, place, and specific terminology that plays an important role in the thematic structure of the novel. As an example of place names "Gakabekong"(25) and "Mishimin Odayang" (198) can be

given as the Ojibway names that both refer to the city of Minneapolis. As an example for Ojibway terms that play an important role in the thematic schemata of the novel, the word "dashikaa" which means "cracked apart" can be given as the most pivotal word whose metaphorical imagery will open and close the pages of the *The Antelope Wife*.

When English language is seen as a linguistic tool that provides the maintenance and transmission of western systems of thought, then its displacement by Ojibway terms can be seen as a very ideological and political move in the part of the writer. By scattering Ojibway words all throughout the pages of the novel, Erdrich reminds the western reader that what he is reading is a product of not only western modes of thinking but also of Ojibway worldview. The Ojibway words are blended into the text, carrying with them the "collective memory bank" (Thiong'O, 1995, 289) of the Ojibway people's experience in history. The Ojibway language does not disrupt the flow of the novel, rather it illustrates the reality of Ojibway culture as an intricate part of the characters' lives.

The names of the first and second generation of the Shawanos are written in their original Ojibway tongue indicating that these characters embody the values, beliefs and traditions of their people. However, for the western reader who is not familiar with Ojibway language, Erdrich has also written the English version of some of these spirit names such as Sounding Feather, Everlasting, Ten Stripe Woman, So Hungry, so that the reader can familiarize him/herself with the specific Native-American worldview embodied in these "spirit names." These names written in English but which articulate traditional values serve as semiotic frames which tear English language from its restricting empirical and materialist worldview and which instruct the reader to incorporate a cyclical, spiritual and metaphorical understanding of nature and its resources.

To illustrate the close relationship between these names and "Native-American" worldview, I will refer to Sebeok's term "iconic spatial expressions" (1989) which is a phrase that he has given to external objects that are particularly encoded in a person's mind and whose meaning are often internalized as representations of self. For indeed, when we examine the spirit names of Cally's great-great grandmother Blue Prairie Woman, we come across names that have a direct link

with nature emphasizing that in the internalization of the self "nature" plays an important role. Her two names, "Blue Prairie Woman" and "Other Side of the Earth" can be seen as a good example that demonstrates how external images from nature and culture may become icons that represent individuals or groups of people. In the former name, the color "blue" which is the color of the sky is juxtaposed with the "prairie," the vast open spaces of mother earth. Such a juxtaposition connects the sky with the earth, the spirit with the material. By reconciling the two archetypal elements, the air and the earth, the name Blue Prairie Woman invokes the imagery unique to Native-American cultures, which is the "sacred marriage" of Heaven and earth. Her name reflects the tribal mode of perceiving the conflict between the physical and the metaphysical as complementary and for that reason, as Erdrich emphasizes, the name Blue Prairie Woman designates "power," "tradition" and "exquisiteness"(13). Guided by Erdrich's textual clues, a careful reader will also draw the association between this name and the place which is described as the place where the mythical antelopes dwell, the "place where sky meets earth"(32). But what is interesting is that while for the Euro-American, the name "Blue Prairie Woman" only reminds vast open spaces circumscribed by an infinite blueness and femininity, an image that evokes the impulse to conquer and control, for the Native-American the name represents the female as being in Gossette's term "-a larger-than-life figure"(1998:2) who is able to balance the polarities of human existence. Erdrich by equating woman not only with earth (which only reinforces the western reader's conception of the earth as female) but also with the "blueness" of the male sky Gods, represents the masculine and feminine principles in perfect union and draws a powerful and distinct female character whose spiritual presence will inhabit the novel from start to finish. In a way, the name Blue Prairie Woman subverts canonical modes of thinking by not only unifying the dualities of human existence but also by associating "woman" with power and strength.

When, Blue Prairie Woman is unable to recover from the loss of her baby (who is carried off to the "blue distance" by a dog during the raid) the elders decide that she must be given a new name. Blue Prairie Woman tormented by her lost baby's vision cannot think and act soundly anymore and thus cannot display the "balance" of mind and body that her powerful name requires from her:

... she dreamed of her first baby bewildered, then howling, then at last riding black as leather, mouth stretched wide underneath a

waterless sky. . . She howled and scratched herself half blind and at last so viciously took leave of her mind that the old ones got together and decided to change her name. (13).

After a special naming ceremony, Blue Prairie Woman's name is changed to "The Other Side of the Earth," since it is the "other side" her lost baby is carried off to, the place of the "arcane" and the "inexplicable." (However, Erdrich continues to use the character's former name, Blue Prairie Woman, when referring to her throughout the novel.) The name is given to Blue Prairie Woman as an antidote that can cure the split that has arisen between her body and mind: "[O]nce she was named for the place toward which she traveled, the young mother was able to be in **both** places at once"(14) However, such a split cannot be "mended" if she cannot bring her beloved child back from the "other side." Thus, the name also represents the place where the white people live, the colonized universe where white man's dual perceptions of the world prevails. And ironically enough, it is the "other" place where Blue Prairie Woman dies; indicating that in the white man's world of dualities to reconcile the opposites is no simple task. Her death is a symbol of the stark reality of western colonization whose effort to control and exploit the natural resources around him has resulted in the extinction and annihilation of Native Americans. Blue Prairie Woman catches a fatal disease, mottled skin fever, and before dying gives the name "The Other Side of the Earth" to her child and summons the antelopes so that they can take care and nurture her child after her death. In this stage, the meaning of the "other side" transforms from implying the "material space" of white man's territory to the "spiritual space," of the antelopes. For it is from the "west," from the "blue distance" that the antelopes emerge from a "spinning cloud light," from "the band of the light at the world's edge"(19). Thus, it can be acknowledged that for the Ojibway elders, the name "Other Side of the Earth" elicits grouping of all arcane fields of reference as the "other," whether this be the incomprehensible western world, or the spiritual realm of eternity. In this respect, the term "other" does not have a negative connotation since it does not correspond to the "excluded or mastered other" produced by colonial discourse. On the contrary, this "other side" is depicted as the place of both wilderness and civilization, life and death, animal and human suggesting a valorized and synchronic relationship with the land. Through the utilization of such a name as "The Other Side of the Earth," Erdrich inscribes in her text a double frame of potential meanings, for the name conveys meanings within both Euro-American and Ojibway extratextual fields of

reference. For the western reader, such a name implies the “splitting” of the world into two inferring a dualistic image of the world. For the Ojibways in the novel, it is a term that derives its meaning from the “west,” (15) the direction of the sun,” (14) “the blue distance,” (15) “the endless invisible trail” that is full of mystery and ambiguity.

The two names of this legendary character, “Blue Prairie Woman” and “Other Side of the Earth” encode chains of references to natural elements, deriving their meaning from nature and its resources. The power of both names come from the fact that they can reconcile divergent realities, the power of the spirits with the earth. Both names evoke images and symbols distinct to Native-American culture and impart a truly non-western worldview. However, when Erdrich introduces us to the next generations of Blue Prairie Woman’s bloodline –Zosie and Mary Shawano (Blue Prairie Woman’s twins’), Rozina Whiteheart Beads and Aurora (Zosie Roy’s twin girls), and Cally and Deanna (the twins of Rozina) – we come across a gradual replacement of traditional Ojibway names with thoroughly modern ones. Such a transformation clearly demonstrates the fact that with white man’s appropriation of Indian lands, we also have a change in Native American’s understanding of the universe, their place within the universe and the kinds of values the “self” must embrace. The first generation of characters carry pure Ojibwa names such as Asinigwesance, Pugweyan, Midassbaupayikway whereas in the second and third generation we come across the utilization of Christian names such as Mary and Josephette (which is later changed to Zosie due to the Ojibwas mispronunciation of the it), German and French war names such as Klaus and Frank (the former deriving from the word Nicholas which means victory of people and the latter from the word Francis meaning free man or Frenchmen), names that refer to English nobles, kings and queens such as Richard and Regina, and last of all names popular in Greek and Roman mythology such as Aurora (the roman goddess of Dawn), and Cally which can be inferred to Calliope (one of Apollo’s muses known for her beautiful voice) and Cecille (the mortal who was “blinded” for her presumptuousness by the Gods). Furthermore, Blue Prairie Woman’s infant daughter who during a raid is described as fleeing into the western prairies straddled on a dog’s back and whose life Scranton Roy saves, is named after an English princess, Matilda, which again designates the process of assimilation that most Native-Americans experienced throughout history. All of these names, whether they

be Richards, Matildas, Reginas, all signify the western appropriation of Native-American bodies and the devaluation of Native-American history and myth.

