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THE THEME OF HOME IN LOUISE ERDRICH'S LOVE MEDICINE

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Abstract: This undergraduate research examines the analysis of the subject of the Native American home perspective in Louise Erdrich's novel "Love Medicine". The research consists of four main chapters. The first chapter is devoted to the life and perception of Louise Erdrich's house. The second chapter focuses on the theme of homeland in Native American literature in general. The third and fourth chapters analyze many people's perception of home, focusing on female and male characters from Love Medicine. Women play a crucial role in the perception of the homeland for all characters in the novel in the role of homemaker, which is why women usually feel no doubt about what and where their real home is. On the other hand, men's perception of the house in the novel always depends on the character of their wives, mothers, or daughters, so it is highly uncertain.

Keywords: Louise Erdrich's, Native American literature, Love Medicine.

1. Introduction

Home holds profound emotional significance, rendering objectivity elusive in discussions about it. Yet, the innate need for belonging, safety, and love propels its enduring presence in literature. This bachelor research delves into the perception of home among literary characters within a Native American tribe depicted in Louise Erdrich's novel, Love Medicine. The novel's intricate narrative structure, akin to a spider's web or mosaic, intricately weaves together the lives of two families during the latter half of the twentieth century, offering a glimpse into the reality of Native American life in reservations from World War II to the 1980s. Each narrator shares their perspective, yet their shared identity is rooted in their origins and surroundings, fueling an ongoing quest for a sense of home. The research will analyze the theme of home through the lens of both female and male characters.

In Love Medicine, the perception of home differs between women and men. Women typically play a central role in home-making, caring for the house, children, and husband, which strongly ties their identity to the home. Consequently, their personalities significantly influence how others perceive home within their families. Therefore, in Love Medicine, the woman herself is considered the most crucial element in creating a sense of home, rather than the physical house. As a result, women in the novel generally have a clear understanding of their home's location and meaning.

On the other hand, men in Love Medicine usually have limited involvement in home-making, primarily providing financial support. The sense of home for other family members is often not associated with a man's character. Men's exclusion from the home-making process is

not their fault, as they are often not invited or allowed to participate by women. Consequently, men's perception of home in the novel is insecure, entirely dependent on others such as their wife, mother, or daughter. This reliance on others for a sense of home can be confusing, especially if they develop feelings for another woman, leaving them uncertain about their true home. This may explain why men in Love Medicine, unlike women, appear to lack direction in their lives.

2. Results and Therotical Methodology

2.1. Louise Erdrich

Louise Erdrich is one of the most popular and praised Native American writers. Her novels reflect strongly her origin, and family and community background. That is why it is crucial to include her short biography, information about the tribe she is a member of, and a commented list of her works in this bachelor research.

1. Louise Erdrich's life

Louise Erdrich was born as the eldest of seven children in Minnesota in 1954, and grew up in North Dakota. Although both of her parents taught at the Wahpeton Indian Boarding school and worked for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, only her mother was a Native American - concretely Chippewa, whereas her father was of German-American origin. This multilingual and multinational heritage influenced her life and future work greatly as she often felt tension between the two worlds she belonged to. She has been coping with this ambivalence in almost all of her writings. For example, Erdrich's novels feature Native Americans, mixed-bloods, and other culturally and socially displaced characters whose marginal status is simultaneously an advantage and disadvantage, a source of power and powerlessness (Rainwater, 1990).

Though a culturally and gender marginalized person, Louise Erdrich was able to matriculate to prestigious Dartmouth College in 1972 as one of the first women admitted there. The college studies were very important for both her personal and working life. Firstly, she met there her future husband, anthropologist Michael Dorris, who was a chairman of the Native American Studies department. And secondly, she started her first serious literary attempts there. In 1975 she was awarded the Academy of Poets Prize for her poems in which she got along with the Ojibwe tradition. In 1976 she graduated her bachelor studies and went home, to North Dakota, where she taught at the Dakota Arts Council. She received her Master of Arts degree at Johns Hopkins University in 1979 and kept sending her literary attempts to publishers with rarely any positive responses. The same year she came back to Dartmouth. At that time, Louise Erdrich started to gain popularity for her short stories published in magazines, such as The Atlantic Monthly or The Paris Review. Her stories were praised, for example, in The Best American Short Stories of 1983; she won the Nelson Algren Award in 1982 and The Society of Magazine Editors' Award in 1983. Finally, her first novel Love Medicine was published in 1984 and immediately won the hearts of its readers, as well as the Sue Kaufman Prize for Best First Novel, the Virginia McCormack Scully Prize for Best Book of 1984 dealing with Indians or Chicanos, and the American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation.

