



The Antelope Wife

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One of America's most celebrated authors offers a powerful story suffused with a Native American sense of magic. Originally an important hunting ground for the Ojibway, the city of Minneapolis draws from nearby reservations many Native people, people who infuse the city with a strong and ongoing Native presence as well as a potent indigenous past. This story brings to life the people who live in or around this midwestern city. And like a modern city itself, it portrays people of all backgrounds and is a mixture of vibrant cultures and ideas. But also like a modern city, it has an edge, troubled by violence.

"New York Times" bestselling author Louise Erdrich has twice won the National Magazine Award and her work has been included in both the O. Henry and the Best American collections several times.

The Antelope Wife Details

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From Reader Review The Antelope Wife for online ebook

Michele says

I hoped that I would like this book, but it was too fragmented, disjointed. It had great potential to be a reflective and philosophical journey, but ultimately the points didn't connect... the kidnapped antelope-woman Sweetheart Calico was supposed to be the link that connected all the events and characters of the book, but it just didn't hold water. I didn't have a single emotional connection with the story or characters during any point of the book.

Considering the treading into the spiritual and the darker sides of life (kidnapping, divorce, homelessness), I was surprised how little meaning or sense these events imparted. I'm a bit disappointed with my first Louise Erdrich novel, but I thought the writing was mostly good so I might read her again.

Elizabeth says

So many layers to this book. Multiple narrators. Family stories. Legends. And, all come together like a puzzle in the end. Meanwhile, the women are FEROCIOUS. Bad Ass. True Free Spirits. Damn.

Louise Erdrich, you got skillz.

El says

At first when I picked up this book, I didn't know what I was getting into. The first few pages of the novel feel disjointed, I couldn't quite tell whose perspective I was reading at any given time. It took me a while to get on board with Erdrich's 1997 novel which turns out to be fucking spectacular.

If you like Magical Realism. I feel the need to point that out early on enough in my review so those who are opposed to that classification can skim this review since it may not be appealing to all.

I'm not always into Magical Realism either, but when it works, it *works*. And this one works.

The story follows the Roy and Shawano families over however many years. I hesitate to call it an epic, because as far as "epics" go, this is a short novel (less than 250 pages). But Erdrich manages to include so much family history without going overboard. All of their stories are here, but in lyrical, glorious passages teeming with Native American mythology and symbols. I absolutely loved that.

There is a section told from the point of view of a dog. Dogs have voices and can speak to each other in Erdrich's novel, though it's not a frequent practice. It's just another part of the family mythology.

I thought more than once about Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* that I read not that long ago, and where Silko's novel is much larger, denser, and more violent, Erdrich covers a lot of the same ground in fewer pages and less violence. I felt a connection to Erdrich's characters that I did not always feel towards some of Silko's. But I'm not here to compare and contrast the two novels, and if you disliked *Almanac of the*

Dead (WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU), that doesn't mean you would dislike The Antelope Wife.

It's hard for me to discuss the story because I feel I would just be copying down all of Erdrich's words. A review can't give the book justice because a part of experiencing this book is reading Erdrich's lyrical voice. There's not a lot of dialogue so it's a very internalized story - we are in the minds of the characters more often than not. This is not always easy to do; I have easily complained about other books that attempt and fail at that. Erdrich does not fail, nor does she disappoint.

I recommend trying to read as much as you can when you do sit down with this. As previously stated, it took me a while to get into the groove of the writing and therefore missed where the story started. It's easy to put down because the sections are so short, but I found a higher appreciation for three-fourths of the novel once I committed to reading it as much as possible, and not putting it down every section.

This won't be my last Erdrich.

Elizabeth (Alaska) says

At the beginning, I thought this not up to my usual expectation of Erdrich. Somewhere she reached into my soul and it became quite extraordinary. I kept thinking "this is magical realism, but I don't like magical realism." It is so much more. Many of her people have more than the usual 5 senses. It isn't easy to explain. They are of the earth, completely of it, and know what lies within and beyond it. This sounds unreal, but it is not.