"The ideological becoming of a human being," according to Bakhtin, "is the process of selectively assimilating the words of others"(1981). In this respect, the inscription of western labels onto Indian bodies can be read as a semiotic act that aims to remove Native-American past, myth and history from the American continent. For such a pattern clearly demonstrates the drastic change that has taken place in the construction and representation of Native-American identities. For the names do not get their "sustenance" from the natural world, but from the "human" and are reflective of a western ideology which insists on historical reference. In a way, the replacement of Ojibway names by western ones can be seen as the symbolic manifestation of the conscious or unconscious process by which the West has gradually projected its own cultural assumptions as the normal, the natural or the universal. As a matter of fact when Rozina unfolds her family lineage to the reader, we realize that the "names" go parallel with patterns of domination and appropriation that emerge from white man's need to expand and display personal and collective power:

. . . we daughters of Blue Prairie woman are wavy haired and lightened by the Roy blood. We're twins of twins, going back through the floating lines of time. Descended of the three-fires people Ivory Coast slave, who crawled under the bark of an Ojibwa house and struck a match by which he looked into the eyes of the daughter of Everlasting, Magid, who blew the match out and opened to him her robes.

The bastard son of a bastard daughter of a French marquis entered the next generation via voyageur trails. . .Hauling knives, guns, kettles, dressed in skins and velvet, he showed up in the territory of the wolf and married six Ojibwa woman of whom the oldest . . took care of him . . . (35)

It is also interesting that the grandson of Scranton Roy who is "stitched" to the complex and interconnected lives of the several generations of characters in the novel and who by marrying Zosie Shawano "lightens"(34) the family tree with his "Roy blood" is named after the Roman emperor, Augustus Ceasar: a symbolic title that foreshadows the "white" reign and subjugation that is about to come. As Cally implies, Augustus with his arrival has spread his "inquisitive Roy energy"(197) that has resulted in "the colliding [of] histories and destinies. Loss, darkness"(197).

Cally also stresses her mixed-blood lineage and the impact of colonialism by resembling her family members to a "huge old family lumped together like a can of those mixed party nuts"(110). However, Erdrich, by including the "spirit names" of both Cally and Deanna as crucial components in this diverse assortment of "party nuts" indicates that one's subjectivity need not to be a product of one's homogeneous system of thought whether this be western or Indian, but should be comprised of both. The name Blue Prairie Woman, the "stubborn and eraseless long-lasting name . . . that won't disappear"(217) is given to Cally and The Other Side of the Earth to Cally's twin sister Deanna, during a "naming dream" that Zosie visions. These "spirit names" which are handed down from one generation to the next "bear the marks and puckers" (217) of their past owners. Until the very last pages of the book, Cally isn't enlightened about the meaning of her spirit name and is led to wonder about her "history flying past"(102). In the chapter titled "Northwestern Blue" Cally not only learns the meaning and origin of her name but also finds out that she herself is a "namer," who has the "power from the in-between"(14). Furthermore, Cally becomes the next and last possessor of the "northwestern trader blue beads" that had passed from her great-great grandmother Blue Prairie Woman to her "deer" descendents ("Antelope Wife" being the most recent representative) and which symbolize the intersection of the sacred with the profane, the spiritual with the physical: "In them, you see the depth of the spirit life. See sky as through a hole in your body. Water. Life. See into the skin of the coming world"(214). The "blue beads" serve as an entry not only to the spiritual realm but also to her mythical past. All these connections link Cally as the person who will reconcile the past with the future, the tribal sense of community with urban estrangement, Ojibwa sacred metaphysics with materialist white values. As her modern name Cally (which can be related to the Greek term Calliope) signifies, she will also be the "beautiful voice" that will carry the responsibility of passing the spiritual beliefs, the "spirit names" to the next generations and be the "storyteller" who will create new stories from old threads and old designs. As a "namer" she has the power to revive the names, the forgotten values and beliefs, the cultural past of her people and as an interpreter who has been "sent here to understand and report"(220) she has the responsibility to create new ways of thinking that will bring sense to the past as well as the present. Her "dream visions" by enabling her to

understand the history, the traditions, the value of her people, will help her to "put back" the scattered beads "in new patterns, new strings"(220).

Because Cally is presented to us as the ideal Native-American self which will reconcile the old with the new and become the storyteller who will bear the important responsibility of passing tribal traditions and values to the next generation, it is crucial to examine her not only in relation to her namesakes but also through the "external images" that have played a significant role in the construction of her identity. Among the external images that Cally has put into memory is the picture of her "home" back at the reservation, especially the objects in her bedroom which consist of the photos of "Jimi Hendrix and the Indigo girls," (103) her previous boyfriend and the song band called "Indigeneous," as well as photos of bears, dogs, and "a buffalo trudging underneath a rainbow,"(103) "a bundle of sage," and "Grandma Roy's singing drum"(103). If we consider all of these as "icons" that make up the "narrative schema" of Cally's identity, then we realize that her internal and external reality comprises of both western and Indian frames of reference. Like most American youngsters she follows the most recent trends, dreams to be loved and cherished by the opposite sex and crams her bedroom with photographs, stuffed toys and animal posters. All of these are reflective of an urban youth culture that grows up with Eurocentric values and images. However, unlike Frank Shawano's sister Cecille, who has turned herself into a "bicep blond Indian with tiny hips and sculptured legs"(110), she is not infatuated with white values and white norms. On the contrary, her continuous search for the meaning of her dream name and its history indicates her sensitivity to her cultural past and traditions. Furthermore, in her room we see a mixture of items that are part of modern pop-culture as well as objects reflective of her Ojibway past. Such a combination of artifacts shows us how Cally's identity is construed by her immediate urban environment as well as her distant cultural history. Her turtle birth-holder –indis mashkimondez which she has lost in her childhood is also among the "objects" whose "every detail" she remembers and whose absence she thoroughly feels.(101) The turtle being one of the most sacred totems in Ojibway mythology is seen as having the magical power to "transgress time periods from present to future or to the past and back again. And to transform its physical to an incorporeal nature"(Johnston, 1976: 171). Even though she has lost this birth-holder that had connected her to her ancestors, she still possesses its spiritual power. For it is this power that enables her not only to see

"visions" from the past and give them meaning and form but also to become the "namer" who will carry the collective consciousness and collective history of her people.

The first and second generation in *The Antelope Wife* exhibit names that reflect Native-Americans use of language as a ritual means, to maintain the "status quo" within "a cyclic cosmological order" (Rainwater, 1999: 1); an order that embraces nature and its living creatures as a part of a "syncretic whole." On the other hand, most of the "names" of the following generations elucidate titles of honor, prestige and nobility and demonstrate the use of language as a means of perpetuating a hierarchical structure of power and reality. The gradual replacement of Ojibway names by western ones vividly illustrates the drastic influences of western colonialism on Native-American people. For colonialism is not only the appropriation of Indian lands but also as Rainwater puts it, "the appropriation of mental space and the revision of interpretive frames of reference"(26). However, Erdrich by depicting Cally as the next "namer" implies that the effects of colonialism though very severe are not irremediable. Cally will become the next storyteller who by retaining the old traditional names and language will prevent, in Owens terms, "the epic and tragic role white America has reserved for the Indian, a role in which . . . the hero must perish"(1992: 201). In addition, through the character of Cally, Erdrich shows the perseverance and maintenance of Native-American values as a result of a dynamic and interactive searching for a sense of self. Cally by perceiving herself and her relationship to the world outside her in connection to both her Ojibway and Euro American ties learns to conceptualize the world through a "narrative schema" that incorporates the "vision" of both worlds. Cally will be able to produce new frames of reference by gradually and slowly creating her own discourse out of the dominant one and will revise in accordance to the shifting realities and rapid changes of her modern environment.

