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美國當代原住民文學中的信仰與社群之再現
The Representation of Religious Belief and Community in Contemporary Native American Literature

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一、中文摘要

自哥倫布發現新大陸，西方基督教傳教士進入美洲大陸，莫不以匡正美洲原住民「原始，落後，野蠻」信仰為神聖使命並以改造原住民傳統生活方式的救世主姿態自居。在西方二元對立的思考架構下，原住民傳統信仰被視為邪靈的化身，當去之而後快。美洲原住民承受近五百年的被殖民窘境，面對文化屠殺式(cultural genocide)的政策，文化瀕臨滅絕。美國原住民傳統的宗教儀式如太陽之舞(Sun Dance)，鬼舞(Ghost Dance)，佩雅特宗教儀式(Peyote religion)都曾遭法令禁止舉行的命運。1960 年代起的美國印第安運動(American Indian Movement)，喚醒美國各部族原住民的部族意識。回歸部族(homing)，重拾部族靈視(tribal vision)成為泛原住民部族的號召，還我土地，重返聖地(sacred land)，回復傳統宗教儀式活動，尋得部族信仰自由(religious freedom)則成為普遍的訴求，在宗教，文化上取得部族自治權更成為原住民共同爭取的政治目標。

面對百年來白人宗教文化的壓境，同化政策的威迫，英語寄宿學校教育的推行，美洲原住民，縱使被圈豢於保留區中也難敵白人文化及代表另一股意識形態的宗教信仰的侵入。當傳統部族信仰與挾帶龐大殖民勢力的西方宗教相遇時，美國原住民為求其生存或文化的自保，各有其相應之道。在信仰一途上，有選擇維護傳統信仰者，有選擇背離放棄部族信仰與身份，皈依西方基督教者，亦有設法在夾縫中，求長補短，融合兩種信仰於一者。以宣揚傳統佩雅特宗教(peyotism)的美國印第安教會(American Indian Church)自基督教中吸取某些要義，融入原住民傳統信仰，即是一例。

宗教融合(religious syncretism)似乎表現原住民在文化互動過程中，為解決衝突與矛盾，以不斷調整，調適，形塑出能彰顯原住民傳統講求兼容並蓄精神的一種信仰方式。然而，宗教融合並非意味兩股信仰的水乳交融，或在面對內部殖民的歷史過程中，原住民信仰與西方殖民宗教間沒有岐異的存在。相反地，在面臨基督教霸權式的一神論，二元對立思想，及白人殖民政策的壓迫下，原住民為免於文化的根絕，將傳統信仰質素「偷渡」至基督教信仰中，也是保存傳統信仰的一種策略。

基督教的侵入對原住民傳統信仰及宇宙觀的所造成衝擊，在原住民的眼中是破壞性及毀滅性的。首先，原住民傳統非二元式的宇宙觀，重視萬物相乘的關係網絡觀，及其接受泛神(pantheon)

的信仰態度，因基督教的一神論而遭貶斥打壓。原住民傳統信仰中所重視的經由祖靈引導(spiritual guidance)追求靈視(vision quest)的靈性宗教經驗儀式亦因土地的喪失，祖靈的失落而日趨式微。原住民社群中更因族人選擇不同的立命安身信仰，產生信仰差異。岐見，誤解與衝突，因之滋生。信仰差異遂成為破壞原住民社群和諧的導火線之一(Weaver ix)。

在再現原住民社群中繁複的宗教信仰面向，各部族的原住民作家無不展現其關懷立場與部族視野。然而在再現過程中，混血原住民作家的跨文化，臨界門檻位置(liminal position)使其在再現的視野上表現出更為多面向，含混的態度。本計畫延伸從對寶拉 愛倫及席爾科之研究，擴大探查三位混血原住民作家作品中所種種與原住民社群信仰相關之議題。這包括:1930 年代原住民作家麥可鎳克(D'Arcy McNickle)之<<被圍者>>(*The Surrounded*), 1960 年代奧克拉荷馬州奇歐瓦族(Kiowa)莫瑪戴(N.Scott Momaday)的<<雨山之路>>(*The Way to Rainy Mountain*), <<日昇之屋>>以及 1980 年代厄翠琪(Louise Erdrich)的<<愛情靈藥>>(*Love Medicine*)，<<蹤跡>>(*Tracks*)，及賓果宮殿(*The Bingo Palace*)。論文中為加強對原住民文化背景之瞭解亦自當代原住民哲學宗教學者德洛利亞(Vine Deloria, Jr.)，及威佛(Jace Weaver)對原住民宗教運動之引介及研究著手，並輔以原住民人類學者吉爾(Gill)對原住民傳統信仰細部之解說，以掌握原住民作家作品中所引徵之與信仰，神話，心靈，儀式相關的符碼與觀念，期以確實瞭解美國原住民傳統宗教信仰之特色，並以之為基準探討原住民作家在呈現原住民社群面對西方宗教殖民時，是採取何種策略，以抗拒宗教同化及文化滅絕之威脅，以確保部族的自主性(sovereignty)與文化的傳承。

關鍵詞: 儀式，部族靈視，佩雅特宗教，宗教融合，信仰衝突，神聖性

Abstract

Since their first contact with the indigenous people on North American continent, the Christian missionaries have set the goal to "civilize" what they subjectively judge to be savage indigenous people. Utilized as a colonization tool to subjugate the indigenous during colonization period, Christianity bore the stigma of being "an imperialist religion." Christianity, which is assumed to have exerted tremendous influences on the lives of Native Americans in the United States, is condemned to have produced more detrimental than beneficial effects on the development of Native American cultures.

Christianity, which is thought to ruthlessly impose its rational, monotheist beliefs on Native American community, compels the Native Americans to change, alter and give up their traditional beliefs and practices to a considerable extent. In face of forced assimilation, many Native Americans are compelled to make a choice for their religious orientation: whether to adhere to traditional belief or to convert to Christianity. To some Native Americans, conversion to Christianity is a strategic means adopted to aid their struggle for cultural survival. Syncretic mixing of Christianity elements and Native American religious elements is another strategy to preserve traditional belief, to minimize the potentially detrimental effect of religious colonization.

Because of the existence of diverging religious beliefs, Native American community is thereby sundered.

Communal tensions and misunderstanding which arise from belief difference "undermine the work of community organizing" (Weaver ix), decreasing the cohesiveness of community.

This research project examines the way in which Native American mixedblood writers represent the religious dimensions of Native American communities: their belief conflicts, and belief accommodation. This project study expands the research scope from works of Paula Gunn Allen and Leslie Silko to the works of three mixedblood writers: D'Arcy McNickle's *The Surrounded* (1936), N.Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* (1968), *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (1969) to Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine: New and Expanded Version* (1993), *Tracks (1988), The Bingo Palace* (1994).

In order to catch the main gist of Native American traditional beliefs, the project looks into Native American religious studies by Vine Deloria, Jr. and Jace Weaver. It further goes into anthropological descriptions about traditional beliefs of Native American communities by Sam D. Gill. With fundamental cultural, religious and anthropological knowledge about Native American beliefs as background, the study examines the perspectives that these writers hold in their presentations of Native American community and religious beliefs.