Having said that, it is important to recognize they are, in fact, humans with human frailties. Mistakes are made and burdens borne. *Who will ever understand the misery love causes?* Yes, this is a story of love, but not just the misery this question suggests. Love comes from family, is deeply felt and shared.

If you have never read Erdrich, I might suggest this not be your first. I have not yet read her more recent fiction, but I think you might as well start with her first, and most well-read, Love Medicine.

Bob Newman says

Oh, Deer Me

I have admired Erdrich's writing in the past---"Tracks" and "The Beet Queen"--so I was looking forward to reading another of her novels. I must say I was disappointed here. Though Erdrich, like N. Scott Momaday, has a highly poetical style and her pages are filled with beautiful images (which is certainly a positive characteristic), a novel after all needs to have a strong story line or a point. Beautiful sentences and poetic expressions do not make a story, even if spiced with magical realism, sex, recipes, and colorful beads. As a literary testimony to a section of Native American experience, THE ANTELOPE WIFE has great merit. But as a novel, in the company of all the novels of the world, I felt that in this case, Erdrich tried to stretch out her career and write the next book though her heart was not in it. Perhaps it was a bad time in her life. The novel felt to me as one written by a person "trying to be literary". She writes of the mixed and intertwined fates of all those people of the Anishinabe world---Indians, whites, men, women, strong and weak---like beads on a string. The Indians come out holding the short stick. Within this framework, individuals play out

their fates, violence and love intermingling with mystery and mundane existence. The characters somehow do not rise above their initial characterizations. The women are stronger than the men for the most part: they endure while the men often fall into alcohol and despair. The author writes in graceful style, but not much depth. I felt---at the risk of sounding snotty---that *THE ANTELOPE WIFE* belongs more in the category of "chick-lit" than in "American literature". I once read part of a novel by Amy Tan, but could not finish for similar reasons. I did read *THE ANTELOPE WIFE* in its entirety, because Erdrich's writing differs favorably from most other authors', but I grew tired of the soap opera quality of this story.

Sarah says

The best part of this book is the dog's perspective in this scene:

I learned early. Eat anything you can at any time. Fast. Bolt it down. Stay cute, but stay elusive. Don't let them think twice when they've got the hatchet out. I see cold steel, I'm gone. Believe it. And there are all sorts of illnesses we dread. Avoid the bite of the fox. It is madness. Avoid all bats. Avoid all black-and-white-striped moving objects. And slow things with spiny quills. Avoid all the humans when they get into a feasting mood. Get near the tables fast, though, once the food is cooked. Stay close to their feet. Stay ready.

But don't steal from their plates.

Avoid medicine men. Snakes. boys with BB guns. Anything ropelike or easily used to hang or tie. Avoid outhouse holes. Cats that live indoors. Do not sleep under cars. Or with horses. Do not eat anything attached to a skinny, burning string. Do not eat lard from the table. Do not go into the house at all unless no one is watching. Do not, unless you are absolutely certain you can blame it on the cat, eat any of their chickens. Do not eat pies. Do not eat decks of cards, plastic jugs, dry beans, dish sponges. If you must eat a shoe, eat both of the pair, every scrap, untraceable. Always, when in doubt, the rule is you are better off underneath the house. Don't chase cars driven by young teenage boys. Don't chase cars driven by old ladies. Don't bark or growl at men cradling rifles. Don't get wet in winter, and don't let yourself dry out when the hot winds of August blow. We're not equipped to sweat. Keep your mouth open. Visit the lake. Pee often. Take messages from tree stumps and the corners of buildings. Don't forget to leave in return a polite and respectful hello. You never know when it will come in handy, your contact, your friend. You never know whom you will need to rely upon.

Mosca says

Review of the earlier edition is located [Here](#)

This second, short review of *The Antelope Wife* is written because this Revised Edition is almost a different book from the first.

And as superb a book as the original edition is.....this one is better.

It is true with all of Louise Erdrich books that the story is illuminated by the history of the "fictional" Ojibwe(Anishinaabe) Reservation in North Dakota. And, although the changes to the original plot line outcome are small in this Revised Edition, the enlarged, background labyrinth of history is so much more revealed that the overall impact is much more profound and powerful.

