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Author

Dyck, Reginald

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When Love Medicine Is Not Enough: Class Conflict and Work Culture on and off the Reservation

REGINALD DYCK

“If slavery made race, its larger purpose was to make class,” historian Ira Berlin argues, “and the fact that the two were made simultaneously by the same process has mystified both.”¹ The European and Euro-American conquest of Native American peoples and lands is analogous. Conquest did create a race; the English names—Indians, First Peoples, and Native Americans—are evidence. However, race was not the motivation for exploration and expropriation even if racism was a key enabling factor. Although the cultural consequences were devastating, the goal of that devastation was primarily economic: the acquisition of land. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn makes a similar claim when she states, “The oldest racism in America was about the economically motivated, government-sponsored theft of lands occupied by others.”²

With a similar focus on economics, Bill Mullen asserts that slave narratives such as Frederick Douglass’s are texts about social class, particularly the working class. He argues that “the value of Douglass’s economic analysis and critique is often obscured for literary critics by the phenomenon of its subjectivity.”³ I see a related pattern in interpretations of modern Native American literature. Critics have given more attention to identity and culture than economics and social relations. Without recognizing the structural hierarchies that shape Native Americans’ lives, critics who analyze identity in isolation can only develop “a reading bled dry of its most troubling and contradictory meanings.”⁴

A number of factors militate against the development of socioeconomic readings of Native American literature. Critics and teachers often share the dominant cultural ideology, which evades structural problems with individualistic rhetoric. Having found liberal humanism a satisfying standpoint

Reginald Dyck is a professor of English at Capital University in Columbus, Ohio. He has a pedagogical article forthcoming in *Studies in American Indian Literature* (Spring 2007).

from which to view the world, too often we have used critical approaches that give little recognition to characters' (or our own) socioeconomic situations. A consequence is the "nearly ubiquitous tendency to view economic activity as taking place in a separate and rarefied social location . . . removed from the forces of social and discursive construction."⁵ Specifically for Native American literary studies, traditional Native relations of production can seem so antithetical to capitalist economics as to be outside the realm of economic concerns altogether.⁶ This misunderstanding is fostered by conceptualizations that see economics as monolithically capitalist. Missed is the recognition that different economic or class relations can exist within the same context; traditional and capitalist relations of production can coexist.⁷ Without this understanding, economic relations and resulting class hierarchies can seem an irrelevant, foreign, or antithetical framework. This blindness can hamper the analysis of oppression as well as the development of resistance.

One cannot analyze economic relations and class hierarchies without considering the central role work plays for individuals and communities; this adds one more challenge. John Bellamy Foster notes in his introduction to Braverman's *Labor and Monopoly Capitalism*, "Work, in today's society, is a mystery. No other realm of social existence is so obscured in mist, so zealously concealed from view."⁸ A look at almost any newspaper, the business section in particular, will confirm how little attention work receives in spite of its centrality to our lives. Knack and Littlefield explain in their introductory essay to *Native Americans and Wage Labor* that the problem is compounded when considering Native American culture. "Anthropological fascinations with the 'traditional' . . . coupled with the habit of studying the Indian community as separate from the non-Indian, have all too often led to constructions that treat Native life as an isolate."⁹ For example, Ojibway ethnologist Basil Johnston begins *Ojibway Heritage* by stating that "[i]f Native Peoples and their heritage are to be understood, it is their beliefs, insights, concept, ideals, values, attitudes, and codes that must be studied."¹⁰ No recognition is given of the past forms of production or present socioeconomic conflicts Ojibwe people face as they dialectically engage that heritage. If, as Knack and Littlefield assert, Native American wage labor "has often been essential for . . . survival" for more than a century, literary critics need to grapple with Native American representations of this reality and the class stratification it sustains.¹¹

Alan Velie's essay "American Indian Literature in the Nineties: The Emergence of the Middle-Class Protagonist" is one of a few essays to use class as an analytical framework. Velie explains that the first generation of Renaissance writers created novels (including *Love Medicine*) whose protagonists' working-class, often-out-of-work status exemplifies the majority of Indians off and on the reservation. In the nineties these same novelists created different protagonists: middle-class professionals who have left the reservation to live and work in the city. In "mak[ing] it in the white world" they lose their ability to return home.¹² Renny Christopher's essay analyzes Louis Owens's autobiographical writing and fiction because it depicts the intersecting outsider status of working-class and mixed-blood identities. This double sense of marginalization creates anxiety as Owens and his protagonists enter the

dominant culture of the white middle class.¹³ Tim Libretti uses a class analysis for a more ambitious and specifically anticapitalist project. His essay, “The Other Proletarians: Native American Literature and Class Struggle,” argues that considering Native American literature as a form of proletarian literature will enrich our understanding of both. “Much Native American literature develops an anticapitalist perspective and treats [the] issue of work and alienation in its broader analysis of colonization and genocide,” Libretti argues.¹⁴ Seeing Native nationalist struggles as a form of class struggle allows him to argue for a Marxist analysis of Native American conditions. The essay first considers Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead* to develop this argument, and then reads Simon Ortiz’s “Our Homeland, A National Sacrifice Area” as “foster[ing] a more comprehensive version of class consciousness as he develops an historical materialist narrative of the dispossession of Native Americans and their subsequent dependence on wage labor under US capitalism.”¹⁵