Key words: ritual, tribal vision, religious syncretism, belief conflict

三、緣由與目的

堅定的信仰，對神祈不變的崇敬與依歸可以是個人或族群立基於世，安身立命的行為準則。對原住民部落而言，凝聚其社群部落的力量是祭師及其所舉行的宗教信仰儀式。然而美國原住民在歷經歐美殖民統治，歐洲宗教侵入，使其傳統信仰儀式遭受質疑。原住民裔美國人在歷經強勢宗教壓境下，其在靈性追求上，是抗拒或認同。而當代原住民作家，位居保留區內外或邊緣，是如何再現其族裔徘徊於歐美宗教與族裔傳統信仰之間，是本研究企欲探討的問題。

四、成果自評

本研究對自宗教面向切入，企圖對當代原住民作品進行文化部分之瞭解。研究過程中雖然設法自社會宗教學者韋伯，涂爾幹等宗教研究著作著手，以希望對宗教研究有更清析的概念後，能應用於作品閱讀文本之分析，可惜文本虛構的再現(fictional representation)與文本以外之現實(reality)有其嫝隙。宗教心理學的一些觀念反而成為可應用以分析文本中人物皈依西方宗教心理歷程的利器。應用佛洛伊德及克麗斯蒂娃的理論來分析原住民的宗教行為及心理，及與文化母體間的關係，是研究過程中的收穫。

本研究部分成果已以英文寫作 Veil the Faith in Tribal Vision: Religion and Belief Conflict in Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine* and *Tracks* 積極尋找可發表之期刊。

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Veil the Faith in Tribal Visions: Religion and Belief Conflicts in Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine* and *Tracks*

Chang Yueh-Chen

> Was there any sense relying on a God whose ears was stopped? Just like the government? I says then, right off, maybe we got nothing but ourselves.
>
> Louise Erdrich, *Love Medicine*, 237

> I thought of faith. I thought to myself that faith could be called belief against the odds and whether or not there's any proof.
>
> -- Louise Erdrich, *Love Medicine*, 245.

The quartets of Louise Erdrich's novels-- *Love Medicine (1984), The Beet Queen* (1986), *Tracks* (1988), and *The Bingo Palace* (1994) chronicles the cultural and spiritual changes of Chippewas in historic transition.[1] Religious and cultural dimensions of such novels as *Love Medicine* and *Tracks* have respectively drawn extensive discussions from critics. On one camp, Catherine Rainwater argues that the fundamental conflicts in *Love Medicine* arise from the conflicting codes between Western religious systems and Native spiritual belief. Similarly, Karen Janet McKinney notes that *Love Medicine* depicts the "cultural schizophrenia" caused by "clash between the Catholic dogma of the miracle and the native belief in personal vision" (152-153). On the other camp, some scholars endeavor to demonstrate that underlying Erdrich's depiction of seemingly incompatible cultural contradictions and collisions is Erdrich's attempt to seek spiritual balance or religious syncretism. Kalar Sanders, for example, maintains that Erdrich's characters in *Love Medicine* are engaged in a search for "healthy balance", despite the fact that they are surrounded and trapped by different forces (129). And Susan Stanford Friedman insists that Erdrich's task in *Tracks* is to blend "two opposing realities," to seek religious

[1] Spanning three generations of Native American and European immigrant families, these novels tell interlocking, inter-generational stories of four families: the Kashpaws, the Morrisseys, the Lamartines, and the Lazarrres.. *Love Medicine*, the first novel of this tetralogy, initiates the telling of this family saga. Some of the characters that show up in *Love Medicine* reappear in the other three novels. The family history spans from the time of 1910s in *Tracks* to 1980s in *Love Medicine*.

syncretism other than identity for her characters (127).

In her perceptive reading of Erdrich's *Tracks*, Friedman indicates that Fanonian interpretation, which centers on the polarity of colonization and decolonization process to highlight the identity politics of the novel, is insufficient to justify the "mixing" of peoples and religions that underlie the surface contestation. According to Friedman, contradictions in *Tracks* prevail where two contested forces battle over their supremacy. One is the force that struggles to claim native identity through the promotion of native spirituality, whereas the other force celebrates the hybridization of religions, embracing a more inclusive view of religious syncretism (108). While she strives to demonstrate the religious as well as political syncretism in Erdrich's novel, Friedman accurately pinpoints the ambivalence that Erdrich discloses in telling stories about her characters, particularly the female characters who oscillate between two worlds.

The cultural tensions derived from the conflicting belief systems between Catholicism and Chippewa traditional spiritual beliefs unquestionably constitute the central themes of Erdrich's works. In both *Love Medicine* and *Tracks* Erdrich's attempt to present the baffling cultural as well as belief clashes that engulf her characters is fairly palpable. The depiction of multiple contested forces at work, in fact, renders the communal life and people in Erdrich's novels lively, vivacious and dynamic. In a sense, Erdrich's multidimensional characterization defies stereotypical representations of Native Americans, leading readers to have a real glimpse of a Native American community sundered by the diverging religious as well as cultural beliefs. "Traditional religions, Christianity, and syncretic movements," Jace Weaver maintains, "have created in American Indian communities a religious pluralism that produces communal tensions and misunderstandings that undermine the work of community organizing" (ix). Indeed, the communal tensions and misunderstandings that spring from the divergence of religious beliefs among natives not only disturb the peace of the community but disrupt the solidarity among its members. The split of the Native American community, also as Weaver argues, is attributable to the destruction of traditional notion of culture and the construction of social structure "incompatible with traditional society" after European colonialism (20). Erdrich's presentation apparently reflects Weaver's observation about Native American community to a certain degree.

But another factor that should not be overlooked in our examination of Erdrich's perception and representation of Chippewa community is perhaps her mixedblood status. Of German and Chippewa ancestry, Erdrich is well educated in mainstream white America. But she bears strong resemblance with the other Native American writers-- Leslie Marmon Silko and Scott N. Momaday, for instance-- in that she also shows preference to portray the peripheral existence of the mixedbloods and the struggle of her community people. She tends to set her characters in the reservation as well as off-reservation surroundings in order to unveil the contradictions extant in two worlds. But commented by Robert Silberman as "a worldly author" who seems to be

more interested in the profane than in the sacred in her novel *Love Medicine* (109), Erdrich seems to give little space to "Indian ritual" or ceremony in her novels. Perhaps compared to Silko and Momaday, who tend to fill their texts with abundant tribal elements such as rituals, songs and ceremony to enhance the "authenticity" of their works, Erdrich grafts relatively less "conventional forms" or culturally "sacred" ingredients into her texts. But this less attention to the sacred elements does not mean that traditional myth or faith has little value in her writings. On the contrary, sweat lodge ceremony, hunting ritual, water ritual, vision quest and healing motif frequent her novels. The only difference is that these elements seem to be desacralized, because Erdrich deploys them to delineate rather personal life story of modern Chippewas. However, mythic trickster figure are quite effectively adopted by her to satirize and undermine the colonial system which designedly expels Native Americans to the marginal frontier.

Erdrich's liminal status and her "colonial" consciousness are acknowledged to have affected her perceptions of the tensions that arise from the intrusion, or the "integration", of Catholicism into Chippewa life. It is reasonable to assume that Erdrich's experience of liminality may have granted her with a more fluid vision of the Native American world. This essay thus discusses the impact of the so-called "spiritual encounters" on the Plain Indians from a standpoint of a liminal Native American woman writer. Taking Chippewa tribe[2], to which Louise Erdrich belongs, as an example, the essay draws Louise Erdrich's novels, *Love Medicine: New and Expanded Version (1993), Tracks* to analyze the involved issues which Native Americans are compelled to cope with in the process of cultural colonization. It examines the psycho-cultural impacts of conversion on Native converts, the tribal vision that Erdrich as well as Chippewas entertains and the degree of syncretism manifested in Erdrich's novels. It also explores the way in which Erdrich depicts and resolves the spiritual malady and psychological illness brought about by colonization and belief conflicts. It demonstrates that for the sake of surviving physical impoverishment, economic pauperism and cultural/religious colonialism, Erdrich's characters veil their real faith either in the tenets of post-Columbus religious belief or traditional trickstering humor.

I. Differences in belief

Cultural collision starts from belief differences. The beliefs held by Native Americans are virtually different from those of Euro-American Christianity. Two fundamentally different concepts can be briefly summarized. First, traditionally

[2] Chippewa (or Objibwa), according to Karen Janet McKinney's study, make up the large population of the Algoniquin tribes, with whom the French Jesuits had the earliest contacts.

