

***Reading Journal —
The Round House
by Louise Erdrich***

Maggie Huang
Spring 2020
English A Lang & Lit
Paul Faber

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An Overview

AUTHOR (LOUISE ERDRICH)

Family:

Father was a German-American, enjoyed telling stories to his children, which Erdrich would later cite as one of her major writerly influences.

Mother was an enrolled member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians.

Husband Michael Dorris is a writer. They raised six children before the separation 14 years after their marriage.

Education and career:

Dartmouth College

National Book Award recipient, authored fifteen novels;

She owns a famous Native-focused bookstore in Minneapolis.

CONTEXT

- Native American Renaissance
- Many problematic stigmas in America which stereotyped indigenous peoples as greedy, destitute, substance dependent, or owners of tobacco and gambling rings.
- Violence against indigenous women is often unreported and justice is absent
- Links to the author's cultural background, which allows the elaboration of her perspective through a realistic setting that she experienced

PURPOSE

- Comment on Colonization, Indigenous rights, violence against women and power dynamics.
- Criticize the ineffectiveness of the legal system/justice system for First Nations people.
- Expose contemporary issues faced by First Nations people today, as well as educate settler readers of indigenous perspectives.

GENRE

I find the genre intriguing to define. I believe it is a mixture of:

- Bildungsroman
 - Joe grows psychologically and morally as he portrays a more mature role throughout the story.
- a political fiction
 - the society on the Indian reservation and the laws that they are obliged to abide by are criticized.
 - Displays a young, innocent boy, whose world is corrupted and flipped upside down, and is unable to be fixed because of powerless laws. This forces him to grow and mature, which in turn represents both genres and ties them together.
- mystery
 - at the beginning of the story we do not yet know who the attacker was, or what actually happened during the crime. We are lead to discover who this is through a series of stories and clues that eventually can be pieced together to form a clear picture of who the villain is.
- realistic fiction
 - The issue of sexual assault and jurisdiction on tribal lands forces us to question the way in which the US has treated them over time, through a historical lens.
- a folk tale

- It tells the story of Akiikwe, Nanapush, how the idea of a round house came to be, and how the story of the house continues to evolve around in Geraldine's case.

These differing genres add to the impact of the story as they allow it to be looked at from different perspectives, and makes it more realistic.

I cite the following discussion online, which I find useful:

*While I appreciate the way in which "The Round House" fits with the Bildungsroman theme, the sense of stagnation and excess of lewd, violent, and pop-cultural elements left me leaning towards classification as post-modernist literature prior to reading the discussion prompts here. Much like Pynchon's "The Crying of Lot 49," Erdrich's narration wanders with exacting details that evoke more than they explain (5). Long detours such as the discussion of "Vaders" and "Emperors" (circumcised or uncircumcised penises) give a strong example of how "The Round House" elicits a mixed and sometimes visceral response to the book's content. **Readers are drawn along Joe's storyline with the same sickly fascination that draws the young characters towards adulthood and more specifically Joe towards the truth.** Further, Erdrich's choice not to call out dialogue with quotation marks or other similar punctuation toys with format in the same grain as Carroll's shaped paragraphs in "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland," Brathwaite's typographic and spelling manipulation in "Letter SycoraX" and later post-modernists' radical arrangements of words and type face (6, 7). **By leaving the distinction between narration and dialogue unclear, the author adds to the feel that the novel's events are being recalled and are foggy, unclear memories. This additionally gives the sense of an oral history, an important aspect of Joe's Ojibwe heritage.***

The combination of these two genres as well as the clear indications that the story occurred long before Joe's telling of it leave the book with an audience much older than the 12 year old protagonist. Barely appropriate for many incoming freshmen, the book deals with extremely mature topics in a blunt, almost vulgar, manner.

STRUCTURE

Chronological flashback, unfolding of the causes behind a childhood trauma.

SETTING

Set in 1988 on a reserve in North Dakota

PERSPECTIVE

The point of view is that of a 13-year-old boy, an interesting authorial choice but does not limit her ability to treat the subjects of justices and sexual violence in a sensitive and unique way. The purpose as follows:

- As a son who did not experience the attack but does experience its pain, Joe is just as affected, albeit in different ways.
- make Joe's thoughts as a young boy be a mirror to the society he lives in, as children's views on themes of the novel like justice are influenced by the people around him.
- Many factors go into a young man's mindset such as duty to family, the concept of manhood, cultural background, and identity. By combining such uniqueness, Erdrich convinces the reader to care about this injustice, and to some extent explains the murder he later commits.
- The story of Nanapush (which shows a young son standing up for his mother and taking responsibility into his own hands to help her) inspires in Joe a sense of similar responsibility due to his heritage and community. Joe commits an ultimate sacrifice when he shoots Linden, but convinces the reader that this justice needs to occur.
- The driving fear in a boy whose mother is raped but may never receive justice from the law gives his perspective enough power to be convincing.
- because joe is still very young, it is possible for him to change his oppressive actions, which he does after the stripping scene
- A young boy is more readily to express emotions outwardly, and it is easier for the audience to forgive a 13-year-old boy than say a 50-year-old male.
- His position of strength as an avenging son with a somewhat outside/limited perspective makes this argument convincing and refreshing enough to grab attention

- The combination of sexual violence and a boy's coming of age brings to light the different effects that sexual violence has and addresses sexism from the point of view of the oppressor (men as opposed to women).

If Erdrich had chosen to narrate from Geraldine's perspective, she might not have been able to fully portray a cry for justice and could have been paralyzed by her fear so that the theme of justice would take second priority to recovery; the novel would focus more on the attack than its results.

Linda was also given her own narrated piece, making this section different from the rest of the book, because...

- Linda's hatred and death-wishes towards her own twin brother shows how horrible a person Linden is.
- Irony that Linden never seemed to really want the kidney "You don't have to do this. You don't have to be Jesus" (124). Irony that this crime could have been avoided if not for her generosity.
- Shift of perspective offers a break from the thoughts and feelings of Joe. Shows the hardships suffered by others and shows how other people dealt with their grief.
- Her story illustrates the concept of "moral freedom" and contrasts with Linden's moralities as "a skin of evil." It shows how humans have the choice to be good or evil and provides a foil to Joe's increasing awareness of human's capability for evil.
- Linda's childlike naivety is similar to Joe at the beginning but they differ in dealing with tragedies of the adult world. Her narrative provides a contrast to Joe's and highlights his changes.