These essays suggest useful approaches for analyzing *Love Medicine*. They alert us to the importance of class contexts for understanding literature, the intersections of Native and class identity that characters experience, and the resistance to dominant economic conditions that authors can engage. Erdrich does provide a thick socioeconomic texture that challenges the status quo in a gentler, more equivocal, much less polemic way than the authors Libretti explores. Her writing has been attacked for lacking political engagement.¹⁶ And Louis Owens rightly states that “the non-Indian reader is not made to feel acutely, as he or she is in other Indian novels, a sense of responsibility for the conditions portrayed.”¹⁷ Erdrich explains that the role of Native American writers is to offer stories that protect traditional cultures.¹⁸ Yet within this positively framed mission she also represents the destructive conditions that shape her characters. Sometimes reading with the grain of the novel, sometimes against, this essay analyzes these representations using a class-conscious framework that engages socioeconomic hierarchies. With this framework we see that protecting traditional yet evolving cultures necessarily involves challenging as well as engaging the economic conditions that inescapably continue to shape characters’ lives. We can also register the inescapable ways that economics, class, and work impinge upon the Native identities of Erdrich’s characters.

LOVE MEDICINE AND SOCIOECONOMIC ANALYSIS

Louise Erdrich’s *Love Medicine* presents a troubled and troubling reimagining of life on the Turtle Mountain Reservation.¹⁹ In analyzing the novel, critics have generally ignored its descriptions of economic structures, class stratifications, and work conditions. James Ruppert’s essay “Celebrating Culture” is representative: “*Love Medicine* is a dazzling, personal, intense novel of survivors, who struggle to define their own identities and fates in a world of mystery and human frailty.”²⁰ While the struggle for identity is certainly significant in the novel, Ruppert’s analysis of that identity argues by omission that socioeconomic conditions are irrelevant in its construction. I argue that these conditions are central to understanding the lived experience the novel

engages. With traditional work mostly destroyed, characters inevitably must participate in alienating forms of modern labor and the class conflicts they entail. Having lost their traditional ways of working (for example, hunting and fishing), Erdrich's characters have less refuge from the dominant society than some tribes.²¹ In creating a fictional model of postallotment, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)–dominated life on the Turtle Mountain Reservation, Erdrich portrays the seemingly insurmountable obstacles Ojibwe and mixed-blood Indians (Métis) face in sustaining a work culture even partly related to traditional tribal values. We will misrecognize the range of ways characters interact with the dominant society's hegemonic socioeconomic and cultural powers if we do not read socioeconomic structures and conflicts as determining (although not deterministic) conditions rather than merely local-color background.

What follows are two reading strategies that analyze how economic structures, class hierarchies, and work culture shape characters' lives on and off the reservation. The first emphasizes the ways socioeconomic status impinges on the characters' senses of identity. Here we see June Morrissey's struggle to maintain her dignity when facing the crushing economic/ethnic hierarchies in reservation border towns. We also see Marie Lazarre Kashpaw's lifelong struggle with hierarchies on the reservation. While this first socioeconomic approach emphasizes "class as a place in a social ranking," the next approach focuses on the "economic relation (of exploitation) between producers and non-producers, working and nonworking classes," that is, class as an economic condition.²² This second approach considers Lipsha and Lyman in their work settings. Although Lipsha joins the industrial workforce when the tomahawk factory becomes the new community center, he also works as a healer. Lipsha elicits our sympathies by offering hope that traditions can survive even under the conditions the novel depicts. Lyman is more thoroughly engaged in the modern work culture that most American Indians experience (even if they generally experience them from a different class position). *Love Medicine* shows the oppressive quality of this work and the characters' strategies for resistance.

Although these two socioeconomic approaches use a class analysis differently, both understand class hierarchies as a form of domination. Erdrich sensitively represents her characters' painful struggles to find well-being while living within systems of oppression.

CLASS HIERARCHIES OFF AND ON THE RESERVATION

From the first sentence *Love Medicine* is saturated with economic details that inevitably entail class conflict. The opening section's oil boomtown setting shapes the financial relationship that underlies the personal relationship between June and Andy, the "mud engineer" she meets at the bar. Immediately we see that working for an oil company pays considerably better than June's work. On this basis of inequality, the exchange begins.²³ She needs someone to pay for a few beers and offer her reassurance; he wants a one-night stand. He drives a Silverado; she's planning to ride a Greyhound. He

has an “expensive” down vest; she is wearing a pink top, ripped in the stomach and covered by a vinyl jacket. A porcelain doorknob provides June some sense of safety, as a lock for her room and a weapon against personal attack. Andy is protected by class privilege and has no need to hide his roll of bills this privilege has provided. He can afford to lose anything June might take.

