

Book Review

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Dialogism or Interconnectedness in the Work of Louise Erdrich. Lysik, Marta J. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017. ISBN: 978-1-4438-8607-9, 195 pp.

Dialogism or Interconnectedness in the Work of Louise Erdrich, by Polish scholar Marta Lysik, is a profound investigation of Louise Erdrich's writing. The title explains the essence of the detailed, six-chapter book: Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogism, that is, interconnectedness, as seen in Erdrich's selected works. In the introduction, Lysik states: "This study is not a veiled biographical project, but an attempt to view the selected literary works as one entity while paying attention to its singular elements, among them the writer's insights into the processes of writing and reading" (2). Lysik informs the reader about the writer's life and her relationship with her husband—specifically their collaboration and failed marriage—but that is kept to a minimum, as she concentrates on Erdrich's practices of reading, writing, co-writing, and rewriting her works, which she analyzes thoroughly as a single entity.

The first chapter, "Compost Pile and Temporary Storage: Dialogism in Louise Erdrich's *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*," explicates Bakhtin's theory of dialogism and demonstrates how Erdrich applies it to this novel. The mosaic-like quality of Erdrich's novels is emphasized and attention is drawn to the fact that even the published book is not the final version, for she often chooses to rewrite or edit her books.

In the second chapter, "A Portrait of the Artist(s): The Erdrich-Dorris Partnership," Lysik recounts how their relationship

evolved into a partnership. Michael Dorris was Erdrich's teacher, husband, editor, and literary agent. This is the only chapter where the reader is given a brief view of their lives, focusing on their collaboration in the writing of novels such as *The Crown of Columbus*, which they co-authored. After Dorris passed away in 1997, readers doubted whether Erdrich would be able to write without him, but she defied sceptics and continued to write. Lysik reveals interesting aspects of the Erdrich-Dorris relationship. A later interview with Erdrich tells a different story about their work and life together.

The third chapter, "A Case Study of Three Editions of *Love Medicine* (1984, 1993, 2009) and Two Editions of *The Antelope Wife* (1998, 2012)," pursues dialogism in the three versions of *Love Medicine* and the two versions of *The Antelope Wife* by illustrating the changes Erdrich made in the rewriting of the novels. Erdrich gained widespread recognition with *Love Medicine* (1984), her debut novel that received several prizes. She continued to revise and expand the novel, and new editions were published in 1993 and 2003. This chapter carefully details the alterations Erdrich made to both novels.

In the fourth chapter, "'Nursing a Baby while Holding a Pen': Ink & Milk; Writing, Reading & Motherhood; Production and Re-production," Lysik analyzes Erdrich's two memoirs, *The Blue Jay's Dance* and *Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country*, and explores the difficulties of being a mother and a writer at the same time. Nevertheless, for Erdrich, "writing, reading, parenting, domestic rituals and nature are entwined" (120).

The fifth chapter, "A Tetralogy, or One Long Book?," studies the structural and narrative characteristics of the texts in Erdrich's North Dakota tetralogy—that is, *Love Medicine*, *The Beet Queen*, *Tracks*, and *The Bingo Palace*—which turned into "one long book," as the renowned author describes it. *Tales of Burning Love*, *The Painted Drum*, and *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*, and other books in the series (*The Master Butchers Singing Club*, *The Plagues of Doves*, *The Round House*, and *La Rose*) are all interconnected, and Lysik also examines them according to their themes.

The sixth and final chapter, "'Equivalence in Difference?' Dialogic Acts of Translation in *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*," concentrates on the novel while asserting that dialogism renders translation "dialogic traffic."

Each chapter contains subdivisions with short sections and (with the exception of chapter two) also a conclusion. At the end of *Dialogism or Interconnectedness in the Work of Louise Erdrich*, there is a “Coda,” which means tail in Italian, summarizing how Erdrich deploys Bakhtin’s theory of dialogism. Understandably, Lysik does not refer to Erdrich’s latest works, *Future Home of the Living God* (2017) and *The Night Watchman* (2020), since they were published too recently to be included in her analysis. Nevertheless, Erdrich’s hallmark dialogic literary style is studied extensively in this well-researched book and is an excellent illustration of the fact that “Storytelling is an ongoing process.” While Lysik’s style is conversational and informal at times, it displays the necessary level of academic rigor. Thus, *Dialogism or Interconnectedness in the Work of Louise Erdrich* is a meticulous study of Erdrich’s works and is positioned to be a major contribution to the field.