Native Americans believe in the power of spirits, ritual and ceremony to maintain the solidity of their community. To obtain sacred power, an individual is always encouraged to seek inspirational guidance in dreams or through vision quest. "During vision quest, a person, usually a male, embarks upon an ordeal in which he will isolate himself from the remainder of the tribe. Under the direction of a medicine man, he is led to hill or other secluded spot, where he stays for an agreed-upon number of days and fasts until he receives a vision . . . that will affect his future" (Melton 491). In the vision quest, a person sometimes needs the instruction of guardian spirits that usually manifest themselves in the form of animals, or inanimate objects such as stones (491). Religion is viewed to have healing and balancing functions. Shamans, who are thought to possess the power obtained from vision quest, assume the responsibility to heal the people who are physically or psychologically ill. It is by virtue of shaman's help that an individual is healed through his/her reunification or communication with the spirits. However such individual spiritual, visionary experience is denigrated in Christianity (Deloria 153-4). Secondly, Native Americans think extremely highly of the sacredness of land. Land is conceived to be the site where the spirits of the ancestors linger over and where the cultural heritage is preserved and continued. In tribal religion, sacred land is of crucial significance because a particular ceremony and specific places are bound. However, whereas land is endowed with spiritual significance by Native Americans, land, to Euro-Americans, is a property that can be traded off, developed, exploited to its fullest advantage.[3]

The fundamental differences in belief, worldviews and lifestyles certainly affect the content experiences of Native Americans and Euro-Americans spiritual encounter. Christianity, which is thought to ruthlessly encroach its rational, monotheist beliefs on Native American community, compel the Native Americans to change, alter or give up their traditional beliefs and practices to a considerable extent. Because traditional Native American beliefs and practices were dismissed as savage, primitive, and mystical, many Native Americans lose confidence in their own beliefs. Conversion to Christianity, whose doctrine the missionaries proclaim to be useful to reinforce the beliefs of the natives, is strategically adopted by some Native Americans to aid their struggle for cultural survival (Griffiths 8).

Since their first contact with the indigenous people on North American continent, one of the major goals of the Christian missionaries is to "civilize" what they subjectively judge to be savages. "Civilization," however, according to Sigmund Freud, is made possible by the imposition of restrictions through "organic repression" (*Civilization and Its Discontents* 6). Utilized as a colonization tool to subjugate indigenous people during colonization period, Christianity bore the stigma of being "an imperialist religion."(Deloria *For This Land* 145) Christianity, which is assumed to have exerted tremendous influences on the lives of Native Americans in the United

[3] Scholars and critics like Vine Deloria, Jr. and Paula Gunn Allen has made extensive comparison regarding the belief differences between Christianity and Native American spirituality.

States, is condemned to have produced more detrimental than beneficial effects on the development of Native American cultures.[4] Numerous indictments against Christianity for eroding Native American cultures have been made explicit by Native American cultural critics and theologians. Native American theologian, Vine Deloria, Jr., for instance, denounces Christianity as "the chief evil ever to have been loosed on the planet" (*For This Land* 146). Paula Gunn Allen, too, contends that patriarchal Christianity should be responsible for the cultural genocide of American Indians, or the obliteration of gynocracy, a social order that characterizes Indian America (3)

The accusation against the "colonization" of Christianity from a tribalist perspective is not uncommon. But should Western monotheist Christianity bear full responsibility for this vanish of American Indian cultures? Is the "encroachment" of Christianity into Native American community an irreparable mistake of history? In "Culture and the History of Difference" Robert J. C. Young, while citing Herder's brilliant ideas about the root and development of culture, indicates the benefits of "mixing and migration" in generating heterogeneous elements to promote the progress of cultures.

> . . . . cultures develop organically into nations by virtue of their homogeneity, attachment to the soil, their traditions and single language, but on the other hand, the 'golden chain of improvement that surroundest the earth' tells a different story, namely that the progress of culture works by a regenerative development between cultures, in which one nation educates another through mixing and migration" (41).

Few can deny the contributions of cultural encounter--or spiritual encounters, above all--to the development of cultures involved. Scholars, particularly scholars who favor to acknowledge the mixture of the cultures across borders, opt to emphasize the positivity of the contact between Christianity and native American religions. They put more emphasis on positive outcome of such "reciprocal spiritual encounters" between the two. Nicholas Griffiths, while conducting his Hispanic studies, states that "the interaction of Christianity with native American religions in the colonial era (and indeed subsequently) was characterized by reciprocal, albeit asymmetrical, exchange rather than the unilateral imposition of an uncompromising, all-conquering and all-transforming monotheism" (1). This focus on the interaction, exchange and blending of religions leads scholars to examine the concept of synthesis or syncretism. Theories of religious syncretism have been formulated to explain this possible combination of two religious elements into one[5]. However, whether the

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[4] In this essay, Native Americans and American Indians are used interchangeably to refer to the indigenous people living in America. A more general term, Christianity, is drawn for discussion here although in the following discussion about Louise Erdrich's novels, Catholicism is the core of reference.

[5] Syncretism, according to Nicolas Griffiths, a lecturer in Hispanic Studies at the University of

mixture of respective religious elements suggests the resolutions of contradictions brought about by religious contact and, thereby, the attainment of harmonious synthesis remains a question (Griffiths 26).[6]

In face of forced assimilation, Native Americans also face a compelling decision as to whether or not to convert. Sometimes the tragedy of Native American life can be said to start from this decision on religious orientation, for different religious experience may certainly orient believers to a different vision of the world. Conversion, as Griffiths writes, "is not just a simple external sociocultural process, but also involves an interior change which affects the fundamental attitudes and behavior of a person" (4). In the North American continent, Native Americans used to be taught to give up their culture and identity if they accepted Christianity. To many Native Americans, the acceptance of Christianity is equal to the relinquishment of their Indian cultures and identity. "To become Christian," Jace Weaver writes, "means to cease being Indian" (*Native American Religious Identity* 6). But any option for religious assimilation has its psychological motivation. As Weaver puts, "Many converted to Christianity, the borrowed religion of the foreign invader. They thought that these things would protect them from further depredations" (*Native American Religious Identity* 3). In light of this, it seems that no harsh value judgements can be imposed on those converts, for they are entitled to the pursuit of a non-impoverished, happy life--if their happiness can be attained through this religious proselytism. But in reality, down at the bottom, converted Natives, like traditional belief beholders, can rarely survive comfortably in a belief-altered or a belief-in-conflict community, due to the common anxiety of seeing the erosion of their own cultures or beliefs.

II. Veiled conversion in repression

In Erdrich's fictional world, Pauline Puyat in *Tracks* and Marie Lazarre in *Love Medicine* are both good examples to illustrate the spiritual struggle and inner psychology of converts (or would-be converts). Erdrich's *Tracks* portrays the distressing historic tragedy of Turtle Mountain Chippewa band in face of physical desolation and "cultural genocide" in the 1910s, the period after the passage of the General Allotment Act of 1887. In the winter of 1912, the Turtle Mountain Chippewas encounter the severest disaster in history: smallpox epidemic, starvation,

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Birmingham, is an indistinct term, which some scholars consider to be "superfluous" because of its overlap with another term, "synthesis".