The genius of Erdrich was not least inhibited by her maternity - she brought up six children, among them three foster children Dorris adopted before they got married; and still she was able to publish a novel almost every two years. Erdrich's initially idyllic personal and working life with her husband and collaborator Michael Dorris ended in the 1990s, though, when Dorris was charged with child abuse of one of his adopted sons. The couple separated in

1995 under the pressure of the conditions. The investigation remained unresolved and Dorris committed suicide in 1997. These tragic events urged Erdrich to focus more on the care of her children for a while: she moved closer to her family to Minneapolis in 1999, where she, along with her sister Heidi, opened Birchbark Books, Herbs, and Native Arts, an independent bookstore, the following year. She still lives in Minneapolis and owns her store, though, she hasn't at all resigned to her writing (About the Author, 1984).

2. Louise Erdrich's perception of identity and homeland

For her work, Louise Erdrich's roots, her family, and the land her mother comes from have constituted an almost unlimited source of inspiration. Antony Rolo (quoted in "Louise Erdrich", n.d.) put Native American literature in opposite to Western literature, concerning the themes used. Whilst Native American literature is mostly about coming home to the land and language of ancient traditions, Western literature praises adventures and journeys to the unknown distant countries. He writes likewise: the construction of Native American identity always begins with the land. The land the specific tribe comes from is important for the actual perception of identity for all its members; it plays a crucial role in their storytelling, myths, relationships, family tradition and way of living. "In Erdrich's fiction, those characters who have lost a close relationship with the earth - and specifically with that particular geography that informs a tribal identity - are the ones who are lost" (Owens, 1994).

Louise Erdrich herself values her roots very highly. Although her first tongue is English, she has been in the process of learning Ojibwemowin, the language spoken by her mother's tribe, for almost twenty years now. The reason for it has been simply to get closer to her wider family and community by means of understanding their jokes. Erdrich believes that humour plays an essential role in maintaining sanity for Native people (Bacon, 2001). Although her Native descent is what has most visibly influenced her writing, she had to cope with her German-American descent from her father's side of the family as well. Erdrich herself claims that for every mixed-blood person searching for identity is part of their personal characteristic. The advantage of this ambiguity is that one can make the choice who he or she wants to be. The disadvantage is quite painful, though: the actual fact that one has to put himself or herself the question: "Who am I? Where am I from?" is confusing. Erdrich commented on her own status of mixed-blood writer of popular novels pertinently:

When you live in the mainstream and you know that you're not quite, not really there, you listen for a voice to direct you. I think, besides that, you also are a member of another nation. It gives you a strange feeling this dual citizenship.... It's kind of incomprehensible that there's the ability to take in non-Indian culture and be comfortable in both worlds.... (Erdrich in Owens, 1994).

2.2. The theme of home in Native American Literature

The Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines home as "the house, apartment, etc. where you live, especially with your family," and also as "someone's or something's place of origin, or the place where a person feels they belong, (...) your own country or your own area." While this definition seems clear, in real life and literature, the word encompasses much more complexity.

Chang integrates Native American literary attitudes toward home within the framework of mainstream American literature, viewing the search for home as a universal theme. Rolo, however, sees Native American literature as primarily focused on returning home,

contrasting with Western literature's emphasis on adventurous travels to distant lands and the quest for a new home.

Over the past two centuries, Native American tribes have faced repeated displacement by government mandates, resulting in the loss of their homelands. This loss, deeply intertwined with religion, spirituality, and tradition, has been a central theme in Native American literature, emphasizing the struggle to preserve the home according to tribal traditions and spiritual continuity.

Louise Erdrich, through her writing, contributes to the preservation of Native American heritage and identity, particularly in her novels "The Birchbark House" and "The Game of Silence," which depict the forced relocation of her tribe in the 19th century. By revisiting this history, Erdrich highlights the importance of understanding and preserving traditional culture.

For Native Americans, home represents a supportive environment that provides defense against real-life tragedies. It encompasses psychological and mythological life, extending beyond blood relations to include spiritual kinship and clan membership. This concept contrasts with traditional Euro-American culture (Chang, 2011).