This opening scene ends with June on a country road, leaving behind the man and his money. When she walks into a deadly Easter snowstorm, the circumstances that brought her there, like the freezing cold, “didn’t matter. . . . June walked over [the snow] like water and came home” (7). Louis Owens’s analysis in *Other Destinies*, similar to most interpretations of her death, focuses on June’s Native identity. “Like the traditional trickster narrative, the story opens with June on the move. . . . It is ironic that June is attempting to “kill” time—to break the entropic grip of linear, Western time—while it is precisely this time that is killing June, the historical time that has eroded a Chippewa sense of identity just as it has overseen the loss of the Chippewa’s traditional homeland.”²⁴ Owens emphasizes traditional narratives, the conflict of cultures, loss of homeland, and Chippewa identity to make sense of June’s death.

An interpretation that uses socioeconomic structures as a framework can both supplement and question interpretations such as Owens’s. It might ask why the wad of money, mentioned twice in the scene, is left behind when June squeezes out of the truck. With this detail Erdrich complicates the situation. June does not take the profit she could easily gain. It is not that money does not matter; she starts walking toward town, a place where money is an unavoidable necessity. Rather, we can interpret June leaving behind the money exactly because she is a poor, working-class woman barely surviving financially. She uses this costly refusal as a strategy for maintaining her dignity, a way of lessening the hidden injuries of class, the psychological wounds the dominant class inflicts on those they dominate.²⁵ By refusing the man’s money, June attempts to reject his and his culture’s estimation of her as an impoverished Native woman selling herself cheaply. While this reading does not contradict Owens’s interpretation, it does argue that the problems facing characters will take more than just love medicine to solve.

Furthermore, the conditions these characters must confront are not only dominant socioeconomic structures. Hierarchies on the reservation, certainly shaped by the dominant structures yet sustained by interests on the reservation, also powerfully affect their lives. Patricia Albers states that class structures in Indian communities have been ignored even as “differential access to jobs and other resources” has increased inequalities. “As with American culture more generally, where class differences are dismissed in a political rhetoric of equality and democracy, Native American communities have their own home-grown political ideologies for masking differences in access to resources and associated labor power.”²⁶ The class-conscious approach that Albers advocates has considerable interpretive power for *Love Medicine* because Erdrich’s reservation characters face significant differences in access to economic resources. The novel provides a moving account of life near the bottom and the injuries this position inflicts in its detailed representation of postallotment socioeconomic hierarchies.

From this position Marie fights for higher status on the reservation. At one point she insists defensively, "By now I was solid class" (148). She has gained enough cultural and economic capital to know that "a good dress, manufactured, of a classic material" is an important class marker. "It was the kind of solid dress no Lazarre ever wore." Pierre Bourdieu notes the dialectical nature of class status by explaining, "A class is defined as much by its *being-perceived* as by its *being*, its consumption . . . as much by its position in relation to production (even if it is true that the latter governs the former)."²⁷ Stung by both economic deprivation and class prejudice on the reservation, Marie struggles to shape others' perceptions of her even as she is shaped by their perceptions. Her strategy is not to assert her Indian identity but rather to deny it as she works to improve her status. The consequences for her sense of identity are profound. The novel engages this struggle for identity through a key pairing: Marie, one of the "dirty Lazarres" identified by their French name as part outsiders to Native American culture, and Nector, leading son of the Kashpaw family.²⁸ Marie's whole life can be characterized as a continuing effort to destroy evidence of her class origins. This repression generates self-destructive energy that Marie channels in various ways. She attempts to climb the reservation hierarchy by linking herself with the church, making a strategic marriage, and then shaping her husband Nector into a tribal leader who will reflect credit on her.

The church, aligned with the dominant white culture, is the most important source of power and status on Marie's horizon. In the first chapter she narrates ("St. Marie"), she has already internalized the church's rejection of Indians, seeing herself as only a "reservation girl." Using appropriate capitalist language, she explains that girls similar to her who were raised in the bush (the bottom of the reservation's geographical hierarchy) had "mail-order Catholic soul[s]" that "went cheap." Seeing religion as a means to social prestige, Marie molds herself into the kind of person the dominant culture rewards. Marie uses religion shrewdly in her struggle for respectability. Her dream is to be a saint, "carved in pure gold" with toenails "they would have to stoop down off their high horse to kiss." One injury Marie Lazarre's inferior class position inflicts is that she can only imagine desiring what she has been denied. She fights for a better place in the social hierarchy rather than challenges its legitimacy. Understanding that the dominant culture sees even the most prestigious Indians as little different from the down-and-out Lazarres, Marie wants to climb over other Indians' positions and identify with the whiteness of the church. Not surprisingly, Marie constructs herself as eligible for a higher status than other reservation girls. Marie's early determination to join the convent is painfully touching. Mixed together are her claims that she prayed as hard as the nuns and, more importantly, was as light skinned as they were (43-44).