If you have already read and appreciated the original edition, please...do yourself a favor and also read this Revised Edition.

Louise Erdrich has outdone herself.

Andy Miller says

This novel shares some aspects of Erdrich's "Love Medicine" which is one of my top ten novels of all time. The chapters alternate perspectives from different characters, the chapters span several generations and intertwine the different character's lives. But perhaps excessive dabbling in "magical realism" that was not as prevalent in Love Medicine, detracted from character development and plot.

The novel starts with the Plains Indians wars when a soldier participates in a massacre of woman and children and becomes haunted with guilt leading him to rescue an infant girl who was being spirited away from the massacre by her family dog. When still a young girl she is reconnected with her mother who soon dies leaving the girl to be raised by a herd of antelope. Generations later Klaus, a Native American trader, kidnaps who appears to be a descendant of the original Antelope wife and he keeps her despite the warnings of a medicine man. Klaus's family suffers for years

There are some great chapters, when Klaus's brother and his wife argue with the brother deciding to leave. One of their young twin daughters hears the argument and sneaks into her dad's pick up truck to hide so she can go with him, Erdrich's writing anticipates what is going to happen but allows the reader to hope the expected narrative is wrong, but each step of the narrative, the truck being parked in a garage, the dad starting the truck, the dad deciding to go back to the house to get something, the second thoughts about leaving his wife bring the narrative and reader closer to a tragic end

A more positive but equally compelling chapter is a first person narrative from a dog, describing how he avoids death as a puppy by deliberately using puppy charm and then tells the role of a dog on an Indian Reservation and finally narrates the near death of the girl who had saved him as a puppy(the twin sister of the girl who died in the truck) and the dog's role in her redemption.

There is also great writing such as this paragraph that sets the stage why the cavalry soldier had left his home to go west and join the army despite his Quaker upbringing

"Unmasked, the woman's stage glance broke across Roy's brow like fire. She was tall, stunningly slender, pale, and paler haired, resolute in her character, and simple in her amused scorn of Roy--so young, bright-faced, obedient. To prove himself, he made a rendezvous promise and then took his way west following her glare. An icicle, it drove into his heart and melted there, leaving a trail of ice and blood. The way was long. She glided like a snake beneath his footsteps in fevered dreams. When he finally got to the place they had agreed upon, she was not there of course. Angry, and at odds, he went against the radiant ways of his father

and enlisted in the U.S. Cavalry at Fort Sibley on the banks of the Mississippi in St Paul Minnesota"

Nannah says

DNF @ 7%

If you read the goodreads description of this book, it reveals nothing about why I absolutely cannot go farther than 7%. See, this is why I don't understand why books don't have the same content warnings as video games or movies. There's no reason why books/text are less graphic than visual mediums when you've experienced some kind of trauma or need to stay away from certain things.

Book content warnings (for as far as I got; there's possibly more):

- rape
- kidnapping
- emotional abuse

Basically, the chapter before I stopped, the POV's character (I won't say *main* because at this point it's not clear who exactly the main character is, if there is one at all) drugs a woman he calls his *prey* and drives away from the woman's daughters who he leaves sleeping in a tent. Then he drags this woman to his house, ties her up, and forces her to be his wife--and yells at her when her coping mechanisms make her less than perfect in his eyes!

As someone who has gone through *things*, I can't read on. I don't care if things don't ever return to this level of awfulness, but I have to put this down for my own personal sake. I wrote this all out so maybe someone else can save themselves the pain.

Carl R. says

It's human nature to want people to like what you like, but when they resist, pointing to reasons they should like it is like explaining a joke. No laughing, no liking. Such it is with my friend and Louise Erdrich. I'm a HUGE fan of Louise. I consider her among the top five living writers in the country, perhaps the top ten in the world. If you took the trouble, as few do, to scroll through the archives of writerworking.net, you'd see how highly I regard her work and why. Yet, I hadn't read the 1997 work *The Antelope Wife*. When my friend, who has never warmed to Louise for some reason, was assigned *Antelope* in a class and said "didn't like it," I of course had to dig in.