The stories the Mooshum told also transported the reader to another time in someone else's mind. His stories purposes however were to give historical background and perspective to Joe's current situation, rather than to give specific insights into the rape that occurred.

INTERTEXTUALITY

Disability: taken to space, taken away from the culture. It's not as close to us.

Exotic, we can talk about uncomfortable things, things that may not be politically correct.

ex. Reconciliation, gender, poverty. Art that is elsewhere, but not in, for example, Canada.

First Nations people, shows how they are colonized.

Some commonality might be found with other culture.

Riva: the important thing is to listen

While reading, we are listening to Travis' story, Linda's story,

Riva's never here, but has three people speak for him.

The person who is writing this novel is speaking to us.

Bringing to us peace.

Riva's going to teach them the hand language. They have to go through it again.

Help two groups to listen to each other.

Wolf: the only black, the other, the outsider. The kids love him implies that they are also outsider of the Western culture. They are Indian instead of white people.

THEMES

1. Justice
2. Coming of Age
3. Colonization
4. Woman/sexism
5. Family
6. Brotherhood
7. Tradition

The themes are further discussed in the next part, plot analysis, and supported by examples and analysis.

Plot analysis (by Chapter)

CHAPTER ONE: 1988

Synopsis. The peace of Joe's family was broken that afternoon — his mother Geraldine was raped. After Joe finished uprooting the small trees in their garden, he sneaked to read his father's *Handbook of Federal Indian Law*, showing his interest in law fairs. Soon the father and son realized uneasily that Geraldine the mother hadn't come home yet.

They went out to find Geraldine. On the way to the grocery, they found her driving angrily, and joked about it. However, when they saw Geraldine covered with blood in the car, they took Geraldine to the emergency room. When Joe was waiting outside, a white woman address them aggressively and insulted Geraldine. Joe tore her magazine. Through conversations, Joe realized that his mother was raped, even though he didn't quite understand what that word means yet. Joe hugged his father and refused to go back home nor school.

Remark 0.1. *This chapter serves as an introduction to Joe's recount of the story. It establishes the perspective: the adult Joe thinking back of the life-turning event in his childhood. Through Joe's eyes, readers also get the background information: the story unfolds in an Indian reservation; at the time when there was still a lot of discrimination towards them; Joe's father is a judge, his mother works in the tribal enrolment office; their family is very close to his relatives, etc.*

Theme 1. (Justice) Justice is a central theme in this novel. It mainly discussed the difference and validity of the Western law system and the indigenous one. In chapter one, Joe showed his initial interest in the law system and his belief in it.

Quote 1.1.

"Small trees had attacked my parents' house at the foundation." (3)

Symbol 1.1. (Small trees) *The small trees in the garden is a symbol for the evil that shakes the foundation of Joe's family. Joe's uprooting of the small trees foreshadow his murder of Linden in the end of the novel. It also implies that this action denied*

his innocence as a child, “You would think then that I would have stopped, a thirteen-year-old boy with better things to do, but on the contrary. (8)”

Symbol 1.2. (Handbook of Federal Indian Law) *Joe was so interested in this law book that he even sneaked into his father’s room to read it. This also implies Joe’s confidence in the law system and respected his reverence for his father’s job as a judge. However, this attitude changes as the novel proceeds.*

Quote 1.2.

I already knew, in a rudimentary way, that these questions would swirl around the facts. I already knew, too, that these questions would not change the facts. But they would inevitably change the way we sought justice.

Theme 2. (Coming of Age) This novel is accepted as a bildungsroman, or the “coming of age” of the protagonist Joe. The first chapter shows Joe as a naive 13-year old boy who didn’t even quite understand what rape meant. However, this rather emphasizes his dramatic change after his mother’s trauma as the novel progresses.

Quote 2.1.

but the two of us stared at each other in a way that struck me somehow as adult, as though he knew that by reading his law book I had inserted myself into his world.

Quote 2.2.

There had already been that look, odd, as if between two grown men, and I had not been ready. Which didn’t matter. I was holding my mother tightly now in the backseat of the car.

These two quotes shows the the first time Joe felt the need of his responsibility for his family. He felt suddenly grown up even though he was only thirteen and not ready yet. This corresponds to his fast growth afterwards.

Theme 3. (Race/Colonization) As one of the major themes in the novel, the issue of Western colonization is evident especially when Joe encountered the pregnant woman in the hospital. However, Joe and family are also portrayed as ones that

kept revolting, which is evident in Joe's reaction towards the pregnant woman, which is taught by his mother.

Quote 3.1.

I am the second Antone Bazil Coutts, but I'd fight anyone who put a junior in back of my name. Or a number. Or called me Bazil. I'd decided I was Joe when I was six. (7)

The name Antone Bazil Coutts sounds apparently European, and it is associated with his father. By changing his name to Joe, we can see the rebellion of this teenage boy.

However, Joe is also a common name in America, and it is the same as his grandfather's. This indicates that no matter what he tried to do to establish his own identity, he cannot get out of it. The impact of former generations, of family, and of western influence is undeniable.

Quote 3.2

Still what? I made my voice grating and sarcastic. I was never like so many Indian boys, who'd look down quiet in their anger and say nothing. My mother had taught me different.

Joe's revolt towards the white was evident since the beginning. It also implies that Indians are at a lower position in society. The pregnancy of the white woman implies the trans generational nature of discrimination.

Quote 3.3

But Cher did not look tough. She looked like a surprised plastic doll. The bony, bulgey woman peeked around Cher and spoke to the knitting lady.

Cher is an actress who loves incorporating indigenous elements in her shows. However, by describing Cher as a "plastic doll," Erdrich shows her dislike towards her action of commercializing the indigenous culture.

Quote 3.4

We sat together staring at a picture of a pioneer woman sitting on a hot hillside with her baby lying next to her, shaded beneath a black umbrella. We agreed that we had never really cared for the picture and now we were going to actively hate it, though this was not the picture's fault.

Theme 3. (Race/colonization) In the novel, Erdrich kept building typical Indian stereotypes in the Western's eyes. However, she also immediately destroys those stereotypes afterwards. In this way, Erdrich is trying to eliminate the Indian stereotypes.

Quote 3.1.

I resented the fact that I didn't have a brand-new name to distinguish me from the tedious Coutts lineresponsible, upright, even offhandedly heroic men who drank quietly, smoked an occasional cigar, drove a sensible car, and only showed their mettle by marrying smarter women. (7)

Without context, this is a typical description of a British, but not a stereotypical Indian. This fits into the recurring motif of Erdrich's attempt to break Indian stereotypes.

