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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## Lipsha's Road to Recovery in *Love Medicine* and *Bingo Palace*

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**ABSTRACT**

Erdrich's works present native people's loss and struggle in confronting the intersection of white culture and native culture. The paper aims to explore native people's identity search and finds that Lipsha achieves his success with the help of his connection to his family and his native culture. His success implies the author's suggestions on self-positioning and mental health for the native people under the mixed culture. Through the creation of this image, the author also provides strategies for the revival of native culture. In the process of contact with mainstream culture, all aspects of Indian life are influenced by cultural hybridity. In this mixed background, the boundary between the mainstream and the edge has been crossed, and natives cannot rely on simple confrontation or blind obedience to achieve development. Blindness will only lead to loss, while simple confrontation will not bring about revival and prosperity. Only by conforming to the tide of cultural integration, preserving, and inheriting the native cultural characteristics, and being good at absorbing the positive elements conducive to the development of their own culture from other cultures can natives find their own position in multiculturalism and make their own beautiful voices.

**KEYWORDS**

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**1. Introduction**

In the works of the second wave of the American native literature revival movement, the identity characteristics of Indians have been more clearly expounded. Among them, Erdrich is recognized as an important representative, and his success can be seen from Louis' comments. Louis once said, "In 1969, N Scott Momaday's novel *The House of Dawn* won the Pulitzer Prize, and its importance is beyond doubt; But none of the native American writers can match the rapid and great achievements made by Louise Erdrich with her *Love Medicine* (Louis Owens, 2000)." Erdrich's North Dakota novels are particularly fascinating. In *Love Medicine* and *Bingo Palace*, the author describes the confusion, struggle, and misfortune of Indians, such as Henry and June, under the current situation of the conflict and integration of traditional culture with American society and modern culture. However, Lipsha, the related character in the two novels, finally completes his identity search and becomes a sound image physically and mentally. This paper aims to analyze Lipsha's rehabilitation process from the family connection and the native culture.

**2. Family connection and affiliation**

Almost all the works of native-born writers show a point of view: losing the past means losing oneself, the order and meaning of the present, and the ability to plan. And storytelling can just make up for this lack. Women, such as grandmothers, mothers, aunts, and menstruation, let their children know who they are by telling them about their past. This is how traditions are passed down from generation to generation. The purpose of this transmission is only partly for education, but more importantly, it is used to connect children with their families, communities, customs, and themselves. In the novel *Love Medicine*, my grandmother Lulu tells Lipsha that his father Gerry is a famous criminal and national hero, and no prison can trap him. "No prison can hold the descendants of Pilate, a Nanapush, and you should be proud of it (Erdrich, 1993)". This made Lipsha realize the strength he inherited from his

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family ancestors, which not only explained why he had the gift of "touch" therapy but also made him feel a sense of belonging in a family with strong traditions. Lipsha realized: Some of my abilities, now that I think about them, come from the family of Lord Pili, ... I know that there is a connection, a strong connection, strong enough for me to continue to seek, and I must find the root of my tradition (Erdrich,1993). It is Lulu's disclosure of Lipsha's life that makes him connect with his family and tradition and makes him understand who he is and what family he has got, thus embarking on his road to recovery. The change of understanding of mother June is another aspect of Lipsa's recovery. After being born, Lipsha is drowned in the pond by her mother, June, with a sack of stones. Drowning is the worst way to die for Chippewa people because drowned people have no place in heaven or the world (Allen, 1989). Therefore, he has been plagued by this nightmare, and he has always refused to recognize June as his mother and regards his grandmother Marie who raises him as his own mother. He remarks, "As for my birth mother ... even if she comes back and kneels in front of me now and says' son, I'm sorry', I won't forgive her (Erdrich, 1993)." The absence of mother leads to the absence of culture, tradition, and self-identity. Fortunately, he slowly makes up for this deficiency. In the novel *Bingo Palace*, in order to pursue Shawnee, Lipsha decides to gamble to win a bonus and a car. Although Lulu teaches him how to concentrate when gambling, June's instructions in his dream helps him get what he wants. The novel reads: Zelda mentioned that Joan abandoned Lipsha, and that night, he dreamed of his mother, Joan. At that time, he believed that his mother appeared in his dream with no malice but to help him. In the dream, Joan showed him how to win the poker game. At that time, Lipsha knows her luck has come. That same night, he wins the car with the card that June shows him in his dream (Erdrich,1998). Lip begins to learn to accept her mother. In the novel *Love Medicine*, Lulu informs him that June is not trying to drown him but that she is at a loss. "She is watching you from a distance, hoping that one day you can forgive her (Erdrich,1993)." Finally, he forgives his mother, June. At the end of *Love Medicine*, he takes his mother home in his car. Home here refers not only to its ordinary meaning but also to the Indian reservation. Through her son, June finds the connection to her hometown that she needs for her recovery. At the same time, Lipsha also realizes that his own strength and self-awareness do not come from personal victory or separation but from contact and acceptance. He not only saves his mother's soul but also connects himself to the family successfully.

