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Elucidating Abstract Concepts and Complexity in Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine* through Metaphors of Quilts and Quilt Making

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> *Women's traditional occupations, their arts and crafts, and their literature and philosophies are more often accretive than linear, more achronological than chronological, and more dependent on harmonious relationships of all elements within a field of perception than western culture in general is thought to be. Indeed, the patchwork quilt is the best material example I can think of to describe the plot and process of a traditional tribal narrative, and quilting is a non-Indian woman's art, one that Indian women have taken to avidly and that they display in their ceremonies, rituals, and social gatherings as well as in their homes.*
>
> —Paula Gunn Allen

In Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine*, when Nanapush thinks about his future death and burial he instructs Lulu, "So when my time comes, you and your mother should drag me off, wrap me up in quilts. Sing my songs and then bury me high in a tree."[1] Quilts have become a part of American Indian culture, and they are mentioned and even highlighted in certain works of contemporary Native American literature. For example, in her novel *Ceremony*, Leslie Marmon Silko writes of "the old quilt" that Tayo's mother provides for him while he sleeps on the earth.[2] In *Reservation Blues,* Sherman Alexie describes how Thomas Builds-the-Fire wraps Robert Johnson's guitar "in a beautiful quilt" and gives "it a place of honor in his living room."[3] In Thomas King's *Truth and Bright Water*, Tecumseh's mother Helen works on a quilt that becomes less "geometric" and more "freehand" as she experiences disappointment and frustration in life.[4] The quilt becomes progressively

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unusual and strange as she attaches objects to it such as chicken feet, hair, porcupine quills, earrings, needles, fishhooks, and razor blades.

Certain questions can be posed in regard to the inclusion of quilt references in contemporary American Indian novels. Do the quilts and the making of quilts have some type of metaphorical function in the texts? Is it possible for more complex concepts to be articulated and understood better through a tangible, concrete household item such as a quilt? How might a patchwork textile such as a quilt, which is essentially a non-Native art enthusiastically embraced by Native peoples, function as a mediator between white and indigenous cultures? Can the concept of a quilt help the reader better understand the novel's structure? In this article, I address such questions by focusing on the novel *Love Medicine*, and I demonstrate that the quilts in the narrative can be incorporated into metaphors that help elucidate more abstract ideas, such as wholeness. I also show how the notion of a patchwork quilt, with its often-disparate parts, can illuminate the concept of a mixed blood and further clarify the novel's structure and complexity.[5]

QUILT MAKING AMONG NORTH AMERICAN INDIANS

To begin, it is important to present a brief history of quilt making among Native peoples in North America. Certainly the making of arts and crafts, particularly those that were included in everyday life in a functional manner, existed for hundreds and even thousands of years among North American Indians. Basketry, pottery, leather tanning, weaving, dyeing, embroidery, quillwork, featherwork, and jewelry making all took place before contact with Europeans. Native inhabitants used the resources available in the particular areas in which they lived. Indians in the Southwest constructed sandals from braided yucca and agave fibers.[6] The Inuit made waterproof coats for fishermen using various parts, such as intestines and bladders, from sea animals.[7] Many indigenous peoples used fibers and dyes made from local plants to make baskets.

As Europeans began to arrive in the New World in the late fifteenth century, an exchange eventually occurred that greatly influenced American Indians.[8] They not only drew on resources from their own environment but also now had access to goods and customs from other lands. As time progressed, Native peoples began to incorporate some European commodities and ways into their own lifestyles. For example, the Huron, who lived in the Northeast, decorated their moccasins with porcupine quills prior to contact. Once Europeans introduced them to items such as glass beads, buttons, and ribbons, they began to replace the quills in their attire with some of these imported items.[9] In addition, Navajo weavers started to use wool from sheep brought by the Spaniards. By the eighteenth century's end, these women had become extremely skilled and proficient at their craft. The Spanish governor of New Mexico, Fernando de Chacon, said that they worked "their wool with more delicacy and taste than the Spaniards."[10]

Moreover, in times of winter and cold, and prior to European contact, American Indians made blankets and robes from various animal skins.

According to Carrie A. Lyford, the Chippewa connected rabbit skins "edge to edge" to form a large blanket (in which the side with fur was used close to the body).[11] This technique was an early type of patchwork that preceded the making of quilts created from various remnants of fabric. The Chippewa employed another method to make large, thick robes. Lyford writes that "rabbit skin robes two inches thick and six feet square were made by sewing together full-length braids, each braid consisting of four three-inch strands of skin."[12] In this case, as well, the piecing together of certain parts to make a whole preceded the making of patchwork quilts of cloth.[13]

It is believed that quilts and quilt making could have been introduced to Native inhabitants as early as the late eighteenth century as people from other cultures, particularly Europeans, settled in North America. Quilting, as taught through mission churches and schools, began to flourish in certain Native communities during the nineteenth century.[14] The skill was passed on to Native peoples for practical reasons and to promulgate Christianity. American Indians learned to piece together scraps from old clothes, flour sacks, and other used items and to incorporate colorful calico fabrics in their creations. Quilting evolved into a means of artistic expression, and quilts eventually replaced traditional crafts such as buffalo robes and blankets made of rabbit skin, wool, cotton, fur, and bark cloth.[15] Throughout the past decades, quilting has become a prominent pastime in many American Indian communities.