Quote 3.2.

My father's chin jutted, his hands tightened on the wheel. He had a profile that would look Indian on a movie poster, Roman on a coin. There was a classic stoicism in his heavy beak and jaw. (8)

Here Joe is describing his father in the language of stereotypes. This is in great contrast with Quote 4.1. By these two contrasting descriptions, Erdrich aims to break the stereotypical image of an Indian man, and that their life style can be no difference from any Western man.

Theme 4. (Women). The novel portrays a lot different women, and all of them have their different troubles as women. Most of them were bullied and objectified by people around them. However, there are also a lot of good qualities in women that this novel shows the readers.

Quote 4.1.

Women don't realize how much store men set on the regularity of their habits...And so, you see, her absence stopped time.

Joe described his mother in this way that men cannot leave them. However, man can only realize this fact when they lose the women. This is a reoccurring motif in the novel, which is also evident in Sonja's case.

Quote 4.2

My mother was a beautiful woman—that's something I always knew. A given among family, among strangers. She and Clemence had coffee-cream skin and hot black glossy curls. Slim even after their children. Calm and direct, with take-charge eyes and movie-star lips.

Notice Joe's description of his mother. It is full of typical Western view of women beauty. The fact that Joe was only thirteen emphasized this point of prejudice towards women, and the standard social view of beauty. This is an evidence of men's objectification of women. This is also in great contrast with the description for Linda in the later part of the novel.

Theme 5. (Family) Chapter one especially put a lot of emphasis on family relationship. Joe is shown as one who cared a lot about his family. When Geraldine was attacked, he even refused to go to school. He also refused to obey the doctor's order to make his father feel better. Meanwhile, their approximate with Clemence's family also show that the line between family member is extremely blurred in Chippewa culture.

Quote 5.1.

Oh, Geraldine.

Bazil's love for Geraldine. Notice that he sentence "Oh, Geraldine" appears again at the end the novel. Through it all, Bazil's love for Geraldine never changed. This also shows a key difference between this couple than any other in the novel — their mutual love is key for maintaining a loving family atmosphere.

Quote 5.2

But during the last few hours I had become increasingly resistant to authority. Instead of politely vanishing, I ran to my father, flailing Dr. Egge aside. I threw my arms around my father's soft torso, held him under his jacket, and I fiercely clung to him, saying nothing, only breathing with him, taking great deep sobs of air.

CHAPTER TWO: LONELY AMONG US

Synopsis.

Non-linear narrative adds a lot of interesting details and insights when Joe looks back years afterwards. Joe has three friends: Cappy, Zack, and Angus. Zack's parents are divorced twice. Angus is extremely poor and all their family have complicated relationships. Cappy lives with his father. All these families get great help from their connected families, which are emphasized in indigenous culture. They love watching TNG. Back home, Joe notices the clear difference and strangeness of his home because of his mother's attack. Even the milk goes sour and Geraldine heats him. Even though it is unintended, Joe feels hurt. At the dinner table, Joe eventually learns from Basil how Geraldine escaped. However, Joe seems to be not yet ready to accept the violent reality.

It is explained that Indians cannot be told easily. Men's objectification of women is demonstrated in Mooshum's talk. Basil makes Geraldine cook again by screwing up the dinner. That night, Joe goes to help Randall with the Chippewa traditional ceremony of sweat-lodge.

Afterwards, Basil asks Joe to help him read the documents on cases. However, Geraldine becomes so sensitive now that when Basil tries to hug her, she is so terrified that she goes to the room again, sleeping all the time yet eating almost none.

Remark *Joe is always ironic to the US government, not only the laws they set up, but also their fake policies. Angus' house was built half way and of low quality.*

Remark *The characters of TNG must have affect these boys in a fundamental way. The fact that they all "wanted to be Worf" and that Worf is the only non-human in the show implies that they are outsiders of Western culture just like Worf. Moreover, "Wolf's solution to any problem was to attack." This can also be interpreted as an influence on Joe's later attack towards Linden as his solution.*

Remark *The fact that Geraldine unintentionally hit his son might imply that violence can produce more violence.*

Quote 2.1

We began to read. And it was then that I began to understand who my father was, what he did every day, and what had been his life.

By helping Basil reading the files, Joe is beginning to take the role of adults gradually. At the same time, we notice he is changing his admiration towards his father as a judge.

Quote 3.1

You can't tell if a person is an Indian from a set of fingerprints. You can't tell from a name. You can't even tell from a local police report...

The series of negatives brings readers attention and let them truly listen. Listen is emphasized in the book as well as in Star Trek — intertextuality.

Quote 3.2

On the other hand, Indians know other Indians without the need for a federal pedigree, and this knowledge—like love, sex, or having or not having a baby—has nothing to do with government.

By describing the complicated process of identifying Indians, Joe implies that there is no such way to tell whether someone's an Indian. The distinction is blurred and is related to self-identity. This is breaking the Western stereotype of typical Indians.

Quote 4.1

She had always liked to feed us.

Women in this book is mainly portrayed as cook. They love cooking for their family and friends. Maybe this is also a stereotype for female in Indian society.

Quote 4.2

The scent of Clemence's newly taken up smoking sobered both of the men.

Clemence starts smoking after Geraldine's accident. This implies that the accident is very disturbing to her. As one of the few females close to Geraldine, she might be more able to understand what Geraldine is going through.

The conversation between the men angers her. Right after Geraldine's rape, they discuss publicly about Sonja and objectifying her. This creates a stark contrast and

emphasizes the nature of men — they don't understand Geraldine, sexism, gender violence. No wonder Clemence is so angry at them.

Quote 4.3

Very little is needed to make a happy life, he said.

My mother took a sharp breath, and frowned... but looking back on it, I also know she was trying to build up her shield. To not feel things. Not refer to what had happened. His emotion grabbed at her.

Bazil seems to want to minimize the impact of this issue on Geraldine. However, this also shows how little he understands her. This also explains why Bazil fails to comfort Geraldine however he tries.

Theme 4. (Woman) Throughout the novel, the boys seem to be greatly influenced by the grown-ups around them. As a result, they are also objectifying women at an early age. This disparity between age and action emphasizes the miserable social norm, which is criticized by the author.

Quote 4.4

Don't worry about it, Joe. He prays for me too. And he gets a lot of girls with his medicine. So he's gotta keep in practice.

Even Cappy's thoughts is not an exception — all men of all ages in the reservation seem to objectify women around them.

