Love, Family and Women's Roles in Luise Erdrich's "Four Souls" and "The Antelope Wife"

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Love, Family, and Women's Roles in Louise Erdrich's novels *Four Souls* and *The Antelope Wife*

Diplomski rad

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Abstract

The paper analyzes the novels *Four Souls* (2004) and *The Antelope Wife* (1998) by contemporary Native American author Louise Erdrich. Describing unusual love relations, complex family ties, and women who, with their almost magical powers, fight against the white influence and their own people's prejudices, Erdrich provides insight into contemporary Native American identity and contributes to its revitalization.

The paper consists of two major parts. The first one analyzes a variety of love relations described in the novel *Four Souls*. It focuses on Fleur's relationship with her children, Lulu and John James Mauser II, and her husband John James Mauser. It also analyzes Fleur Pillager's identity quest and her recovery from its failure and pays attention to the blurring of the boundary between the mythical and the real, and between the human the animal, visible in Fleur's characterization.

The second part explores the concepts of love, family, and women's social roles in *The Antelope Wife*. It analyzes Rozin's marriage to Richard, Klaus's obsessive love for Sweetheart Calico, and briefly sums up the consequences of a love triangle between Augustus Roy, Mary, and Zosie Shawano, emphasizing the diversity of these love relations and their magical elements. *The Antelope Wife* introduces many concepts of family and shows that, in situations when an individual needs help, the whole community takes up the family's role. It also depicts cultural intermixture as a positive concept and teaches us that forceful and selfish acts only cause imbalance in the community. This section also discusses strong women characters, who fight for their goals and freedom, that abound in this novel. It analyzes Rozin's decision to get rid of Richard's obsessive love and Cally's connection to her ancestors, especially to Sweetheart Calico, as well as her courage to be a mediator between the past and present.

This paper supports the thesis that love relationships in both of the novels are not strictly reserved for a man and a woman, but go beyond this basic concept. It is possible to love a place where one resides, or even have feelings for the non-human beings, too. It argues that in Erdrich's fiction family and community are interchangeable concepts since one can get help not only from the closest family members but also from one's relatives. Thus, the cultural mixture within a family is described as a positive concept in the novel. Lastly, the paper emphasizes the role of Erdrich's women characters – their relevance in the community, their strength in defying authority, as well as their power and responsibility to change the world.

Keywords: Louise Erdrich, *Four Souls*, *The Antelope Wife*, love, family, women, myth

Introduction

Louise Erdrich, one of the most popular and award-winning Native American novelists, blends Native American and Western culture in her novels and stories. The fact that "Erdrich's Ojibwa and French grandparents on her mother's side of the family lived on North Dakota's Turtle Mountain reservation, where her grandfather Patrick Gourneau served as tribal chair" (Stookey 2), helps the author to give us a better insight into the complicated but in a way, magical world of her mixed-blood characters.

This paper discusses three basic notions – love, family, and women's roles in the Native American society – important for the overall understanding of Erdrich's novels *Four Souls* (2004) and *The Antelope Wife* (1998). *Four Souls* introduces a variety of love relations. It discusses Fleur Pillager's love for her son and daughter, her sister-in-law Polly Elizabeth, and, most importantly, for her land.

The first part of this paper describes Nanapush and Margaret's love at the old age and Polly and Fantan's devotion to one another. It argues that love can surmount all obstacles and can also include important objects, or even animals. The analysis also explores the role of family and community as safe havens for their members, especially for those suffering from a personal crisis. Additionally, the first chapter describes Fleur's recovery at the reservation and how important it is to cherish the relation between the living and the dead family members. It also explains Nanapush's abilities as a *trickster* and how he uses them in order to convince the tribe not to sell the land to the whites. The last topic addressed is the role of a woman in the community. Erdrich attaches great importance to different female characters in both of the novels. They have special powers hidden in their names. One of them is Fleur Pillager, who gets her land back by going on a mission in the City. Decisive and unstoppable, Fleur stands as an example of a woman fighting for her rights no matter what. The analysis aims to show

that women in *Four Souls* are strong and capable enough to confront every oncoming challenge, taking advantage of their multiple skills.

The second part of the paper focuses on the concepts of love, family, and the role of female characters in *The Antelope Wife*. Through examples of obsessive love affairs which never end up happily – Rozin's marriage to Richard, Klaus's relationship with Sweetheart Calico, and Augustus Roy's relation to the Shawano twins – it maintains that possessive love always affects the protagonists in a negative or even tragic way. Analyzing the identity quest of Cally, a young Native character, as well as the connection between various families – the Roys, the Shawanos, and the Whiteheart Beads, this paper argues that *The Antelope Wife* proves that being a mixed-blood should evoke positive feelings in an individual, as well as enrich the whole community. It also states that women's spiritual powers and their courage to withstand male authority are indications of their strength and wisdom.

1. Four Souls

Louise Erdrich's most devoted readers had to wait for almost sixteen years for the continuation of a breath-taking story about a powerful and even mythical female Native American figure named Fleur, who fights against white settlers who are trying to take away her land. Erdrich's earlier novel *Tracks* (1988), introduces Fleur's guardians, Nanapush and Margaret, as well as Fleur's daughter Lulu. These characters play an important role in the novel *Four Souls,* a sequence to *Tracks*.

In *Four Souls,* Erdrich "tells an intergenerational story of fictionalized Ojibwe people on North Dakota, which starts in 1912, just as the effects of allotment[1] were starting to manifest on their reservation" (Carpenter 611). The story revolves around Fleur Pillager who stands as "representative of the struggle of the traditional Native American values against the materialistic ravages of modern Euro-American culture" (Ferguson 549). The novel could be understood as Fleur's revenge quest to a city in which she wants to find a man, John James Mauser, who chopped her woods and built, among other things, a house for him and his family. Besides the fact that he is a rich lumber trader of German descent, he is also "a desperately sick man who sweats so much in his sleep that his bed linens must be changed in the middle of the night": "Mauser's sister-in-law, Polly Elizabeth, runs the household and hires Fleur to do the extra laundry. Shortly after Fleur's arrival, Mauser is debilitated by a seizure and Fleur cures him, massaging his limbs each in turn and calming him" (Brenton 38-39).

[1] "Allotment" refers to a late ninteenth- and early twentieth-century federal legislative program that included legislations such as the 1887 Dawes Act, designed to divide large tracts of land owned by Indian tribes, allocate smaller parcels to individual members of the tribes, and sell off the rest of their land to white settlers (Carpenter 606-7).

Mauser is married to a plain woman named Placide, whom he divorces after being seduced by Fleur. Placide moves out along with her spinster sister Polly Elizabeth. Later on, when Fleur gets pregnant with Mauser, Polly returns and becomes her caretaker. Fleur gives birth to a mentally challenged boy. Meanwhile, Mauser goes through some business issues. Soon enough, "when his investments begin to fail and his wealth diminishes, Mauser takes what wealth he can and runs" (Brenton 40), leaving Fleur their son and a new fancy car. However, Polly finds the love of her life – Fantan, Mauser's male nurse and a war friend. Although he is having difficulties with speech due to the fact that he got wounded, they somehow manage to overcome that obstacle and decide to spend their lives together.

Fleur goes back to the Little No Horse reservation to find out that her land is now in the possession of an Indian agent, Jewett Parker Tatro. After coming to Tatro's bar a few nights in a row, Fleur finally enters his poker game. If she wins, the land will be in her possession once again. If not, Tatro gets her car. By drinking "one too many," she enables herself to play further, and then, according to the rules, the player can ask a relative to take his or her place. Since she brings her son with her, the little boy, seen as an idiot by many, takes the cards "and it was then that the life of him showed, Fleur's part of him, the Pillager" (FS 197). Nanapush, the narrator and witness to this remarkable event, describes what happens:

> I don't know if it was then Tatro knew how thoroughly he had been taken, or when he realized that the foolish mask the boy wore was in fact both his real face and unreadable. But for sure he must have known it by the fourth hand and then the fifth. The bet was six hands out of ten and the boy took every one. (FS 197)

Fleur finally comes home where she, with Margaret's help, gets purified and able to reestablish the link with nature and her spiritual self.

At the same time, the novel describes the obstacles which Nanapush's and Margaret's love has to overcome. As he is getting older, Nanapush is tormented with jealousy while his

spouse Margaret's only wish is to integrate some of the Western "wonders" into their home, such as linoleum. Margaret provokes his jealousy, mentioning the sweet talk of Nanapush's old enemy Shesheeb. On her way to the church she must pass by Sheseeb's cabin, and this fact brings Nanapush to sheer madness. One day, after Margaret has proudly installed linoleum into their cabin, he stays alone in the house. A fly comes through to the window, and Nanapush imagines that this must be Shesheeb, slyly taking another form just to drive him mad. By catching the fly, he ruins Margaret's linoleum. Afterwards, still obsessed with his enemy, Nanapush sets a snare in the woods in order to kill him, but unfortunately, becomes witness to an unexpected tragedy. Namely, Margaret was the one who "strained on perfect tiptoe, like a zhaaginaash ballerina dancer, on the flimsy branch that had fallen across the shallow square that I had carved in the path. Her hands were up around her neck attempting to release the tightening wire. Her face was dark red" (FS 115).

Having survived this unfortunate incident, Margaret starts to make a so called "medicine dress," which later helps Fleur in the purification process. On the other hand, the dress helps Nanapush, as well. On one occasion, he intrudes into the nuns' cellar where they keep mass wine, wearing only Margaret's dress. He wakes up the next morning a bit tipsy, forgetting about the speech that he has to make in front of the whole tribal community, since he is a tribal chairman. Finally, empowered by the dress made by his wife, he gives an inspiring speech just before the gathered community members vote whether to sell their land to the whites or not. Nanapush describes the feelings which the wearing of the dress aroused in him with the following words:

> But the dress itself is sacred as you know, and even though I am a clever fool it stopped my thoughts and humbled me and made me listen. It wasn't that the dress spoke to me. It was that my ears were opened to hear all I missed when I was arrayed like a man. When they voted, they rejected the land settlement. So

> the dress worked. The medicine was the sacred shame that it provoked in me. (FS 156)

The whole concept of women's power recognition, which occurred at this tribal meeting, is a living proof of female strength and beauty represented in an object – a hand-made colorful and sacred medicine dress. As Nanapush attests, its task is to evoke the necessary feelings in a person wearing it, simultaneously making one conscious of the importance of the female life-giving role on Earth.