Although today Native and non-Native quilt makers use similar techniques and materials, American Indians often integrate colors and symbols that are significant to tribal culture. (See, for example, Karen Tootsie, a Hopi, displaying her quilt that includes Navajo sandpainting designs in figure 1.)[16] They also incorporate quilts into their daily routines and rituals. Marsha L. MacDowell writes that the Potawatomi employ quilts and rope in the construction of hammocks for young babies; the Hopi create bedrolls with quilts for sleeping outdoors; the Assiniboine utilize quilts to record their traditions and history; and the Chippewa feature them in fundraising activities. Quilts are used in naming ceremonies, at sweat lodges, and during powwows.[17] Quilt making among Native peoples provides not only an object that is functional but also one that includes artistic, cultural, and metaphorical expression.

THEORIES OF METAPHOR

Although there are a variety of schools of thought in relation to metaphor, for the purposes of this article I deal with the cognitive linguistic approach as outlined by certain scholars. In their seminal book *Metaphors We Live By*, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson write that metaphors are not limited to skilled authors who brilliantly deal with words but are incorporated every day by ordinary people.[18] They point out that a metaphor is not just an exclusive figure of speech but also is actually an inherent element in regular daily thought and expression. Lakoff and Johnson argue that metaphors are frequently more powerful when the two entities compared are dissimilar rather than similar. So although a more traditional view of metaphor can

Figure 1. *Karen Tootsie and her* Navajo Sandpainting *quilt. Keams Canyon, Arizona, 2006. Photo by Deborah Fillerup Weagel. All rights reserved.*

be traced back to Aristotle and has been taught for centuries, a number of scholars have embraced the more recent cognitive linguistic outlook on the subject.[19]

In his article "The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor," Lakoff claims that metaphor is found in the manner in which a person can "conceptualize one mental domain in terms of another."[20] Zoltán Kövecses provides a model for expressing the cognitive linguistic view of metaphor, which is "Conceptual Domain (A) is Conceptual Domain (B)." He writes, "The conceptual domain from which we draw metaphorical expressions to understand another conceptual domain is called *source domain*, while the conceptual domain that is understood this way is the *target domain*."[21] Thus, in the metaphor "wholeness is a patchwork quilt," *wholeness* is a target domain, and *patchwork quilt* is a source domain. It is through the concept of a material, pieced quilt, that we better understand the more abstract idea of wholeness.

Furthermore, in his essay "Extended Metaphor—A Text-World Account," Paul Werth writes that metaphor in literature is often analyzed at a sentence level. He suggests, however, that a metaphor can actually extend through an entire text, often by means of shorter, single metaphors. He presents the idea of "extended" or "megametaphors" that can become salient as the result of the accumulation of "single" or "micrometaphors."[22] So a conceptual metaphor such as "a mixed blood is a patchwork quilt" can apply to a passage, section, or even an entire text. Furthermore, a variety of micrometaphors associated with the idea that "a mixed blood is a patchwork quilt" can form a megametaphor that deals with the same conceptual association.

My examination of quilt metaphors in Erdrich's *Love Medicine* proposes that in the model "Target Domain A is Source Domain B," a patchwork quilt can be a source domain for a variety of target domains, such as wholeness, mixed blood, and text. The quilt as a source domain can help illuminate certain target domains, and by analyzing the quilt in literature in this manner, multiple dimensions and viewpoints are possible. A variety of different megametaphors associated with patchwork quilts can be discussed in relation to Erdrich's text.[23] However, for the purposes of this article, I present only three: "wholeness is a patchwork quilt," "a mixed blood is a patchwork quilt," and "a text is a patchwork quilt." In these particular metaphors, patchwork quilt as a source domain further elucidates the target domains of wholeness, mixed blood, and text.

WHOLENESS IS A PATCHWORK QUILT

The notion that a certain unity can comprise a variety of fragments is further emphasized with the metaphor "wholeness is a patchwork quilt." Additional details make the metaphor more specific to the text: "Wholeness in Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine* is a patchwork quilt." This megametaphor not only permeates Erdrich's text, but also reflects an American Indian perspective in general. Part of achieving balance and harmony, or wholeness, in life involves a connection to other elements in the world and universe. The Ojibwa believe that the orders of creation are as follows: earth, plants, animals, and humans.