[6] Syncretism is indeed a charismatic and enchanting ideal, the reach of which state denotes the realization of successful reconciliation of opposing principles and practices, with contradictions resolved. Yet syncretic fusion is not so simple and direct a state to reach or define. In light of this, what underlies the surface syncrtism and how the natives move back and forth between two poles of total rejection and acceptance to reach that uncontradictory state of syncretism will be a more interesting subject for exploration.

and the enforcement of white law that coerces the removal of Chippewas from their land. Setting Pauline against this historical context, Erdrich makes her conversion a complex matter that carries psycho-cultural meanings. In a sense, conversion to Pauline is practically a survival strategy in that proselytism helps sustain her peripheral existence in an economically impoverished condition, effectuating her resistance against a community which, due to colonization, is revolved into a culturally patriarchal society.[7]

A mixed-blood girl, Pauline since girlhood has suffered a great fear of being abandoned. Like all the other Chippewas who experienced the severe winter of 1912, Pauline witnessed the deaths of starved Indians as if it were a common, ordinary scene. After her mother died, Pauline was left alone in the world, ignored and invisible to others.[8] Although adopted by the clan family, she was treated as if she were a white. Additionally, she suffered the sexual attack from male relative, Napolean. As Pauline told Fleur: "I have no family. . . I am alone and have no land. Where else would I go but to the nuns?" (142); "I went to the convent because I couldn't stand those men"(142). The traumatic experience of being sexually abused and pregnant left Pauline despondent, helpless and lonely. In her desperation, Pauline attempted to abort her unborn daughter so as to disconnect herself from the community, but she was at the same time afraid that if the baby she conceived was born, she would be again cut off from the world: "If I gave birth, I would be lonelier. I saw, and I saw too well. I would be an outcast, a thing set aside for God's use, a human who could be no other human" (135). This fear about her existence in the world strengthens her will to be a Catholic nun.

In Pauline's case, proselytization is virtually, to follow Sigmud Freud's term, a "palliative measure" (22). It is a strategy that she takes to meet her psychological need for a less sorrowful life. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Sigmund Freud says that behind the surface of religion lies the motivation of human wishes for pleasure and happiness. Religion, in Frued's view, is both an illusion and delusion, in that religion paves a way for humans to acquire happiness and protection from suffering but "its technique," says Freud, "consists in depressing the value of life and distorting the picture of the real world in a delusional manner" (31). Religion, in other words, provides people with substitute satisfactions of wishes while putting repressive mechanism into execution.

Pauline's conversion thus can be read as motivated by a desire to fulfil her wish for a better material and spiritual life. In addition to that, Pauline converts, not chiefly because she identifies with the white values, but because she believes that she can be

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[7] Paula Gunn Allen contends that American Indian community used to be woman-centered. Sexual abuse is never heard-of, but after colonization, there are more cases of sexual abuses. Sexual abuse that occurs after-Columbus period is always singled out to be the legacy of colonization.

[8] Erdrich's portrayal of Pauline's psyche--the feelings of being ignored, the desire to be white, the experience of being peripheralized--immediately reminds readers who are familiar with Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* of Pecola. That Erdrich is influenced by Toni Morrison and William Faulkner is acknowledged and discussed among critics. See Friedman and Wong's interview with Erdrich.

put on a path to self-empowerment. To zealous converted Native Americans, their being Catholics seems to mean that they have secured the alliance with the mainstream, and that the colonizers have granted them with a "talisman" against the oppressors. Western religion, in other words, is their "defensive weapon" against humiliation and suffering inflicted by the external oppressing systems. Their psychology shows that they are willing to repress themselves so as to procure from the exchanged new religious identity pride, dignity, and respect inside and outside of their tribal community. "Some Indians," as Griffiths writes, "converted to Christianity because it provided a better answer to the urgent social and religious questions that they were facing at that particular juncture in their cultural history" (6).

In the mind of vulnerable, victimized Native American women, the only refuge for them to escape from patriarchal colonial oppression is convent. They believe that they can forget miseries, regain confidence, and renew themselves in that quiet retreat and total submission to a monotheistic Father. In that relationship, their self-hatred is replaced by a narcissistic belief in their sole relationship with God.[9] The spiritual journey of Marie Lazzarre, Pauline's illegitimate daughter, in *Love Medicine* is another example. Like Pauline, Marie also suffers from a strong sense of "internalized oppression" (Sergi 142). A mixed-blood, she, likewise, directs her values at the white world, assuming that the status of Catholic sainthood can draw for her admiration and respect from people around, helping her gain self-esteem. Dreaming that worshipers would "touch the hem of her garment to get blessed" (*Love Medicine* 147), Marie, at the age of fourteen, started her quest for Western God, which, however, turned out to be a vision quest in a tribal sense (Van Dyke 16-7). She went to the Sacred Heart Convent, expecting to be accepted as a nun; however she was frustrated by the sadomasochistic behavior of Sister Leopolda, a new name for converted Pauline in *Love Medicine*. Sister Leopolda, driven by her obsessive fear of Satanic intrusion, was on the brink of insanity. After internalizing Christian concept of the evils of paganism, what Leopolda managed to eradicate was all that devil associated with Indians--Indian language, Indian spirits and Indian legacy. She treated her own biological daughter cruelly and inhumanly, because her Christian conception of evil impelled her to make it a top mission to exorcise darkness out of Marie's body. She had Marie go through series of agony designed like trials: she poured hot water over Marie as if she were baptizing her, she poked Marie's heart where she thought the devil resided, and she forces Marie to feel guilty and to admit her own evils:

> She always said the Dark one wanted me most of all, and I believed this. I stood out. Evil was a common thing I trusted. Before sleep sometimes he came and whispered conversation in the old language of the bush. I listened. He told me things he never told anyone but Indians. I was privy to both worlds of his

[9] According to Freud, Christianity's devotion to Christ expresses the Western preoccupation with the anxiety of son experience in relation to their fathers, and Catholicism's adoration of the virgin discloses

knowledge. I listened to him, but I had confidence in Leopolda. (*LM* 46)

In her mystical-realist delineation about Marie's struggle against Pauline's intimidatory "spiritual guidance," Erdrich ironically reveals the absurdity, cruelty and anomaly of a converted Native American nun.

In *The Wretched of the Earth,* Frantz Fanon ever writes about the mental disorder of the colonized people who are denies the attributes of humanity. They showed psychiatric symptoms after being brained washed (224-233). Leopolda's internalized conception of evil, distorted idea about martyrdom and daemonic behavior reflect the aftermath of religious colonialism. From *Track* to *Love Medicine*, Erdrich portrayed the psychological and moral decadence of a converted Native American who is driven to the brink of madness by Western concept of sainthood. Pauline is first deluded by the false assertion that worldly suffering is a path to afterlife paradise. She is furthermore blinded by the illusion that she can be the savior of her suffering people if she just sublimates herself into sainthood. In *Tracks*, Pauline, seeing the unbearable scene of diseased Indians, dying, suffering and crying for help, conceives the idea that the hope of Indians' deliverance lies in the hand of Christian god. She is convinced that all the sufferings in her Indian community--starvation, poverty, diseases, death--can be made light of through the rescue of Jesus Christ. In Pauline's assessment, Indian guardian spirits are relatively impotent in comparison to the Christ she worships and adores. To her, Jesus Christ gives not only protection but material well-beings and prosperity whereas the Indian spirits bring nothing but suffering, impoverishment, alcoholism and death. As Pauline boasts:

> Our Lord, who had obviously made the whites more shred, as they grew in number, all around, some even owning automobiles, while the Indians receded an coughed to death and drank. It was clear that Indians were not protected by the thing in the lake or by the other Manitous who lived in the trees, the bush, or spirits of animals that were hunted so scarce, they became discouraged and did not mate. (*Tracks* 139).