1.1. The Diversity of Love

There are many love relations in this stunning novel. These could be called anything but usual. Firstly, most of these relationships are directed towards the main protagonist, Fleur, whose spiritual name is also the book's title – Four Souls.

Fleur is a mother of two children, a girl Lulu and a mentally disabled son John James Mauser II. Although she cares for both of them, Fleur fails in her duties as a mother. Trying to get her land back, this woman leaves Lulu in a boarding school. Nanapush describes her act as follows:

> No, she did not give her first child away. It was not as they insist. Fleur merely took the girl off to hide her the way a wolf hides a pup when she must do battle to protect her standing or confront a danger. That's how it was. Lulu was to be hidden in the government school, safe. Not left, not forgotten. This is what she did. (FS 7273)

On the other hand, the boy is not raised properly either. He becomes a ruler of the house, running around, eating too much, and giving orders. This is all because Fleur "warped this one. Kept him too close, plied him, spoiled him, sweeted him" (FS 183). Blinded by her revenge, Fleur forgets to love herself, and that is the central reason why she does not show the love to Lulu and little John James in a right way. Consequently, Lulu and John James Mauser are not able to show their love to Fleur either. As she comes back to the reservation, Margaret makes her aware of that fact:

> All the power you were given and all the luck that drove you to the Cities, all the cruelty that lay in your heart toward those who wronged you, all the devotion to the land and to your stubborn idea comes to nothing before one truth—your first child does not love you and your second child doesn't know how. How can they love a woman who has wasted her souls? How can they love a mother who forgot to guard their tenderness, and her own? (FS 206)

Consequently, Four Souls, as her spiritual name says, needs to get her spirit, her souls to balance and forgive herself this negligence. Only then will she be able to open up to a new beginning in her old home at the outskirts of the reservation and, maybe with time, get closer to both of her children.

Since Margaret and Nanapush are, besides Polly Elizabeth, those who narrate Fleur's story, it is necessary to say something about their devotion to her, as well. In one of the two chapters narrated by Margaret, we are given a brief retrospect of Fleur's past. Margaret speaks of Fleur with motherly tenderness and love. In *Tracks* we found out that Clarence Morrissey and Boy Lazarre attacked Margaret and shaved her head. Years later, in *Four Souls*, Margaret remembers that dreadful moment, but with gratitude to Fleur who "had shaved her own head to halve my shame, and the thought of us two, heads gleaming like dark, peeled onions, made me laugh" (184).

Later on, Margaret adds: "I was eager to hold her close and wished as I always did that love had worked out between Fleur and Eli. I couldn't help it. Fleur Pillager was the daughter of my spirit" (FS 184). Despite the fact that nobody knows for certain if Lulu is the daughter of Eli, Margaret's son, or not, both Margaret and Nanapush consider her their loving granddaughter and gladly accept Fleur back after her long absence from home. When she returns, again, these two old people are the first ones who embrace her with joy and parental protection in spite of her stubbornness and revengeful heart. Margaret explains to Fleur the power of ancestors' and her own love:

> You scorned us. You did not listen. And yet we love you, n'dawnis. We have loved you all through this. Myself, old Margaret, who has the vanity to call herself Rushes Bear, loves you as does the crazy old man. Nanapush. Your mother's spirit and her grandmother's, all the way back through the generations, love you. Your father and his fathers, too. All of these spirits love

> you, and the spirits in the four layers of the earth and the four skies that exist above us. (FS 204)

The whole community, both those still living and the ones who moved into the transcendental sphere, unites in showing Fleur that she is more than welcome. However, it is necessary to go through a healing process in order to be able to coexist in peace with oneself, others and nature, as well. Finally, this ultimate connection that goes beyond this world is one of the examples which prove that love in Erdrich's novels is not only a simple feeling reserved for strictly human relationships but that it also becomes a much broader concept.

The next proof for this statement lies in Fleur's complete devotion to the land taken away from her. Native Americans believe that "the land is the most important thing. 'Land is', as Nananpush says, 'the only thing that lasts life to life'" (Carpenter 613). According to this belief, the land is sacred, and if it is taken away, one loses the bond not only to the present but also to one's past, jeopardizing the future of one's descendants. For Fleur, the land has multiple meanings; among other things, it is "the source of her subsistence lifestyle, the connection with her culture and medicine, the ground where her parents are buried, and the place where she relates to the supernatural being that resides in the lake" (Carpenter 613).

That is why she goes to the City and decides to find the man who has not only stolen her land but also torn off a bit of her own being. When Fleur finally comes to Mauser's huge house, built on her people's suffering and out of trees grown on her land, she is shocked. As Harrison explains, "Since Fleur equates her identity with these trees the trauma of that moment is echoed in *Four Souls* when she touches the walls and feels like she is touching 'her own face'" (49).

After some time', Fleur and Mauser start a relationship. Later on, Fleur becomes his wife. Their relation is sexual and materialistic, since Mauser takes Fleur to expensive dinners

and theatre shows. It is very hard to explain their mutual influence and attitude. Mauser's sister-in-law Polly Elizabeth describes how Fleur affects Mauser:

> "We must go now," she said, and as she swept past him, taking his arm, I saw that hot glow in his eyes. It was always there. He burned in the grip of some blandishment. She must know spells, I always thought, for to elicit such devotion one would think she might make some tender movement toward him. Show him some slight mark of love. He had apparently accepted his fate, though, to love unrequited and with a simple, fateless, heat. Whatever spell she laid on him, I wish I knew its verse. (FS 87)

One can conclude that Fleur does not love Mauser, but enjoys the things such as his luxurious banquets, which she could never have experienced if she had stayed on the reservation. After a while, we find out that Mauser is well aware of the fact that his second wife only tolerates him, pities him in a way, and spares his life thanks to their little boy. At one point, he even makes a confession to Polly Elizabeth, stating that he is aware of this unilateral care:

> "I don't think she wants to kill me anymore," he said. "That's one thing. She can't. In some interior way—I cannot grasp it, I don't even experience it—she has developed a form of love for me. I call it love, anyway, though I suspect it is more like pity, kindness. Some honor in her that won't permit my death at her hand. (FS 127)

Polly Elizabeth Gheen also shows devotion to Fleur. She decides to leave her sister's place and be at service to a Native American woman who was, a few months ago, only a laundress in a rich white family. However, now she shows great sympathy towards Fleur. At first Polly Elizabeth has a high opinion of herself, thinking about the people of her own status as privileged. However, even this "lady" passes through a certain catharsis. Over time, she starts doubting whether her way of life is the only socially valid form of existence and stops being full of prejudice towards those similar to Fleur. Rather, she begins to "imagine her [Fleur] as a

person – as a woman with family and feelings such as my own" (FS 67). Since she does not have children of her own, Polly is thrilled by Fleur's little baby:

> Sometimes I gazed so long into the baby's face that I forgot my own face. Or I touched the shining hands and forgot my own borders, melted skin through skin. As I made my way home each night, I had to remind myself that he was birthed of Fleur, belonged to Mauser, that I was nothing and no relation. Yet I had given away my own heart, and once that's done there is no easy way to take it back. (FS 69)

Moreover, Polly has enough compassion when witnessing Fleur's drinking problem. Fleur notices her friendship, as well as a complete dedication to the baby, and returns with shy, but still present emotions of love and gratitude. Again, we can read about it from Miss Gheen's perspective:

> She now tried to hide her consumption, but, to one who does not imbibe, the undertone of spirits is unmistakable. She put her arms around me, sometimes just to guide her faltering step. But other times she embraced me with true emotion, often when she witnessed how much I loved her child. She had a heart, no matter how she tried to hide it from her husband, a heart that stood both fast and passionate when it came to defending those she loved. (FS 122)

One of the love stories worth mentioning is Polly's and Fantan's pretty much unexpected admiration for each other. For most of the time Polly shows certain contempt towards Fantan – a disabled servant who cannot even speak properly. Yet, she finds true happiness with him. Her example shows that honest emotions can confront any kind of physical disadvantage and make it a real blessing. This woman speaks with warmth in her heart about the man she has chosen:

> Everything that happened since I answered the door to Fleur was leading up to this. Warm sun falls on us through diamonds of lead glass as we work. If I am a fool, I am proud to be one. I have married one servant and declared another my sister. My husband and I do not speak in flows of words, but we connect by

> the heartstrings and by laughter and by signs. I am that rare thing thought only to exist in death. I am a happy woman. (FS 161)

Lastly, a very interesting and humorous love relationship is the one between Margaret and Nanapush – two elderly Native Americans. He is a non-conventional tribal chairman who is not afraid to make a speech in front of the whole community in his wife's dress. On the other hand, his spouse is a woman willing to sell her land in return for the linoleum that she puts on their cabin' floor. Crazy with jealousy of his old enemy and his sister's ex-husband Shesheeb, Nanapush inadvertently destroys Margaret's linoleum. What keeps their relationship strong is the fact that they manage to overcome all mutual misunderstandings with the help of humor. When Nanapush tries to make Margaret believe that a falling star destroyed her linoleum and all she sees is a part of a bean can cut out in a form of a star, he is surprised by her behavior because "Margaret did something she had never done before in response to one of my idiot transgressions. Margaret laughed" (FS 173).