To them, as explained in Basil Johnston's *Ojibway Heritage,* these parts are so interconnected that they make one whole, and they depend on each other for completion. Each segment "derives its meaning from and fulfils its function and purpose within the context of the whole creation."[24] In like manner, a patchwork quilt comprises a variety of parts that come together to form a unified whole. No piece exists independently of the others, and each fragment relies on the others for a sense of function and completion. A single remnant, for example, cannot provide the warmth, beauty, or symbolism that can be found in an entire quilt.

This sense of oneness or wholeness can be found in numerous passages in Erdrich's *Love Medicine.* In one scene, for example, Nector Kashpaw expresses a particular sensitivity to animals and humans with whom he shares existence in the world. The day he meets Marie Lazarre running away from Sacred Heart Convent, he carries two dead geese and reflects on his own attitude toward animals: "There are some times . . . checking the trapline, I find a wounded animal that hasn't died well, or, worse, it's still living, so that I have to put it out of its misery. Sometimes it's just a big bird I only winged. When I do what I have to do, my throat swells closed sometimes" (66–67). He explains further, "I touch the suffering bodies like they were killed saints I should handle with gentle reverence." This tenderness is not limited to wounded animals; it also extends to Marie, a fellow human being who has been injured at the convent. Nector says, in reference to the way he carefully handles hurt animals, "This is how I take Marie's hand. This is how I hold her wounded hand in my hand" (67). The constituent connections of man to animal, man to woman, and man to earth (or any of a variety of combinations) help form a wholeness that correlates with the unity of a patchwork quilt made up of various pieces of fabric.

Part of achieving balance and harmony, or wholeness, in life also involves an awareness of various natural cycles. Native peoples approach life from a communal, rather than an individual, point of view. They think in a cyclical rather than linear manner and recognize that various cycles establish both order and wholeness in life.[25] Black Elk, an Oglala Sioux, taught that

> everything an Indian does is in a circle . . . because the Power of the World always works in circles. . . . The sky is round . . . and so are all the stars. The wind, in its greatest power whirls. Birds make their nests in circles, for theirs is the same religion as ours. The sun comes forth and goes down again in a circle. The moon does the same, and both are round. Even the seasons form a great circle in their changing, and always come back again to where they were. The life of a man is a circle from childhood to childhood and so it is in everything where power moves.[26]

The Ojibwa, who separate day into three parts, sunrise (morning), noon, and afternoon (concluding at sunset), recognize such cycles. Night also comprises three segments, including evening, midnight, and dawn, thus ending at the beginning.[27] Many tribes follow a twenty-eight-day cycle for each month or

moon.[28] The Objibwa also recognize four distinct times of the year: spring, which is the season for gathering sap; summer, the season of abundance; autumn, a time of fading; and winter, the season of very cold and freezing weather.[29] These remnants combine together to form a unified whole that can be associated with a multicolored patchwork quilt comprised of parts that depend on each other for harmony and completion.

Cycles, seasons, and times are also symbolized in the four directions east, south, west, and north, which are important divisions in many tribal communities. According to the Ojibwa, Kitche Manitou created Waubun (east or morning), Zhawano (south), Ningobianong (west or evening), and Keewatin (north).[30] He then sent each being to a specific space or quarter on the earth where they had cordial relations and existed together in peace. The Chippewa find specific meaning and relationships with these four parts of the world. They affiliate east with the rising sun, creation, birth, knowledge, and spring. South continues the cycle and is connected with midday, the process of maturing, understanding, and summer. West is the direction of sunset at day's end, when light turns to darkness, and represents the change of life to eventual death. It is likened to middle age, maturity, insight, and autumn. North relates to midnight, snow, purity, old age, dreams, wisdom, and winter.[31] These four directions all intertwine to form a complete cycle that correlates with quilts as they are used from day to day and from season to season.

A patchwork quilt Marie puts on her sleeping son Gordie evokes associations with all four directions. It coincides with the east, because when Gordie comes home and is covered with the quilt, the sun is rising and "pushing over the spines and arms of trees in their gold and rust." The quilt aligns with the south, in that it shelters Gordie who is a maturing man. It connects to the west, because Marie wakes very early that day to can peaches and tomatoes, "boil down" chokecherries, pound venison, and preserve "two bushels of ripe corn," which suggests that it is autumn or nearing autumn, a time of harvest. In addition, it is a "cool" day that requires the protection of a quilt (260–61). The patchwork covering also links to the north, in that both Marie and Gordie sleep, and Marie, the quilt maker, dreams.[32]

Other quilts mentioned in *Love Medicine* refer to cycles of life. When she goes into labor at home, Marie watches "the breath" of her "children rise into the freezing air" as they sleep under their quilts (100). During the time that June Morrissey lives with Eli Kashpaw, she sleeps "on the cot beside the stove" and appears to be "a lump beneath the quilts and army blankets" (214). The use of the quilts that cover the sleeping children and June correspond to the cycle of day and night, the sun's rising and setting, as well as to the colder seasons that require greater warmth and protection of quilts. In addition, the quilts Nanapush requests to be buried in when he dies are significant in terms of the cycle of life and death. Thus, wholeness is achieved by connecting to the cycles and seasons that exist in the universe and by piecing the individual directions of east, south, west, and north together into one construct. The unified fragments of a patchwork quilt correlate with this wholeness.