In Native American literature, the role of women as home creators and leaders is emphasized. Despite historical disruptions to the traditional family structure, women, especially those of mixed blood, strive to build and maintain homes that reflect their cultural identity and community expectations.

Additionally, in Native American culture, home includes not only the living inhabitants but also the spirits of ancestors. The dead are considered part of the home, contributing to the identity and cultural continuity of the living.

Nature also plays a significant role in the Native American concept of home, representing a spiritual connection to the landscape. Characters in "Love Medicine" demonstrate this connection, finding solace and identity in nature.

In conclusion, home in Native American culture is deeply intertwined with landscape, tradition, and spirituality. It serves as a source of identity and belonging, even amidst the historical displacement experienced by Native American communities. Storytellers, as keepers of tradition, also play a vital role in preserving the cultural significance of home (Walter, 2005).

2.3. Women as home-creators in Love Medicine

In this research, the focus will lie on the theme of home, which I understand as a place (perhaps a house, but not necessarily as it was mentioned above) where people live together in company of their family or other relatives and friends. All the people who live in one particular home contribute somehow to the perception of home of the other people and also of themselves. Yet, the perception of home in Love Medicine may be not only one-dimensional. As another dimension of the same term the reader can see the whole area of the North Dakota reservation, including the wild uninhabited parts of it, as home of the main characters of the book. On the other hand, the word home may be also understood more narrowly - as something that mother creates for her children.

The differing perceptions of home of the individual characters of Love Medicine will be the main object of the analysis in this work. The analysis will be based on the idea that women in Love Medicine are the ones who stay securely with their feet on the Earth, because they

are also the ones who give the right feeling of home to the others - to their children and also to their husbands (Chang, 2011).

They are strong and independent individuals who fight tightly for what they believe creates the right feeling of home. In comparison to men in the novel, women can be sure about what and where their home is as they are continually creating themselves what they consider their home - and they have to work really hard to make it as hospitable as they wish. Besides, they do not only create the home from a house - when they are pregnant they consider their own bodies as homes of their yet unborn children. There are five main female characters in Love Medicine; two of them are real homegivers for the other people in the story: Marie Kashpaw and Lulu Lamartine; and three seemingly minor but for the story essential characters: June Kashpaw, Albertine Johnson and Zelda Kashpaw. The analysis will successively deal with all of them (Hernandez-Avila in Chang, 2011).

1. Marie Kashpaw, her daughter Zelda and granddaughter Albertine, and their perception of home

Marie Kashpaw is quite a difficult character to analyze. Although her achievements as a mother and a leader of a household indicate that she is a born Indian mother and home-creator, brought up in a complete family with equally strong mother, she is actually a mixed blood whose family background was not at all satisfying when she was a child. She does not fit into the reservation where her family lives because she is not that much Indian as she is supposed to be according to the other Natives in the reservation. Even her future husband, Nector, does not consider her an Indian:

"Lemme go, you damn Indian," she hisses. Her teeth are strong looking, large and white. "You stink to hell!"... I have to laugh. She is just a skinny white girl from a family so low you cannot even think they are in the same class as Kashpaws. (Erdrich, 1989).

Marie's situation is complex; she is neither fully accepted in the white community nor completely embraced by the Native American world. Feeling trapped between these two worlds, Marie chooses to seek solace and belonging by dedicating her life to God and becoming a nun in a convent.

Despite her mixed heritage, the nuns perceive Marie as an Indian, which strengthens her resolve to fit into the microcosm of the Catholic convent. She is determined to conform to the strict rules and expectations of convent life, hoping to find acceptance and belonging among the Sisters (Erdrich, 1989).

Marie is willing to go to great lengths to prove her devotion and purity. She prays fervently, works diligently on her soul, and even endures the harsh treatment from Sister Leopolda, believing it will help her rid herself of Satan's influence. Marie's ultimate goal is to become pure and saint-like, earning the respect and love of her fellow Sisters. She believes that by achieving this, she will finally find the sense of belonging and security she has longed for, creating a home where she can feel safe and embraced by tradition.

In her quest to fit in, Marie is not above bending the rules. When she is injured by Sister Leopolda, she plays along with the idea of having stigmata, allowing the other Sisters to believe in a miracle and further solidifying her place within the convent community.