Nevertheless, the will to stay focused on each other brings them to the final goal – to be together until the rest of their lives. Even though he is an experienced man who had women before Margaret, Nanapush still feels confused when thinking about the major existential issues. Yet, he comes to a unique solution – the power of love is the only force capable of alleviating the fear of death:

> She was my last love, and the most challenging of all my life. We were meant to face death together, Margaret and I, for what else is love in old age? On those occasions when our animosity melted and turned golden, I brimmed with such comfort that death lost a portion of its wretched power. (FS 112)

His lady is full of forgiveness in spite of the fact that he set a snare in which she almost died. She accepts her husband's flaws with humor and decides to spend her life with him:

> Nanapush is the only man I've never seen entirely through, never thoroughly understood. He has loved me with all his foolish heart, which at first outraged

me. But for a long time now, secretly, I've let myself be charmed. I told the dress that I would die with him although he is an imbecile. (FS 180)

1.2. The Importance of Family in a Healing Process

As mentioned earlier, the concept of family in Native American society is much broader than in our Western civilization. Along with children born in a marriage, adopted children have the same rights and privileges. Here family encompasses not only the living and strictly human beings but it also involves animals and ancestral spirits since "there is no separation between the human and animal world . . . between the visible and the spiritual worlds" (Quinlan 254).

Fleur Pillager and her family story is the central theme of Erdrich's novel *Tracks*. At the beginning we find out that all of Fleur's family died of consumption so old Nanapush, now married to Margaret Rushes Bear, adopts Fleur.

Nanapush is a *trickster* character, a real example of a person living under the influence of society which tries to destroy the way of life his people have cherished for a long time. Still, he does not give up protecting his traditional worldview, but rather helps his community to make them aware of the sly maneuvers of the settlers by trying "as a consummate figure of adaptability . . . to model strategies for cultural survival" (Harrison 44). By delivering a speech dressed as a woman, and even wearing some make-up, Nanapush confirms his status of an "all-man, all-woman archetypal human being" (Barnim 56) from the Ojibwe mythology. He considers the wider community his family and believes that they need to be guided from the darkness imposed on them by those who are stealing parts of their Native American heritage. This wise and unconventional old man also interrogates his tribal members' open-mindedness when talking about gender interchangeability. Namely, he gives primacy to women in many respects. Seeing that most of his audience are women, Nanapush approaches them with the tone of admiration, hoping that they would "fall" for his "sweet talk"' and reject

the land settlement. In a somewhat *trickster* fashion, self-confidently, he makes the ladies aware of their importance by saying:

> I am not afraid, as others may be, that my manhood will be compromised by such a little thing as wearing a skirt. My manhood is made of stiffer stuff. No, I was not concerned for that. Rather, I worried that I, like so many other men who boast of their superiority and revel in their brute strength, cleverness, or power, was unworthy to wear the dress of a woman. (FS 155)

Finally, succeeding in his intention to preserve the land in his people's hands, Nanapush ensures the survival of their tradition.

Both Nanapush and Fleur, to whom he becomes a guardian, exhibit a *trickster* personality. According to Castor,

> Trickster behavior is contradictory and ambiguous. Characterized by an exgaggerated appetite for food, sex and knowledge, he or she can be clever or foolish, tricky or tricked, a spoiler or a benefactor. Although usually a solitary figure that lives on the margins of tribal society, the trickster is a powerful force for balance and survival of the community. (129)

Fleur, who, like Nanapush, is a black sheep and misunderstood by many, goes on a personal quest to the City with only one aim – to return her land. This powerful woman wishes to prove that it is possible to get the sold land back. Unfortunately, average community members reject Fleur and are at the same time afraid of her mysterious behavior because she "rarely uses English, refuses Christianity, and lives on the outskirts of the settlement, close to the woods" (Quinlan 265). The fear is increased by the fact that everyone who tries to do either harm or a good deed to Fleur inevitably dies. In *Tracks* we find out that Fleur got raped by three men because they could not stand the fact that a woman has beaten them in cards. However, "Within hours, a tornado strikes Argus, and the men seek shelter in the meat locker where their frozen bodies are found days later" (Quinlan 266). Fleur owes many of her

unusual characteristics to a complex and mythological family line. There are a few details mentioned in *Four Souls* which give us a better insight into her origin, and, at the same time, justify her spiritual peculiarity. We learn that Fleur's grandmother Fanny Migwans survived the smallpox epidemic that killed her mother (Quinlan 265):

> So angry was she that she chose to confront death herself, and so had herself buried for four days and four nights, breathing through a leather tube while her relatives kept watch. Through this ordeal, Fanny earned the spirit-power of healing, as well as the name Anamaiiakiikwe. (FS 49-50)

The story continues with Under the Ground's daughter, Fleur's mother, who is informing us that

> She was named Anaquot, which means "cloud." Anaqout survived illness not once but four times, thus earning the spirit name Four Souls in honor of the spirits she released each time she cheated death. As a young woman Anaquot abandoned her husband, daughter and son to move in with the Pillager man who was the father of her infant daughter. The man's wife, Zigwan'aage, understandably resentful of a second woman in the household, seemed to Anaquot to be preparing poison or a charm to kill the baby…. (Quinlan 265-66)

Anaqout protects her little daughter by not telling anyone her real name, especially not to Zigwan'aage, but "instead, she used a nickname she herself had been given by an old French trader. Fleur. So that baby was disguised before it had even spoken. . . . For it seemed that spirits had some great work in mind when they made the child (Quinlan 266).

Fleur's displacement from the land "causes a kind of identity crisis that prompts her to take on her mother's name Four Souls as a source of strength" (Harrison 46). Fleur must become aware of the name's power. Unfortunately, Fleur does not always seem successful in this task because she is not completely aware of the responsibility the name demands from its carrier:

> So the name was going to do what it wanted with Fleur Pillager. From the beginning, she did not own it. Once she took it, the name owned her. It would slam her to the earth and raise her up, it would divide her, it would make her an idiot and nearly kill her, and it would heal her once it had finished humbling her. (FS 47)

At the novel's end this "prophecy" about the name's forceful energy proves to be right as she tries, disappointed and exhausted from the city life, to heal her spirit by reestablishing the connection with all of her "four souls."

According to Quinlan, in both *Four Souls* and *The Antelope Wife*, Erdrich makes her readers aware of the importance of the naming process in Ojibwe culture. Naming is a very important event in a person's life, and without a name, an individual is lost in a spiritual sense: "since names often carried a spiritual power. To grow into the power of one's name required awareness and effort" (256-257). Consequently, when Margaret Kashpaw realizes that Fleur does not call her son by name, she is horrified:

> "My son," she called out. She never called him anything else but n'gozis. I opened my mouth to ask Fleur to tell me his name, but then a thought stopped me, an answer. *She had not named him.* Oh, he'd have a name for the records, for papers, surely. A name for chimookomaan law. He'd have a name for the whites to call him, but no name for his spirit. "You haven't named your own son," I hissed at Fleur, outraged at her carelessness. "He's strange in the head because the spirits don't know him!" (FS 200)

Fleur, on the other hand, finds an excuse for her irresponsible behavior by asking: "How was I supposed to name him in that city? Who would dream a name for him? Who would smoke the pipe? Who would introduce his spirit to the name and help his spirit to embrace that name?" (FS 200-1). It becomes obvious that Fleur's lack of strength to give the little boy a mark of his Native origin is a signal for community's help. When one loses spiritual power, like Fleur does, he or she must return to the source of love and kindness – to the family circle. All in all,

Erdrich gives the readers a hope that in the community little John James Mauser would still get his Native name, and in that way present himself to his ancestors' spirits. Maybe the naming ceremony could restore not only his health but also the balance between his white and Native descent. In other words, the boy's case affirms the premise that "to reject either Native or Western culture or beliefs leaves the characters metaphorically homeless" (Wilson 12).

Unfortunately, Fleur does not make a mistake only with her son. Namely, in *Tracks*, after she comes back from Argus pregnant and gives birth to a daughter, she refuses to declare herself the baby's mother so Nanapush and Margaret adopt the child who is named Lulu. Again, without a name, the person stays without identity, alone in society, not aware of the closeness to the tradition needed to become a full community member. Sadly, when she is old enough, Lulu refuses to call Fleur "mother."

In *The Antelope Wife* there is one female character who is without a proper name too – a woman known as Sweetheart Calico: "Her true name is never known, and her life is miserable because she has been forcibly taken from her family and homeland" (Quinlan 269). Towards the story's end Klaus, the man who captured Sweetheart Calico, sets her free so that she can be with her daughters. Also, she is free to "return" to her real name and liberate her spirits from the name that does not belong to her (Quinlan 269). According to Quinlan, "the healthy characters become who they are in the context of a community, working their way toward a sense of self, and finding the truth of their names" (273).

1.3. Fleur and her Mythological Female Power

Even though Fleur Pillager is not the narrator of *Four Souls*, the readers find out the facts about her life from Nanapush, Polly Elizabeth, and Margaret who alternate in narrating Fleur's story. Always willing to risk for her most intimate goals, spiritually and physically strong, courageous, connected to the animals, a fighter for her land – she frightens and delights at the same time, making individual quests her trademark. Yet, who is she actually?