A MIXED BLOOD IS A PATCHWORK QUILT

Another important megametaphor invoked by the novel is "a mixed blood is a patchwork quilt," or, to be more precise, "a mixed blood in Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine* is a patchwork quilt." It is not uncommon for American Indians to descend from a mixed parentage that includes Native and white influences. Erdrich and many other Native authors have a mixed-blood heritage that plays a significant role in their writing. A native of Minnesota, Erdrich's ancestry is German, French, and Chippewa, and she belongs to the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians. In *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel*, Louis Owens observes: "In her novels, Erdrich draws upon both her mother's Chippewa heritage and her experiences as the daughter of a Euramerican growing up in middle America. Both the wild reservation bushland and the weathered edge of the North Dakota prairie permeate her novels, stamping their character upon Indian and non-Indian alike."[33] The various fragments of Indian and non-Indian cultures and influences that are so prevalent in *Love Medicine* form a complex, multifaceted patchwork quilt similar to Erdrich's mixed-blood heritage.

One salient character in the novel is Marie, a mixed-blood woman who lives and struggles to survive in a blended society and who makes quilts. It is apparent that Marie is not wealthy and must scrimp and save to make ends meet. She says: "I was saving cream to sell in those days, trying to make butter, *piecing quilts*, sewing other people's clothes, beading dance outfits, whatever I could do to get by without Nector. I even tried to sell our cats, our kittens, and dried teas and berries we picked" (97, my emphasis). She quilts not only for her own family but also sews quilts for others in return for some kind of payment that helps the family survive.

One of Marie's quilts, the one discussed earlier that covered Gordie, is a patchwork quilt made from old clothes and blankets. The quilt is brown and mustard yellow with shades of green. It contains remnants from "the first coat she had bought Gordie, a faint tough gray patch, and the blanket he had brought home from the army. There was the plaid of her husband's jacket. A thick skirt. A baby blanket half turned to lace by summer moths. Two old blue pants legs." Marie's quilt seems to be more functional than beautiful, and the layers are tied rather than hand stitched together. Erdrich writes: "Each square was tacked down with a knotted piece of yarn" (261). The technique of tying a quilt in this fashion requires much less time and effort than that of hand stitching the layers together. So Marie's purpose seems to have been to create a warm quilt in an efficient manner for domestic use.

The quilt, however, is not just functional; it is also a metaphor of the mixed-blood parentage so common in the society in which Marie and her family live. The quilt is created not only from clothes worn by family members but also includes part of the blanket Gordie received in the army, which is very much affiliated with the white world. The quilt's various patches can be associated with both cultures, which not only are placed side by side but also are meshed into one to form a complex, mixed-blood whole. In the hybrid society one finds modern conveniences such as cars, trucks, and televisions as well as

"a leaky boat made of bull hide" and "a mud-chink bachelor shack" (76, 91).[34] Fry bread is served along with hot dogs and canned soda pop. In an interview with Joseph Bruchac, Erdrich states: "People who aren't familiar with Indians go out to visit and they can't believe that there's somebody sitting in a lawn chair who's an Indian. It's kind of incomprehensible that there's this ability to take in non-Indian culture and be comfortable in both worlds."[35]

There are many examples in the novel that depict the juxtaposition of pieces of American Indian and white lifestyles and cultures. Some American Indian–oriented fragments include "a bow and my arrow" (32), "Indian time" (71), "*Kaween onjidah*" (80), "Chippewa politics" (136), "powwow" (183), "old language" (263), "clans and families" (308), "cradle boards" (310), "Indian hunting grounds" (327), and "pipes of kinnikinnick" (341).[36] These remnants of American Indian traditions are connected to pieces of white culture and influence, such as "Silverado pickup" (3), "picture of Saint Francis" (55), "*Je ne peux pas voir*" (58), "Hollywood" (122), "color TV set" (186), "government promises" (188), "government housing" (216), "Bureau of Indian Affairs" (300), "U-Haul rental vans" (306), and "commodity flour" (333).[37] Fragments of both cultures are part of a mixed blood's experience and can be pieced together in a textile such as Marie's patchwork quilt or even the verbal quilt seen in figure 2.