The two hierarchies, white and Indian, clash as Marie confronts Nector coming up the hill to sell his geese. "You damn Indian," she hisses at him with a sense of superiority. In that comment we see Marie as an astute reader of both cultures. She has developed the double consciousness W. E. B. DuBois explained in *The Souls of Black Folk*: "this sense of always looking at

one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity."²⁹ Marie's reflected self-consciousness results in a game of cultural hide and seek. Knowing Nector's superior Indian position, she seeks out his status while at the same time hiding her own Indian identity and poverty by asserting her superior whiteness. Nector's chapter follows and helps us understand Marie's previous desperate desire to join the convent as we see his juxtaposition of Lazarres and Kashpaws. Marie has internalized Nector's conventional evaluation even as she struggles to escape it: "Marie is the youngest daughter of a family of horse-thieving drunks. . . . She is just a skinny white girl from a family so low you cannot even think they are in the same class as Kashpaws" (63). Because his privileged position has not necessitated his developing a comparably acute double consciousness, the defeated Nector is slow to see the sexual encounter that follows for what it is: a class struggle. Yet in defeating Nector by seduction, Marie reveals the vulnerability of the prestige she fights so hard for. Interclass marriage as a class-climbing project is just as perilous as joining the convent for the same reason.

The second chapter Marie narrates ("The Beads") demonstrates her third strategy for advancement as it continues to reveal the injuries inflicted on her by the reservation's socioeconomic status system, which is clearly shaped by the dominant culture's system. Marie's plan is to "make him [Nector] something big. . . . When he got there they would not whisper 'dirty Lazarre' when I walked down from church. They would wish they were the woman I was. Marie Kashpaw" (89). The self-destructiveness of Marie's class strategy is registered in her rejecting her own family name and classifying her mother as "the old drunk woman who I didn't claim any more" (85).

Erdrich concludes the last chapter that Marie narrates ("Flesh and Blood") with kneeling. It is a humbling, floor-washing scene of individual transformation that follows her reading of Nector's farewell note. Dennis Walsh argues that the 1993 expanded edition of *Love Medicine* "plainly converts Marie from one once insistent on her whiteness and Catholicism to one who embraces Ojibwa and tribal activism, and spiritually empowers Lipsha."³⁰ Walsh's identification of two versions of Marie is significant, if too schematic. Walsh focuses on Marie's later life; I have focused on her earlier experiences. The scene of Marie floor washing hinges the two versions. It is complex with symbolism: Marie buys linoleum, now worn and cracked, that covers the still-creaking boards underneath; places the note under the salt can rather than the sugar jar; and proclaims that she will shine when the wax is (metaphorically) stripped off her (so that her true self shows) yet waxes herself into a corner. The chapter ends with Nector stepping onto the lake-like, newly waxed floor and Marie "pull[ing] him in." However, Erdrich subtly troubles this hopeful story, as she often does, by inserting a complicating moment.

As Marie contemplates her present situation, she states, "I could leave off my fear of ever being a Lazarre. . . . Now I hurt for love and not because the old hens would squawk." Even if Nector left, "I'd still be Marie." This self-fashioning seemingly escapes the burden of hierarchies through love (medicine), but it is called into question as she continues with "Marie. Star of

the Sea! I'd shine when they stripped off the wax!" (165). This near repetition of Sister Leopolda's claiming Marie years ago suggests that Marie still carries the stigma of her origins (54). Her double consciousness tells her that others still see her, and so she still sees herself, as a Lazarre. Thus she defends herself at this moment of hopeful re-creation by adapting a previous strategy she has depended on to bolster her sense of self. The contradiction is painful.

The complex characterization of Marie in the kneeling, floor-washing scene is simplified after her third narrated chapter. At the end of the novel, "Lazarre" takes on positive significance as Marie returns to speaking the language she used when she left the bush (263). Marie becomes a comparatively minor figure as the more flamboyant Lulu becomes the leading elder. Both turn up (with little explanation) at the "Senior Citizens," where their conflict is resolved. Yet Erdrich leaves the contradictions and complexities of Marie's self-fashioning unresolved, even as she gives Marie a transformed sense of herself. The problem of socioeconomic hierarchies does not seem amenable to the individualistic solutions with which the novel concludes.

To understand Marie as a character caught in the double helix of Indian and white hierarchies on the reservation and to see June as an off-reservation worker trapped in a dead-end situation is to recognize that neither lives free of socioeconomic structures. Throughout much of the novel, class is a force that shapes characters' efforts to create an identity that provides dignity and worth to lives of hardship and degradation.