Quote 5.1

Holding the glass, I felt the tremendous hush in our little house as something that follows in the wake of a huge explosion.

Quote 5.2

The sun fell onto the kitchen floor in golden pools, but it was an ominous radiance, like the piercing light behind a western cloud. A trance of dread came over me, a taste of death like sour milk.

Similes. The uneasiness of the house after the accident. The weird atmosphere at home is an implication of the irreparable change happening in their family.

Quote 5.3

Clemence poured me a glass of iced tea and went to answer the phone. People were calling her constantly for news, gossip really, about her sister.

...

Clemence came back in and flared her eyes at him.

Awee, said Uncle Whitey. Guess I'm not supposed to talk.

The attention Erdrich gives to the reactions of Geraldine's family and community members, as understood by Joe, strengthens her message as she reveals how an act of sexual violence impacts an individual's family in completely different but almost equally significant ways from the victim.

Quote 5.4

We were not churchgoers. This was our ritual. Our breaking bread, our communion...

In comparison, we see how the family was like before the accident. Breaking bread and communion alludes to Christian practices. By analogizing dinner as ritual, Joe is giving the dinner importance to their bounded family relationship.

With no ceremony,

This creates such great contrast in terms of dinner before and after the rape.

Quote 5.5

But now they stood staring at each other helplessly over the broken dish. Beginning with the scene just after the attack where Basil tries to touch Geraldine as he normally would and accidentally triggers her so that she drops her dish and soon begins to slowly slip away from her family, Erdrich shows Joe's family being torn apart slowly and terrifyingly.

Theme 6. (Brotherhood)

Quote 6.1

We were starting to get our growth and were anxious how we'd turn out. In TNG we weren't skinny, picked on, poor, motherless, or scared. We were cool because no one else knew what we were talking about.

Theme 7. (Tradition & Catholicism) The conflict between Chippewa tradition and Catholicism is an aspect of the long standing conflict between the Western colonizers and the indigenous people. However, in the novel the conflicting religions seems to be soften easily by people on the reservation. Some of them believe in both.

Quote 7.1

Cappy looked at him and said, How sacred can your fire be if we sucked out its holiness with just our puny wieners?

Before this, the author builds the image of a traditional ceremony that associates with that of “real Indians.” However, what Cappy jokes about the hotdog destroys that stereotype. Cappy’s act juxtaposes the “real Indian” (stereotype) with real people (reality behind).

Remark. *This kind of motif of establishing and then destroying stereotypes is common throughout the novel. In this way, Erdrich is education her audience about real Indian life.*

CHAPTER THREE: JUSTICE

Synopsis.

By viewing the cases with his father, Joe realizes that what his father does are trivial cases instead of what he has imagined. Meanwhile, he gets to know the Larks, a despicable racist family. Basil is suspicious of Linden because he has weird behaviours and his personal interest is harmed by Basil. His twin sister, Linda, was adopted by an Indian family and now lives in her adopting mother's house. Her biological mother wanted to claim that house as hers, but failed. Moreover, by reading the case happened at the round house, Joe deduces that his mother's attack took place there.

Quote 2.1

Here it was. The weighty matters on which my father spent his time and his life.

Quote 2.2

I said nothing, but as I read on I was flooded by a slow leak of dismay. For what had Felix S. Cohen written his Handbook? Where was the greatness? the drama? the respect?

All of the cases that my father judged were nearly as small, as ridiculous, as petty.

Joe is turning disappointed towards the jurisdiction system.

CHAPTER FOUR: LOUD AS A WHISPER

Synopsis.

Having confirmed that Geraldine is raped at the Round House, Joe secretly goes there with his friends to find more evidence. Using his tuition, Joe finds the gas can, realizing that the attacker intended to burn Geraldine. He feels disgusted. The boys start smoking and eating hungrily. The boys play around and drank the beer they found in the forest. After that, they go to Grandma Thunder's place for food and show great interest in sexuality.

When Joe gets home, he eavesdrops on his father and uncle. Basil complains that for the first time, he and Geraldine sleeps apart. They start to doubt on the priest. At night, Joe wakes up and sees a ghost in the garden. Joe tells Basil about it the next morning, but feels ignored. He becomes more determined to help his mother.

Remark. *When Joe is in the Round house pretending he is Linden, notice the author's use of auxiliary verbs. "must have" "would have" all show Joe's certainty. Meanwhile, it seems that there is some relationship between Joe and Linden, and least a similarity in thinking and logic. This aids the discussion in the end about what kind of person Joe could be, depending on how he is going to use his outstanding intuition and logical analysis.*

Quote 1.1

He did it here. I tipped my head back to the round house. He did it, Repetition of "he did it." Emphasize. Hatred. Foreshowing the revenge.

Quote 2.1

How I could have offered to do that errand. I had entered that furrow of remorse—planted with the seeds of resentment—peculiar to young men.

Joe is angry that his parents no longer give him the care he needs. This is accelerating his growth. The metaphor of resentment as seeds foreshadows Joe's later solution to punish Linden. It is a seed that grows over time.

Theme 3. (Colonization) Poverty is an issue raised that mainly due to colonization. Poverty is not emphasized in the novel but rather described as a

common thing in life, and everyone on the reservation seem to enjoy this material poverty albeit spiritual richness.

Quote 3.1

Cappy picked a splinter off the broken door and stabbed the ground with it. Zack chewed a piece of grass. I looked at Angus. He was always hungry. I told him I'd brought sandwiches and fished the bag out of my pack to divide them up.

The boys are always hungry, which is a sign of their material poverty. It also implies the fact that they are all growing up rapidly.

Theme 4. (Woman, Sexuality) As the boys growing up, they are becoming more aware of adult sexuality around them and are explicitly curious towards it. They are influenced by their family and start to objectify women like all other men in the reservation.

Quote 4.1

We wanted to sneak away but were pulled back by that last piece of information. Maybe we were each thinking of our three minutes in the woods.

Quote 5.1

But he had hung up. The words I love you echoed... A red cloud of anger floated up over my eyes. My head was light with hunger, too.

Joe feels his father is ignoring him. At the same time, he is feeling angry because his love for his father is not given positive feedback. Clearly Basil is equally bothered by Geraldine's situation. The trauma has impacted everyone in the family.

Quote 5.2

We traded shoes. As soon as I put his on, I realized that his feet were a size bigger. He walked away from me on pinched feet. He had heard what I'd said on the phone.