Homi Bhabha discusses the concept of a third space, or blended space, in his book *The Location of Culture*. He writes of African American artist Renée Green who explores a physical space that disbands traditional binaries such as black/white and self/other.[38] He says that rather than being limited solely to the gallery, Green creates a metaphor that uses the entire museum. According to her, the attic, which is associated with "higher" and "heaven," is juxtaposed with the boiler room, which corresponds with "lower" and "hell."[39] The stairwell becomes a type of medial space that connects higher and lower, heaven and hell, and black and white. Due to the upward and downward movement that takes place in the stairwell, traditional binaries become less polarized and more integrated so that a type of hybridity can occur.[40] A patchwork quilt can be associated with this in-between space in its ability to interconnect remnants from certain binaries, such as Native/white, in such a way that there are no specific hierarchies. A pieced textile has the potential to act, in a sense, as a mediator between both worlds, as is found in Marie's quilt and in the verbal quilt in figure 2.

A TEXT IS A PATCHWORK QUILT

Another metaphor that can be associated with Erdrich's novel is "a text is a patchwork quilt," or more specifically: "Louise Erdrich's novel *Love Medicine* is a patchwork quilt." In this metaphor, patchwork quilt becomes the source domain that helps emphasize the text's fragmented quality, which can be viewed as a composite novel. The pieced quilt's concept highlights the lack of a single focal point in the narrative through the use of multiple characters and stories. Peter G. Beidler writes that because the novel is "constructed of a number of short stories, it is almost impossible to give a meaningful plot

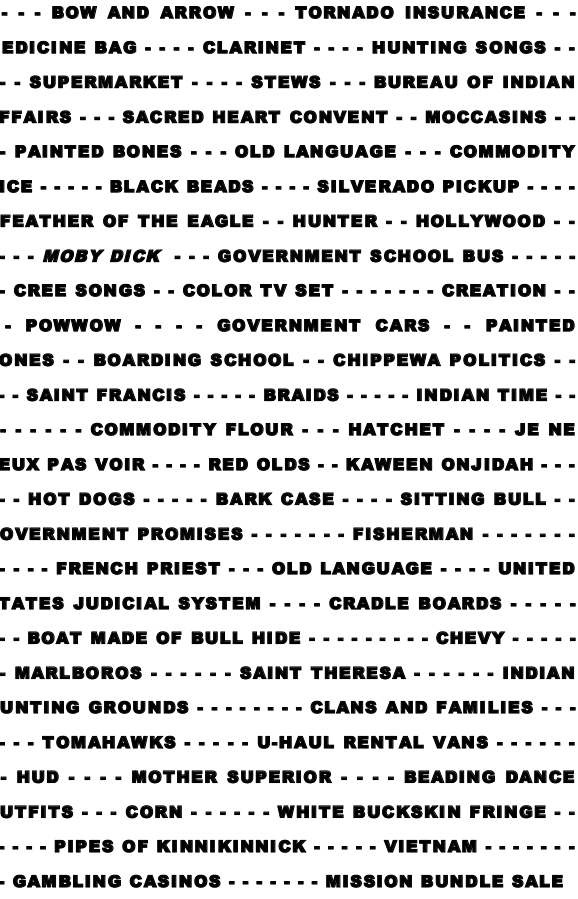

Figure 2. Mixed Blood Verbal Quilt*, by Deborah Fillerup Weagel. Based on passages from Louise Erdrich's* Love Medicine.

summary of the whole."[41] Erdrich skillfully brings together a variety of disparate remnants to create this patchwork novel in a similar way that Hopi quilt maker Edison Tootsie constructed his Nine Patch quilt seen in figure 3, which has no main central focus or climactic point.[42]

Claire Crabtree describes the patchwork nature of Erdrich's text and asserts that the ultimate goal is to obtain a wholeness or oneness (as in a finished quilt). She writes of the cyclic, nonchronological structure, the focus on multiple characters rather than a main protagonist, and the presentation of many stories rather than one main tale, and points out that there is both a sense of disunity and unity with the overall objective of "redemptive oneness." She reasons that even though the structure of the novel includes both a sense of fragmentation and wholeness, "the ultimate theme of the

FIGURE 3. *Edison Tootsie and his* Nine Patch *quilt. Keams Canyon, Arizona, 2006. Photo by Deborah Fillerup Weagel. All rights reserved.*

novel is not the disruption of the characters' lives, but the redemptive oneness which reconciles painful polarities and dissolves alienation."[43] The text as a patchwork quilt is a third space where certain binaries can be disrupted and then brought together into a harmonious whole. The act of quilt making, which frequently includes ripping, tearing, or cutting apart articles of clothing, fabric, and/or other items, can be associated with the dissolution of various binaries. The subsequent gathering, arranging, and connecting of fragments into one integrated unit, or quilt, can be affiliated with the former binaries successfully blending into one unified, nonhierarchical space with the result of "redemptive oneness."