The first indicators of her troubled life are seen in *Tracks*:

> She is of a Pillager clan who was famous for "the secret ways to cure or kill," (T 2) or for possessing the power which "travels in the bloodline, handed out before birth" (T 31). They lived on a land, "surrounded by the highest oaks, by woods inhabited by ghosts" (T 2). Her family died of consumption, leaving only Fleur behind at the age of seventeen when Nanapush, her guardian and lately a symbolic father figure, found her in the house. Fleur "was wild as a filthy wolf, a big bony girl whose sudden bursts of strength and snarling cries terrified the listening Pukwan" (T 3). (*Tracks*, qtd. in Kaclerová)

As time passes by and she eventually becomes a mature woman, Fleur's power reaches its peak. She becomes a living legend, an almost mythical female figure. Her lifelong attempts to live freely where and when she wants show that this special woman really has the characteristics of animals with which she is compared. It is often indicated that Fleur "grin[s] the white wolf grin [that] a Pillager turns on its victims" (T 18). Fleur is like a wolf, a solitary person who does not prefer human company, but enjoys her freedom. Thus, when she wants to harm somebody, Fleur Pillager endeavors to be patient and, when the right moment occurs, surprises her object of revenge. On the other hand, bear is her guardian through life because her family belongs to the bear clan (Kaclerová). Another legendary tale involves her two attempts of drowning in a nearby lake, which she successfully survives. From those nearly tragic events on, "there are all sorts of conjectures: 'Misshepeshu, the water man, the monster,

wanted her for himself.' 'Rumor is, there's no limit to her life'" (Hsiu-li Juan). Moreover, this woman is familiar with all the herbs that grow in the woods around her cabin and the ways she could use them in medical purposes. Due to her skills to use the natural sources and live in harmony with the environment, Fleur shows a rarely deep connection to nature. Unaccepted from the wider community, frequently a target of other women's gossip, Fleur does not seem to be concerned about these gossips. On the contrary, the last member of the Pillager clan is pretty much aware of her beauty. Namely, she attracts the opposite sex very easily. In other words, "men made brainless fools out of themselves in pursuit. They adored her and feared her in equal measure" (FS 72).

Ultimately, the best example of Fleur's non-conformist behavior is recognized in her readiness to fight for the right to live on the land which throughout decades has been her ancestors' lodging: "Fleur shakes off all other obligations—as a mother, daughter, human being—in order to get back her land" (Kaclerová). Her determined individualistic spirit takes her on an identity quest, challenging her patience and strength at the same time. By taking her mother's name, Four Souls, she draws protection from her predecessors, especially from her feminine line. When Four Souls arrives at the house of a man who selfishly took something that does not belong to anyone, least of all to him, and is sacred to her people – the land – her adaptability reaches its maximum. At first, she looks and behaves like a "vagabond" and gives an impression of an unclean woman. Mauser's sister-in-law hires her to do extra laundry in the household. Very quickly, Polly Elizabeth explains that by becoming Mauser's wife Fleur proves to be "a talented mimic" who "quickly perfected her carriage, manners, behavior, by steady observation of other women" (FS 87). If we remember Mauser's history as a man who seduced many young Native American women, forced them into marriage just to get their land, and then left, Fleur's revenge could be understood as a universal act of punishment for him. Her plan to occupy the most important place in the house – to become its mistress –

requires a lot of wisdom and caution. She is in a great advantage by playing the role of a powerless, poor looking and easy conquerable servant who does not show any signs of discontent. Yet, the truth is quite the opposite. Fleur proves to be a hunter who slowly gets what she has come for (Harrison 56).

Again, she demonstrates the *trickster* traits.Like the *trickster* who incorporates the communal benefit into a specific personal goal, by taking back her land, Fleur helps her people and encourages them to fight against white domination. However, since Mauser's influence and wealth slowly fade, Fleur has to figure out how to achieve her goal:

> When his investments begin to fail and his wealth diminishes, Mauser takes what wealth he can and runs. "He was to wander the earth," Polly Elizabeth remarks, "leaving me to clean up the copious mess of his belongings" (159). Fleur returns to the reservation "only to be told that Mauser had taken his turn after her in not paying his taxes," and that the Indian agent, Jewett Parker Tatro, now owns her land. (Benton 40)

Fleur abandons the City, sacrifices her comfort, and lives with her son in the car Mauser leaves her while she investigates the possible solutions to her problem. Nanapush narrates about his adopted daughter's *trickster* methods which come to light while she presses a claim at the reservation's office in order to get the land back:

> And nobody but me seemed to wonder why it should be the same repeat visit at the same time of the day every day. It didn't take me long to recognize Fleur's poker game, the one she had played for Argus men's wages, where she raked them in slow with a hunter's patience and then sprang her trap. Routine was her favorite strategy. Odd, annoying, humble. And dangerous. (FS 186)

Gambling is a very common motif in Erdrich's works and one of the *trickster* features, as well. In *Tracks*, Fleur beats three men at poker while living in Argus. In the same novel, Pauline Puyat, one of the narrative voices, remarks how poker games are not only reserved for this world. On the contrary, in the spiritual reality gambling is also pervasive. In Pauline's

vision Fleur plays against the spirits of the men who died in tornado. The first time she loses, her first child dies. On the second occasion Fleur wins and saves Lulu's life (Benton 44). In *The Antelope Wife*, a similar situation occurs when twins Mary and Zosie also gamble for beads at the spiritual plane.

The most important game, however, is the one between Fleur and the Indian agent Tatro. Fleur comes to Tatro's bar, and enters a poker game. Nanapush observes that "she played modest and even and I don't need to tell you, dangerous" (FS 192). Fleur sets a trap to Tatro when she starts drinking too much, and loses a lot of money. The game's rule allows that a person unable to proceed can ask a relative to take his or her place. Fleur hands over the cards to her son. They make a deal that, if Tatro loses, he is obliged to return her the land. On the other hand, Fleur must give him the car if she fails. Leaving the whole crowd astonished by his mastery, John James Mauser II, a mentally challenged boy, but a great poker player, saves his mother (Benton 44-46). At the end, "Tatro has fallen prey to the best trick of the Trickster arsenal: believing in innate qualities of appearance – that what walks like a duck and talks like a duck must be a duck – without knowing that Trickster's form and behavior takes advantage of the other person's perception" (Benton 46).

After getting her land back, Fleur needs to come home, and start a necessary spiritual journey. Fleur's homecoming and conversation with Margret resemble the Biblical allegory about a son who, having lost his father's wealth, returns disappointed and tired of a turbulent life to his old home. His father tells him that he is more than welcome. Nanapush and Margaret do the same for Fleur. Consequently, this brave and resolute woman comes to an understanding that she has failed as a mother since she does not relate to her children on a spiritual level. Also, her general isolation from the community also contributes to this crisis (Harrison 58). Instead of looking inside herself to find the reasons for her bitterness, Fleur comforts herself with whiskey, and the old woman "can smell the liquor" on her (FS 202).

When Margaret and Fleur finally stay alone, another event comparable to those described in the Bible takes place. Like Christ who baptized the people in the river, her female guardian washes Fleur:

> Fleur Pillager stood naked by the washtub, her hair down her back again . . . Slowly, she lowered herself into the water. I used my copper dipper to pour the water over her. I wet her hair and soaped it, then rinsed every trace of soap from her hair and did the whole thing again. At last, I gave Fleur the final rinse with fresh hot water that I poured on her from a gourd dipper. I cleaned her face with a rag, washed her carefully. . . . (FS 202)

Afterwards, while Margaret sings to her "the song of return, the song of Four Souls, the song of her name . . . an old lullaby that [makes] her cry again as she'd last heard it from her long dead mother . . . the song belonging to the lake" (FS 203), Fleur finds her medicine dress. This is the next step in a healing process which Fleur must go through in order to put her mind, body and, most importantly, her soul in balance.

The dress itself is a symbol of Ojibwe culture and the difficult history of the tribe. Margaret notes that she "saw a dress of starvation worn meager . . . an assimilation dress of net and foam. . . . A dress of whiskey. A dress of loss" (FS 176). While making the dress according to special rules because "the power of the dress lay in the strict rules of its making" (FS 176), Margaret remembers her personal life and all the distress she has suffered. The boarding school she was in as a girl coerced her and the Government tried to stop the preservation of Ojibwe tradition and language. Thus, the making of this sacred object enables this old lady to understand better "the women's bonding and their enormous power they have exercised and shared. Their power was somewhat hidden in their names that they carried" (Kaclerová). When looking back, Margaret sees "back through [her] gitchi-nookomisiban to the woman before, her mother, and the woman before that, who bore her, and the woman before that too. All of those women had walked carefully upon this earth" (FS 178). In the act

of sewing she sees the feminine creative power. Women are those who make the world's pattern by giving life:

> To sew is to pray. Men don't understand this. They see the whole but they don't see the stitches. They don't see the speech of the creator in the work of the needle. We mend. We women turn things inside out and set things right. Sometimes our stitches stutter and slow. Only a woman's eye can tell. Other times, the tension in the stitches might be too tight because of tears, but only we know what emotion went into the making. Only women can hear the prayer. (FS 176)

A very similar metaphor is present at the beginning of Erdrich's *The Antelope Wife*. The writer represents the beading imagery on the novel's opening page – female twins bead a colorful pattern which becomes a source of life (Magoulick). In both of her works, women's hands are a life-giving source providing balance and cultural survival for the future generations. Later on, in *Four Souls*, her individual recovery gives Margaret enough power to guide Fleur through the same experience. Her guardian and healer diagnoses Fleur's problem as a lack of memory; she "forced herself to forget" her ancestors and family members "in order to survive" (FS 205). To reverse this process it is necessary to "remember every dear one she lost" (FS 205). In other words, the ceremony puts an emphasis on finding a place for oneself in the community. The state of isolation is considered to be diseased, and only reintegration into society brings tranquility and health (Harrison 59).

Margaret explains to Fleur the benefits of her complete transformation, which she gets the opportunity to experience:

> I am putting you out on a rock on the side of the lake . . . with nothing to help you but my medicine dress. My daughter, the sun will bake and burn you and destroy your ability to see, but this dress will save your vision so that you'll be forced to look within. It will get worse. Now you must weep over those who died in your place. Mourn your dead properly so you can live properly, Fleur.

> Weep yourself sick. And then from your heart, from under your skin, and from the arrogant shell you call the surface of your mind will come the pain of understanding your loneliness. This dress will force you to enter the darkness of your spirit. This dress will intensify your hunger and allow you the privilege to suffer. (FS 205)

In the final chapter of *Four Souls*, positive results of Fleur's spiritual quest are more than obvious in Nanapush's description of Fleur's new way of life: "Like the spirits, she lives quiet in the woods. No road leads to her place. Hardly even a path. She doesn't drown men anymore or steal their tongues, she doesn't gamble. She doesn't rub her hands with powders of human beings" (FS 209-10). All in all, it seems that this stubborn vengeful woman finds inner peace at the reservation once her soul is purified.