Marie's journey is marked by a profound realization of her identity and her role in creating a home. Initially drawn to the convent as a means of finding belonging and purpose, Marie eventually recognizes the earthiness within her and decides to leave the convent. This

decision leads her to Nector Kashpaw, whom she marries and begins her career as a housewife and mother (Erdrich, 1989).

As a mother and wife, Marie embodies strength and resilience, leading her household with determination and love. Despite the challenges she faces, including the loss of two babies and the departure of her daughter June, Marie remains steadfast in her role as a home-creator. She opens her home to orphans from the reservation, loves them as her own, and supports her husband in his role as tribal chairman (Erdrich, 1989).

Marie's mixed heritage adds complexity to her identity, but she embraces her role as a mother and wife within the Native American community. Her home becomes a sanctuary for her family and others, providing love, security, and a sense of belonging. Despite the tragedies and challenges she faces, Marie's commitment to her role as a home-creator never wavers (Erdrich, 1989).

Zelda, Marie's daughter, inherits her mother's strength and determination in creating a home. Despite her own struggles and challenges, Zelda plays a crucial role in bringing Nector back home when he considers leaving for Lulu. However, Zelda's own journey as a mother is marked by challenges, as her daughter Albertine struggles with her mixed identity and ultimately leaves the reservation in search of her place in the world (Erdrich, 1989).

The novel highlights the complexities of identity and belonging, particularly for mixed-blood individuals like Albertine. While Marie and Zelda are able to provide a sense of home for their family members, the challenges faced by Albertine and others reflect the broader struggles of finding one's place in the world (Erdrich, 1989).

Ultimately, the novel suggests that creating a home is a deeply personal and uncertain journey, influenced by individual identity, family dynamics, and external forces. Despite the challenges and uncertainties, Marie and Zelda's commitment to their roles as home-creators remains unwavering, offering love, support, and a sense of belonging to those around them (Erdrich, 1989).

2. Homecoming of June Kashpaw

June's character in "Love Medicine" presents a stark contrast to the traditional roles of women within the story. Unlike other female characters who prioritize their families and homes, June's perception of home is distorted, leading to a tumultuous lifestyle and a lack of fulfillment.

The novel opens with a glimpse into the final hours of June's life, portraying her as a woman adrift and disconnected from a sense of home. While other women in the story find purpose and identity through their roles as mothers and homemakers, June's satisfaction is derived solely from her financial independence, highlighting her detachment from traditional notions of home and family (Ingraffia, 2015).

It's unclear what June considers to be her home, as she no longer lives with her family on the reservation and has left behind the responsibilities of motherhood and homemaking. Instead, she seeks solace in the anonymity of the city, where she can live freely without the constraints of societal expectations.

June's inner turmoil reflects her struggle to find a sense of belonging and purpose. Her lack of connection to her family and community leaves her feeling lost and disconnected, symbolizing the internal conflict between her desire for independence and her longing for connection.

Externally, June's appearance reflects her inner turmoil and precarious circumstances. Her worn and tattered clothing mirrors her state of disarray and instability, further emphasizing her disconnectedness from a sense of home and belonging.

Overall, June's character serves as a poignant reminder of the complexity of identity and the consequences of being disconnected from a sense of home. Her journey underscores the importance of belonging and connection in finding fulfillment and purpose in life (Erdrich, 1989).

June's character in "Love Medicine" embodies a unique perception of home that diverges from traditional notions of domesticity. Her connection to home is rooted not in physical spaces or familial ties, but rather in the wild and untamed aspects of nature found in the reservation.

June's tumultuous life and lack of stability are reflected in her unconventional understanding of home. Unlike other female characters who prioritize family and domesticity, June finds solace and belonging in the wilderness of the reservation. This connection to nature stems from her traumatic childhood experiences, including the death of her mother in the bush, which left her to fend for herself (Erdrich, 1989).

Throughout the novel, June's affinity for the wild is evident in her behavior and interactions with others. She eschews conventional domestic roles, behaving more like a wild creature than a traditional woman. Her relationships with her children and husband are strained, as she struggles to fulfill societal expectations of motherhood and homemaking (Erdrich, 1989).

June's death in a snowstorm is depicted as a return to her true home: the untamed wilderness of the reservation. This interpretation of her death suggests that June's sense of belonging is found not in human constructs like houses or families, but in the natural world. Her spirit remains connected to the land even after death, manifesting as a haunting presence that defies traditional notions of the afterlife (Erdrich, 1989).