Delusion motivates Pauline to make a martyr of herself through self-infliction and bodily mortification; she devises a way which she regards as "the ingenious reminder of Christ's imprisonment" by wearing shoes on the wrong feet (*Tracks* 146). But this emulation of Catholic martyr is rather preposterous since such motification of flesh does not necessarily suggests the purification of soul after suffering. Although "bodily pain," according to Friedman, "was the central component of religious practice" (120), Pauline's odd design can only be interpreted as a distortion of saint's practice, and syncretism in her case is not so well-presented as Friedman suggested. For syncretism, as defined, should imply a reconciliation of oppositional forces. It is a

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an intense idealization of motherhood. See "Freud, Sigmund." *The Encyclopedia of Religion,* 437.

state reached after perfect merging or combinations of two systems. In *Tracks*, Pauline's appropriation of Christian practices is weird and deviant to such a state that no union or harmony can be felt.[10]

With Pauline's weird practices, Erdrich further shows how conversion may destroy self, dissolve subjectivity and how spiritual conflicts can persist in a devout converted Native American even after a convert claims to have a new identity. Pauline loses her self and sense of subjectivity in her humble submission to God: "Only I must give myself away in return. I must dissolve. I did so eagerly. I had nothing to leave behind, and nothing to acquire, either, except what would come into His hands. I fit easily through the eye of a needle" (*Tracks* 141). Although the messages she thought she received from God confirmed her affinity with the white people ("He said that I was not whom I had supposed. I was an orphan and my parents had died in grace, and also. Despite my deceptive features, I was not one speck of Indian but wholly white" (*Tracks* 137)), she is still haunted by the mythical spirits, the legacy of the Chippewa culture: windigo, the giant cannibal living in the water, the dead spirits that wander around the land, and underwater manito. She constantly experiences spiritual struggles:

> I should not turn my back on Indians. I should go out among them, be still, and listen. There was a devil in the land, a shadow in the water, an apparition that filled their sight. There was no room for Him to dwell in so much as a crevice of their minds. (*Tracks* 137)

According to Chippewa/Ojibwa belief, windigo, a giant cannibal living in the water, always search for human flesh to eat, and can transform itself into a human form. Chippewas who harbor great fear may suffer from the psychological delusion that they are possessed by the giant and will be eaten.[11] A human can become windigo if the Windingo is acquired as a guardian (Vecsey 77). The fear of windigo intensifies Pauline's anxiety living in a Chippewa community. Her repetitive reference to the devilishness of the dark thing in the water, further, discloses her obsessive dread of spirits that Indians believe to permeate this universe.[12]

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[10] In Erdrich's novel, harmonious religious syncretism remains not so noticeable. Even if there is any indication of Chippewa appropriation of Catholicism, the observance of Catholic rites seems rather superficial. In *Love Medicine*, Nector's laughable behavior in the church is a good example to show Chippewa's ludicrous attitude toward Catholicism or Western God. Earnest pray to God suggests nothing sacred for, in the eye of Chippewas, it is only a performance. Nector yelled and prayed to God as if he were still a Hollywood movie actor, because he knew that "God don't hear [him] otherwise" (*LM 236).* As Lipsha commented, "I knew this was perfectly right and for years not one damn other person had noticed it. God's been going deaf. Since the Old Testament, God's been deafening up on us" (*LM* 236). It is this skepticism about the mercy of God on Indians that keeps them accepting Catholic God wholeheartedly, although pantheism of Native Americans allows the existence of Catholic God in their lives. But this coexistence does not imply that there is no congruity.

[11] Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, 2177.

[12] According to Paula Gunn Allen, Native Americans believe that "God is All Spirits and other beings are all spirits"(60).

Pauline's Western dualistic thinking makes her see the incompatibility and incongruity between Chippewa belief and Catholicism. She rejects the coexistence between these two beliefs. Yet despite her earnestness in acting as a harbinger of Christian mission, Pauline is compelled to acknowledge the fact that it is extremely difficult and impossible for Catholicism to conquer and abolish Indian concept of spirituality. In other words, Chippewa's traditional belief can not be so easily eradicated. In a symbolic battle with what she deems as the devilish water spirit in the lake, she killed Napoleon, the biological father of her illegitimate daughter. In her failure to achieve the holy goal to exterminate Indian deity, she ironically commits a secular crime of murder.

The concept of Christian sainthood and the image of Virgin Mary as ideal womanhood affect the religious perception of the reservation girls who deem themselves as "white" enough to be admitted into Western religious institution. Both mixed-blood Native Americans with light skin, Marie Lazarre and Pauline Puyats are deceived by the illusion that people would have to kneel to them, because they "don't have that much Indian blood" (*LM 43).* This illusionary, narcissist belief in their own "superiority" to Indians keeps them from realizing that they are confronted with a cultural and political reality not so favorable to them in one way or another. They fail to take advantage of their liminal position to embrace both culture; instead, they are restrained from either/or by their limiality. In reality, what they experience are no better than those Indians who are after whites, plundering their medicine for the cure of diseases. Just as Marie says: "Like those bush Indians who stole the holy black hat of a Jesuit and swallowed little scraps of it to cure their fevers. But the hat itself carried smallpox and was killing them with belief" (*LM* 45). Like bush Indians who mistakenly postulated that the Jesuit would carry with him powerful cures for physical ailments but faced death instead, Marie, too, met with deep psychic trauma and pain when she assumed that she could find spiritual food at a convent. Her longing to convert herself to a nun is later deemed by herself as a stupid conduct committed out of ignorance. It is such vision that brings her back closer to her own tribal community.

II. Faith in regression and restoration

Erdrich persists in her exploration of the impact of Catholicism, yet the second-generation Chippewas are portrayed to be more tribal conscious as contrasted to the perversion and neurosis of the first-generation converted Chippewa like Pauline. In *Love Medicine*, the return to tribal reservation turns out to be an inevitable journey that Chippewas in the 1930s-1980s take. For Chippewas who ultimately recognize the significance of upholding traditional beliefs, reservation, rather than convent, becomes the destination of their life journey. The preservation of the legacy of tribal heritages also becomes the primal wishes of non-converts in Erdrich's novels. In *Love*

Medicine Marie's farewell to the convent symbolizes her departure from the Euro-American monotheistic belief, and Catholic concept of ideal womanhood embodied in the icon of Virgin Mary. After the austere spiritual trial that Sister Leopolda puts her to go through, Marie returns to reservation. Her rather accidental sexual relations with Nector Kashpaw provides her with an opportunity to go back to a primal state of domestic life to realize her idea of secular womanhood as well as motherhood.

Whereas Pauline sacrifices and suffers for her faith in Western religion, Marie strives to define her own value and achievement in her marital life: being a good wife and mother. Although she does not become a Catholic nun like Sister Leopolda, she however practices in a secular world the love that Catholicism preaches. She bears, raises and adopts children from clan family, following the traditional concept of family[13]; she rescues her husband Nector from alcoholism and gambling; she makes him end up as a tribal chairman. An independent, self-sufficient and competent woman, Marie proves to herself and Sister Leopolda that she can survive well by empowering herself and her husband without putting faith in any supernatural being or god. As she says: "I don't pray. When I was young, I vowed I never would be caught begging God. If I want something I get it for myself. I go to church only to show the old hens they don't get me down" (*LM* 96). This capability to prove self-sufficiency and independence without begging God's help, however, does not imply that Native woman like Marie is spiritually self-reliant. Rather, behind her external strength is an unveiled faith in the tribal spirit, which in her view is gradually being washed away by the wave of colonialism and assimilationism -- vanishing. As she secretly touches the beads which "ignoret bush Crees" put on June Morrisey to protect against wandering ghost spirits of the deceased, she ponders:

> I don't pray, but sometimes I do touch the beads.
> It has become a secret. I never look at them, just let my fingers roam to them when no one is in the house. . . . I touch them, and every time I do I think of small stones. At the bottom of the lake, rolled aimless by the waves, I think of them polished. To many people it would be a kindness. But I see no kindness in how the waves are grinding them smaller and smaller until they finally disappear. (*LM* 96)

Although her pride refrains her from confessing her faith in either religion, Marie does reveals her concern for the disappearance of tribal belief in spirits, spirits which are symbolized in small stones in the lake. Because she has witnessed the effect of colonial institutions on her people, Marie, at her senior age, becomes more affirmative about the value of old-time culture and language. Erdrich writes: "Marie had started speaking the old language, falling back through time to the words that Lazarres had

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[13] For the characteristics of Native American family system, refer to Paula Gunn Allen's *Sacred Hoop*, 247-52.

used among themselves, shucking off the Kashpaw pride, yet holding to the old strengths Rushes Bear had taught her, having seen the new, the Catholic, the Bureau, fail her children, having known how comfortless words of English sounded in her ears" (*LM* 263). Marie's affirmation represents the growing tribal consciousness of surviving non-Catholic Chippewas who reject to yield their own belief to Christian God.