References to fragmentation in the text further underscore its patchwork quality, as can be seen in the following passages: "horse-trading with the government for bits and shreds" (19), "shreds of talk" (30), "every scrap of Latin" (51), "a shred of devotion" (52), "a scrap of Indian blood" (240), "sweat had darkened patches on his workshirt" (284), and "sad gray patch of space" (348). In these few excerpts, some references are specific to American Indian culture, such as "horse-trading" and "Indian blood," as well as to white culture, such as "Latin" and "devotion" in relation to Catholicism. There are also passages that single out the concept of the fragmented female, such as "she never stops moving long enough for me to see her all in a piece" (62), "I scrubbed the pitiful scraps of her" (87), and "I am a woman of detachable parts" (115). Erdrich utilizes the micrometaphor "connecting threads of power," which is significant because the quilt maker uses thread to connect the fragments of a pieced quilt, and there is a certain power in the creative act of arranging, manipulating, and organizing raw materials (341). She meticulously combines these references or remnants with many others to form her unified work, and the micrometaphors collectively support the megametaphor that Erdrich's novel is a patchwork quilt.

This concept of piecing fragments in a text also correlates with the manner in which American Indians view the world as an interconnected whole. Unlike the perspective found in western, male-dominated culture, which often tends to have a centered focus, Native peoples view the world from a more inclusive point of view. In *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions*, Paula Gunn Allen points out that with an inclusive-field perception the various elements involved have equal value without any one part receiving more importance than another. Thus, all elements are in the foreground, and, as a narrative unfolds, each part receives attention until all the main points have been presented.[44] The manner in which a tribal narrative includes multiple areas of interest rather than one singular climax can be connected with the construction of many patchwork quilts.[45]

Allen also explains that there are strong similarities between a Native perspective, which includes a sense of multiplicity, and women's culture. To consider these ideas about Native narratives in relation to women's writing, we can turn to Elaine Showalter who discusses how piecing quilts and writing texts are associated. In her article "Piecing and Writing" she says, "In literary theories of a Female Aesthetic, the metaphor of piecing has been used as a model for the organization of language in the wild zone of the woman's text."[46] She cites

Rachel Blau DuPlessis, who argues that piecing in women's writing becomes "nonhierarchic . . . breaking hierarchical structures, making an even display of elements over the surface with no climactic place or moment, having the materials organized into many centers."[47] This quality of avoiding traditional masculinist Western binaries and hierarchies and including a multiplicity of ideas, themes, and stories correlates with the balanced field perception of Native narratives. Indigenous narratives, women's writing, and patchwork quilts, with their frequent emphasis on multiple points, all present a nonhierarchical field of perception that includes the voices of women and men.[48]

A variety of North American women writers have pieced together texts that implement a nonhierarchic, quiltlike structure. For example, in *Beloved* Toni Morrison not only makes references to quilts but also constructs the novel in the manner a quilt maker creates a patchwork quilt.[49] Sunny Falling-rain relates the novel to a crazy quilt, in which remnants are joined together in a random fashion.[50] Cathy Peppers concurs with Falling-rain in regard to the text's pieced, nonlinear nature and adds that *Beloved* "is a patchwork of scraps of memory that contains remnants of lived, bodily experience."[51] She also points out that the fragments are held together and unified through themes, repeating voices, and other elements. Morrison is one of a variety of women writers who have incorporated quilting themes, metaphors, and structures in their work, including Alice Walker, Eudora Welty, Whitney Otto, Margaret Atwood, and Bharati Mukherjee (to name a few).[52]

Many of these authors construct their prose in a particular novel by piecing together fragments in a nonlinear manner as does Erdrich in *Love Medicine*. The concept of scraps or fragments existing in the structure of her text correlates with the creation of a pieced quilt, which is made of remnants and can be connected to cyclical patterns (for example, day and night, the four seasons, life and death). Catherine Rainwater observes that *Love Medicine* follows a cyclical structure in which it begins in the 1980s, passes through former decades, and then returns to the 1980s. She explains that "through this organization, Erdrich's text suggests that the meanings of events and conditions in the present moment lie *piecemeal* in the endless round of time."[53] The characters, stories, and events that appear in the novel are stitched together into one whole, a patchwork quilt with multiple parts, harmonious relationships (even of disparate pieces), and nonlinear and nonhierarchical construction.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, these metaphors are effective because quilts are a common household item in the lives of many North Americans, both Native and white, and are concrete objects that they know, relate to, and understand. Thus, the concept of a material, physical quilt can be used as a source domain to help an individual better understand an abstract idea, such as wholeness, which includes a respect for and dependence on the universe's various parts (earth, plants, animals, humans, seasons, cycles). It also aids a person in relating to a type of third space that juxtaposes Native culture with white culture, ideally

in a nonhierarchical way. Finally, the patchwork quilt assists the reader in better appreciating the text's actual structure in which multiple characters (who frequently use the first-person "I"), a variety of intertwined stories, and a cyclical treatment of time all combine to form a complete and whole narrative. Drawing on the proclivity of American Indians toward crafts in general, their eventual sense of fragmentation after European contact, and their continual efforts to understand personal identity in a mixed society today, metaphors of patchwork quilts and quilt making enhance a reading of this complex and multifarious novel.