### **3.4 Beading the "Reality" by Metaphor**

It is not enough to say that one is conscious of something, one is also conscious of something being something. (Percy, quoted in Geertz, 1964: 61)

Clifford Gertz maintains that the dominant perspective towards ideas is a systematic prioritization of facts and knowledge and the underestimation of metaphoric frameworks that categorize and organize consciousness. (Geertz, 1964: 57). For in the empirical world of western thought, ideas are seen as weapons to support or defend the objectivity of facts rather than as categories by which consciousness is itself organized. However, as cognitive linguists have pointed out, the individual in order to give meaning to his infinitely varied nature of his experience goes through a process of classification and categorization in which s/he tries to structure and conceptualize certain domains of her/his experience in terms of different new domains of experience. (Black 1962 : Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: and in a collection of essays in Ortony 1977 and White 1996 ). Most of the time the individual constructs relatively abstract domains in terms of more concrete ones. As Lakoff and Johnson indicate, “. . . we typically conceptualize the nonphysical in terms of the physical, we conceptualize the less clearly delineated in terms of the more clearly delineated” (1980: 59). However, mapping the structure of one domain of experience onto more abstract ones is not an arbitrary process. During this metaphorical mapping the individual preserves and carries the “logic” of the source domain to the target domain. Thus, metaphor should not be considered as only a figure of speech but a “mode of thought” that entails mental processes basic to language and cognition; a “cross-domain mapping in the conceptual system”(Lakoff 1993: 203). Metaphor, as seen by positivist thinkers, is not “an anomaly, an unusual or deviant way of using language, a minority interest, or something you do in literature class”(Goatly, 1997: 1) but a cognitive process that lets the individual construct similarities between two different domains of experience so that he/she can understand one thing in terms of another.

Culture and language plays a crucial role in the metaphorical mappings which establish our conceptual frameworks. For the words which we use in order to express our experience is encoded within cultural values and social inventions:

. . . every experience takes within a vast background of cultural presuppositions. . . Cultural assumptions, values, and attitudes are not a conceptual overlay which we may or may not place upon experience as we choose. It would be more correct to say that through and through, that we experience our “world” in such a way that our culture is already present in the very experience itself. (1980: 57)

From the above passage, it is clear that the individual's domains of experience depend upon cultural and sociological factors. Hence our "cross-domain mappings" rest upon not only how we conceive of and structure domains of experience but also of how our "culture" conceives domains of experience. What this implies is that while there is room for creative imagination in constructing reality, the cultural assumptions, values and worldviews built in language place quite severe constraints upon "what is possible." As a result, since meaning and interpretation evolves within a framework set by society and its prevalent worldviews, "metaphors" should also be seen as "conceptual models" that reflect the dominant views and values inherent in cultures and their languages.

If we apply the theory of metaphor into the "theory of framing" then what comes to the fore is that metaphorical processing entails the process of "framing." For in order to make the appropriate connections and associations between two domains of experience, the individual makes use of "schemas", in other words, the generic knowledge structures that are put into memory and which allows the selection, organization and integration of incoming information. Or the individual makes use of, in Werthe's simple paraphrasing, "an area of experience, with all the necessary connections and crossreferences"(1999:33). When seen in this respect, then the use of metaphors in literary texts become highly ideological since they not only convey the predominant worldview of the writer and his/her built-in knowledge structures but also have the capacity to generate new "frames" or "schemas" in which the reader is asked to accommodate to. For the writer not only constructs a "text world"(Werth, 1999) through his language but also a "reality" in which certain categories of experience is selected and projected as the "real." In such a "projection" the metaphors that the writer will use or create will also be ideological in the way that they will "highlight or conceal" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 9-10) certain features of reality and in turn will mediate a worldview in conjunction to the writer's. Therefore, we can assume that the metaphorical models that a writer uses are a reflection of his/her own built-in cognitive frames that are created in response his/her knowledge structures, experience of language and cultural processes of socialization.

In *The Antelope Wife* metaphors play a crucial role in directing the reader to make the necessary associations needed to comprehend the overall design of the

novel. All the chapter names either carry the names of characters or the names of specific objects or events that will serve as “icons” in the registration of abstract phenomena such as gender-crossing, self-afflicted pain, fear, death, love, self-hatred and so on. Thus, such chapter names as Father’s Milk, Blitzkuchen (which means a cake done very fast in German), Kamikaze Wedding, Tears, and Almost Soup indicate that the reading process will be geared towards a representation of knowledge which is analogical rather than analytical.<sup>30</sup> For the western reader is expected to draw associations from the visual images that these metaphorical titles trigger such as a man suckling a baby, man stabbing himself to death on a wedding, a cake made as fast as lightning, the process of becoming soup, someone crying, and in return see these visual mental representations as particular concrete instances of a more general abstract theme. In other words, an iconic resemblance between the conceptual domains is presupposed to facilitate the mapping of mental structures.

These character and object names also become reminders of the fact that the structure of the novel will not be based on a mapping of chronological events but on a network of metaphors that will lead the reader to understand the novel in terms of “relationships” and “analogies” rather than on facts and events. In fact, all through the novel we have only a single reference to a historical event which we assume to be the Little Crow’s War in 1862, when the Sioux began to raid surrounding forts and towns in Minnesota. Apart from one single reference there is no other date that can help the reader to situate the time span of the novel. As a matter of fact, not only does the time but also the text’s plot structure challenges the western reader whose sense-making competencies depend on the sequential coherence of events in the novel. The western reader who is used to pursuing a story line that is meaningfully connected in a temporal and causal way, will get confused and troubled by the multiple narratives that make up the plot. For each chapter consists of a story told by a different narrator and rather than concentrating upon a specific

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<sup>30</sup> Paul Werth (1999) in his book, *Text Worlds: Representing Conceptual Space in Discourse*, (Essex: Longman, pp: 28) distinguishes between analogic and analytic representation by positing that while the former can be characterized by its being iconic, pragmatic, contextual and responsive the latter has the qualities of being symbolic, semantic, grammatical and automatic.

episode that follows the traditional "grammar rules,"<sup>31</sup> they are conveyed in the mode of oral storytelling whose development is concentric opposed to linear, associational opposed to chronological. I have used the term "concentric" to emphasize the fact that each chapter is designed as a personal story that concentrates on an "internal disposition" framed within a universal feeling such as love, hate, sorrow, pain and whose function is not merely compromised of moving the plot onward. I have used the term "associational" to highlight the fact that stories are not connected by chronology but by "interrelationships" which are dated and tied to various before-and-after events in the personal relations linking the many characters. As a result, what comes to the fore is a subversive understanding of a plot that is centered on metaphors and personal relations rather than events and resolutions. For example, in the chapter titled "Tears" we do not come across a specific event or action that will contribute to the linear flow of the novel, but come across the emotional state of Richard Whiteheart Beads and Klaus Shawano (which can in fact be described metaphorically as tears.) The chapter opens up with the "tears" of Richard Whiteheart Beads who is described by Klaus Shawano as an alcoholic and drug-addict after the death of his daughter, Deanna, and ends with Klaus's contemplation of his own obsessive love to Sweet-heart Calico. What unites these two characters is their feeling of sorrow and pain which they have afflicted upon themselves as a result of their selfish and egoist natures. But what differentiates Klaus from Richard is that Klaus contemplates on his wrongdoings and tries to remedy the past while Richard continues to "devour whatever grazed, pecked, crawled, rooted over earth, or swam in the sea"(153). And it is this big difference between the two characters that the reader is made to realize throughout this chapter.