In new and expanded edition of *Love Medicine*, Erdrich allows herself to present more freely such rising tribal consciousness of surviving Chippewas. Erdrich's intention to make this part of presentation the site of identity politics is so noticeable that it attracts widespread critical discussions. In a perceptive comparative review of Erdrich's 1984 and 1993 versions of *Love Medicine*, Allan Chavkin points out that the expanded version of 1993 *Love Medicine* is intended to make Erdrich's political vision more powerful. She argues that the new edition reveals the authorial intention to avert the attack from reviewers and critics who accuse her of apolitical presentation of Indian life (111).[14] To Chavin, Erdrich's political vision is crystallized in her insistence on preserving American Indian culture, her resistance against assimilation into white culture and her advocacy for feminist independent American Indian women (112).

Chavin's succinct and careful analysis indeed summarizes some major issues that Erdrich explores in her fiction. But meanwhile, Chavin's examination betrays the ambivalence and ambiguity that Erdrich displays in her description about the vision and spiritual quest of her characters, particularly the quest of abandoned daughters for their mothers. Fleur and her daughter, Lulu; Pauline/Sister Leopard and her daughter, Marie, as indicated, are two pairs of characters whose presence in both *Love Medicine* and *Tracks* exemplifies the significantly symbolic meaning embodies in mother-daughter relationship. Erdrich delineates the endeavor of these self-assertive, independent Native American women in search of spiritual consolations either in foreign Catholicism or in native spirituality. Interestingly, both mothers, though absent in the upbringings of their daughters, later turn out to be "role models" that their daughters try to emulate -- though their daughters may not be aware of it. It is detectable in these novels that their attempt to seek recourse to either native spirituality or Western religion is mainly triggered by their desire to escape from the state of spiritual desolation or physical impoverishment. For the daughters in both novels, their painful experiences of being deserted by their mothers is another factor that contributes to their spiritual search. In *Tracks,* Lulu, first left to Jesuit school and

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[14] Famous debates started from Silko's attack on Erdrich's novel, *The Beet Queen*. Silko charged that Erdrich showed "more interest in the dazzling language and self-referentiality associated with postmodernism than in representing Native American oral traditions, communal experiences, or history." But critics such as Nancy Peterson and Susan Castillo all stood up to defend for Erdrich. Castillor argued that Silko's accusation was "rooted in a restrictive view of ethnicity and essentialist, logcentric concept of textual representation" (285). Peterson also defied against Silko's accusation of ahistoricity in Erdrich's novel, contending that Erdrich deployed "a revisioning project" to reinscribe history which "[wa]s neither a simple return to historical realism nor a passive acceptance of postmodern historical fictionality" (991).

later raised by old shaman Nanapush in *Tracks*, cannot forgive her mother for that desertion. However, despite her unpleasant memories about absent mother, she still expresses strong wishes to go back to the side of her mother. In *Love Medicine* Lulu says: " I never grew from the curve of my mother's arms. I still wanted to anchor myself against her. But she had tore herself away from the run of my life like a riverbank. She had vanished, a great surrounding shore, leaving me to spill out alone" (*LM* 68)

Lulu, like Marie, finally shuns white assimilation policy and goes back to the reservation, as her desire for maternal affection, language, and voices intensifies, escalating. In a dreaming state of hearing her mother's voice to summon her, Lulu runs away from the government boarding school, which aims to civilize her, and she returns to the reservation where she thinks she can be reunited with the spirits of her mother:

> I wanted to fill her tracks, but luck ran out the holes. My wishes were won soles. I stumbled in those shoes of desire. Following my mother, I ran away from the government school. Once, twice, too many times. . . . Punished and alone, I slept in a room of echoing creaks. I made and torn down and remade all the dormitory beds. I lived by bells, orders, flat voices, rough English. I missed the old language in my mother's mouth." (*LM* 68)

The physical homecoming, as William Bevis suggests, entails the spiritual homecoming. At reservation, the returnees get the chance to embark on vision quest as opportunities rise. Lulu's stay with her relatives--uncle Nanapush, and his wife Margaret Kashpaw--and her love affair with her cousin, Moses Pillager, provide both exhilarating and excruciating experiences that affect her emotional responses to the communal network. Her desires to be sexually and culturally affiliated with her Pillager people are realized: "I hold his [Moses Pillager's] name close as my own blood and I will never let it out" (*LM* 82). The search for a mother turns out to be a healing process in which the lost daughters discover the spiritual legacy of their mothers, and their cultural heritages (Chavin 98; Van Dike, 15-27). The return to reservation for Native American returnees may symbolically suggest a regression to maternal womb, because that act denotes a desire for security and warmth in a physically and "culturally" familiar milieu. However, for Native American returnees, "homing-in" suggests more than symbolic regression to maternal womb; it manifests, instead, a wish to rejuvenate self in reconnection with the community.

Unfortunately, in Erdrich's novels, such physical or spiritual "homing-in" rarely succeeds; "homing-in," in other words, does not necessarily guarantee achievement in spiritual liberation or well-being.[15] In *Love Medicine* June Morrisey's death on her way to the reservation, and in *Tracks* Pauline's unwelcomed homecoming are all

[15] homecoming is a central motif in Native American literature. Silberman and Bevis all dealt with this motif extensively in their analysis.

manifestations of Erdrich's uncertainty and ambivalence about the security and consolation values of reservation life.

Erdrich's uncertainty and ambivalence is also manifested in her presentation about tribal belief. In Erdrich's novels, the blending of the supernatural with the real constitutes another major characteristics. With that mixture, Erdrich challenges, disturbs and plays with the supernatural signs that she transforms from the traditional trickster narratives. Just as she exposes the mercilessness of Christian God in face of the suffering of Indian people, Erdrich, in a like manner, betrays the powerlessness of traditional Chippewa spirits. Her skepticism against such belief systems is illustrated in both Pauline's and Lispha's commentaries. In *Tracks,* Erdrich allows Pauline to question the power of the water spirit, Missepeshu, in Matchimanito Lake. Missepeshu, which is brought from Minnesota by the Pillagers, is said to be the guardian spirit of the Pillagers family, but this Manitou also possesses great and dangerous powers to bring flood and stormy weather. Manitous, in other words, is both saviour and destroyer in non-binary Chippewa belief. Fleur, who is Pauline's rival in the novel, is downplayed by Pauline, for her role as the "hinge" (*Tracks* 139) between people and her gold-eyed guardian spirit in the lake fails. Said to be the only survivor of the Pillagers who inherits the gift of healing people, Fleur possesses overwhelming physical strength, gambling skills, and most of all the supernatural power which the guardian spirit seems to endow on her. She has the power to transform herself from a human to a bear. The only survivor of the Pillagers, rescued and adopted by Nanapush, Fleur, like most of the characters in Erdrich's novels, live without her own family. Driven by hunger and despair, she has attempted drowning herself in the water, but in vain. Like Pauline, Fleur also experienced sexual assault and had an illegitimate daughter, Lulu, who she gave up to Nanapush. But unlike Pauline, who succumbs herself to Western God, Fleur relies on the legacy of her family, the guidance of supernatural water spirit, Misshepeshu to protect her and sustain her survival. Living in the sacred forest, by the lake, near Misshepeshu , Fleur keeps an uncanny closeness with her guardian spirit. To Fleur, Misshepeshu is the deity that protects her from starvation and assault.

Erdrich's evocation of the mysterious water spirits from Chippewa myth may be read as an attempt to show the significance of spiritual legacy. This evocation does suggest that a vulnerable Chippewa woman desperately needs to find strength in spiritual legacy she inherits in order to defeat the encroaching forces of Western capitalism as represented by the white logging company. But it may be far-fetching to infer that Erdrich intends to restore the faith in this traditional guardian spirits, because as the story reaches the end, Fleur ultimately loses her land despite her conjuration of supernatural forces to destroy the cabins where the white lumbers stay. The defeat of Fleur not only suggests the invincibility of oppressing white colonialism, but discloses the unreliability and impotence of supernatural spirits that Fleur relies on. Just as Nanapush comments: "[Fleur] had failed too many times, both to rescue us and save her youngest child. . . Her dreams lied, her vision was obscured, her helper slept

deep in the lake . . . Fluer was a different person than the young woman I had known. She was hesitant in speaking, false in her gestures, anxious to cover her fear" (*Tracks* 177).