CONFLICTING WORK CULTURES

Erdrich has filled *Love Medicine* with descriptions of workers and work: Albertine studying to become a nurse, kitchen and household work, reservations girls as servants at the convent, Beverley (Hat) working as a door-to-door salesman, King as an angry low-wage employee with no framework for understanding his dead-end situation, tribal chair Nector also working as a night watchman, Dot Adaire knitting at the truck scales, tomahawk factory workers wanting to keep warm, Lipsha earning a living as both healer and part-time factory worker, and Lyman as entrepreneur and bureaucrat extraordinaire. No other contemporary Native American novel has as much to say about work and work culture.

The concept of work or labor culture is borrowed from Kwinn H. Doran's essay "Ganienkeh: Haudenosaunee Labor-Culture and Conflict Resolution." Focusing on the Ganienkeh Mohawks' 1974 occupation and reclaiming of land in New York State, Doran argues that the conflict was fundamentally shaped by differences in "labor culture," that is, "the behaviors and beliefs informing or governing the productive activities of a given group of people."³¹ Work here is understood not only as a form of production or economic activity; it is part of the web of culture in which a group of people creates meaning for itself. Traditional Haudenosaunee labor culture, Doran explains, "tends more toward use/need distribution than American notions of private ownership and title. . . . While the Haudenosaunee espouse individual skill and daring, their labor-culture is centered on cooperative group activities;

systems of reciprocity and emphasis on communal benefit from labor make both conspicuous wealth and personal ruin unlikely.”³²

While the Plains life of the Ojibwe Turtle Mountain Band differed from the traditional field and forest work of the Haudenosaunee, the basic contrast between traditional and capitalist work cultures, nevertheless, is applicable. Red Cloud, an Oglala Sioux leader, offered a similar contrast: “The Great Spirit did not make us to work. He made us to hunt and fish. He gave us the great prairies and hills and covered them with buffalo, deer and antelope. He filled the rivers and streams with fish. The white man can work if he wants to, but the Great Spirit did not make us to work.”³³ The alienated labor of capitalism seems mean and degrading compared to the vision of production that Red Cloud refused to call work. Yet other Native American leaders have seen work within the capitalist system as an inevitable necessity. For example, while living on a reservation after graduating from the Carlisle Indian School Delos Lonewolf gave a 1915 speech that emphasized work as a means to independence: “*Work is the only salvation for the Indian.*”³⁴ *Love Medicine* engages both of these views as well as positions in between.

For most Native Americans, sustaining a traditional work culture separate from capitalist economics has not been possible for well over a century.³⁵ This includes the Ojibwe and Métis of the Turtle Mountain Band living on a small, crowded northern North Dakota reservation.³⁶ “By 1895 the reservation area had been severely depleted of game, fish, and fur-bearing animals,” Stanley M. Murray explains, and timber had also been reduced.³⁷ Land was allotted and then redivided through inheritance. Federal and tribal governments came to play key roles in employment.³⁸ These are not circumstances that sustain traditional forms of work.

The novel does include elders who have the work values of Red Cloud and participate, to varying degrees, in a traditional work culture. Fleur Pillager, for example, sustains herself without the support of the government or the charity of the church. “She receives no forgiveness, no money, no welfare when that came about” (101). “Living with spirits” by the lake, Fleur is connected to the community only minimally. Most tribal members, including Lipsha when he needs special medicine, are afraid and avoid her rather than offer her respect. Even more isolated on an island, Moses Pillager has even less influence on other tribal members. Erdrich gently mocks him with a fine attention to detail. Moses clothes himself using traditional methods but makes an unusual fur trade to do so. He uses the skins of domesticated cats multiplied from ones he had stolen from an old French woman. When Lulu breaks his isolation, he must sacrifice tradition and “trade[] his skins for blankets” (83). Because he cannot give up his isolation, Moses’s place in the novel ends when Lulu, needing a midwife, must leave the island by herself. Moses and Fleur’s stories provide interesting vignettes, but their examples offer little to help other characters sustain traditional work culture or values.

Eli Kashpaw plays a more culturally engaged role. He is introduced in the opening chapter as younger family members sit around the kitchen table drinking beer with him. Eli is honored as the last person on the reservation able to snare a deer. Yet when King Kashpaw cries, “I always thought so much

of you, my uncle!" Eli responds knowingly, "He's drunk on his behind" (33). King's drunkenly sincere respect suggests his need for Eli as a symbol rather than as a model. Clinging to his uncle helps give the urban King pride in being Indian. Because of his profound and multifaceted alienation, however, King's trips to the reservation and his admiration for his uncle intensify rather than ameliorate his painful sense of loss.