However, this does not mean that Erdrich's text does not refer to any sequence of actions that will contribute to the making of what Tomashevsky (1965)

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<sup>31</sup> Both Thorndyke (1977) and Rumelhart (1975) propose that stories are comprised of units which are structurally connected in the same way as the units of sentences. Thorndyke identifies the major components of a story as setting, theme, plot and resolution, with the plot consisting of an episode and where the episode comprises of a "subgoal, attempt and outcome." For a further reading on Thorndyke and Rumelhart see D.E. Rumelhart (1975), "Notes on a Schema for Stories" , in D.G. Bobrow and A. Collins (eds.), *Representation and Understanding: Studies in Cognitive Science* (New York: Academic Press), 211-36 and Perry W Thorndyke (1977), "Cognitive Structures in Comprehension and Memory of Narrative Discourse", *Psychology* 9: 77-110.

calls the "fabula" or Genette (1982) terms as "histoire" or Chatman (1978) and Rimmon-Kenan (1983) call "story." The multiple narratives moving back in time, from the present to the buried past, from the immediate to the remote provide a general historical framework in which the reader is asked to decipher the entangled and confusing relationships between the characters and their past. And by the time Erdrich concludes the story of the Roys, Shawanos and Whiteheart Beads, it is clear that she has circumscribed her text temporally no matter how vague it may seem in terms of narrative technique. For the novel starts with the Ojibway raid and ends with its aftermath asking the reader to "bind" these interconnected personal narratives with "history": a history that has been penetrated by Anglo-colonialist oppression and violence and is recounted in order that the reader relate this "vanishing history" to others.

Despite such a historical framework, Louise Erdrich intentionally disrupts the story scheme with chronological gaps, multiple viewpoints, confusing bloodlines and multiple characters. As one reviewer remarks, "Some readers, having lost the narrative thread of this maddening complex novel, will not finish it, wondering where the plot got bogged down. Some who do finish it will wonder what is gained by giving us so many names and characters whose purpose or function is not clear until a second reading –if then. Some will both yearn for and resent the need for genealogical charts" (Beidler, 1999: 219). Furthermore, the organizing principle that provides the text with a unifying theme and structure is not a specific event, action or character but a literary metaphor whose source domain is outside western categories of experience. And if we assume that "narrative is one of the large categories or systems of understanding that we use in our negotiations with reality" (Brooks, 1984: xi), then Louise Erdrich's refusal of plot centered on temporal sequence and western metaphors becomes a subversive act of resistance to western models of reality. For it is the extended metaphor of beadwork, an art unique to Native American life that frames the novel from the opening page to its close. It asks the reader to conceptualize "reality" not as a given fact but as a creative process in which the reader and the beaded play crucial roles. Thus, it is pivotal that we understand the significance of such a metaphor since "beadwork" becomes an iconic sign that constitutes not only the thematic but also the narrative structure of the novel. It invites the reader to view "narrative" as different stories beaded to make one large overall design. Each personal narrative functions as a

unique pattern that communicates the narrator's personal experience to the world around him/her and is threaded with the narrator's innermost feelings, thoughts and desires. In a sense the narrator becomes the beader who chooses the color, shape and design of his/her narrative and stitches his/her story together using the rich thread of events, people or objects found in his natural world. In this respect, we can view *The Antelope Wife* as a story in which multiple narrators bead their many stories into a single story that becomes, very gradually, a "beadwork" of intertwined lives. For the novel is not only comprised of heterogeneous discourses which speak through human, non-human, male, female, adult and child voices but also is interspersed with personal anecdotes unfolding rich interrelationships where the past and the present come together. However, "beadwork" also becomes a metaphor that results in the reader's self-critical awareness of his or her own role in text production. For as *The Antelope Wife* closes, Erdrich addresses readers directly for the first time with a highly metaphorical question: "Who is beading us? Who is setting flower upon flower and cut-glass vine? Who are you and who am I, the beader or the bit of colored glass sewn onto the fabric of this earth? All these questions, they tug at the brain. We stand on tiptoe, trying to see over the edge, and only catch a glimpse of the next bead on the string, and the woman's hand moving, one day, the next, and the needle flashing over the horizon"(240). Is the pattern-maker the writer or the reader or the stories themselves that evolve over time and maintain their own unique history and frames of reference?

Apart from the attempt to illuminate the narrative structure of the novel as an "act of beading," Erdrich also uses "beadwork" as an ideological metaphor that asks the reader to conceptualize the meaning of life from a non-western perspective. Through the utilization of such a metaphor, Erdrich invites the reader to refer to his/her store knowledge of "beading" – a conceptual domain in which s/he is not too familiar with and must fill in if s/he is to understand the significance of the "knots," the "seed beads" and the "threads" that are constantly repeated throughout the story. For if we are to carry the logic of "beading" into the target domain of "human experience" then we must be able to grasp all the little details that will enable us to make the appropriate connections and inferences. In order to clarify how "beadwork" operates in an ideological level, I will have to first resort to explaining the function and the meaning of the four main sections of the novel entitled Bayzhig, Neej, Niswey, and Neewin.

*The Antelope Wife* consists of twenty three chapters that are divided into four main sections and each section is introduced to the reader with a short preface numbered one through four in the Ojibway language: "Bayzhig," "Neej," "Niswey," and "Neewin." These four parts are more like successive fragments of a "creation story" which are weaved by Louise Erdrich to the novel's narrative blanket so as to blend myth into the fabric of contemporary Native-American life. In the first section titled Bayzhig, the reader is introduced to two archetypal twin sisters who are engaged in a furious beading competition, warring against each other in their beading of human destiny:

## PART ONE

### Bayzhig

EVER SINCE THE BEGINNING these twins are sewing. One sews with light and one with dark. The first twin's beads are cut-glass whites and pales, and the other twin's beads are glittering deep red and blue black indigo. One twin uses an awl made of an otter's sharpened penis bone, the other uses that of a bear. They sew with a single sinew thread, in, out, fast and furious, each trying to set one more bead into the pattern than her sister, each trying to upset the balance of the world. (1)

Beadwork unique to Native-American culture becomes the central metaphor of this mythic prelude designating creation and the activity of life itself. Beading signifies motion and order, an interlacing that forms a design. The twin beadworkers moving their string in and out give a pattern to the world. One critic has resembled these twins to the Greek Morai, (Stokey, 1999:127), the three goddesses who have spun the threads of fate and who represent the past, present and future. While these twins can resemble the Morais in respect of weaving the web of life, the emphasis of the creation story is more on their competition and dualistic natures. Like the section's two coexisting titles that are written first in English and then in Ojibway, these twins also represent a double consciousness in which the integration of two diversities are perceived as creating a whole. Erdrich portrays one twin as responsible for life "sew[ing] with light" and the other for the darkness in the world, sewing "with dark." The gift of light provides consciousness, nourishment and warmth while the dark opens the road to the unconsciousness, chaos and the unknown. While one twin uses the "awl made of an otter's sharpened penis bone,"

which can be interpreted as signifying the sea the other “uses that of a bear” representing the earth. The section ends with Erdrich associating these twins with power, their urge to possess power by “trying to set one more bead into the pattern. . and upset the balance of the world.” In other words, the complementary nature of the twinship evolves into an oppositional one as well, since the twins not only try to outdo but also dominate the other.

The second part of this mythological story unfolds with the competition gaining a more strenuous and violent quality:

Neej

THE PATTERN GLITTERS WITH CRUELTY: The blue beads are colored with fish blood, the reds with powdered heart. The beads collect in borders of mercy. The yellows are dyed with the ocher of silence. There is no telling which twin will fall asleep first, allowing the other's colors to dominate, for how long. The design grows, the overlay deepens. The beaders have no other order at the heart of their being. Do you know that the beads are sewn onto the fabric of the earth with endless strands of human muscle, human sinew, human hair? We are as crucial to this making as other animals. No more or no less important than the deer. (73).