2. The Antelope Wife

The Antelope Wife, Erdrich's novel written in 1998, tries to explain the benefits of cultural intermixture. The author tries to encourage the renaissance of Native American tradition and prove to the readers that it is possible to incorporate traditional values into the contemporary world (Magoulick). The novel's narrative fabric is complicated and difficult to understand. There are many characters in three families which are mutually connected. A few of them are not even sure who their ancestors are. It is speculated, for example, that Sweetheart Calico was born from a deer father. Again, Ojibwe mythology is interwoven with reality. Another notion that makes the reading of this master work difficult is the concept of time. The girl Cally lives in the 1990s and is the narrator of a few novel's chapters. There are, of course a few middle-aged characters, as well as old grandmothers aged almost 80 years. However, in every paragraph the contemporary happenings are intersected with the distant past, telling a story about the will for survival dating more than one century back.

The novel begins with Scranton Roy's infatuation for a travelling thespian, which brings him west. He is the youngest son of a Pennsylvania Quaker who, after failing to locate the woman he likes, enlists in the U.S. Cavalry and takes part in a raid upon an Ojibwe village. In that attack he kills an old woman. She sacrifices herself in order to save a little baby girl whose cradle is put on a dog's back. Scranton follows the dog and takes the baby with him. Surprisingly, he is able to nourish the infant with the milk from his breasts. A little girl, whom he later names Matilda, has a necklace made of blue beads around her neck. When she is six years old, her adopted father marries a schoolteacher Peace McKnight. While Peace gives birth to their son Augustus, Matilda goes on a quest to find her real mother. Blue Prairie Woman, also called Other Side of the Earth, leaves her husband and twin daughters with the aim to find her older child whom she lost in the horrible attack on an unprotected village.

They find one another finally. However, Matilda transmits to her mother the mottled skin fever. Becoming aware of the fact that she is going to die soon, Blue Prairie Woman boils her dog Sorrow so that her child can survive.

In the second chapter we learn something about the characters who make the fourth generation of those introduced in the first one. A sanitation' engineer Klaus Shawano from Minneapolis in his free time works as a trader. At one of the powwows he sees a woman who believes is the antelope wife. Mesmerized with her beauty, Klaus kidnaps her, leaving her three daughters behind. He names the woman Sweetheart Calico for the fabric that binds her wrist to his.

Other protagonists include Rozina Roy Whiteheart Beads who is married to Richard Whiteheart Beads with whom she has two little daughters – Cally and Deanna. She herself loses her twin sister at the early age due to diphtheria. Rozina is the descendant of the female twins who were born from Blue Prairie woman. She is in an unhappy marriage with Richard, although her secret passion is baker Frank Shawano – Klaus's brother. In front of his bakery she sees Sweetheart Calico for the first time. Roz decides to lie to her husband about the relationship with Frank until the moment she finds out that her lover has cancer. When he sees that she really wants to end their marriage, Richard decides to kill himself by starting his truck engine in the closed garage. After a few moments he gets an idea to take a last drink, and goes into the house, leaving the car keys in the car. Meanwhile, one of his daughters, Deanna, sneaks from her bed into the truck and stays there, waiting for her dad to come. Unfortunately, Richard makes a decision to deal with the whole thing tomorrow. In the meantime, the exhaust fumes thicken and Deanna dies at the back seat.

The novel's second part describes the years after Deanna's death. Frank Shawano survives cancer, and Rozin moves to the Ojibwe reservation to Zosie and Mary, one of them being her birth mother. Klaus and Richard become drunken bums living on the city streets. As soon as

Cally turns eighteen, Rozin helps her to go back to Minneapolis by arranging to live with Frank in his bakery shop. Frank loses the sense of humor because of the illness. His sister Cecile tries to find ways to restore it, but without success. Along with Cecile, Sweatheart Calico is also one of the bakery shop residents since Klaus has not been around for more than four years. Cally, on the other hand, tries to find her grandmothers Zosie and Mary with one specific aim. Namely, since they are both namers, she wants to find out the truth of her own traditional Ojibwe name. Klaus is, in the moments of drunkenness, visited by a *windigo* dog who tells him a family story. His father, wanting to avenge his friend who died in World War II, kidnaps an ex-German soldier. In order to avoid death, he bakes a cake – a wonderful dessert named *blitzkuchen*. All those who tried it were hypnotized by its taste so Klaus's father not only spares the man's life but also names one of his sons Klaus, after him. His brother Frank sees baking as a vocation and becomes a baker, too. Rozin eventually returns to the city and resumes her love to Frank. They are determined to organize a wedding. Frank bakes a famous *blitzkuchen* and all the guests gather at the Cliffside Park overlooking the Mississippi river. Just as the ceremony begins, her former husband Richard Whiteheart Beads appears and tries to commit suicide again by throwing himself off the cliff. Luckily the reverend saves him. The ambulance picks Richard up, and the wedding begins. Unfortunately, he pays a visit to Rozin later at the wedding reception, telling her that he poisoned the cake. However, when Frank tastes it, everybody else does the same, and the party can be continued. Although it seems that they have avoided disaster, Richard succeeds in his intention. He arrives at a hotel in which a newly-married couple spends their first night as husband and wife and shoots himself in the head in front of their room.

In the last section, Rozin spends ten days alone mourning after her daughter and Deanna's father Richard. Preparing the food for the dead, she also has visions of their ghosts. At the end, Rozin realizes that she does not want to go to "the other side," and is determined to

continue with her life. In her part of narration, during the Christmas dinner, Cally talks to her grandmother Zosie. It turns out that Cally is also a namer. Zosie tells her a tale about her and Deanna's name, and how she gambled the names for blue beads with a Pembina woman, which her granddaughter now wishes to see. Her wish is fulfilled when Sweetheart Calico opens her mouth, and shows them to her. Sweetheart Calico can speak at last and says: "Let me go." Klaus becomes aware of the necessity to return his wife to the place she belongs to in a moment of epiphany which occurs to him when a lawn mower runs over his head. He promises that he will not drink anymore and releases her home.

The next story offers a comical prelude. Frank and Rozin's different anniversary plans cause a lot of laughter in the community. Whereas he invites a lot of friends and family members to his bakery shop, his wife dreams about seducing him, wrapped up only in cellophane. Rozin comes to the shop wearing only high heels, and embarrasses herself in front of the others. They all have a good laugh, even Frank whose sense of humor experiences a great "comeback."

The Antelope Wife is brought to a close by a tale about Scranton Roy from the novel's very beginning. Haunted in his dreams by an elderly woman whom he killed, Scranton visits the village which his army destroyed. He takes on that trip his grandson Augustus who trades the white beads for the Shawano girl he likes, and from whose cabin he would disappear. The beads were woven into a blanket for the baby named Richard Whiteheart Beads. This man could have lived to his eighty-fifth birthday if he had not shot himself in the head a few decades earlier (Stookey 128-35).

2.1. Love at the Verge of Myth

The Antelope Wife depicts many complex love affairs over a very long period of time. The novel's plot abounds with different relationships between its protagonists, which makes it even more confusing at some points. This chapter analyzes only those relationships that are characterized by magical love and mesmerizing passion. It also describes the love relations between humans and animals. Also, each and every one of these bonds involves a spiritual explanation for its creation and a deeper message for the persons involved in it.

Rozin's marriage to Richard Whiteheart Beads and the difference between his and Frank's approach to her are the first love patterns to be analyzed. Richard is "a charismatic, self-destructive man for whom she feels 'a complex mixture of tenderness, hatred, exhaustion'" (Postlethwaite) when thinking about all the years they spent together. Most details about their marriage the readers find out when Richard, unfortunately, kills himself. While holding her dying former husband's head in her arms, Rozin remembers some of his goods sides and their initial marital happiness:

> She remembered the times Richard took care of her. For those first days after Deanna, he would do anything. Still, she could not forgive him. It was not in her. He combed her hair, braided it, painted her fingernails and kneaded lotion into her feet. He tried his best to comfort her, and it was true, there was no one else who loved Deanna as he did. He drove her crazy. His desperate love, going back, all the way back to when they first married. He had kissed her over and over with profound and desperate emotion, his tongue a wet flame. (AW 181)

Richard is an example of a person whose greed destroys those he loves: "As a product of the city and reservation corruption, Richard typifies the larger harm done to the Native people through their assimilation into European-American culture" (Tharp 126). Rozin comprehends

his love as suffocating and exaggerated in a way. His manipulative and even pathological behavior is revealed in the moment when Roz announces the big news – she wants to move to her lover Frank who has cancer. Richard asks himself: "If I get ill . . . deadly ill, will she come back to me? How about when Shawano finally dies? Then?" (AW 64). Moreover, his three suicide attempts point at his huge selfishness and a necessity to hurt his wife: "He is comforted by the thought that once he is gone and later, when Frank dies, she will be lonely" (AW 70). Richard's insatiable hunger and constant mood changes drive Rozin away from him into another man's arms. The other man, on the contrary, does not violently suck life out of her, but makes it easier and sweeter by feeding her "bits of a cinnamon roll from his bare fingers" (AW, qtd. in Tharp 125). The truth about Richard's inability to love deeply without the necessity to possess someone is inscribed in his name. Like in *Four Souls*, in *The Antelope Wife* characters' names illuminate the reasons why a particular person takes part in certain events in the first place. "Throughout the novel we may consider Richard's name – Whiteheart Beads – as evidence of his "White" heart, i.e. his inability to embrace or carry out traditional ways. Although he has an Indian outer shell, the essence of his being is bankrupt – White (at heart)" (Magoulick).

Even though she still blames him for Deanna's death, Rozin is aware of "the intricate way they were woven into Cally and Deanna" (AW 193). Her communication with him reaches the spiritual level, which makes this relationship so unique and overwhelming. Since dreams and visions about the past or future in the Native American culture make the understanding of the presence much easier, Rozin's dream is a great relief and enables her to embrace new life with Frank Shawano to the fullest.