The imagery surrounding June's death, including her ability to navigate the snowstorm with ease and her eventual demise in the wilderness, underscores her deep connection to the land. For June, home is not a fixed location or a set of relationships, but rather a primal connection to the Earth itself (Erdrich, 1989).

In conclusion, June's character challenges conventional ideas of home and belonging in "Love Medicine." Her affinity for the wild and her inability to conform to societal norms highlight the complex nature of identity and the search for meaning in a changing world (Erdrich, 1989, p. 181).

3. Lulu Lamartine

Lulu Lamartine's character in "Love Medicine" challenges societal norms regarding fidelity and motherhood within the reservation community. Despite being labeled as a shameless woman for her perceived promiscuity, Lulu is revered as a devoted and beloved mother to her eight children.

Lulu's reputation as a woman who disregards marital fidelity is well-known within the reservation. She is criticized for her affairs and for giving birth to children whose paternity is uncertain. However, despite societal judgment, Lulu's role as a mother is unwavering. She accepts and cares for all eight of her children, regardless of their origins or the circumstances of their conception (Erdrich, 1989).

The diverse paternity of Lulu's children reflects her unconventional approach to relationships and family. While other women in the reservation may strive for marital stability and fidelity,

Lulu embraces the complexities of motherhood and refuses to be constrained by societal expectations.

Despite the challenges she faces, including the suicide of her husband Henry, Lulu maintains a meticulously cared-for home and provides for her children with love and devotion. Her house is described as neat and orderly, a testament to her strength and resilience as a single mother raising eight boys (Erdrich, 1989).

Lulu's portrayal in the novel challenges stereotypes about single mothers and challenges the notion that a woman's worth is determined by her fidelity to her husband. While she may not conform to traditional standards of morality, Lulu's commitment to her children and her ability to create a loving home for them make her a complex and compelling character in "Love Medicine."

Lulu Lamartine's perception of home evolves throughout the novel "Love Medicine," reflecting her journey of self-discovery and resilience in the face of adversity. Initially, Lulu finds comfort and identity in her meticulously cared-for house, which serves as a symbol of stability and pride in her role as a mother. Despite her unconventional approach to relationships and her refusal to conform to societal norms, Lulu creates a nurturing environment for her children, where they feel loved, protected, and secure (Erdrich, 1989).

However, Lulu's concept of home undergoes a profound shift when her house burns down as a result of a conflict over tribal land. This event prompts Lulu to reevaluate her priorities and reconnect with her indigenous roots, realizing that true home is not defined by material possessions but by a sense of belonging to the land and honoring tribal traditions. Camping on the land becomes a form of resistance against encroaching industrialization, symbolizing Lulu's determination to defend her heritage and way of life.

As Lulu grows older and faces challenges such as failing health and partial blindness, her perception of home further expands to include the nurturing care provided by her sister-in-law Marie. In Marie's embrace, Lulu finds solace and a sense of belonging, recognizing the importance of familial bonds and support in creating a home beyond physical spaces (Erdrich, 1989).

Ultimately, Lulu's journey underscores the complexity of the concept of home and the importance of resilience, cultural identity, and interpersonal connections in shaping one's sense of belonging and purpose (Erdrich, 1989).

Through her experiences, Lulu discovers that home is not just a place but a dynamic and multifaceted concept that evolves with personal growth and the bonds forged with loved ones (Stock, 2016).

2.4. Men as home-seekers and home-losers in Love Medicine

There is no typical man in Love Medicine as there is no typical woman there. Yet, what we can see as a "meeting point" of all the male characters in the book is their connection to the wild nature - in contrast to female characters. Although the connection to land and nature should mean that men are also closer to traditions and that is why also closer to the core of their homes, the opposite is true. The land in the book is often a source of living for people but there is no mythological dimension of land to be seen. Men seem to be happy hunting in the woods but that seems to be all. What is important for their perception of home, are their houses and families.

However, in comparison to their wives and mothers, men do not create their homes, they provide money, but otherwise they only consume their homes, they do not contribute much

otherwise. It would be simple to say that it is their fault. But it is not - actually in most cases they are not invited by their women to the process of home-creating at all.