Along with Fleur, Moses, and Eli, one other elder of that generation should be considered. Erdrich pairs Eli with Nector as apparent embodiments of tribal and capitalist cultures. Louis Owens, for example, presents the two in stark contrast: "In Eli the past is alive" while Nector is "one of the novel's cultural outcasts" who survives "at the expense of his Indian self" (202-3). Yet this contrast, focusing narrowly on identity, reduces the complexity and contradictions of these characters. As shown in the preceding text, the past Eli represents is alive but not in the unequivocal way Owens suggests. And Nector is not merely an Indian Uncle Tom. For example, Lipsha, arguably the most traditional of his generation, admires "Grandpa" Kashpaw and sees Nector's going to Washington to fight bureaucrats as no more un-Indian than his own going to Winnipeg to play Space Invaders and think (232). As with Eli, Erdrich here too creates an ambiguous portrait of Nector. While Lulu sees Nector as having sold out the tribe by using her land for a factory, Albertine calls him "an astute political leader . . . who kept the land from losing its special Indian status under the policy called termination" (19). If the deeply alienated King idealizes Eli, Albertine and Lipsha look to Nector as an elder positively engaged in the world.

Thus Fleur, Moses, Eli, and the work culture they embody have limited direct impact on present tribal culture. Their presence in the novel marks the tribe's loss. Their ways of integrating work no longer provide viable models. Yet Tim Libretti's essay alerts us to another possibility. These elders can offer "the historical memory of an unalienated relationship with the land."³⁹ Natives and non-Natives alike need alternative models as they challenge capitalist exploitation of both workers and the environment. Libretti astutely links Native national struggles and international class struggles by seeing "the desire for a nonalienated labor" as "implicit in that longing for a return of the land."⁴⁰ In this way, Owens's claim that the past is alive in Eli makes sense. The next generation's challenge is to integrate Nector's political strategies with the values of traditional work culture that Eli's deer-snaring ability symbolizes. Relegating Nector to outsider status does not help answer this challenge.⁴¹

In its next-generation pairing of Lipsha and Lyman, *Love Medicine* offers alternative ways of negotiating this socioeconomic situation. As with Eli and Nector, it would be reassuring to read these two as opposites: one the hero with the healing touch, the other the villain with a Midas touch. We might see Lipsha as rejecting consumer desires and remaining true to Native traditions while associating Lyman with capitalist economics and judging his financial success as a mark of his cultural failure. The novel's ending seems to support this conclusion as Lyman's tomahawk factory is destroyed and Lipsha discovers his heart and his family connections. However, these characters, like the elder brothers, call for a more complex reading. The limitations of Eli's

cultural role suggest similar limitations for Lipsha. And Lyman, similar to Nector, is more than a villain. Erdrich alerts us that Lipsha and Lyman should not be read as opposites by creating them with a common Pillager descent. Lyman notes this and explains, "The Pillagers had been the holdouts, the ones who didn't sign the treaties, the keepers of the birch bark scroll and practitioners of medicines so dark and helpful that the more devout Catholic Indians crossed their breasts when a Pillager happened to look straight at them" (312). By recognizing Lyman's claim here for himself and Lipsha's work as both healer and manual laborer, we see that each is caught up in the conundrum of identity and economics in a changing world. Work culture provides a conceptual lens for considering the complexity of these characters' constructions of identity in the novel's final time setting. The limitations of Lipsha's love medicine become clearer while Lyman takes on a more central role and his tomahawk factory offers more than just comic relief.

THE LIMITS OF LIPSHA'S TOUCH

Lipsha takes a mindless job in the tomahawk factory from his uncle Lyman, where he initiates the uprising that destroys Anishinabe Enterprises. Previously he has worked as a healer. Lipsha is usually seen as a character of hope, naïve but having traditional values. He is the underdog we cheer for. Erdrich gives her most engaging character his say in the key chapter "Love Medicine." Lipsha begins by explaining, "I never really done much with my life, I suppose. I never had a television" (230). Lipsha's economic self-evaluation is countered with a more traditional one: "I know the tricks of the mind and body inside out without ever having trained for it, because I got the touch. It's a thing you got to be born with" (230–31). Lipsha associates Indianness with having special powers, whether Grandma Kashpaw's uncanny knowing, Old Lady Pillager's ability to seize up others' hearts, the Ojibwe tradition of love medicine, or his own touch (240–41). Lipsha's imaginative sense of Indian identity, open need for belonging, and charming naiveté create a center for the novel that actually seems to hold. Although he is troubled by a disturbing past, it does not warp his character as it does his half-brother King's. In spite of the often bleak picture Erdrich paints of reservation life, by the end of the novel we find reassurance as Lipsha finds his father, reconciles with his dead mother, and returns to the reservation with an epiphany of connectedness. The novel concludes: "The morning was clear. A good road led on. So there was nothing to do but cross the water, and bring her home" (367).