In her sleep Rozin sees a beaded watchband made for Frank as it loosens and falls apart in his hand. Roz comes to a conclusion that she is twisted in a tangle of hatred and

longing for Richard. Suddenly, her spirit is empowered as "a radiance of goodness, a strange pleasurable intensity sifts in her body and floats her just an inch above herself" (AW 192). Realizing that only by continuing with her life she can keep a positive memory of her daughters' father, Rozin gives a chance to a marriage with Frank. However, this brave woman constantly makes offerings to Richard's and Deanna's spirits in a form of various meals they liked (Little 516).

Rozin's second husband, Frank Shawano, is quite the opposite of Richard. He offers her an unconditional love imbued with peace and freedom which she never experienced in her relationship with Richard: "That love could be seen, all agreed, in his eyes when he looked at her as she passed..." (AW 160). Rozin is also enthused about him and their relationship:

> As for her love, it was based on a similar message received when her world was young—Frank's easy bearing, the powerful sloped shoulders and elongated bearish muscles of a strong swimmer, and his thoughtful mouth were familiar in the deepest way. His voice, ringing above other people's heads like a railroad conductor's, direct with a chef's assumptions, thrilled Rozin with pride. When his peremptory gestures occasionally irritated her, she told him. Their honesty with each other was a wonder to them both. (AW 160)

Whereas Richard stands as a proof that love slips away to those forcefully trying to control its intensity and growth, Frank's affection for Rozin signifies a possibility of a new beginning, neglecting the shadows of the past.

Later on, Klaus Shawano's obsessive love for Sweetheart Calico, whom he wishes to possess on the physical level, turns into a huge lesson for him, since his attitude towards the antelope wife almost costs him his sanity. Klaus sees this woman at a local powwow and is attracted to her instantly. Knowing that she is someone special, not only to him but also to the whole community, he immediately wants to own this incredible woman – a descendant of the antelope people, as he believes. Despite all the warnings – Jimmy Badger, an elder from a

Plains tribe, gives Klaus a love potion to use it on her, emphasizing that "few men can handle their love ways. Some men follow the antelope, and lose their minds" (AW 29) – Klaus becomes crazy about her. With the help of a love potion, he kidnaps Sweetheart Calico and ties their wrists together. It is interesting to notice that the motif of a love potion is also present in *Four Souls*. In order to ruin his old enemy Shesheeb, Nanapush uses medicines, as well. Nanapush learned this wisdom from the old shaman Mirage. Hoping that his wife Margaret will pass near him, he "dusted the back of Margaret's coat, as she walked out, with the deadly attractant" (FS 108).

Even though the love potion helps Klaus Shawano get the woman he desires, he cannot keep her forever in the modern world. Sweetheart Calico, or the antelope wife, exists merely as a symbol of what needs to be changed or recovered in today's Native American society. As the representative of the past, Sweetheart Calico is able to warn the others about their mistakes, but cannot stay and survive in the modern world. Unfortunately, this cultural difference and forced marriage harm Klaus who gradually loses his mind, as predicted by Badger.

Once, while standing on a bridge with Richard, both of them drunk, Klaus realizes that the disease that overwhelms his mind and brings him into alcoholic stupor stems from his crazy obsession with Sweetheart Calico. Looking at the river, he feels thirsty, and then, suddenly, a vision comes to him: "He couldn't stop his mind from turning his sweetheart into a Disney character. The Blue Fairy. Her light increased. Her smile into a jagtoothed mercy and then her voice flowed, the cool of a river" (AW 94). After walking for a while towards the river's bank and quenching his thirst in it at last, Klaus sees her this time as the antelope: "Longing for her scorched him through and through. He stretched toward her with all of his soul but she only looked back at him over her shoulder with her hungry black eyes. Gave a flick of her white-flag tail" (AW 98). This whole experience sends him a message that it is

impossible to forcefully mix the past and present ways without some dangerous consequences (Magoulick).

However, Erdrich also provides a positive role model for recovery through an episode with Klaus and a humorous *windigo* dog who pays him a visit. As he sleeps in the park, a "powerful stray dog" sacrifices himself so that a lawn mower would not hit Klaus in the head. Thankful for yet another opportunity life gives him, he stops drinking and releases Sweetheart Calico to her natural environment where his antelope wife truly belongs (Magoulick). The occurrence of a woman who stands between myth and reality makes Klaus understand that past and present cannot always coexist at the same time. He also becomes aware that if one person violently tries to constrain another person's freedom, as he himself did, this act can possibly endanger them both. He brings his sweetheart to the outskirts of the city where her husband literally "[pulls] at the loop of dirty gray sweetheart calico" and undoes "the knot that bound her to him" (AW 229). In the moment when his beloved wife's silhouette is no longer visible on the horizon, Klaus is finally freed from his obsession with her, as well as from his drinking problem. Also, Frank and Rozina can enjoy their happiness, too. In other words, balance is restored in the lives of many other community members.

Also, one interesting anecdote happens in the earlier generations of the Shawano-Roy family. In the "Windigo Story" it is described how Mary and Zosie Shawano, second-generation female twins in the Shawano family, become *windigos*, figures, "cannibalistic monster[s] set loose by human greed, envy and jealousy" (Tharp 117), in order to deceive their husband Augustus Roy. It is precisely Augustus Roy's love hunger that wakes the *windigo* nature in the two sisters. Although bound with Zosie in a traditional Ojibwe marriage, Augustus Roy alternately sleeps with her sister Mary, as well. The twins agree that they would use their physical resemblance to their advantage and share a bed with the same man: "Augustus had fallen in love with the enigma of his wife's duplication. The confusion of

sameness between the twins made him tremble like an animal caught in a field of tension" (AW 209). Put in between two of them, driven by his sexual appetite, Augustus Roy seeks the way how to regain control over the situation. On one occasion he bites off a piece of Zosie's earlobe so that he is able to differentiate between the two lovers. Soon after this incident, he mysteriously disappears (Tharp 126-27). Years later, during a Christmas dinner, Mary's and Zosie's granddaughter Cally inquires about Augustus Roy: "He disappeared, foul play, but the body was never discovered. What did you do? Boil him? Eat him? Grind up his bones to sprinkle on your rhubarb plants? What? Who took the first bite?" (AW 212), and Mary answers: "He did" (AW 212).

The term *windigo* is found in Erdrich's *Four Souls*, too. Namely, Nanapush, while remembering the childhood spent with his sister, discloses his doubts about his enemy's character. Shesheeb, whom he deeply hates, marries his sister. After she mysteriously disappears, Nanapush is convinced that "Shesheeb went windigo. That he killed and ate my sister was never proved in a whiteman's court so he went free. But, the rest of us knew" (FS 102). This humorous love tale, like the two previous ones discussed in this chapter, in a unique way sends an important message to its listeners by emphasizing "the absolute need for balance and self-restraint in human relations, as in interaction with the natural world" (Tharp 117).

2.2. Cultural Mixture as a Source of Life

With respect to the importance of family and community for Native Americans, *The Antelope Wife* invites a very similar approach to that suggested in *Four Souls*. The novel supports the fact that only in the family circle a person gets the answers to the most intimate questions about his or her origin. For example, Cally finds out that she is a namer like her grandmothers Mary and Zosie at one family gathering. Surrounded by the people one loves, one can recognize one's individual skills more clearly. This proves to be true in Frank's case. He decides to become a baker in the moment he witnesses the making of *blitzkuchen* – an event initiated by his father. Finally, one can get the help from one's community in various life situations, as is the case when family, relatives, and friends help Rozin and Frank to prepare food and decorations for their wedding day.

In addition to that, Erdrich's heroes tend to fight against the split which is present not only in their identities but also in the world they live in. The word "daashkikaa," meaning "cracked apart" "refers to two different worlds which are fused in the present narrative pattern: the strong traditional Native American thread and . . . 'civilized Minneapolis' statement of the 1990s" (Pirnuta and Badulescu 414). Jonathan Little wonderfully sums up Erdrich's attempt to persuade the readers that reconciliation between the two or more cultures is not a utopian mission but an actual possibility:

> In *The Antelope Wife* . . . Erdrich dramatizes a vast web of interdependence brought about by the intersection of many cultures, past and heritages. Instead imagery in the novel demonstrates the "remarkable interpretation of colors" (AW 209), as cultures, individuals, epistemologies, and myths interact, overlap, and become part of a vast kaleidoscopic synthesis. (500)

The narrative describes the Roys, the Whiteheart Beads, and Shawanos throughout several generations in between the 1880s and the 1990s. Before the novel itself starts, the author

presents a strong metaphor about the twins who are beading the same pattern with beads of different color; one sews with "cut-glass whites and pale" and the second twin's beads "are glittering deep red and blue black indigo" (AW 1). Announcing a powerful female myth, Erdrich widens the possibilities of its interpretation. Since the twins are trying to "upset the balance of the world" (AW 1), this introductory part could be understood as the battle between fortune and misfortune in people's lives. Secondly, the beads of different colors might represent different races. The pattern is also filled with the red blood of Anglo-colonialist oppression. The whole text is actually a mixture of myth and historical events such as the war between the Sioux and the Federal Government. One of the characters, Scranton Roy, takes part in such a conflict. He is in the Government's army, involved in the massacre of a small Ojibwa village near the Minnesota-North Dakota border "mistaken for hostile during the scare over the starving Sioux" (AW 3). These constant Government's attempts to destroy the Sioux tribe escalate with the Sioux War of 1865-67 and continue with the Battle at Wounded Knee Creek in which two hundred Sioux men, women and children were brutally slaughtered (Little 502). The cavalry raid described in *The Antelope Wife* resembles the Wounded Knee Creek tragic incident. It is set at the very end of the war era, around 1889, when disease and famine spread on Sioux reservations. Erdrich recounts what happened to Scranton during the attack. As he bayonets an old woman, her last word is "Daashkikaa," which is an Ojibwe word for "cracked apart." In that way, she gives him an insight into his own pre-birth, using her shamanistic powers by looking him straight in the eyes. Horrified, Roy runs away and notices a baby carried by a dog. Immediately feeling a "human response," he follows the dog, and adopts a little baby girl. Scranton names her Matilda after his own mother. An unusual thing occurs when he finds out that his breasts are able to produce milk for Matilda (Little 502-3). Giving a man the features of a woman, Erdrich plays with gender

roles, suggesting that each person is able and obliged to protect life in every form. Accordingly, the baby teaches the soldier a lesson on how to love another human being.