Due to the beaders struggle for power and domination, the pattern that is created “glitters with cruelty” covering the beads with “fish blood” and “powdered heart.” The desire to gain power and control the other has resulted in a vicious war in which the color “red” has begun to dominate the overall design. If we relate this vicious battle to the novel's storyline, we can link it as the aftermath of the “cruel raid” which has resulted in the fragmentation of Native-American identity. For the novel opens with a “spectacular cruel raid”(3) and the curse of an elderly bayoneted Ojibway woman releasing the word “daashiika” from her mouth as she dies trying to protect innocent children from being slaughtered. The word “daashika” which is defined by Cally's grandmother as “cracked apart” (213), plays a vital role until the end of the novel. The word evokes the image of being split apart into two, and it is very striking that it surfaces as a consequence of the white man's policy of racial purity that defends the geographical displacement and cultural annihilation of all people who are not white. As a result, the term “daashika” should be read as a symbol that signifies the attempt of white man to demarcate a line not only between himself and the “others” but also to impose his own system of dualistic thinking onto

the others. The image of this bayoneted woman replaces the many split Native-American identities that have emerged as a result of Anglo-colonialist oppression and violence.<sup>32</sup> The mythic story of the twins runs parallel with the narrative plot of the story since the twins also try to inflict the patterns of duality to the world they are beading, sewing "in, out, fast and furious, each trying to upset the balance of the world"(1). Consequently, this subsequent fragment of the creation myth can be read from a racial point of view highlighting the American myth of conquest which has resulted in the bloody genocide of the Indian peoples and their ruthless subjugation. It is utilized in order to reframe the polarizing mechanisms that are at the heart of white man's invasion of Indian lands and whose ideology authorizes a dualistic concept of the world. In such a worldview, white man sees himself as separate and superior to the natural world and believes he has the right to master and exploit nature and all its living creatures. In short, the pattern that Erdrich describes as "glitter[ing] with cruelty" can in fact stand for the EuroAmerican story of human dominion over nature and the implementation of such a hierarchic polar thinking onto the Indians people who in contrast viewed themselves as kin to the spirits of the land. Consequently, it is after the elderly woman's symbolic "splitting into two" by white man's "bayonet," do twins actually begin to appear in the family line of the Roys and Shawanos.

However, the beading competition that is taking place between these two twins is not only specific to contemporary Native-Americans who are culturally fragmented, torn between white and Indian models, but also the central problem of the human condition as well. Erdrich through the metaphor of twins, demonstrates vividly the opposite forces that control human existence and by placing it within the frame of beadwork, asks the reader to comprehend "experience" as the individual's tapestry woven by its two opposing sides. If one dominates the other, then this balance will be "upset" and Erdrich in the narrative plot of the novel exposes how

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<sup>32</sup> The image of the bayoneted woman is also a good example to all critics that have accused Erdrich as being non political and not giving place to the effects of EuroAmerican colonialism and suppression. The most severe criticism was put forward by Leslie Marmon Silko in her review of the *Beet Queen*, when she protested that the world of Erdrich was "an oddly rarified place in which the individual's own psyche, not racism or poverty, accounts for all the conflict and tension. In this pristine world all misery, suffering and loss are self-generated, just as conservative Republicans have been telling us for years." (1986: 10) For a more detailed reading see "Here's an Odd Artifact for the Fairy-Tale Shelf", in *Impact Magazine Review of Books, Albuquerque Journal*, October 17.

destruction is brought about precisely by the inability to bring these two polar sides together to equilibrium. In the first chapter, "Father's Milk" we come across the desire to colonize and dominate which leads to the vicious slaughtering of innocent Ojibway children, men and women. In the chapters, "Yellow Pickup Truck", "The Girl and Her Deer Husband" and the "Antelope Wife", we encounter death and abduction that results from the desire to possess and own. In the personification of Richard Whiteheart Beads we also come across the pattern of cruelty and destruction for like his surname indicates he is devoid of any compassion and humanity. And like Scranton Roy who tries to avenge his unreturned love by slaughtering innocent Ojibwa people, Richard avenges his wife's adultery by threatening to poison everyone attending his ex-wife's wedding. However, unlike Scranton Roy who realizes the brutality of his deed and tries to amend it by saving the life of an Indian baby and seeking out the remnants and survivors of the brutal massacre, Richard Whiteheart Beads never truly understands the consequences of his actions. His alcoholism and suicidal tendencies not only become the reason for her daughter's death but also prevents him from creating a harmonious pattern with his environment. As one critic asserts, "His [Richard's] character is a representation of how ill equipped some people are to succeed at blending cultures today. In the process of living and blending or splitting cultures there will be 'terrible poisons' which must be dumped somewhere. Richard is the unfortunate representative of such a repository"(Magoulick, 2000: 298). In other words, Erdrich indicates that the battle between the twins stands for the internal struggle that every individual goes through regardless of race and gender. Furthermore, by linking the humans and animals as co-partners in the creative process Erdrich also foregrounds the pan-Indian idea of "interrelatedness" in the universe in which "all things in the universe [are] dependent on each other"(Beck, 1992: 8). For it is only when the individual acknowledges all things as being of equal value, will s/he be liberated from the oppositions, dualisms and separateness that characterize western thought. Interestingly enough, the two of the three chapters that weave the narrative fabric of this section is recounted by a dog who affirms this pan-Indian belief by asserting that he too is "connected in the beadwork"(91). By reminding the reader that "we are crucial to this making as other animals. No more and no less important than the deer" Erdrich dismantles the hierarchical polarization of human versus animal and rewrites nature in this creation myth as an active partner rather than a passive object.

In the third part of this mythic narrative, titled "Niswey," Erdrich adds one more essential ingredient into this "beadwork," and that is the element of "chance" and unpredictability":

#### Niswey

SOUNDING FEATHER, GREAT GRANDMA of first Shawano, dyed her quills blue and green in a mixture of her own piss boiled with shavings of copper. No dye came out the same way twice. According to her contribution, always different. The final resulted from what she ate, drank, what she did for sex, and what she said to her mother or her child the day before. She never knew if she'd end up with blue dye, green or a dull combination. What frightened her was this: One morning, after she had lost her struggles, done evil in the night, resented and sought revenge of her sisters, slapped her husband and screamed at her child, the quill worker peed desultorily and finished her usual dye. Dipping the white quills into the mixture, she found that the blue she made that day was unusually, lovely, deep and clear. (99)

In this mythic prelude, Erdrich emphasizes the active role each individual plays in the shaping of his/her destiny. It is the individual's "mixture of her own piss" that creates the colors of the quills. In spite of the apparent destiny of the Roy, Shawano and Whiteheart Bead clans, there is no fate but what the characters make for themselves. People who are caught between two cultures and who cannot resolve or reconcile the oppositions within and outside themselves can end up as Richard Whiteheart Beads, a tragic alcoholic who pities himself and commits suicide. For all the characters in the novel face practical and cultural dichotomies and make choices that shape their lives. They battle the "split" of cultures and those who succeed like Cally are the ones who are able to create new designs from the thread of old ones. Rozin on the other hand is able to seize happiness and contentment when she finally lets go of the "one black seam . . . of unforgiveness"(181) that she had stitched for Richard.

Furthermore, the "unpredictability" of Sounding Feather's quill dyes foregrounds the role that "randomness" plays in the formation of new cultural patterns and paradigms. This "unpredictability" is also implied in the second prelude when we are told that there is no telling which color will dominate the pattern since "there is no telling which twin will fall asleep"(73). Even though the pattern that has

been set may comprise of as Cally indicates "the vines and leaves of infidelities. There a suicidal tendency, a fatal wish. On this side drinking. On the other side a repression of guilt that finally explodes,"(200) lovely new designs may emerge from the pain of the old ones. From fragmentation and destruction, a new multicultural design may evolve carrying the most "lovely and deep" colored beads. As Cally remarks, Native-Americans "may be scattered like beads off a necklace"(220) but they will be "put back together in new patterns, new strings"(220). This new design will be weaved neither by assimilating to white values nor by replicating the old patterns of Indian way of life. Instead a new alternative is presented in the mythic story of the warring twins who are actually split apart by white man's dualisms that have set good against bad, white against Indian and nature against the individual. For Erdrich indicates that there is only one "single sinew thread" that each twin must share with the other, emphasizing how conflicting elements must coexist if a healthy balance is to be achieved. Thus, a world woven by one single thread foregrounds the fact that these twins in their struggle to dominate the other, are actually engaged in a competition to "reconcile" realities perceived as separate. At the end there will be one pattern beaded by one single string and it will weave coherence from apparent contradictions. In other words, from the evil, agony and destruction of the past, new lovely patterns will emerge. As one critic states, ". . . the emphasis of the novel is . . . on individual growth and weaving new patterns for individual cohabitation and survival out of the chaos and pain of the past" (Little 2000: 499).