On the other hand, Fleur's weakening power, to Erdrich, may also be attributed to many factors. Beside the factor that water spirit is no longer potent enough to provide protections, the other reason may be that Chippewa has lost the power of supplanting the spirits, the power of communicating with the spirits.[16] In Native American religion, the ceremony cannot be performed successfully if a medicine man or woman loses such power. To Native Americans, religion, spirits, land are all interrelated. As land is being taken away by the whites, the spirits that linger over the land are also gone. As a consequence, from the moment when the forest is confiscated for white timber business, Fleur lose not only the ground on which she can claim her identity but her spiritual faith. As her connection with the land, the forest, the lake, the spirit is cut off, she loses her faith and identity.

That the power of Chippewa mystic spirits is satirized and challenged also appears in both *Love Medicine* and *The Bingo Palace,* in which Lipsha Morrissey, the abandoned son of June Kashpaw, is the protagonist. Lipsha is portrayed to possess the power of magic touch, the mysterious experience of having flying dream. Lipsha is always expected to perform a shaman-like healing for the diseased around him, but neither the supernatural power nor the transcendental ability gratifies him: "When you have the touch, that's where longing gets you. I never loved like that" (*LM* 234). In fact, he is troubled and scared by his secret knowledge and ability. His unhappiness and anxiety grow not only from his fear of the untrustworthy touch, but from the irrational wildness the magic touch might engender: "It made me feel all inspired to see them fight, and I wanted to go out and find a woman who I would love until one of us died or went crazy. But I'm not like that really." (*LM* 234).

To Erdrich, old trick may not be so reliable, but moral cheating or unfaithfulness to the traditional belief may be more dangerous. In *Love Medicine,* Lipsha was compelled to use his magic touch to detain the stay of his Grandpa, Nector, who turned insane because of old age. Also under the request of his grandma, Marie, Lipsha initiated his rather laughable and satirical search for the recipe of love medicine in order to revive the love between his Grandpa and Grandma. He reproduced the old-time hunting ritual in his attempt to acquire a geese heart for love medicine remedy. But to his disappointment, he missed the shots, so he returned to supermarket to buy frozen turkey hearts as substitutes. This act of cheating, surprisingly, led to the death of his grandpa. Nector's death seems to suggest that although one cannot put full faith in old "strange beliefs"(*LM* 245), one cannot play with it either.

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[16] As Lispha in *Love Medicine* meditates: "Our Gods are perfect, is what I'm saying, but at least they come around. They'll do a favor if you ask them right. . . .. But you have to know . . . how to ask in the right way. That makes problems, because to ask proper was an art that was lost to the Chippewas once they Catholics gained ground" (*LM* 236).

To Erdrich, what is vital to life is not the magic of love medicine but the spirit of love that lingers over the house. Lipsha's vision shifts by virtue of this deep realization. As he told his Grandma after they both saw the returning ghost of Nector: "Love medicine ain't what brings him back to you. Grandma. No. it's something else. He loved you over time and distance, but he went off so quick he never got the chance to tell you how he loves you, how he doesn't blame you, how he understands. It's true feeling, not magic. No supermarket heart could have brung him back" (*LM* 257). What Lipsha has learned is the meaning of love and the magic of love medicine he is inherited with. He learned to forgive his mother, June Morrissey, who abandoned him and assisted his father, Gerry Nanapush, to escape from federal prison. Through Lulu's revelation of the real identities of his parents that Lipsha can come to terms with his unbelievable natural endowment: "With every root I prized up there was return, as if I was kin to its secret lesson. The touch got stronger as I worked through the grassy afternoon. Uncurling from me like a seed out of the blackness where I was lost, the touch spread. The spiked leaves full of bitter mother's milk. A buried root. A nuisance people dig up and throw in the sun to wither. A globe of frail seeds that 's indestructible" (258).

Vine Deloria, Jr. has ever asked: Is the restoration of tribal religion possible? In Erdrich's fictional world, the answer to the given question seems rather negative. Despite the fact that Erdrich in the novels seems to have responded to the call for the restoration of tribal belief or vision with fervor, yet she remains rather skeptical about the possibility to revive old-times. Lipsha's failure in practicing old-time love medicine signals Erdrich's recognition about the difficulty or confusion in sustaining old magic or similar shamanic ritual. Yet that weakened power is like a "a globe of frail seeds that's indestructible". *Tracks, a*s Friedman accurately points out, shows Erdrich's "distrust of fundamentalist certainty about fixed truth" (108). But Erdrich's distrust does not show that she has not faith. In fact, in order to disguise her disbelief in either assertion about truth, Erdrich displaces her desire for "spiritual balance" to easy, humorous storytelling of trickster figures in her novels. It is in that re-association with Native American oral tradition that Erdrich has her characters discover the real legacy of their spirits and the will to survive.

III. Tricksterism in progression

Jace Weaver, in his discussion about the differences between Christianity and Native theology, suggests to reevaluate in Native theology the concept of deity and to replace that notion with new categories such as "Trickster discourse" (32). Although he fails to elaborate on the idea, his suggestion does underscore the significant meanings of traditional tricksterism in Native American theology and culture.

Trickster figure, which is the principal mythical figure in Native American mythology, particularly in Chippewa myth, is, according to Carl Jung, characterized by "its fondness for sly jokes and malicious pranks, his powers as a shape-shifter, his dual nature, half animal, half divine, his exposure to all kinds of tortures, and --last but not least--his approximation to the figure of a saviour" (195).[17] Because of its particular features of being both good and evil, a beast and human, a saviour and destroyer, trickster figure cut across the Christian dichotomy of good and evil. Besides, due to its unrestrainable ability to transform itself, trickster rejects imprisonment. Other than this, trickster, according to Levi-Strauss, also plays a mediating role "in response to the perception of contradictions in a belief system" (qt in Ammons x). The value of trickster strategy therefore rests on its art of, to use Elizabeth Ammons' words, "resisting ghetooization and silencing and find ways to write from borderland territories" (x).

By virtue of its immanent subversiveness, traditional trickster figures and strategies have been deployed by Native American writers as "chief weapons" to oppose, disturb and challenge the dominant world view.[18] Following suit, Erdrich also incorporates in her novels popular Chippewa tricksters to ridicule, disrupt and politically subvert the relentless reality. In fact, the employment of trickster strategy gives Erdrich more liberty to portray the experiences of her characters in face of cultural and historic transformation. Erdrich's *Tracks* reveals this attempt. In *Tracks*, Nanapush, who is delineated as the representative of Chippewa cultural hero and trickster figure, serves as Erdrich's persona. Although portraying the most devastating years of starvation, death and disease in Chippewa history, Erdrich tries to make light of the suffering through the trickstering voices of Nanapsuh.

Compared to Fleur, who is also deemed by critics to be a trickster in a certain sense, Nanapush is a more successful cultural survivor because of his ability to defy containment, to cross the boundaries and play with the colonial regime.[19] Like Betonie in Silko's *Ceremony*, Nanapush received white Jesuit education, yet he resisted against the ideological control of white education. A tribal chairman, he rejects alliance with the white colonizers by refusing to sign governments paper; yet at the same time, his liminality allows him to see the "loophole" in the white law, enabling him to have his way with the white world. Unlike Fleur, who puts faith in the power of supernatural power, Nanapush sees the crack in the world and learns how to change himself. As he comments on the failure of Fleur:

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[17]To Jung, the split-off personality of trickster figure is the leftover of the collective conscious. He maintains that by virtue of civilization development, the crude primitivity of the trickster feature that is originally part of our collective conscious is spoiled. The trickster figure that can only be traced in folklore is, in his words, "the remnants of a collective *shadow* figure"(202).