Simultaneously, Blue Prairie Woman is grieving after her lost child, now known as Matilda Roy. Again, the community takes care of an individual by calling upon the spiritual realm. Blue Prairie Woman splits in two halves: Ozhawashkwamashkodeykway (Ojibwa for "Blue Prairie Woman") and Blue Prairie Woman. As she sends her shadow-soul in front of her, out of fear that she would find her daughter's bones, Blue Prairie Woman eats dirt. The tribal elders cover her name in blood and burn it. She crosses the border and enters the spiritual world with the aim to find her unnamed girl. However, they wish her "to return to the living" (AW 13), and in order to make this possible, the woman gets a new name – Other Side of the Earth, which enables her to be at home with her husband while searching for the child. Meanwhile, Other Side of the Earth carries her female twins, Josephette (Zosie) and Mary. Taking a disembodied journey using the power of a new name, she is finally able to continue with the embodied one. After finding her daughter, Other Side of the Earth dies from a disease that Matilda transmits to her. Her death has a deeper allegorical meaning. Matilda's mother tries to get the girl back to the Native people, sacrificing her own life for the possible resurrection of the Ojibwe culture. Unfortunately, Other Side of the Earth succumbs to the disease spread by the whites. Also, another example of "cultural death" is the scene from the novel's very beginning when Scranton Roy slays Matilda's grandmother, depicting a universal attempt of the Anglo-American colonists to ruin the legacy of indigenous people (Magoulick). However, before dying, Other Side of the Earth sings a song which attracts the antelope people to whom she herself belongs. From that moment on, the little girl joins them, still wearing the blue beads as a protection. In that way Erdrich once more emphasizes the fluidity between the human and non-human ancestors.

In the present, Klaus Shawano, a direct descendant of Blue Prairie Woman's brothers and husbands, plans how to capture a woman who represents a unity of human and natural realms, later known as Sweetheart Calico. Believing that she is one of the antelope people, through her eyes Klaus sees the collective past of his own tribe and hears the antelope voices. Therefore, his antelope wife cannot really be considered a person but rather a trace of transcendental existence brought to a real world to teach an individual and the whole community a specific lesson. However, Klaus's obsession with this woman and his abduction of her from her natural environment ends badly for him. He dreams often about the herd of antelope who gallop at him, decisive to take their revenge. All in all, Klaus's story serves as a cautionary tale for the community since it is a part of Ojibwe ethical code that cautions against greed and selfishness. Thus, the author tends to keep the Ojibwe mythology alive and coherent by incorporating it into the traditional time and place in the novel (Little 506-7).

Tightly connected to Sweetheart Calico's story is the identity quest of the youngest character – eighteen year old Cally Roy. As one of the narrators, Cally struggles to understand her position in a complex family tree and because of that wanders to Gahakbekong (Minneapolis) where she, after her twin sister Deanna's tragic death, wishes to find her grandmothers, Zosie and Mary Shawano, Blue Prairie Woman's abandoned twins. Until that moment, she has lived at the reservation in her great grandmother Midass's house. Cally and Deanna are also of mixed blood since their mother Rozin is a child born in a marriage between Zosie and Augustus Roy, Scranton Roy's grandson. Cally lives at the bakery owned by Frank Shawano, Klaus's brother, while trying to extricate the complicated web of her heritage. She states that "family stories repeat themselves in patterns and waves generation to generation, across bloods and times" (AW 200). This young girl is well aware of the cultural diversity which prevails in these relations and mirrors onto her own past: "I am a Roy, a Whiteheart Beads, a Shawano by way of the Roy and Shawano proximity – all in all, we make

a huge old family lumped together like a can of those mixed party nuts" (AW 110). Throughout the novel Cally matures in her comprehension of the mixed status and becomes existentially "the most successful character in the novel. The blend of cultures and patterns inspires rather than worries her" (Magoulick). Her Aunt Cecile, Frank's sister who teaches martial arts is, in Cally's opinion, also of interesting origin bearing Irish and Native genes. Moreover, Cally's association with Klaus's wife, whom she calls Auntie Klaus, educates the young woman about her past. She sees immediately that Sweetheart Calico is the embodiment of the Ojibwe myth itself since she "alters the shape of the things around her and changes the shape of things to come" (AW 106). Auntie Klaus is the bond between the Roys and the Shawanos. Namely, Blue Prairie Woman is an original "deer woman" who married a Shawano brother after living on the prairie with a deer person. The deer people warn her of the U.S. army attack so that she can save her baby by putting it on the dog's back.

After Cally learns about the significance of her Auntie's beads, she wants to trade the beads her great-grandmother once owned for Klaus's wife's freedom. Zosie explains to her granddaughter that these beads testify about the intersection of the two different worlds and offer an access to another state of being (Little 519).

Zosie explains that she gambled for lives with the woman who possessed the blue beads.[2] Their grandmother wins the two names, too. Blue Prairie Woman is the one given to Cally and Other Side of the Earth is Deanna's spiritual guide (Stookey 134). After the bargain, Sweetheart Calico shows Cally the beads which were under her tongue all the time. By saying her first sentence "Let me go (AW 208), she continues speaking about the unhappiness she has felt since the moment she was put in the strange and unpleasant environment. Sweetheart

[2] Similarly, Fleur Pillager gambles for her child's life, as well. In the first game, Fleur plays for her first child's life and loses. However, on the second occasion she wins and saves her daughter Lulu (cf. *Tracks*).

Calico's life in the city represents a danger for a mythical legacy she carries, a legacy suffocated by the white materialistic approach to life (Little 508-12).

Cally's mother Rozina Roy Whiteheart Beads also has to undergo a spiritual quest, which helps her realize the reasons for some wrong decisions she has made in life. At the same time she makes peace with the loss of her family members, especially her daughter Deanna. She identifies herself as one of the "daughters of the granddaughters of Blue Prairie Woman" who are "lightened by Roy blood" (AW 34). Drawing even farther back to her perplexed lineage, Roz explains that she is "descended of the three fires people and of the Ivory Coast slave, who crawled under the bark of an Ojibwa house and struck a match and looked into the eyes of the daughter of Everlasting, Magid" (AW 34-35). In the next generation French blood mixes with the anterior heritage through the "bastard son of a bastard daughter of a French marquis" who adventured into the raw territory of the wolf and married six Ojibwa women" (AW 35). Looking back, Rozin comes to a conclusion that she should not have played with such a powerful legacy and break the continuity by giving her twin daughters modern names – Cally and Deanna. She indicates this as the main reason why Deanna tragically dies (Little 514-15).

Many other less important events in the novel indicate that the protagonists' mixed heritage empowers and enriches them. Klaus's father, who wants to kill a German soldier from the neighboring state to avenge his cousin fallen in World War II, allows him to save his life by making a cake. Astonished by the flavor of a dessert they have never eaten before, his father and some tribal elders who were present at the cake trial "breathed together. They thought as one person" (AW 139). Excluding the blood revenge, his father's decision not to kill the baker Klaus opens enough space for the gathered men to experience a collective spiritual vison. In a very unusual way, the community members return to the somewhat forgotten Native American tradition (Little 518). This case follows the tribal custom of taking

a new family member to replace the one who died (Tharp 127) and proves that reparation is a better option than revenge.

Towards the end of the novel Louise Erdrich offers one of her characters the opportunity to correct what he has done wrong. Namely, Scranton Roy is tormented in his dreams by the old woman whom he killed a long time ago. In order to release himself from this burden, he decides to find the Ojibwe village which his cavalry destroyed and bring its inhabitants supplies of food, water, along with other items necessary for a normal life. Scranton Roy's grandson Augustus Roy accompanies him at this long journey. This episode, described by an anonymous narrator, provides the missing links to the story. Augustus trades the beads of different colors for a young woman named Zosie, Ten Stripe Woman's granddaughter. These beads were sewn into the blanket made by Ten Stripe Woman and given to a pregnant woman who named her baby after the Whiteheart Beads and the name continued until "Richard ended up with it" (AW 240). Richard marries Rozin, the descendant of Augustus Roy and Zosie Roy, who are related to Blue Prairie Woman and a Shawano brother.

The violence done by the Roys to other Ojibwas results in a tragedy. Namely, Scranton Roy, Rozin's distant ancestor, joins the U.S. cavalry which destroys a small Ojibwe village. Almost a century later, Rozin's daughter Deanna tragically dies. A few years after Deanna's death, her father Richard commits suicide. Unfortunately, the old ghost woman's prophecy that "those things should come down on us" (AW 238) fulfills (Little 519-20).

Although extremely complex, this skillfully narrated family saga offers the readers a wonderful example of the community's positive engagement in an individual's life. Thus, it teaches us that multicultural society is not a threat but an opportunity to widen the horizons and reconsider the fact that each person, despite her or his mistakes "has the power to

influence the collective memory and to reinvent the past in order to create the openings for a redeemable future" (Castor 133).

2.3. Women Beading the World

According to Stookey, in *The Antelope Wife* Louise Erdrich depicts women's power to defy traditions of masculine authority" (140). In addition to that, Native American women in the novel have the power to communicate with nature and its forces, conduct special duties in the community circle, and are strong enough to say "no" to different influences. Finally, women are entrusted with the ability to create the pattern of the world by giving life to both, men and women. According to Magoulick, Erdrich's novel is a myth in which "culture heroes and other positive forces are all women". Female characters are those through whose eyes an individual, and very often the whole family or community, sees the reasons why a certain event took place clearer than before.