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NOTES

Epigraph. Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 243.

1. Louise Erdrich, *Love Medicine* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1993), 71. Subsequent citations are included parenthetically in the text.

2. Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), 111.

3. Sherman Alexie, *Reservation Blues* (New York: Warner Books, 1995), 11.

4. Thomas King, *Truth and Bright Water* (New York: Grove Press, 1999), 61.

5. A patchwork quilt includes pieces of various fabrics that have been sewn together to form a larger whole. This creation is then usually quilted (stitched) or tied onto other layers (usually some type of batting or interior material and a backing that is made of fabric) to form a quilt. Not all quilts are made of patchwork.

6. Emory Dean Keoke and Kay Marie Porterfield, *Buildings, Clothing, and Art: American Indian Contributions to the World* (New York: Facts on File, 2005), 64.

7. Ibid., 58.

8. Timothy G. Roufs writes that white contact with the Ojibwa occurred in the early seventeenth century, about 1612. He points out that "European goods and traders frequently followed traditional Indian trade routes established long before the arrival of white men." See *The Anishinabe of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe* (Phoenix, AZ: Indian Tribal Series, 1975), 42.

9. Keoke and Porterfield, *Buildings, Clothing, and Art*, 62.

10. Quoted in ibid., 71.

11. Carrie A. Lyford, *The Crafts of the Ojibwa (Chippewa),* Indian Handcrafts 5 (US Office of Indian Affairs, Education Division, 1942), 101. Regarding the various names for the Chippewa, Gerald Vizenor writes: "In the language of the tribal past, the families of the woodland spoke of themselves as the Anishinaabeg until the colonists named them the Ojibway and Chippewa." See *The People Named the Chippewa: Narrative Histories* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 13.

12. Lyford, *Crafts of the Ojibwa (Chippewa)*, 101.

13. For additional methods used by the Chippewa to make rabbit skin blankets, see Frances Densmore, *Chippewa Customs* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1979), 161. To view the making of a rabbit skin blanket, see the videocassette *Rabbit Boss: The Survival of a Washoe Tradition* (Reno: University of Nevada Oral History Program, 1995).

14. Marsha L. MacDowell, "North American Indian and Native Hawaiian Quiltmaking," in *To Honor and Comfort: Native Quilting Traditions*, eds. Marsha L. MacDowell and C. Kurt Dewhurst (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press and Michigan State University Museum, 1997), 5.

15. Carolyn O'Bagy Davis, Guest Curator, "Native Quilters of the Southwest: Arizona, New Mexico, Utah and Colorado," Quilt Exhibit, Navajo Nation Museum, Window Rock, Arizona (8 September 2005–31 December 2005).

16. Karen Tootsie lives in Keams Canyon, Arizona, which is located near Window Rock, the Navajo Nation's capital.

17. MacDowell, "North American Indian and Native Hawaiian Quiltmaking," 4.

18. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By,* 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

19. See Aristotle, *Poetics* (London: Macmillan, 1895; repr., Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1997).

20. George Lakoff, "The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor," in *Metaphor and Thought,* 2nd ed., ed. Andrew Ortony (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 203.

21. Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 4, his emphasis.

22. Paul Werth, "Extended Metaphor—A Text-World Account," *Language and Literature* 3, no. 2 (1994): 79. See also Paul Werth's *Text Worlds: Representing Conceptual Space in Discourse* (Harlow, UK: Longman, 1999).

23. For other articles that deal with metaphor in Erdrich's novel, see Robert F. Gish, "Life into Death, Death into Life: Hunting as Metaphor and Motive in *Love Medicine*," in *The Chippewa Landscape of Louise Erdrich,* ed. Allan Chavkin (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999), 67–83 and Lissa Schneider, "*Love Medicine:* A Metaphor for Forgiveness," *SAIL* 4, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 1–13.

24. Basil Johnston, *Ojibway Heritage* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976; repr., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 21.

25. Donald L. Fixico, *The American Indian Mind in a Linear World: American Indian Studies and Traditional Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 94.

26. Quoted in ibid., 43.

27. Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby), *History of the Ojebway Indians: With Especial Reference to their Conversion to Christianity* (1861; repr., Freeport, NY: Libraries Press, 1970), 136.

28. Fixico, *American Indian Mind,* 43.

29. Jones, *History of the Ojebway Indians,* 135–36.

30. Johnston, *Ojibway Heritage,* 27.

31. Lisa Marie Corp, "A Brief History: The Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians," http://mailer.fsu.edu/~lcorp/native.html (accessed 23 September 2003).