Cappy is one of the people around that helps Joe all the time during his hardest time when his family is not with him. The concept of family is challenged again here. The fact that Grandma Thunder welcomes and cooks for the boys is another sign of the bounding of the whole community. Everyone support each other.

Quote 5.3

As he left the room, I experienced an alarm that quickly turned to fury. I glared at his back. Either he had purposely not cared to quiet my fear by challenging me, or he had not listened to me at all. And had he really covered me with a blanket?

Joe is angry that his father is not giving him enough attention — an important aspect that leads to Joe's prematurity. It is also a sign when Joe starts to break with his family and become more independent, turning from sadness and helplessness to regret and revenge.

Quote 5.4

Everything we gave her came back and left a ring or a crust or went cold or congealed or went hard. I was sick of bringing down her wasted food.

Coffee embodies the love from Geraldine's family. Not drinking is a metaphor for rejection of love. This action is leaving scars on their hearts and shatters the family apart. This is metaphorically represented as the cold and congealed ring. No wonder Joe becomes "sick of bringing" her food.

Quote 5.5

To see the egg-brown scalp and thin patch of gray hairs would put me over the edge. I'd snap, I thought, if I looked down.

Joe doesn't want to see his father's head because he doesn't want to face the reality of his father's aging and worry. Joe loves his family a lot, even though he may not express it explicitly. That is also a direct reason why he chooses to kill Linden himself in the end. Realizing father's aging, Joe is becoming more independent.

Quote 7.1

One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, but the earth abideth forever. We think that way too.

There is such a similarity between the seemingly conflicting religions of Catholicism and Indigenous traditions, implying the possibility of reconciliation.

Quote 7.2

I know. But the round house. Symbol of the old pagan ways. The Metis women. Setting it all on fire together—the temptation and the crime all burned up as in a fire offering . . . oh god.

Symbol 7.3 *The round house was used for indigenous ceremonies. Before Indians were not allowed to practice their own religion, so they come to the round house and pretend being in a social dance hall, reading the Bible. It is a symbol for culture and religious communion and at the same time, the colonizers' attempt to destroy their culture heritage. Round house elevates the rape of Geraldine to the Western's rape of the indigenous culture.*

Theme 7. (Spirituality) *In the novel, Erdrich takes all spiritual experiences of the characters seriously, describing everything as real.*

CHAPTER FIVE: THE NAKED NOW

Synopsis.

Joe and Bazil help Geraldine plant her flowers. When Joe visits Geraldine and tries to talk to her about the document, Geraldine gets so mad and depressed and scolds Joe. Joe is upset and is even barked at by Pearl. After arguing with Bazil, Joe runs away only to find Angus beaten again by his aunt. They decide to find Father Travis. Joe is caught smoking but because of this, he gets the priest's alibi. They still doubt Travis and spy on him at his house. On the way, they nearly die of the dogs. While spying on Travis, they get easily attracted to the movie in his house. They become certain that Travis is not the attacker, but get caught by him. They are frightened. But as they get closer to Travis, they realize that Travis is not his cruel appearance but rather has his own story.

Remark. *The fact that Geraldine always appears along with flowers is one of stereotypes Western idea has on the Indians, that they are close to nature. In ads it is always shown an Indian process among the flowers.*

Remark. *Right after Joe threatens Geraldine and Geraldine refuses any of his help, Joe goes to Pearl to find some pleasure. However, the fact that Pearl refuses to please him and play with him and even attempts to tear him, Joe realizes that Pearl wants freedom. There is a parallel between Geraldine and Pearl. Both are forced and threatened by Joe. Both fight for their freedom. I wonder whether Joe is actually hurting his mom even though he intends to help. Interestingly, this attempt to control is also evident in Bazil's unwillingness to let Joe involved in this issue, but Joe refuses to follow his advice and believes that he should "do what I want with it [life]."*

Quote 1.1

You said if they're assigned to Indian Country they are either rookies or have trouble with authority.

Now Joe is losing confidence even in the police and the jurisdiction system. He is becoming more independent and at the same time, more rebellious to the authority.

Quote 2.1

*You're too damn inquisitive, Joe. You've surprised the hell out of me. I'm afraid.
You could get yourself . . . if anything happened to you . . .*

Notice the change of Bazil's language use. He never swears before his son before. This is an indication of his anger and worry and love. Meanwhile it hints that Bazil starts to treat Joe more like an adult.

Quote 3.1

*Shawanobinesiik, Elizabeth, Southern Thunderbird. Adik, Michael, Caribou.
Kwiingwa'aage, Joseph, Wolverine. Mashkiki, Mary, The Medicine. Ombaashi,
Albert, Lifted By Wind. Makoons, The Bearling, and Bird Shaking Ice Off Its
Wings.*

Quote 3.2

and the white man appeared and drove them down into the earth, which sounded like an Old Testament prophecy but was just an observation of the truth. And so to be afraid of entering the cemetery by night was to fear not the loving ancestors who lay buried, but the gut kick of our history, which I was bracing to absorb. The old cemetery was filled with its complications.

The grave they pass on the way to Travis' house is described for a reason. It is not only full of dead people, but also full of history.

The names, clearly remembered by Joe, gives a closeness to that history of colonization. It is very emotional and historically relevant. The fact that Joe as a boy has such a great knowledge of his family history also reminds readers that Joe is not as non-religious as he appears to be. He is well aware of it and casts great hatred toward the Western society, as evident in his description. By visiting the grave, Joe is reminded of his own history, the culture invasion before her mother's rape case, and that all this has started long ago. Joe is sad not to the death, but about the empathy.

Quote 4.1

She sat up suddenly, activated, like rising from the dead.

Quote 4.2

It was as though I had been locked up with a raging corpse.

Geraldine is “dead” in the sense that she chooses to abandon everything, and is no longer the Geraldine before the attack. The simile as a corpse also shows what home is like for Joe.

Quote 5.1

You ran away? Angus frowned. I’d always had the perfect family loving, rich by reservation standards, stable—the family you would never run away from.

Joe’s family is different from other boys’ fundamentally. In this chapter, Angus is hurt badly by his aunt. This gives stark contrast with Joe. Joe leaves his home because his father wants him to step off this issue, which is out of good intent, protection and love. However, Angus was beaten because of the lack of love.

Theme 3+7. (Catholicism) The role of catholic church in the colonization is to convert the indigenous into Christians, “taking Indian out of Indian.” [This is very similar to the conversion of jew in MV.] This is a culture genocide that we need to identify in this novel. Also, Father Travis is physically different from the people in the reservation. He is a cultural other.