The last mythic prelude of *The Antelope Wife* makes a vital statement concerning the oppositional forces of creation and destruction composing the universe. It asks the reader to view the competition of the opposing twins not from a western frame of reference that is "war" in which to "win" is the primary goal, but from a Native-American perspective which is to see this competition as a trial, as a test of spirit. The second twin rather than fulfilling her personal responsibility that has been set down to her, that is to complete the "larger meaning of her design"(184), gets infatuated by the idea of possessing the rare and exquisite red beads which are "attained only by the addition, to the liquid glass, of twenty-four carat gold"(183). Determined to use them in the "center of her design"(183), the second twin "gambled, lost, grew desperate, bet everything. At last, even the blankets of her children"(183). When the twin gets possession of the beads, her children neglected and ignored, "shivering" and "hungry" swallow the beads

mistaking them for candy. The twin goes crazy, filled with rage and anger chases desperately after her children with a knife in her hand. Erdrich very dramatically illustrates that the "drive" underlying the pursuit of destruction is the lust for power and property which are at the roots of American capitalism and individualism. What is conveyed is a model of the self that worships his own interests beyond everything and everyone. This is what Paula Gunn Allen refers to as the "American Individual Ethic"(1998:29), that praises the individual over community, the self over the family. Sometimes, Erdrich insists, we have a choice about which force we are aligned with and sometimes not. But as demonstrated in the finale of the creation story, we become destructive when we are engaged only in our own egoist needs and impulses and forget that there is a whole world that wants to embrace us. The last prelude is not a criticism of western culture but of any culture that has produced characters devoid of communal and familial bonds and moral sensibility. The potential to experience the state of relatedness and finish the beaded pattern is shattered in the face of greed and the desire to "own" and "possess." As Paula Gunn Allen puts it, "When the concepts of possessiveness or proprietorship disappear as being meaningful in our lives, the haunting sense of separation from the universe will be lessened because possessiveness requires selfishness, and selfishness is separation" (Allen, 1998: 20).

The opening fragment to each part of *The Antelope Wife* make the reader especially conscious about reading and looking at "metaphor", and about the ways "metaphor" serves as a model for understanding reality and one's place in the world. Through the metaphor of beadwork, Erdrich emphasizes the significance of each and every bead in the creation of the overall design and demonstrates how it is their "interconnectedness" and "plurality" that give the design its shape and uniqueness. For without "connections" to significant others, meaning, self-esteem, a sense of belonging cannot exist. It is as Cally remarks at the end of the novel, "Everything is all knotted up in a tangle. Pull one string of this family and the whole web will tremble"(239). Furthermore, by portraying the beaders as "warring" twins who try to "upset the balance of the world," Erdrich also indicates the difficulty in reconciling the polarities of human existence and reaching a balance against the clear-cut oppositions set by western systems of belief. Being "beaded" by two oppositional twins can be read as the consequential ambivalence experienced by most Native-Americans who attempt to reconcile their cultural heritage with the expectations of

white dominant culture. Consequently, through the utilization of such a metaphor as "beadwork," Erdrich also challenges the destructive configurations of the self and the world. For the metaphor not only embodies the cross-coding of Ojibway worldview with that of the dominant culture, but also entails the competing notions of individual identity. The last prelude presents the western self-centered materialist individual as a tragic figure who in the end is locked into isolation, divided from his/her family, victimized by his/her greed and lust for power. Every individual in the novel struggles to find harmony and those who succeed will do so only with the help of family, community and traditions. If the individual can accept the world as it is, as Cally does, and learn from the past s/he will stand as the durable resilient beads that represent wholeness and beauty. And in their circularity and durability each and every bead will play a vital role in the continuity of a living tradition and in the creation of a new paradigm.

The mythological story that unfolds in parallel to the narrative plot, implies how the "self" is also "beaded" to the collective unconscious of its culture, and how it is politically empowered when it is mythically connected to communal values and traditions. In other words, the co-existence of two different types of narrative that unfold simultaneously can be read as a metaphorical "interlacing" of the world of the text with the mythic world of storytelling, or as life having "twin manifestations that are mutually interchangeable"(Allen, 1983: 8). The material and the spiritual, the physical and the mythic are fused from the novel's onset when Blue Prairie Woman's pregnancy is described as the "forming" of two babies, "creating themselves just as the first twin gods did at the beginning"(14). In a way, Erdrich necessitates the simultaneous reading of the four mythic preludes with the storyline indicating an analogous relationship between them. While the narrative plot of the story resides materially in "this world," the preludes surface from the collective conscious of Native Americans who believe in the power of myths, legends and stories. Reading the novel through the frame of such a mythical creation, fuses reality with myth, archetype with identity and blurs the boundaries between the real and mythic worlds.

In short, the creation myth in which two twins are described as "beading" the pattern of the world highlights two important Native-American concepts. One is that of "interconnectedness" and the other is that of "balance" and "harmony." Erdrich by

using the metaphor of "beadwork" as a frame of reference not only represents the reading process as an act of creation in which both the "beader" and the "beaded," the author and the reader share equal roles, but also asks the reader to conceptualize the world as one piece of beadwork, circular, dynamic and related. As a result, the utilization of such a metaphoric model becomes highly ideological since it subverts the assumptions that have been commonly held in the western world regarding life and its meaning. The source-path-goal schema underlying western metaphors like "Life is a journey," is replaced by an interconnectedness-circularity-wholeness schema that organizes experience in terms of relationships and harmony. Such a replacement also necessitates the subversion of the "American Adam" myth that has contributed to the estrangement of the individual from his family and community and has introduced the western concept of the self-sufficient "loner" to American life. As a matter of fact, the novel opens with such a western hero, Scranton Roy, who in his determination to "prove himself"(4) sets off in a journey to the unknown, leaving behind his "Quaker father" and "reclusive poet mother."(3) Cutting loose his family ties and going "against the radiant ways of his father, he enlist[s] in the U.S. Cavalry," (4) and partakes in one of the cruelest raids in American history. Scranton Roy, in fact, stands for the "rugged individualist" who with his righteous imperative, without a father or mother, singular and alone wanders in the heart of the forest and destroys whatever and who ever comes in his way. However, Erdrich subverts this mythic image of the American Adam, when Scranton Roy after bayoneting an elderly woman begins to despise his ruthless and vicious "dark acts" (5) and rather than making "isolation" and "progress" his defining virtues, commits his life to the nurturing and raising of an Indian girl, Matilda and later to the rearing of his son, Augustus Roy. By depicting this white man as a wet-nurse, breastfeeding and mothering both babies, Erdrich challenges not only the linear metaphor of "life is a journey" bereft of familial and communal ties, but also replaces it by a reciprocal metaphor, "life is commitment", in which maternal relationships and bonding come to the fore. Furthermore, at the end of the novel, we see Scranton Roy's white grandson, Augustus, playing an active and influential role in the formation of the Roy and Whiteheart family trees when he trades some red whiteheart beads to marry Zosie Shawano and from their offsprings the Roy bloodline is formed. Furthermore, the name of the beads that he trades are given to an Indian child who will begin the Whiteheart Bead family line. As a result, everyone in the novel, be it a white or an Indian, a dog or a human is connected in the

"beadwork" and are sewn into the pattern in which they make up the "tiny pieces of the huge design"(83). For the wholeness schema asks the reader not to perceive life as "progress" but life as "contribution." In the name of achieving a goal one must not sacrifice others, for it is the "binding" that keeps the "design" together.