Now I'm not going to claim that this is equal to masterpieces like *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse* (See my Dec, 2006 commentary.) or *The Master Butcher's Singing Club*. However, it's an intense, mystifying, and life-affirming read. I'll admit there are some weak places--an unfortunate gag scene with stick-on gift bows that nearly sinks to sitcom level, for example; and an equally unfortunate sequence from the point of view of a dog named (for obvious reasons) *Almost Soup*. However, who can resist writing like this?

"Dusted all over like an egg with freckles, Peace McKnight. . . was sturdily made as a captain's chair, yet drew water with graceful wrists and ran dancing across the rutted mud on curved white ankles. . . . At night, the kerosene lamplight in trembling rings and haloes, Miss Peace McKnight felt the eyes of Scranton Roy carve her in space."

Stuff like that all the way through. Like most of Erdrich's work, *Antelope Wife*'s chronology is disjointed, a metaphor, I believe for the non-linear, organic way we experience time and life. Events from the beginning of the more than one hundred years of the book's history appear in the final pages, events from the late nineteenth nineties appear in the beginning. And the sequences are jumbled in between. In this case, she makes the metaphor concrete with two broken strings of beads--one of blue stones, the other of red, so that the scatter of events is matched by the scattering of the beads. Ditto with the treatment of characters. Again, this mixture of time and space and people is usual for Erdrich, but here she complicates it even more with duplicate names. There are three generations of twin girls with identical names, and we're often not quite sure which generation we're reading about. This confusion is neither accidental nor is it literary trickery. It echoes life's difficulty in stringing together the scattered elements of life.

The book begins with a cavalry nineteenth-century raid/massacre on a defenseless Indian village. Scranton Roy (mentioned above in the quoted description) is a soldier who commits an atrocity during that raid, then performs a humanitarian act of equal weight in saving the life of an infant who is carried away on the back of a frightened dog. By the time he catches up with the dog, he is far away from the village and his unit and he never goes back. Still, the humanitarian act turns into an atrocity when he from one point of view saves the child and gives it a home, from another point of view steals the child from its mother and people. This Hegelian interaction of good and evil, animal/human continues throughout the book and down through the generations that Scranton Roy begets.

The above summary is way too prosaic, though, for it leaves out the element of magic. Many authors cross into the fantastical, but Erdrich lives there. A father nurses two children. Girls are raised by antelope and deer. People stare into rivers and find themselves swimming with underwater spirits. It also leaves out the comedy, of which there is plenty. Ribald, profane, dangerous, and deeply serious comedy of the kind that makes you laugh while people die naked.

If you want to read this for the history or sociology, there's plenty of that, too. You'll find a depiction of the Native American migration to and from the cities and the interaction between reservation Indians and urban ones. Louise even brings the Hmong into the mix, one of the latest additions to the incredible racial stew we are preparing in America.

Throughout, despite the horrible things people do to one another, the women sew constantly, threading the beads of their lives and culture into taut strings, making patterns of the loose beads, trying to make sense of the the "... longing [that] makes us do the things that we should not. Even longing for the good. For love. Longing is the bliss of thieves that getting kills."

I don't suppose this will make my friend like the book any better, but maybe it will convince her it has more worth than she first thought.

Mosca says

Louise Erdrich's works seem woven with textures of destinies, families, and histories. This book is no exception.

Frequently painful to read because of the emotional damage inherited by and inflicted by the characters in this tale, this book is nonetheless a rewarding experience because of the human redemption achieved by a few key members of this tangled family web.

The melodic and mystical prose guides the reader through worlds of tragedy, comedy, damnation, and salvation. Although not religious, these worlds are deeply spiritual in a most physically human way.

"The Antelope Wife" is another masterful experience by one of our best writers.

Amy says

The Antelope Wife combines Native mysticism and legend with the multi-generational stories of the Roy and Shawano families. Linked by one woman, she will bring their destinies full circle.

Written in lyrical prose and infused with haunting imagery, the story alternates between grief and acceptance, with a rare glimpse of joy.