Quote 7.1

This time Cappy went to look and after a little while he came back and said it was Alien,

Alien the name of the movie implies the otherness. It is something from the other. In the movie, Aliens kills humans for no reason. A parallel is drawn between the aliens and the white who colonized and killed all those indigenous people in the graveyard. This also raises the question of how aliens is defined. In this case, Travis becomes the alien. Whereas in the western world, the indigenous people are more likely to be viewed as other, as alien.

Quote 7.2

It was almost enough to make a boy want to be a Catholic.

There is also this attraction for Joe to become Catholic, to become white. It also implies that Father Travis is not what he appears to be like. He is gentle inside regardless of his appearance and language (humiliating without swear words). This occurs frequently in the novel: the stereotype and that the contrasting reality.

CHAPTER SIX: DATALORE

Synopsis

Joe and Bazil visit Linda. The first conversation is all about weather and does not go very well, but is enough to make Linda visit Geraldine with banana bread the next time. She has a well-going conversation with Geraldine, which is unexpected to Joe. Joe talks to her and gets to know her background.

Linda was born deformed and abandoned by her biological mother. An Indian nurse adopted her, who became his mother later. Her adopted family molded her appearance. There were arguments and Linda was sometimes excluded by sisters because she is white. When her parents died, she inherited the house. One day she received a call from her biological mother, and wanted to meet her. When they met in a restaurant, Linda realized that they wanted her to donate her kidney to her twin brother Linden. Linda feels that Linden's spirit was always with her, and she agreed to help despite her sister's dissuasion and Linden's malicious swearing and humiliation. Linda got sick afterwards because of the spirit, and was cured with the sweat lodge ceremony.

Remark. (Intertextuality) *The title is again adapted from Star Trek. Data and Lore are twins. One stands for justice, and the other is evil. In this chapter, Linda and Linden are such twins.*

Remark. (Perspective) *For the first time in novel, we have a new narrator, Linda. She is given the narration for reasons. First, she is in the middle of the western and the indigenous. She was born white, but adopted by the reservation. This however, makes her an "Other" in either culture. Her story can well serve the purpose of the book and drive the plot — she gives hints at finding out the attacker. She gives a further insight into how Linden is really like and gives flesh to the character of Linden. Without this, the reader might not empathize with Joe that much and decide whether Linden deserves his punishment.*

Quote 2.1

But maybe . . . you want to come?

Bazil breaks his promise to not getting Joe involved. This signifies a concession to Joe's inquisition. Joe is growing up to be more able to get involved into issues like this.

Quote 2.2

I wasn't sure what coming down to talk with Linda Wishkob was about, but apparently some exchange I didn't understand took place.

Even though Joe is growing up rapidly, much faster than anyone of his age, the readers are reminded here that he is still a child and may not understand a lot of things. This seems to make him more innocent and understandable while killing Linden.

Quote 3.1

The blackboard menu today advertised Hamburger Soup, all U could eat... commodity macaroni, canned tomatoes, celery, onion, salt, and pepper. It was especially good that day. ...It was always burnt. He kept drinking it expressionlessly after we'd finished the soup.

I suspect that the food tastes good because they haven't eaten properly since Geraldine got attacked, and that they all understand Linda might help them in this, which cheers them up. People with a good mood can find the food "especially good." In addition, the hamburger soup hints at the poverty of reservation (due to colonization), this may also be a stereotype Erdrich is building from the Western perspective.

Quote 3.2

When I asked why she'd blamed me, Sheryl gave a hateful look, and said, Because you're white.

It is not only the white see Indians as "others," the indigenous people feel the same towards the white. However, Linda's story proves that reconciliation and mutual understanding is always possible.

Quote 4.1

She reminded me of a pop-eyed porcupine, even down to her fat little long-nailed paws.

Joe's first description for Linda is to emphasize her ugliness. However, as we moves on to learn more about her, we can realize her completely different inner world. This is more than contrast but also breaks the stereotype and emphasizes one shouldn't be judged by their appearance.

Quote 4.2

I went past pop eyes and sinister porcupine hands and wispy hair and just saw Linda, and wanted to know about her, which is probably why she told me. It seems that Joe is able to not judge women based on their appearance.

Theme 5 (Family) Again in Linda's story, we find the discussion of what defines a family. It is chosen by oneself? Should it be so?

CHAPTER SEVEN: ANGEL ONE

Synopsis.

Mooshum is an old man full of energy and keeps his ceaseless and quixotic activities. Joe asks Mooshum about the spirit he saw, and is asked to find the ajijaak, the crane clan. He goes to the lake, but no luck is found. However, when he picks up a doll in the lake out of curiosity, he finds it filled with money. Joe doesn't know what to do with the money and goes to Sonja for help. Sonja helps him put all the money into the bank. On the way back, Joe asks to help out in the gas station.

When Joe gets back home, Soren Bjerke, special agent for the FBI, is at home. He tells them about the oil can, the document, and the beers in the forest. He regrets leaking the secret and gets back to the room, where he is reminiscent of his mom in the past and saw a crane into the sun.

Quote 3.1

But on our particular reservation Bjerke's presence was a statement of our toothless sovereignty.

After linking the past cases with the present one, Joe emphasizes the constant oppression of the reservation. Bjerke's here is a symbol of that oppression.

Symbol 3.1 (The hanging tree) *Joe's passbooks are hidden under the hanging tree. It is a physical reminder of the history of colonization and violation.*

Quote 4.1

My aunt, who was dressed to go out and clean the church, in a set of high heels, a ruffled white shirt, and tight, streaky jeans, immediately put a pitcher of iced tea and two glasses on the table.

The description here is like one for a typical Western office woman. The reality and stereotypes contrasts again.

Quote 4.2

At one bank she said I had inherited money from my senile uncle. At another she mentioned a racehorse. Then she went back to the bingo win. It took all afternoon, us driving through the new grass pastures and crops just beginning to show. Sonja seems to very adept at this. She might have done something very similar before. The calmness and bravery shape her as an independent woman.

Quote 4.3

But can you do that? I've never known a guy who could keep a secret. Naturally Sonja chooses to doubt. However, this is more than feeling uncertain for a child. Sonja uses "guy," showing her distrust in man, hinting at her background and story.

Quote 4.4

Yeah. Thinks he owns me. But he'll find out he don't, huh? Am I right? The fact that Sonja doesn't want Whitey to think he owns her is a rejection towards the objectification of women. She is portrayed as independent and very aware of the stereotypes society holds towards her. However, the rhetorical questions also implies her unsureness about her own statement. She is trying to escape, in a wrong way. She still lacks the courage and experience to revolt against the objectification. This becomes more evident when we moves on to learn that Sonja is experiencing domestic violence.