As a conclusion, we can say that the "beadwork" metaphor is a message of inclusivity and foregrounds the Native-American system of thought based on a non-hierarchical order of the universe in which the static as well as the dynamic, the individual as well as the community and the natural as well as the supernatural forces all play an imperative role in the perseverance and maintenance of balance and harmony. It is used by Louise Erdrich as a cognitive frame that subverts Western modes of linear and dualistic thinking, western models of identity and western understandings of life and its meaning.

## CONCLUSION

By applying schema theory, I have tried to demonstrate how a magic realist text through the utilization of language, textual and world schemata tries to initiate a process of subversion in the mental processes of the western reader. Through the employment of both western and non-western frames of reference, Louise Erdrich in her novel, *The Antelope Wife*, is able to dismantle western polarized thinking, redefine the parameters of reality, and challenge pre-established mental representations. Like most magical realist narratives, *The Antelope Wife*, provides a "third space" whereby the reader is invited to contemplate another world besides his/her own. However, "magical realism" is not imposed to the reader as a "galaxy of signifiers" which do not have an order, a unity, or a structure but on the contrary are let to be conceived as meaningful "signifieds" that entail a structure and allow the reader to "make sense" of it. Louise Erdrich activates familiar "scripts" grounded on verisimilitude, motivation and realistic description and creates a magical world circumscribed in reality. In this way, Louise Erdrich reorganizes what Fairclough asserts as the reader's "mental map of the social world"(1989: 2) which consists of his expectations, his assumptions and his prior knowledge and facilitates the illusion of "magical realism" without complicating the "sense-making" activity of the western reader.

The "schema theory" or "frame semantics" helps us understand how Erdrich lets western readers appropriate and identify with her magical realist text without making them feel that they have exiled from their normative value structure. Erdrich makes use of the reader's schematic knowledge, his/her organized background information to recreate new structures of meaning and experience. The descriptions of events and the portrayal of characters in *The Antelope Wife* are rich in physical and sensory details that are blended with unobserved but significant "natural attitudes" of the human condition in general. These details which seem inessential to the movement of the story are actually very important narrative units that grant the text its "irreducible factuality" (Martin, 1986: 67). Through a vast incorporation of universal feelings such as love, pity, sorrow, fear and the employment of well-known universal scripts such as motherhood, love and survival, Louise Erdrich creates a fictional world that validates the supernatural occurrences and glazes them with a

believable coating. For example, because we activate the "lover" script when reading the chapter "The Girl and her Deer Lover" or activate the "mother" script when we come across the breast-feeding scene of Scranton Roy, we comprehend both the deer and the soldier not in their actual existence but in their situational roles, as a devoted lover or a caring mother. For it is the intimate relationship that can only be experienced between a man and a woman or a mother and child and its rooting in intense and sincere emotion that prepares the reader to the "marvelous." In other words, the unrestricted love between two people or the genuine bond established between man and child are furnished with such authentic and true-to-life details that the reader disregards the humanity or the gender of its actants and conceptualizes the marvelous occurrences in terms of their universal meanings. In the case of the depiction of a flesh and blood talking dog, Erdrich uses the referential and cultural codes of 20<sup>th</sup> century urban America as well as the "act of narration" itself to inscribe the reader into the magical realist world of the novel. By portraying the Windigo dog as the practical, self-determined, self-centered and quick decision making individual of 20<sup>th</sup> century cosmopolitan America, Erdrich is able to present it as acceptable and non-threatening to the world of reason. The Windigo Dog's story of survival which comprises of the do's and don'ts of everyday life functions as a basic "survival kit" for anyone who does not want to be swept by the rapid changes of today's modern world. Furthermore, by playing with the notion of a dual voice, Erdrich is able to integrate both western and Ojibwa, individualistic and communal, realistic and magical traits within a single character. The construction of such an identity is not only a message sent to the western reader but to the Indian reader as well. It becomes a reminder that a monocentric view of reality whether this be a western or Native-American view of human experience is not adequate for the rapid changing realities of contemporary life. In short, we can say that the "discourse world" of this marvelous talking dog not only functions to make the mental landscape of the "animoshug" world very familiar and intelligible to the western reader but also serves as an ideological construct that dictates the characteristics of the Native-American "self" in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

As a result, we can say that the "supernatural" is conveyed as a natural component of everyday reality through the utilization of cognitive frames that are familiar to the overall reader. While the reader realizes such phenomena as a milking soldier, a deer lover or a talking dog is logically impossible, s/he accepts its

integration within the fictitious world of the novel. In a way the magico-mythic world of the novel seems so real and so convincing that the reader does not challenge what he reads and actually begins to play an active role in its materialization. The reading process is transformed into a process of "naturalization" where magical occurrences are "woven in seamlessly"<sup>33</sup> in an explicit factual manner, with all the vividness, preciseness and concreteness of realism, transforming the reader to a witness who not only verifies these supernatural events but also absorbs the ideological worldview inherent in magic realism. Thus, I believe that "naturalization" of the spiritual also metaphorically designates the "cognitive schema" that is exercised throughout the book in which the "act of reading" becomes also an ideological medium that converts "implied readers" to "active eyewitnesses." In other words, Wolfgang Iser's statement that highlights the "creative role" of the reader during the reading process, ". . . the text only takes on life when it is realized, and furthermore the realization is by no means independent of the individual disposition of the reader," (1974: 274-75) happens with an ironic twist: the reader's "individual disposition," his/her cognitive processes become the operating force that grants the magic-realist text's credibility and makes the reader an active participant in the actualization of the supernatural.

Apart from the utilization of cognitive frames that heavily rely on the use of stereotypical situations and the affirmation of social universal values and feelings, Louise Erdrich employs various other schemata to convey the magico-mythic world inherent in *The Antelope Wife* as the prevailing normative worldview. These are the significance of chapter and character names, the use of non-western metaphors and the devising of a narrative structure that centers around "interrelationships" and storytelling rather than plot unity or character development. Louise Erdrich uses the title of her book and sub-titles as textual frames that direct the reader to interpret reality not as a static term designating one single "truth" but as a hybrid space that blurs the clear-cut borders between tradition and change, miracles and fact, the archaic and the contemporary, West and the Indian. Titles in *The Antelope Wife* serve as "thresholds" in which the readers pass from their everyday reality to the

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<sup>33</sup> A phrase used by Suzanne Baker in her paper "Binarisms and Duality: Magic Realism and Postcolonialism" *Span* 36 (1993), to indicate the subtle incorporation of supernatural elements in magic realistic fiction.

highly organized magical space of the fictional world. Such chapter names as the "Antelope Wife," "The Girl and Her Deer Husband," "Father's Milk" push the reader to new domains of experience by presenting the two opposing realities of the natural and the supernatural as equally ontologically valid and simultaneously visible. Furthermore, the use of non-English terminology in the naming of various titles such as Nibi, Gakahbekong, Blitzkuchen can be read as an attempt to "appropriate" the semiotic space of the novel with a multi-focal perspective so that a totalizing dominant way of looking at the world may be evaded. Character names in *The Antelope Wife* serve as powerful ideological signs that demonstrate the gradual process of assimilation of Native-Americans into the homogeneous system of western thought. The names of the first generation of characters are reflective of the values and beliefs of Native-Americans whereas most of the names of the succeeding generations serve as textual cues that display the dominance of western culture in the formation of Native-American identities. The gradual replacement of authentic Ojibway names such as Apijigo Bakaday, Midassbaupayikway with western ones such as Richard, Regina and Cecille demonstrate the severe influences of western colonialism on Native-American people. The inscription of western labels onto Native-American bodies can be read as a semiotic act to reveal the conscious or unconscious process by which the West has gradually projected its own worldview as the normative. However, by passing on the "dream names" of certain powerful characters such as Blue Prairie Woman to the future generations and by depicting one of her youngest character as the next "namer," Erdrich reminds the western reader that the "self" like the concept of reality, is not a by-product of one dominant mode of thought but consists of a cluster of schemata that reflect ample domains of experience.