Sometimes, they are not even allowed in (as in the case of Nector in Lulu's home). And that is the reason why men in Love Medicine, in contrast to women, seem to be completely lost in their lives. This is a result of the fact that their perception of home is very insecure. As their homes are represented by their wives, mothers or even daughters, they are completely dependent on some other person in creating their perception of home. That is why they are so confused about where and what their right home is: if they fell in love with a new woman, then where is their home? With their wedded wife and children or with the love of the moment? Similarly, the perception of home of the women in the book who are not able to create or at least contribute highly to the creating of their homes is distorted; and therefore they are lost in their lives, too.

This bachelor research will focus on two characters of Love Medicine who represent two different types of men in the novel. The first one is Nector Kashpaw, the descendant of tribal chiefs, and the other one, Lipsha Morrissey who is an orphan mixed-blood boy taken in home by Marie and her husband Nector (Ibid).

1. Nector Kashpaw

Nector Kashpaw's journey reflects the complex interplay between cultural identity, personal history, and the quest for belonging. Initially separated from his indigenous roots by attending a government boarding school, Nector returns home with a blend of white education and a lack of traditional Native skills. Despite this, he is revered by women for his good looks and lineage as the descendant of tribal chiefs.

She [Nector's mother] had let the government put Nector in school, but hidden Eli, the one she couldn't part with, in the root cellar dug beneath her floor. In that way she gained a son on either side of the line. Nector came home from boarding school knowing white reading and writing, while Eli knew the woods. (Erdrich, 1989)

His relationships with Lulu and Marie highlight contrasting desires and expectations. Lulu represents familiarity and comfort, akin to a sense of home, while Marie embodies a challenge and a departure from convention. Nector's attraction to Marie stems from her perceived differences and the excitement they bring, yet he ultimately finds stability and fulfillment in their marriage.

In their household, Marie takes on the role of decision-maker and home creator, while Nector assumes the role of financial provider. This dynamic reflects their respective strengths and priorities, with Marie's guidance steering the family's direction. While Nector initially seeks solace outside the home, he ultimately recognizes the importance of family and community, leading him to assume leadership roles within the tribe (Erdrich, 1989).

Despite his upbringing and initial struggles, Nector's ability to navigate the complexities of reservation life and advocate for his community's interests demonstrates his growth and adaptability. Through his efforts to preserve tribal land and establish educational and economic opportunities, Nector contributes to the well-being of his people, albeit in his own distinct way (Ahmad, 2019).

Nector Kashpaw's journey is marked by a search for belonging and understanding where his true home lies. Initially propelled through life by chance encounters and external influences, Nector finds stability and security in his relationships with Lulu and Marie, viewing them as embodiments of home.

Lulu represents familiarity and comfort, reminiscent of childhood memories and a sense of belonging. However, Nector's perception of home with Lulu is shaken when he realizes he cannot fully integrate into her life and family dynamics. Despite their love, Nector's inability to provide tangible support or commitment leads to uncertainty and mistrust (Erdrich, 1989).

In contrast, Marie symbolizes stability and security, providing a sense of home through her guidance and leadership in their household. Nector's recognition of Marie's importance in his life is reflected in his return to her after the destructive incident with Lulu's land. Yet, even in Marie's home, Nector struggles with a sense of restlessness and yearning for something beyond domesticity.

The fire at Lulu's house serves as a symbolic turning point, representing the destruction of Nector's illusions about home and his realization that it cannot be confined to physical spaces or relationships. Ultimately, Nector's journey underscores the complexity of human connections and the quest for belonging, as he grapples with the dualities of love, loyalty, and identity across multiple homes and relationships (Ibid).

2. Lipsha Morrissey

Lipsha's life is shaped by a sense of gratitude towards Marie and Nector for taking him in, despite the circumstances of his birth and the legend surrounding his mother's intentions. Raised in their home, Lipsha finds solace and belonging in their care, considering Marie his true mother figure and Nector a connection to tribal traditions.

Despite uncertainty about his biological parents, Lipsha's loyalty and love for Marie and Nector are unwavering. He sees their home, whether in their old house or the Senior Citizens home, as his true sanctuary, where he feels secure and loved. For Lipsha, home is not merely a physical space but the emotional connection he shares with Marie and Nector, embodying both maternal care and tribal heritage.