Quote 4.5

I was awkward, but she suddenly glanced at me, sharp, with a naughty smirk like the one on that doll's face. Then she looked away, still smiling with manic glee. By comparing Sonja with the doll, Joe is inevitably becoming a man like Whitey — objectifying Sonja. This sexual attraction may become understandable when we consider Joe as a boy who doesn't yet know how to hide his emotion well. This thus better reveals the society's view of women.

Quote 5.1

The implication was that she was doing for me the things that my mother would have done if she was able to get up and out.

Sonja is taking the role of Geraldine as Joe's mother. This is also the reason why Joe chooses to go to the gas station first. The ideology of family is expanded.

Quote 0.0

As the light crept down the sides of the walls, turning the yellow paint to a deeper bronze, I thought about the awful doll and the money. I thought about Sonja's left breast and right breast... There was that hush on the reservation that falls between the summer dusk and dark, before the pickup trucks drag between the bars, the dance hall, and the drive-up liquor window. Sounds were muted—a horse neighed over the trees... Now the crane my mother used to watch, or its offspring, flapped slowly past my window. That evening it cast the image not of itself but of an angel on my wall. I watched this shadow. Through some refraction of brilliance the wings arched up from the slender body. Then the feathers took fire so the creature was consumed by light.

I love this description at the end of this chapter. It is elegantly described. Joe is reminiscent of all the things happen before and recent. This is rather a short moment of peace in all the chaos started at the beginning of this novel. The crane flying into the sun gives Joe hope and persistence.

CHAPTER EIGHT: HIDE AND Q

Synopsis.

Bjerke wants to know about the file. The first attempt of talking to her is failed when the rest waits outside of her room for hours. That afternoon, Basil puts the table in Geraldine's room to have dinner there. During the dinner, Basil tries to find topics. When Basil mentions Yeltow's attempt to adopt a child, Geraldine reacted drastically, both physically and emotionally. It is a catharsis of herself when she finally says "I was raped." During Geraldine's narrative, Basil tries to find out where the rape took place, but Geraldine is so emotional and refuses to say.

Basil sends Geraldine to the hospital. Joe starts to work happily at the gas station. He meets Linden and asks LaRose about Mayla. That night, Whitey beats Sonja because she wears a pair of earrings from nowhere. Joe helps Sonja to stun Whitey. The next day, Joe goes to live with Clememce and Mooshum. At night, Mooshum tells Joe the story of Akii. She was framed by her husband as a wiindigoo. In order to save his mother, Nanapush went on to find an old buffalo. The buffalo saved many lives. Joe receives the news that Linden has been arrested, and Geraldine goes back to life.

The boys want to have a swim at the lake by the church, where they meet the dream girl Zelia. Later when Joe sees the car salvaged from the lake, he realizes the doll full of money is Mayla's.

Quote 3.1

Many people had adopted French or English names by that time, too, or had been baptized and received thereby the name of a Catholic saint.

Cultural invasion.

Quote 3.2

Her name was Zelia and she'd traveled all the way over from Helena, Montana, to convert the Indians, none of whom lived in tipis and many of whom had skin lighter than her own, and this confused her.

Zelia as a Mexican girl has such stereotypes towards the Indians. This implies about the extent of misunderstanding between Indians and the western world.

Quote 3.3

Used the prairie nigger word for Indians. Thought it was funny. Had a mistress in Dead Eye... Said the Sun Dance was a form of devil worship. That's Yeltow. Oh, and he's all tanned up. Vain about his looks.

Yeltow is a representation of most of the US governors and their attitudes towards the indigenous issue: seem to care a lot, but disdain them at the back. This is one major factor that contributes to the disharmony between the indigenous and the western.

Quote 4.1

Children of incest, molestation, rape, adultery, fornication beyond reservation boundaries or within, children of white farmers, bankers, nuns, BIA superintendents, police, and priests.

Sexual exploitation and the chaos exists for long. There are cases everywhere. Also the inclusiveness of the reservation.

Quote 4.2

Would it help if we had a woman? To talk?

The agent is aware of the issue. He realizes that it is hard for him to empathize.

Quote 4.3

There's no he. It's just you, baby. Lemme go. The crack of a slap, a cry. Don't. Please. Joe's out there.

Strong and independent as Sonja seems, she is experiencing violence from Whitey. She is one of the victims in this male dominant society.

Quote 5.2

Anything but go back upstairs, into the bedroom. My father said it was important I be there so that she couldn't deny it.

The family relationship is worse than ever. Everyone seems to resent and love each other at the same time. Bazil is forcing both Joe and Geraldine to do things they don't want to. He is helping himself rather than caring for his family.

Quote 7.1

my father remembered that of course an Ojibwe person's clan meant everything at one time and no one didn't have a clan, thus you knew your place in the world and your relationship to all other beings.

Erdrich is using Basil's mouth to educate the readers about the traditions in Ojibwe.

Quote 7.2

But there are also stories told from the earliest histories of western civilization of humans rescued by animals.

Erdrich finds a common ground between the indigenous culture and the western one, as they share similar stories. The fact that the stories may originate from Ancient Greek, the start of western civilization, emphasizes that.

CHAPTER NINE: THE BIG GOOD-BYE

Synopsis.

It is Mooshum's birthday. Mooshum was born as Méris, and later adopted by the Chippewa community. In the party, Grandma Ignatia talks about her former lovers. When Mooshum tries to blow out the candles on the cake, it catches fire.

Except this drama, Joe feels safe and good for the first time since the accident. He learns that Linden was the attacker, and may be able to get out. At night, Joe hears Mooshum's story. Under buffalo woman's guidance, Nanapush built the round house, where Chippewa community was formed.

The next day, Sonja comes to the house to give a "grown-up gift" for Mooshum. Joe blackmails Sonja to let him stay. After the performance, Sonja is angry with Joe despite his apologies. Sonja tells him her story as a stripe dancer and all the sexual exploitation and violence she went through.

Joe goes to Cappy's house only to find him depressed for Zelia's leave. At home, Geraldine is screaming again. Seeing Joe furious, Bazil uses a moldy casserole and silverware to illustrate the Indian law that framed Native people as inferior savages.