By placing a strong emphasis on an achronological presentation of reality based upon metaphors and myth, Louise Erdrich also deviates from the expected story schemata and disrupts the conventional "story grammars" that facilitate reading comprehension. As a result the process of reading also becomes cyclical, forcing the reader into a productive and continuous shuttering between textual levels, the mythical and the contemporary, the past and the present. For her novel cuts back and forth among several generations to create a nearly mythic sense of the past when the novel opens up with a pair of twin gods who are described as creating the pattern of the world, reenacting the matriarchal myths of Native-

American legends. From the penis bones of animals, i.e. from the reproductive organs of the male species these twins create the order of the world and its unique patterns. However, immediately afterwards, we are confronted with the stark reality and dualisms of contemporary American life. Parallel to these twins who try to establish their own order and design by trying to dominate and outdo the other, we come across the white man, Scranton Roy, who engages in a brutal massacre of an Indian village and partakes in the raging annihilation of "others" who (being non-whites) are seen as threats to the existing status quo. At the very end of the novel, we have an eternal return to this raid and its aftermaths in which the storyteller tries to weave a fabric of meaning and significance out of the remnants of the past. Louise Erdrich takes us back to where we had started reading, to Scranton Roy and "to the old scores and pains and betrayals that went back in time"(240) and not only places humanity within a cyclical ordered cosmos but also gives the reader responsibility for understanding the "delicate balance" the real and the magical rests on.

Another narrative device that Erdrich employs in order to incorporate traditional Native-American belief systems into the techno-modern world of the west is the utilization of non-western metaphors. In fact, Louise Erdrich describes the world of *The Antelope Wife* through one single unitary metaphor which is the metaphor of Native-American beadwork. The beadwork metaphor asks the reader to conceptualize the world as one piece of beadwork –circular, dynamic and related. Each and every "bead" with their different colors, shapes and textures have equal shares in their contribution to the finished pattern. In this respect, "beadwork" can be seen as the interdependent stitching of human lives in which the overall design derives from Native-American synthetic thought (opposed to western analytic thought) which "involve[s] a search for and appreciation of the connections between categories of experience"(Leuthold, 1998: 190). It is for this reason that we are not surprised when Erdrich weaves the histories of humanlike animals such as Windigo Dog or the deer husband or animal like humans such as Antelope Wife into the plot of the novel. Consequently, the beadwork metaphor functions not only as a conceptual metaphor that invites the reader to decode the meaning of life, an abstract concept in terms of a craft familiar to all Native-Americans but also as a literary metaphor that brings about a reconceptualization of experience. By constructing a new frame of reference that highlights the cosmic interrelatedness of

all things, animate or inanimate, human or non-human, mythic or profane, Erdrich invites the reader to capture Native- American experience.

Through repeated exposure to a hybrid reality that mediates between the real and the unreal, the human and the animal, the white and the Indian, Erdrich breaks down western reader expectations and undermines the projection of western experience and western reality as typical of humanity. She impels her reader to explore the text's imaginative worlds rather than have him process the text through a western cultural agenda. However, if we assume that the notion of "reality" is a social construct, then its means of representation, whether it be realistic or magical, factual or dream-like, metaphorical or metonymical, is highly ideological. For like realism, magical realism should also be considered as a "systematization of a point of view"(Kress & Hodge, 1979: 6). Therefore, the selection and utilization of particular frames by Louise Erdrich should not only be considered as a narrative strategy intended to convey specific cultural and social values of Native-American people but as a highly ideological maneuver that aims to challenge hegemonic patterns of reading and understanding the world. In this respect, schema theory is a valuable tool in revealing how through the activation of particular frames, processes of subversion or legitimization takes place in the reader's cognitive plane while s/he attempts to reorganize his/her prior world knowledge in accordance to the reality presented in the text. For "frames" as all cognitive features of discourse can be used to support power relations as well as to challenge or change them. In fact, the application of schema theory on *The Antelope Wife* not only reveals the "schematized" aspects of the text that bridge the two disparate realms of the magic and the real, but also demonstrates, in general, how writers are able to manipulate reader's language, textual and world knowledge bases to create a magical realist worldview. In this respect, application of schema theory to *The Antelope Wife* displays five essential characteristics of magical realist narratives:

- 1) The reconstruction of the real and the unreal on the same semantic plane can happen if the writer is able to activate familiar "reality models" that will enable the reader to conceptualize the supernatural in accordance to the socially defined "natural attitudes" of a given culture. In the case of western culture, it is evident that "reality" is constructed through the concept of mimesis. As a result, magical realist writers writing in the United States and

who mostly come from ethnic backgrounds have to take into consideration not only the western reader's socio-cultural or world knowledge that is shaped by the perspectives of empirical science but also the values, belief system and the reality of his/her own particular ethnic audience. What this implies is that if magical realist ethnic writers want the "generalized reader" to create a sense of reality and meaning from the text, they should assume a "bifocal" or "reciprocal" perspective that can gradually pull both mainstream and ethnic readers into the magical realist world of the text.

- 2) Magic realist writers not only have to use the conventions of realism, but they also have to use them to defy the ideology and hegemony of realism. In this respect, a magical realist ethnic writer that seeks to initiate a "process of subversion" in the mental processes of the reader has to use the very referential and cultural codes of mimetic representation. Consequently, the commonplace principles of western reality are used to create a new frame of understanding that will bear the imprints of the empirical and material world as well as that of the metaphysical and the supernatural. Realistic descriptions and factual details serve as rhetorical strategies of persuasion, inviting the western reader to restructure pre-existing world schemata in the light of a hybrid world where the real and the magical can coexist on the same semantic plane.
- 3) Besides the employment of familiar frames, magic realist writers also make use of non-western frames of reference to initiate a thinking of the real and what it represents. For example, titles, sub-titles, metaphors can become powerful linguistic frames that can require the reader to modify his/her mode of thinking and adapt a non-western perspective.
- 4) In addition to the utilization of world schemata, magic realist also make use of textual schemata to challenge the dominant Western aesthetic tradition. A story schema based upon circularity and analogy may in fact defy the conventional construction of western linear narratives and initiate a process of subversion whereby the categories and codes of western reading processes are challenged. In other words, the process of subversion not only takes place in the cognitive but also in the textual plane. The process of

reading becomes cyclical, forcing the reader into a productive and continuous shuttering between textual levels, the mythical and the contemporary, the real and the unreal, the written and the oral.

- 5) Magic realist writers by evoking a constant restructuring of language, text and world knowledge bases not only disrupt the world schemata of the West, but also cause a "schema refreshment" since they provide a new means of interpreting experience. In this respect, magic realist narratives that create new frames of understanding from the reader's existing storehouse of knowledge, also promote a "model of learning." In this model, framing is not only used as a process of association and transition but also of transaction. In other words, most magic realist writers employ western as well as non-western frames of reference not only to convey their own hybrid worldview but also to impose this worldview as the "normative," and the commonly acceptable. In this respect, they are highly ideological in their attempt to write down their own systems of belief onto the dominant discourse and culture of the West.

By applying schema theory to *The Antelope Wife*, I have tried to demonstrate how magical realist writers by activating various cognitive and literary frames can present "reality" as a constantly shifting phenomenon where the real and the unreal, the West and the non-west frequently intersect. By stripping reality from its conventionalized usage these writers challenge the reader to perceive the "real" through a kaleidoscope, where the patterns and colors of reality are always shifting. In such a pattern, western reality can only be one among the infinite number of truths and reality like truth is not a fixed or stable formulation. When viewed from this perspective, the oxymoron that magic realism is erected upon becomes not a source of confusion but a tool that can aid its readers to decode hegemonic structures of knowledge and understand reality as somehow consonant with the values, assumptions and discursive practices of one's own culture.

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