Writing out of his own Indian experience, Greg Sarris raises a troubling question about Erdrich's hopeful ending: "Is finding our fathers and knowing our families loved us as much as they can medicine enough?" Characters in *Love Medicine*, he explains, do find ways to talk about their pain. They have "moments of understanding and forgiveness" that are "love medicine." Yet the "nature of home," the conflicts, violence, and abuse remain. Sarris is concerned that "love medicine treat[s] the symptoms of a disease without getting at the cause." For Sarris the cause is "internalized oppression." He goes on to explain that "much of the pain these characters experience and inflict

upon one another is tied to colonialism, and ironically and inadvertently they work to complete what the colonizer began."⁴² I see what Sarris is saying; it makes sense. However, as a socialist who advocates structural economic change and as a non-Indian who experiences reservation life at second hand, I have a different lens to look through and consequently see a somewhat different although clearly related cause of the disease that love medicine alone cannot heal. From the perspective of work culture, I shift the focus from Lipsha to Lyman. The conflicts that engage him are also central to Native American life. The debilitating consequences of Indian poverty and the destruction of traditional work culture cannot be healed solely with Lipsha's touch.

Erdrich shifted the novel's center of gravity toward Lyman in the 1993 expanded edition of *Love Medicine*. By adding "The Tomahawk Factory" and "Lyman's Luck" she further emphasizes the importance of class structures and work cultures in shaping her characters.⁴³

CAPITALIST LABOR RELATIONS ON THE RESERVATION

Lyman's second chapter "The Tomahawk Factory" begins with him walking back from the river. His brother Henry has just jumped in and killed himself. Previous to this event Lyman was a small-time entrepreneur who climbed from shining shoes to owning a diner. He is proud of what he had accomplished as a young person: "I had every one of my relatives, and their relatives, to dinner, and I also bought that red Olds . . . along with Henry" (181-82). Lyman ironically suggests the limits of his tribal vision (and generosity) and his comfortable consumerism. The free dinners foreshadow free donuts. Falling in between these events, Henry's death does shake up Lyman's individualistic value system. As he begins to see his world more broadly, he realizes that his "talent for money was useless with the deeper problems. Worse than useless." The metaphor that follows this indictment suggests that Lyman is giving his brother's death a social meaning that extends to the whole tribe: "If I bobbed to the surface, others went down" (298). This new vision, however, is quickly clouded.

Aside from the solemn opening paragraph, Erdrich brings great wit to this chapter. Maybe she brings too much as it limits further development of Lyman's new social awareness. What follows is Lyman's dark night (year) of the soul: "My business fled, my stocks crashed . . . and tax information and credit notices showed up in the mail, piling high, higher, high as the spring-time river until they overflowed and littered the kitchen floor." His realization that he still exists in government files somehow brings Lyman out of his mock-existential funk (299). He joins the BIA after this absurd salvation through paperwork. Given the sincere tone of the chapter's opening, we might consider this decision as a shift to tribal consciousness. Rather than individualistic entrepreneurship, we might think that Lyman has chosen a bureaucratic way of supporting his people. Erdrich's imagery, however, does not take us in that direction. Because the humorous, distancing rhetoric reduces Lyman to almost one dimension, the opening pathos of Henry's death and Lyman's humanizing transformation is lost until the chapter's sentimental conclusion.

The string of "I's" in Lyman's description of his reemergence makes clear that he has not gained a communal consciousness. Instead he has become an American Adam, re-creating himself into a successful bureaucrat working the system for his own success.

Duane Champagne's "Tribal Capitalism and Native Capitalists" contextualizes Lyman's tomahawk factory failure as it explains that "most Native reservation communities do not support individual capitalistic activity, accumulation of wealth, and a central focus on production and market enterprise. Values of generosity, redistribution, and egalitarianism continue to prevail among many community members." Economic development for most Indian groups is a way "to promote viable and self-supporting Native communities." In contrast, Lyman manages the factory as an individual enterprise and resents the community input of Lulu and Marie. Along with clarifying the defects in Lyman's strategy, Champagne's explanation also cautions us as we consider the implications of the factory fiasco. Unlike *Love Medicine*, Champagne asserts the possibility of positive economic growth. In tribal as opposed to individualistic capitalism, "economic development is seen as a means to enhance community tribal sovereignty, empower the community through independent resources, and mitigate the harsh effects of poverty."⁴⁴ One can imagine that Nector might embody such an outlook, but Erdrich does not pursue this possibility. She only envisions economic development as love medicine's opposite.

The tomahawk factory, a government-supported enterprise, is typical of projects in the 1970s. From ski resorts to pottery factories, few Native enterprises survived beyond the period of federal subsidy.⁴⁵ That Lyman finds workers susceptible to at least temporary proletarianization indicates the impoverished economic conditions on their isolated reservation. Wage labor for them is a survival strategy. The problem of Lyman's narrowly entrepreneurial vision is compounded by the incompatibility of tomahawk factory work with traditional work culture. As manager, Lyman faces the daunting problem of assimilating reservation Indians into the discipline of industrial work. David Harvey explains the comprehensiveness of this process when it occurred at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. "The socialization of the worker to conditions of the capitalist production entails the social control of physical and mental powers on a very broad basis. Education, training, persuasion, the mobilization of certain social sentiments (the work ethic, company loyalty, national, or local pride) and psychological propensities (the search for identity through work, individual initiative, or social solidarity) all play a role." Workers had to adapt to a work culture filled with routine, requiring few skills, and offering little control over their work. During European industrialization, "the habituation of wage labourers to capitalism was a long-drawn-out (and not particularly happy) historical process."⁴⁶ In contrast, Lyman tries to enforce an almost instantaneous transformation. Having by then reduced the "deeper problems" to "work systems analysis," he fails to take into account the ensuing clash of work cultures (310).