Later the boys go to church, where Cappy decides to confess and ended up chased by Father Travis because his having sex with Zelia in the church. At Clemence's house, Mooshum tells them about Liver-eating Johnson, and then says Sonja has left. Overwhelmed, Joe tells Cappy about the money and finds that Sonja left him some.

Quote 1.1

Everything we do, no matter how trivial, must be crafted keenly. We are trying to build a solid base here for our sovereignty. We try to press against the boundaries of what we are allowed...

This is the state of tribal law, and why he feels his role matters. After this, Joe also seems to have a better understanding of his father and his work. This may also be a direct reason for Joe to choose the same path as his father.

Quote 4.1

I don't keep the tassel in a special box or anything—any more.

Juxtaposition of laughter and the reality. The interior world of two people, Joe and Sonja, got revealed, and their fantasy images of each other have changed.

Quote 4.2

You're crying, aren't you? Cry all you want, Joe. Lots of men cry after they do something nasty to a woman... I thought of you like my son. But you just turned into another piece a shit guy. Another gimme-gimme asshole, Joe. That's all you are.

In saying this, Sonja compares Joe with the men who mistreated Sonja, disputing his manipulative nature and objectification of women.

Quote 2.1

For sure. Then after, we got into the church basement. We did it a couple of more times there.

The fact that Cappy chooses to do it in the church may imply the disdain and even hatred on church.

Symbol 3.1 (The Round House)

Quote 3.1

I lay awake thinking of the place on the hill, the holy wind in the grass, and how the structure had cried out to me. I could see a part of something larger, an idea, a truth, but just a fragment. I could not see the whole, but just a shadow of that way of life.

This is Joe's description of the round house after listening to Mooshum's story of it. He sees the round house as a holy and sacred place with power and energy. The fact that this is a meeting place for religious ceremonies is important in reminding Joe what it represents. "something larger" may refer to the culture and tradition from which he was brought up. At the same time, the round house is a symbol for revolt against colonization. It is based on the woman buffalo, who is dead because of the oppression from colonization. The round house is built also as a symbol where justice can be sought.

Moreover, by saying “cried out,” Joe seems to be drawing a parallel between the round house and Geraldine. Geraldine being violated in a sacred land like this is a proof of the violence and oppression of settlers to the Indians from past to present.

CHAPTER TEN: SKIN OF EVIL

Synopsis.

Linden is back. When Joe and Bazil go to the grocery store, they meet and beat Linden there. Bazil has a heart attack and is sent to the hospital. Capper tells Joe later that his family beat Linden. During diner, Geraldine explicitly says Linden as a wiindigoo and would stop him. This disturbs Joe for a long time. He turns to Father Travis. Because Father doesn't teach Joe shooting, Cappy asks to help. Joe buys ammo and gets information about Linden from Linda. Then he steals a riffle from Doe at the powwow regalia, feeling intensely guilty, especially when Doe informs them about this the next day.

The next week, Joe gets up early and wait near the golf course. He eats and sleeps and wait, ecstatic when a day passes without Linden showing up.

On Thursday it finally happened. Joe didn't focus well, but Cappy appears and kills Linden, even though Joe didn't tell him the plan and wanted to do all this alone.

Quote 3.1

For real food our people had traveled off reservation twenty miles or more to put our money in the pockets of store clerks who watched us with suspicion and took our money with contempt.

“suspicion” and “contempt” show the discrimination of Indians in the settlers’ economy. Using grocery such a tiny yet essential part of life as an example, Erdrich shows how Indians are excluded by the mainstream.

Quote 7.1

Every time there is an evil, much good comes of it

Father Travis is preaching to Joe, and he must be very aware of the reason Joe comes to him. He might even notice that Joe is doing the exact opposite. This further makes Joe doubt whether his choice is justifiable in any belief system. Rarely in the book, he is caught between catholicism and indigenous tradition.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: THE CHILD

Synopsis.

Joe and Cappy hide the riffle at Linda's house. Wanting to drink, the boys go to Whitey's gas station. Joe feels sick and vomits but pretends he has the summer flu. They have the whole bottle and fall asleep.

Going back home, Joe pretends nothing has happened. During the police investigation, Joe contracts the flu and worries about becoming a wiindigoo himself. After getting better, Joe goes to Linda's. After eating, Linda believes the evil in Linden and tells Joe that the riffle has been destroyed.

The boys plan to go find Zelia together because Zelia's family found out about the relationship and attempted to end it. Back home, Bazil affirms the correctness of killing Linden and identifies him as a wiindigoo. Joe has several nightmares the next few days and shouts out Cappy during sleep. Finally, Joe asks Bugger what he saw. It turns out that Bugger saw Mayla in the construction site, dead. Regretted, Joe finds Cappy, and prepares to go find Zelia.

Joe is jolted awake when the car accident happens. Cappy is dead, and Joe cries out. Geraldine and Bazil come to drive him home. On the way, they pass by the cafe that they used to go often "in a sweep of sorrow that would persist into small forever."

Quote 1.1

I looked at the books as if they could help us. But we had moved way far past books now into the stories Mooshum told in his sleep.

Bazil's comment that Linden's murder is wiindigoo justice makes Joe think about all the books on Bazil's bookshelf. Joe decides that he is now beyond the reach of the books. Mooshum's stories seems to suggest that the books, which are primarily written in the white European or American tradition, do not touch on Joe's own experience anymore, which is so rooted in a cultural context outside of the white American norm.

Quote.

In all those miles... I cannot remember speaking and I cannot remember my mother or my father speaking. I knew that they knew everything. The sentence was to endure... I do remember, though, the familiar sight of the roadside café just before we would cross the reservation line. On every one of my childhood trips that place was always a stop for ice cream, coffee and a newspaper, pie... But we did not stop this time. We passed over in a sweep of sorrow that would persist into our small forever. We just kept going.

This quote ends the final chapter of the novel.

Joe's memory of the drive home is utterly silent, creating a grieving atmosphere where the tragedy has stopped them to think or speak. Joe realizes that his parents know that Joe and Cappy killed Linden. When Joe says that "the sentence was to endure," he implies that his punishment, even though could not be punished from the legal system, is a spiritual obligation that accompanies him all his life. And he needs to do so in the absence of Cappy, with the shame and guilt for he has done. The fact that they do not stop by the cafe symbolizes that Joe has departed fully from his childhood innocence. By saying "a sweep of sorrow that would persist into small forever," Joe suggests that even though he tried hard to restore his former careless life by helping Geraldine and even killing Linden, Joe has finally accepted with Cappy's death that he can not undo the miseries he and his family have gone through.