[18] The most well-known and skillful adoption of trickster figures appears in the novels of another Chippewa writer, Gerald Vizenor. Vizenor approach the traditional trickster from a postmodern perspective, arguing that trickster, as the product of tribal communal creativity, defies containment. See Alan Velie, "The Trickster Novel" in *Narrative Chance,* 131.

[19] William Gleason notes that the Nanapushs' inherited ability to liberate themselves from the containment of the external system show in Gerry Nanapush, Lipsha's father, in *Love Medicine.*

> Power dies, power goes under and gutters out, ungraspable. It is momentary, quick of flight and liable to deceive. As soon as you rely on the possession it is gone. Forget that it ever existed, and it returns. I never made the mistake of thinking that I owned my own

Power, to Nanapush, does not come from belief in supernatural forces, nor from Western concept of God. On the contrary, his strength lies partly in his ability to liberate himself from the bound of external world, and partly in his capability to keep the continuity of oral tradition.

In *Tracks*, Nanapush competes with Pauline for valid narrative about Fleur's life story. In that oral contestation, Nanapush acts as both destroyer and constructor. One the one hand, he tries to dismantle Pauline's story about herself and Fleur; on the other hand, he attempts to construct a valid story on the basis of his own visionary as well as real experience in that spiritually and physically devastated land. In fact, allowing Nanapush to oscillating between this act of deconstructing and constructing stories, Erdrich keeps the spirit of a trickster figure lingering over the community. Like other Native American writers, Erdrich also believes in the power of words. To Erdrich, the spiritual power of storytelling lies in its ability to unite disruption, to reconcile conflicts, and to reconnect broken bonds. In *Tracks*, Erdrich has Nanapush perform the spiritual ritual of storytelling in order to heal the psychological wounds of his people. Nanapush told Fleur's stories to his adopted granddaughter, Lulu in order to teach Lulu the meaning of love and forgiveness. Thus unlike Lipsha's attempt to look for old-time "love medicine" formula to heal "the broken heart" of Nector in *Love Medicine,* this old-timer makes storytelling a vehicle to transform the spirits of his listener.

Storytelling, to Erdrich, is also means of sustaining life.[20] Telling stories is an act that allows her characters to confront the harsh realities with courage and energy. Just as Silko in *Ceremony* writes, stories "aren't just entertainment . . . . [t]hey are all we have . . . to fight off illness and death" (2), stories also provide storytellers in Erdrich's novel with such strength to defeat death. For instance, in face of the death of his daughter, Nanapush must rely on words to sustain his life. As he tells Lulu: "During the year of sickness, when I was the last one left, I saved myself by starting a story . . . I got well by talking. Death could not get a word in edgewise, grew discouraged, and traveled on" (*Tracks* 46). In addition to this belief in the healing power of stories, ritual performance is another way to help maintain a sense of kinship that strengthens the will to live, and assures the continuity of cultural heritage. Thus, Nanapush, the only survivor of his tribe, assumed that responsibility to teach young man like Eli Kashpaw the "old ways" of living, the hunting skills and the rituals (*Tracks* 39-40; 101-5). It is in that act of conducting vision quest for Eli that

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[20] For detailed discussion about the function of storytelling in Erdrich's novel, refere to Jennifer Sergi's "Storytelling: Tradition and Preservation in Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*."

Nanapush felt the strong bond between Eli and him: "'You're my son,' I said, moving by the scorched taste, 'you're my relatives'" (*Tracks* 105).

In his oral narratives, Nanapush derides the historic transformations, cultural shifts, and political impacts on Chippewa community. But on the other hand, he transforms the traditional story of flood to tell the origin of the universe. With that story about the mating of water-monster and the girl, Nanapush disturbs Pauline's faith in Western God. To Pauline, Nanapush's storytelling is like "a special pot of strong sassafras [with] mixed sugar into it" (*Tracks* 148). She feels captivated, entertained and seduced by Nanapush's talking; however, she also feels her belief in Western God is ridiculed, and her belief in God is challenged in the mocking voice of Nanapush: "I cursed all the talk of water and began a rosary in my thoughts. But I saw the sorrowful mystery, Christ in Gethsemane. He wept a river, and I could not keep from hearing the voice of Nanapush. . . . He meant to bar me from gaining joy in the presence of my Savior, in heaven where I would be finished with such earthly humiliations as I suffered now with each corner of my mind, each muscle" (*Tracks* 149-50).

Joking, according to Freud, is an analogy for repression, in which the speaker directs his/her remarks at something else to disguise the intended insult against people who are masters or have command over something (*Five Lectures* 31). Humor is certainly one of the most effective strategies that colonized people adopt to disguise their resistance against the distressing circumstances and oppressing colonial systems. To Erdrich, Nanapush's humor is another kind of ceremony that he performs for Pauline in order to exorcise from her the deep-rooted concept of Satan with no intention to hurt her.[21]

IV

In *Tracks* and new version of *Love Medicine,* Erdrich manifests her efforts to alter and reshape the images of Native Americans by breaking the stereotypical representation of Indians as drunken alcoholics, sex abusers, and unemployed gamblers. She delineates the spiritual pursuit, vision quest of contemporary Chippewas , exposing the psychological degradation of native Catholics and showing the deficiency of Catholicism. Her delineation reveals her firm conviction that Chippewa belief can hardly be displaced by Catholicism in one way or another. Just as Pauline says in *Tracks*: "Christ was weak, I saw now, a tame newcomer in this country that has its own devils in the waters of boiling-over kettles. . . . That night in

[21] In her interview Joseph Bruchac, Erdrich stresses the significance of humor to Native Americans. To her, humor is for survival; laughing is a way to make light of things. It's a ritual and ceremony in Indian's life. She said, "If there is any ceremony which goes across the board and is practiced by lots and lots of tribal people, it is having a sense of humor about things and laughing" (81).

the convent bed, I knew God had no foothold or sway in this land, or no mercy for the just, or that perhaps, for all my suffering and faith, I was still insignificant. Which seems impossible" (*Tracks 192*).

But as she presents the pernicious impact of Catholicism and Western culture on the local people and native traditions, Erdrich is also cognizant of the reality that two beliefs do coexist -- though in discordance. In her oscillation between Catholicism and traditional belief, Erdrich manifests rather ambivalent feelings when she portrays the psychological struggles of characters in face of religious antagonism. On the one pole she presents the sadistic repression of Chippewa's desire in search of religious accommodation; on another pole, she portrays their infantile wish to go back to maternal cultural womb. But between these two poles is Erdrich's wish to find a middle road to show her mature cultural perspective. What orients her vision turns out to be her fondness for tricksterism.

In her consecutive portrayal of Fleur Pillagers' shapeshifting spirits, Nanapush's trickstering humor, Lipsha's belief struggle and Marie Kapashaw's belief transformation, Erdrich shows the most prominent features of Chippewa old-time cultures: storytelling, hunting rituals, medicine practice, shamanic healing and communal love. "Indians do not hold grudges with respect to other people's belief," said Vine Deloria, Jr. (160). Just as Deloria's commendation for the generosity of Indian religious attitude, Erdrich indeed bears little grudges against Catholicism. To counteract the encroaching Western religion, she has her characters disguise their deep faith in the pranks of shape changes. Because she understands clearly that her Chippewa people are "torn" between these two belief systems (Wong 111), she can catch the gist that under the superficial combinations of different religious elements lies Chippewas' ridicule. It is in communal love and therapeutic power of storytelling that Erdrich puts her faith. Just as Lipsha says in Erdrich's *The Bingo Palace*: "You got the medicine, but you don't got the love" (BP 153). It is love that Erdrich hails throughout her novel, and that is the ethic of her novel.

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