"Your mother..." I began.
"I can never forgive what she done to a little child," he said. "They had to rescue me out of her grip."
I tried again.
"I want to talk about your mother..."
Lipsha nodded, cutting me off. "I consider Grandma Kashpaw my mother, even though she just took me in like an old stray." (Erdrich, 1989).

Lipsha's worldview is a blend of traditional beliefs and Catholic principles, infused with a pragmatic approach to life. While he acknowledges the power of magic and his own "touch" to heal, he also recognizes the importance of faith and belief in their efficacy. His willingness to prepare love medicine for Marie and Nector demonstrates his commitment to preserving their home and relationship, even if the outcome is uncertain.

Ultimately, Lipsha's journey reflects the resilience of the human spirit in finding belonging and purpose, despite the challenges of identity and origin. Through his unwavering devotion to Marie and Nector, Lipsha discovers that home is not defined by blood ties but by the bonds of love and kinship forged through shared experiences and mutual care.

In the aftermath of Nector's death, Lipsha's perception of home is both strengthened and unsettled. As he mourns alongside others who viewed Nector as a father and grandfather

figure, Lipsha feels a sense of belonging within the community. However, the loss of Nector represents a rupture in the home he has known for years (Chen & Tan, 2023).

Driven by a newfound curiosity about his biological parents, Lipsha embarks on a journey to uncover his roots. He discovers that his mother is June, Marie's beloved daughter, and his father is Gerry Nanapush, a tribal hero and criminal. Despite the unconventional circumstances of his parentage, Lipsha embraces his connection to his newfound family, including his grandmother Lulu.

On his quest to find Gerry, Lipsha encounters his half-brother King, whose presence complicates matters. Eventually, Lipsha wins June's car in a card game against Gerry and King, symbolizing a reclaiming of his mother's legacy. Yet, Lipsha's journey with Gerry reveals the complexities of belonging and home, as Gerry expresses a perpetual sense of displacement and uncertainty.

"I won't ever really have what you'd call a home." He was right about that, of course. I'd never seen. He could not go back to a place where he was known and belonged. No matter where he settled down, he would always be looking behind his shoulders..... (Erdrich, 1989).

Returning to the reservation after accompanying Gerry to the Canadian border, Lipsha reflects on the river as a boundary between the known and the unknown, symbolizing his own journey of self-discovery. Despite the challenges and uncertainties, he faces, Lipsha acknowledges the importance of the home he found with Marie and Nector, expressing gratitude for the security and love they provided him.

In the end, Lipsha's return to the reservation signifies a coming home, both physically and emotionally. Through his experiences, he reconciles with his past, embraces his heritage, and finds solace in the bonds of family and community. As he reflects on his journey, Lipsha acknowledges the significance of the home he found with Marie and Nector, recognizing it as a place of belonging and acceptance (Ibid) (Vlaicu, 2011).

Conclusion

In "Love Medicine," Louise Erdrich presents a portrayal of life on the reservation that reflects the raw realities and complexities of Native American communities. While traditional rituals and beliefs are present in the lives of the characters, they are often depicted as marginalized or reserved for special occasions rather than integral aspects of daily life. The concept of home in the novel is closely intertwined with individual identity and personal relationships rather than solely based on adherence to tribal traditions.

Characters like Marie Kashpaw and Lulu represent the idea of home through their nurturing and maternal roles, creating a sense of belonging for those around them. However, their understanding of home differs from traditional notions, as they perceive it more as a personal connection rather than tied to specific rituals or customs. Marie's journey from a troubled past to creating a stable home with Nector Kashpaw highlights the transformative power of personal relationships in shaping one's sense of belonging. Despite her initial desire to find home in a convent, Marie ultimately finds it in her connection with Nector and the community on the reservation. Similarly, Lulu's role as a mother and caregiver embodies the essence of home for her sons, transcending physical boundaries like a house.

Nector's affair with Lulu introduces a layer of complexity to the characters' perceptions of home. His confusion about where his home truly lies reflects the intricacies of human relationships and the

challenges of navigating conflicting emotions. Even after his death, Nector remains torn between Marie and Lulu, unable to fully grasp the true meaning of home until the very end.

Lipsha Morrissey's journey of self-discovery and connection to his biological roots adds another dimension to the exploration of home in the novel. Despite learning about his parentage, Lipsha's sense of belonging remains rooted in his upbringing with Marie and Nector, illustrating the enduring influence of familial bonds and personal connections.

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