I only started to enjoy the book about halfway through. The characters and stories before that come and go quickly and with little ceremony, which made it hard to figure out who or what to invest in. However, there were family members in the second half which I really came to care for.

Erdrich writes family so well. She is really able to get into their hearts and souls and convey their thoughts and feelings to the reader. Characters have their own true voices and are consistent to their traits.

3.5 and a good read.

Lila says

I loved this novel which is both magical and realistic. This is the first time I've read anything from Louise Erdrich. I really appreciate her style and the way she combines myth and reality. A very thought provoking read! I am looking forward to reading more books from her.

Stephanie says

I haven't read Louise Erdrich in years, but this book reminded me why she was once one of my favorite authors. It's difficult to describe her books--and they aren't for everybody--but this one reads like a vivid dream. Reality and folklore intermingle and time is not-linear, so it is often difficult to know if you are in the past or present. There is not necessarily a plot, but the book evokes a mood and captures all those feelings we deal with as humans. Her prose is so lyrical that it is nearly poetic, and the images she creates for her reader are lasting. I feel like I'd need to read this one many times to "get it," and it probably wouldn't hurt to go back and re-read some of her earlier work because these are many of the same characters she has already written about.

The other thing I love about Erdrich is how she undermines the classic "Native American" stereotype. Her characters are definitely impacted by their tribal culture, but they are equally influenced by mainstream America and their European heritages. A typical Erdrich character is an Indian baker raised on the rez but living in the city, trying to master a German cake recipe. She pushes the boundaries and doesn't allow her reader to place any characters in a box. She definitely makes you think and feel. A great read.

V says

Some beautiful writing in here, although unless you're paying attention you will definitely miss things. The cast of characters is large, and it is difficult to keep track of all of them, especially when the narration skips between generations at will, without signposting or explicit time shifts. This book probably bears another read.

Kirsten says

Beautiful. At times, it takes me a while to slow down enough as a reader to appreciate Erdrich - when I do, it is always rewarding. I keep reading her novels in snatches, here and there, and because they are so entwined, I know there is a lot I am probably missing. I would like to eventually reread everything of hers I've ever picked up, in succession.

Maureen says

The lack of a fourth star is probably my fault. I suggest you read this slowly and contemplatively while awake and in the quiet. Also suggest you bring paper and pencil and diagram the characters. I have moved it into my permanent collection and would probably read it again after I have retired. Erdrich is one of my absolute favorite authors.

Michelle says

a floating, meandering dream of a tale that has beautiful moments, but ultimately fails to mesh together.

many members of a loosely connected group of ojibwa families meet, love, hate, and cross paths over the generations in the minneapolis area. some of these people are seers, who have to dream the names of the next generation; others are ordinary bakers who nourish this one. things that would be played for shock value (or at least dramatic climax) in a more mundane author's hands - a kidnapped woman shatters her teeth on a bathroom fixture while trying to flee, for example - happen in a near stream-of-unconsciousness acceptance. truly, few things i've ever read have come as close to a dream's feeling of strange things washing over you with barely a ripple as this novel.

apparently, though, i'm a bit too conventional in my tastes to really suffuse myself in this type of tale. there's no real WHY to this story, just the sense that you're getting a fragment of an endless dream. for all that this story has moments of amazing beauty and wonder, i need things to have more meaning or more cohesive purpose.

Bernadette says

Louise Erdrich writes the most passionate and poetic prose i've ever read...

Most of Erdrich's novels that i've read so far swept me off my feet because of her masterful storytelling, this true weaving and weaving (though she might prefer beading ;)) of story-lines, and because of her descriptions of nature, landscapes, thoughts, emotions & sensations that are both so very poetic and precise. The centrality of passion in the lives of her beautifully vulnerable, flawed or awe-inspiring characters makes her, on top of being my favourite writer, one of my favourite artists as well.

Allie Riley says

Erdrich strikes again with her usual heady mix of poetic prose and magical realism. I just love her writing. This particular novel took a little while to get going for me and I did find myself struggling to work out exactly who was who for a bit. (I could have done with a family tree to refer to!) I think I just about worked it out in the end, though. Fabulous stuff, as ever. Highly recommended.