### 3. Native culture

Besides the family ties mentioned above, Lipsha's recovery also benefits from his understanding and inheritance of native culture. Under the invasion of white culture, native people gradually drift away from tradition, which leads to their inability to find their own cultural orientation in the cultural intersection, resulting in the lack of tradition and displacement. It is evident in Henry's misfortune when he returns to his hometown; his values and behaviors cannot be integrated with Chippewa's traditions and viewpoints, so he fails to continue his normal life and chooses to drown himself. Another example is June, who is lost in the outside world, and death is her way to escape. Both two figures cannot be successfully positioned in white culture, and they are divorced from their own cultural traditions and lose their own cultural subjectivity.

In *Love Medicine*, Lipsha is a rebel against white culture. He thinks Christianity is hypocritical, and he is aware of all kinds of bad influences of white culture on his family: alcoholism, ethical confusion, and cultural division. But he cannot come up with a substitute to replace Christianity. Lipsha's ability to get out of his confusion and recover is reflected in the recovery of his magical "touch" healing ability, which benefited from the Chippewa religion. But Lipsh's replacement of a wild goose's heart with a turkey's is a violation of native culture with another completely different one. Lost the healing power of a touch, Lipsha becomes powerless again. In order to restore his divine power and to seek the love medicine of Shawnee, he turns to elder Fleur, Lulu's mother. She not only knows the history of the tribe but also is a symbol of wisdom. Besides, all her experiences make everyone think that she has magical abilities, and she chooses Lipsa as her heir. In the novel *Bingo Palace*, the visit to his great-grandmother made him realize that "the tradition must survive and remain active all the time when he is alive" (Erdrich, 1998). After coming back, Lipsha finally understands that he is supposed to find a balance point at the intersection of the two cultures and that he must believe in his own traditions. In the novel *Bingo Palace*, Mary gives him a pipe that belongs to Nector, grandfather, and tribal leader. According to the myth of Lakota (a branch of Sioux), the White Buffalo Woman gave the sacred pipe to Lakota. Thanks to this pipe, Lakota rituals and ceremonies have gained strength (Allen, 1992). Therefore, for Lipsha, this pipe not only gives him a family connection but also gives him a connection between history and tradition. Lipsha found his identity through his family and inheritance, and inheriting his native culture gives him the strength to look forward to the future. The combination of the past and the future enables Lipsha to change from confusion to confidence in the situation where the two cultures meet.

### 4. Conclusion

The paper aims to explore native people's identity search and finds that Lipsha achieves his success with the help of his connection to his family and his native culture. His success implies the author's suggestions on self-positioning and mental health for the native people under the mixed culture. Through the creation of this image, the author also provides strategies for the revival of

native culture. In the process of contact with mainstream culture, all aspects of Indian life are influenced by cultural hybridity. In this mixed background, the boundary between the mainstream and the edge has been crossed, and natives cannot rely on simple confrontation or blind obedience to achieve development. Blindness will only lead to loss, while simple confrontation will not bring about revival and prosperity. Only by conforming to the tide of cultural integration, preserving, and inheriting the native cultural characteristics, and being good at absorbing the positive elements conducive to the development of their own culture from other cultures can natives find their own position in multiculturalism and make their own beautiful voices.

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