Scranton Roy is one of the male protagonists who learn an important lesson from a woman. An old grandmother whom he kills at the novel's beginning comes to him in a dream decades later. Feeling shame and guilt, he realizes that every person is responsible for his or her actions. Fortunately, Scranton understands her message of reconciliation and hope, and decides to help today's village inhabitants. The overlapping of Christian and Native American beliefs is evident in his vision of a woman offering forgiveness. However, the difference between the two traditions lies in the fact that "she asks not for sacrifice, but for taking responsibility for our own lives and actions. 'Those things should come down on us'" (Magoulick). Thus, the old woman's sentence announces the forthcoming tragedies in one of the next generations.

Female figures in the novel possess strong spiritual power. Blue Prairie Woman is strong enough to divide her spirit in two – one part stays with her husband and with the other part she searches for her lost daughter. Later on, as the antelope person, Blue Prairie Woman shows her strength in the crucial moment. Before she dies of the virus infection carried by her little girl, Matilda's mother sings a song "to the blue distance" (AW 19). The melody attracts the antelope which her girl joins in the woods (Little 504).

Even though Matilda is just a girl, mentioned in a novel as a baby and then as a little girl at the age of six, she incorporates female decisiveness to choose her own path. After helping her adoptive father, Scranton Roy, discover the traces of humanity in his heart while breastfeeding her, Matilda decides to follow her mother when she comes for her:

> Matilda, too, rejects Scranton Roy's designs for her life, for although she thinks of him as her father, indeed loves him "like nothing else" (AW 11), and remembers with gratitude how he nourished her when she was small, she somehow knows, when her mother comes, that she can no longer be Matilda Roy, daughter to Scranton. She therefore pens a brief note in handwriting that resembles his own and sets out for home. (Stookey 141)

Two other female descendants of Blue Prairie Woman, Mary and Zosie Shawano, also resist the male authority in their own way. Zosie's husband, Augustus Roy, sleeps with her sister, as well. Neither of these women wants him to know which is which, so that they can dominate him. With the aim to regain control over the situation, Augustus decides to mark one of them. In that way he would know which of the two sisters is currently in his bed. Not long after he bites off a piece of Zosie's ear, Augustus disappears. His exaggerated wish to satisfy his sexual hunger and find out which of the twins gives him the physical pleasure and when, ends up tragically for him.

After a long internal battle, Cally's mother Rozina Roy finally realizes that it is necessary for her to move away from her husband who becomes obsessed with her.

Throughout their marriage "she was never sure how she stood because his mood changed with no reference to anything she did"(AW 58). Rozin soon becomes very unhappy, and Richard does not put any effort to change that. When Rozin falls in love with Frank, Richard is unable to accept that as an adult, but plays a role of a victim by planning to commit suicide. In the last moment he decides not to wait for his death in a truck, but to have one last drink. He does not know that the exhaust gasses will kill Deanna who sneaked from her bed into the truck. Even though Richard tries to kill himself two more times, Rozin does not want to have anything to do with him. In other words, although they have two children together and a complicated past full of ups and downs, "she makes it clear that her husband does not own her"(Stookey 141). In that way Erdrich once more demonstrates that her novels abound with "strong and resilient women" (Stookey 142) who can say "no" in the right moment.

However, the woman whose mythical origin seems to arouse many questions is Klaus's wife Sweetheart Calico. Sweetheart Calico's resemblance to Fleur Pillager, the female hero in *Four Souls*, is obvious when discussing these women's magical powers. Both of them are able to enact their power when they take an animal form. While Fleur "possesses magical power when she assumes the form of the bear"(Stookey 140), "Sweetheart Calico commands the power to be free when she lives at one with the antelope" (Stookey 140).

According to Magoulick, the antelope wife "represents a pull to living more 'traditionally' or more 'authentically'" because she unites some of the ideal Native American characteristics of the past – she is "incomprehensible, beautiful, graceful, and other worldly – but also a woman, silent and aloof for the most part." In spite of her unclear lineage, it is likely that Matilda Roy is Auntie Klaus's ancestor since she carries under her tongue the same beads Matilda got for protection from her mother Blue Prairie Woman/Other Side of the Earth (Magoulick).

To Klaus Shawano, an obsessive victim of Sweetheart Calico's love ways, her physical appearance mimics the antelope: "They float above everyone else on springy, tireless legs . . . with a gravity of sure grace . . . their black, melting eyes never leave the crowd" (AW 23-24). In many of his dreams Klaus subconsciously realizes her nature, but cannot reconcile it with his reality, which eventually leads him to consumption (Magoulick).

Bewitched by Sweetheart Calico's unusual, even magical features, he kidnaps the antelope woman. However, Klaus's wife is still capable of influencing many people despite the tragic fate of being violently put in unknown surroundings. Rozina Roy is also one of those persons whose life decisions are affected by her arrival in the city.

Although she is not familiar with Sweetheart Calico's identity, Rozina feels that through her presence she is able to gather enough courage to leave her husband and start over with her true love Frank Shawano: "I entered [the bakery of Frank Shawano – her lover] for one reason and only this – her. Sweetheart Calico sat on the sidewalk just outside the shop" (AW 36). In the new relationship Roz finds her happiness (Magoulick).

The female character who is probably most deeply associated with Sweetheart Calico is the girl Cally. Not only do those two Native women have similar names, as"Cally is potentially a nickname of Calico," but they also "realize in each other their symbolic mythic twin, necessary because Cally's identical twin is dead, and Calico (half woman/half antelope) is an incipient twin" (Magoulick).

Although she is just a girl trying to find her own place in the complex family heritage and in the world in general, Cally represents an important link in the process of understanding and reconnecting the past with the present. As one of the narrators, she tries to affirm the value of the Ojibwe culture, which is actually the mission of the whole novel. At first, Cally does not understand the meaning of her aunt's presence and is afraid of her:

> I have always been afraid of her. She is not just any woman. She is something created out there where the distances turn words to air and thoughts to stone. The blue beads, now, she wiggles the first from the broken place in her smile and then she pulls bead after strung bead from her dark mouth out into the open space between us. That's where she was keeping them all of this time, I understand. Beneath her tongue. No wonder she was silent. She offers me their blue sentence in exchange. (AW 217)

However, what Sweetheart Calico comprehends as a burden becomes a sign of hope for Cally and her people. Cally holds the family together by accepting the beads which Auntie Klaus gives her and the role of a namer, too. Since her Aunty Klaus cannot fit into the consumerist worldview of the new generations in the city, Cally seems to be the more adept carrier of the beads because she is a part of Gakahbekong/Minneapolis (Magoulick). Remembering her mother Rozina's vision from a long time ago in which she saw "a huge thing, strange, inconceivable. All her life she told me she wondered what it was. It came out of the sky, pierced far into the ground, seethed and trembled" (AW 220), her daughter gives a new meaning to it, adapted to the contemporary times:

> I see this: I was sent here to understand and to report. . . . What she [Rozina] saw was the shape of the world itself. Rising in a trance and eroding downward and destroying what it is. Moment through moment until the end of time if ever there is an end to this. Gakahbekong. That's what she saw. Gakahbekong. The city. Where we are scattered like beads off a necklace and put back together in new patterns, new strings. (AW 219-20)

Cally transmits her vision of the world to the readers by stating that we, people, are just playing the given role, here on Earth, confronting us with the most important question raised by this novel: "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?" (AW 240). As a mediator, Cally finds the ways to prove that being a mixed-blood, or,

more generally, a blend of different traditions is something good and inspiring. Her female strength lies in the fact that she still believes in progress and mutual respect despite the history of "cracked apart" families (Magoulick).

Conclusion

The two novels analyzed in this paper – *Four Souls* and *The Antelope Wife* provide a unique insight into Native American culture and tradition. They abound in almost mythical characters with supernatural powers and allegoric imagery, blending elements from the Ojibwe and the dominant white culture in a unique way.

Four Souls depicts a diversity of love relations that not only show that it is possible to nurture a healthy relationship between a man and a woman but also emphasize the necessity to develop a connection to animals and nature, the land being the most important part of it. As a woman who is trying to get her land back, Fleur Pillager probably represents the best example of a person succeeding to restore those relations. Moreover, the novel offers some examples of love relationships which help the protagonists overcome all problems, even their disabilities. *The Antelope Wife* is, in this respect, not much different. However, in this novel a greater emphasis is placed on love relationships' mythological features since some of the characters draw their heritage from the antelope people. Also, *The Antelope Wife* teaches the readers that all forms of obsessive love affairs are doomed to fail.

When discussing family issues, in both *Four Souls* and *The Antelope Wife* not just the closest family members but also the whole community help the lost individuals to find their spiritual path again and provide answers about one's descent and role in society. Moreover, one must learn to respect the ancestors, as well as the living ones in order to be at peace with oneself. In *Four Souls* Fleur learns this while starting the process of spiritual purification. In *The Antelope Wife*, however, Cally and Sweetheart Calico take up the role of mediators between the traditional and modern world, demonstrating that cultural mixture is a positive and inspiring phenomenon.

Lastly, Erdrich's fiction is full of strange but strong and powerful women, all of whom have the same responsibility – to create a world where love and mutual respect are the main values. Each one of Erdrich's heroines does that in her own unique way. Whether defying governmental or any male authority, they fight for personal aims, contributing to their native community's well-being and its rebirth. In *Four Souls* Fleur Pillager is the one trying to rewrite history for her personal and her people's interest. She sacrifices her spiritual well-being and neglects the duties of a mother in order to get her land back. In *The Antelope Wife*, there are many women who decide to listen to their inner voice rather than any authority. Some of them, like Sweetheart Calico, have the task to remind the others that it is possible to blend the old and the new ways without negative consequences. A person just has to find the balance.

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