32. For a discussion on the significance of dreams in Chippewa culture, see Densmore, *Chippewa Customs,* 78–86.

33. Louis Owens, *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992), 193.

34. In e-mail correspondence, Peter G. Beidler said that the mud-chinked shack in this novel "would have been a log cabin, the 'chinks' or spaces between the logs being filled with a mixture of mud and straw. When dry the mud mixture would have provided a strong and tight barrier against animals, insects, wind, and snow." He also explained that this was "almost certainly a basically Anglo cabin, with window, stove, logs, table, chairs, etc." He wrote that "the really original Ojibwe would probably have lived in a house made of birchbark over sticks or poles. But that would have been many years earlier. By 'now' even old-time Ojibwe used many white things like houses, clothes, hunting weapons, and cars." See e-mail correspondence of Peter G. Beidler to Deborah Weagel, 26 August 2007 and 29 August 2007.

35. Joseph Bruchac, "Whatever Is Really Yours: An Interview with Louise Erdrich," in *Conversations with Louise Erdrich and Michael Dorris*, eds. Allan Chavkin and Nancy Feyl Chavkin (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1994), 98.

36. According to Peter G. Beidler and Gay Barton, *kaween onjidah* means "not on purpose," and *kinnikinnick* is "bark-based tobacco." See Peter G. Beidler and Gay Barton, *A Reader's Guide to the Novels of Louise Erdrich*, rev. ed. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2006), 387.

37. *Je ne peux pas voir* means "I cannot see" (my translation).

38. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 3.

39. Quoted in ibid.

40. Ibid., 4.

41. Peter G. Beidler, "Study Guides to Eight Erdrich Novels," in *Approaches to Teaching the Works of Louise Erdrich*, eds. Greg Sarris, Connie A. Jacobs, and James R. Giles (New York: MLA, 2004), 231.

42. Hopi men sewed traditionally. In an interview I had with Edison Tootsie in Keams Canyon on 27 January 2006, he told me his father belonged to a men's quilting group. See also Carolyn O'Bagy Davis, *Hopi Quilting: Stitched Traditions from an Ancient Community* (Tucson, AZ: Sanpete Publications, 1997).

43. Claire Crabtree, "Salvific Oneness and the Fragmented Self in Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine*," in *Contemporary Native American Cultural Issues,* ed. Thomas E. Schirer (Sault Ste. Marie, MI: Lake Superior State University Press, 1988), 49.

44. Allen, *The Sacred Hoop*, 241.

45. Ibid., 243.

46. Elaine Showalter, "Piecing and Writing," in *The Poetics of Gender,* ed. Nancy K. Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 226.

47. Quoted in ibid., 226–27.

48. For further discussion on multiplicity in women's creative work, see Deborah Weagel, "Feminine Expression and the Power of Plurality," in *Interconnections: Essays on Music, Art, Literature, and Gender* (Kolkata, India: Writers Workshop, 2004), 93–115.

49. Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (London: Vintage, 1987).

50. Sunny Falling-rain, "A Literary Patchwork Crazy Quilt: Toni Morrison's *Beloved*," *Uncoverings: Research Papers of the American Quilt Study Group* 15 (1994): 112.

51. Cathy Peppers, "Fabricating a Reading of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* as a Quilt of Memory and Identity," in *Quilt Culture: Tracing the Pattern,* eds. Cheryl B. Torsney and Judy Elsley (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1994), 94.

52. See Priscilla Leder, "Alice Walker's American Quilt: *The Color Purple* and American Literary Tradition," in *Critical Essays on Alice Walker*, ed. Ikenna Dieke (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 141–51; Carol L. Scheidenhelm, "Patterns of the Individual: The Literary Quilts of Eudora Welty" (PhD diss., Northern Illinois University, 1993); Géraldine Chouard, "Patchwork, or the 'Pile-Up of Possibles,' in *How to Make an American Quilt*," *Mosiac: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature* 36, no. 2 (June 2003): 53–74; Jennifer Murray, "Historical Figures and Paradoxical Patterns: The Quilting Metaphor in Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace*," *Studies in Canadian Literature/Etudes en Littérature Canadienne* 26, no. 1 (2001): 65–83; Deborah Weagel, "The Metaphor of Quilts and Quiltmaking in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*," *South Asian Review* 27, no. 2 (2006): 219–34. Mukherjee was born in Calcutta (now Kolkata), India, but has lived in the United States many years and refers to herself as an American writer.

53. Catherine Rainwater, "Reading between Worlds: Narrativity in the Fiction of Louise Erdrich," in *Louise Erdrich's "Love Medicine": A Casebook*, ed. Hertha D. Sweet Wong (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 172, my emphasis. In writing of the novels of Erdrich, Connie A. Jacobs explains: "Stories do not end with their telling, but rather continue, transformed, in a circular manner, to link to other stories, to continue a new life in a new, never-ending life." See *The Novels of Louise Erdrich: Stories of Her People*, American Indian Studies 11 (New York: Lang, 2001), 14.

54. Deborah Weagel, "The Metaphor of the Quilt in Contemporary Asian Indian and American Indian Literature" (PhD diss., University of New Mexico, 2006).