Erdrich's description of the manufacturing process is devastating. Each step has been time managed to Taylorized perfection.⁴⁷ One character

“inserts precut rectangle into punch press” while another “drips one drop of glue on end dowel handle” and so on (309). Not surprisingly, the result is worker alienation too deep to be assuaged with free donuts.

PRODUCTION WITHOUT CONSUMPTION, POWER WITHOUT AUTHORITY

Lyman’s failure to assimilate his workers into the discipline of this regime results from a number of fundamental misunderstandings. Among them, he fails to grasp the necessity of developing relations of consumption as well as production. As motivation for accepting workplace alienation, his workers must learn to desire the goods that capitalism produces and their wages can purchase. Lulu recognizes how little Lyman has been able to change his employees. “‘Open your eyes, Lyman,’ she cried out. ‘People were desperate for work in the beginning, but now they’re caught up on their car payments’” (314). Not blinded by a consumerist desire for buying new cars rather than just paying off old ones, these workers can see their alienated work as an insult to traditional work culture values. These Ojibwe characters have sustained traditional values even as they have lost the possibility of traditional work in spite of a century of allotments, termination threats, relocation programs, and poverty.

Lulu’s direct, forceful criticism suggests another way that reservation workers have not submitted to the demands of the industrial workplace. Lyman becomes frustrated that traditional hierarchies undermine his leadership, established through his entrepreneurship and BIA connections. His problem is to maintain managerial authority while appearing to respect his elders, Lulu and Marie in particular. Although unskilled employees, these two feel superior to him, particularly in human resource management. As the factory opens, they want to dictate who is hired. Later they insist to Lyman that, in spite of his superficial efforts to keep workers happy, a disaster is about to happen (331).

Another reason Lyman has problems establishing authority is his connection with the BIA and the tribal government (301–3). He is one of the new tribal elite. Schneider explains a problem existing ever

since the Federal government destroyed the buffalo to force the Indians to settle on the reservations. . . . Economics became politics as some people who were willing to give up their tribal ways received more of the resources and were rewarded, first by food and later by jobs. . . . In essence, those who were most reluctant to change their Indian ways were doomed to poverty. Those individuals or families who agreed to exchange their traditions for food and jobs became a new elite—an acculturated elite—favored by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, officials and representatives of church groups.

Schneider adds that these new leaders “were not necessarily highly regarded by those Indians who did not give up their traditions.”⁴⁸ Thus the federal government’s politicization of reservation economics has created a form of

class conflict related to the industrial division between owners/managers and workers. Similar to Nector, Lyman has power in one context and alienation in another. As his attempted firing of Lulu shows, Lyman makes no effort to challenge the hierarchy that sustains his assimilationist sense of superiority.

Workers respond to Lyman's failed reservation industrialism and capitalist consumerism by gleefully destroying the factory. Erdrich has created a hilarious scene that makes readers cheer on the rioters who destroy the tomahawk factory with "a kind of organized joy" (320). The words "organized joy" suggest worker empowerment, but that is not how the uprising begins. Workers first turn on each other. Greg Sarris argues that the legacy of "cultural and political domination" continues through "internaliz[ing] the oppression," as seen in the "quarreling, name-calling, self-abuse." Lyman's workers face what Sarris found in his own Indian community: "A sense of powerlessness. Alienation from both the past and present, the Indian world and the white world, and from the ways the two worlds commingle."⁴⁹ Because of this double-edged alienation, workers turn on each other, continuing an internal conflict started in the first conflicted responses to the dominant culture's encroachments. This is not, however, "just another episode in a small and vicious hundred years' war." After the personal battles have been fought, workers "methodically demolished, scattered, smashed to bits, and carried off what was left of the factory" (319). They experience a change as they challenge oppressive conditions. Significantly, the machinery is "methodically demolished"; this becomes an attack on the system. The workers destroy not only the equipment but also Lyman's authority. He sees them "walking around me as if I were just another expensive and obsolete government-inspired mechanism" (319–20). As the workers gain agency, they reduce their manager to a machine just as he had done to them.

When the factory is demolished, Lyman's final managerial action is to attack Lipsha drunkenly with his office chair, an imaginative narrative touch. Desperately trying to maintain his authority, Lyman attacks what he believes has destroyed him. Lipsha represents for him a nostalgic refusal to see the past as passed. Yet as Lipsha leads him away from the ruined factory, Lyman's sense of the world begins to change again as it had at the beginning of this chapter: "My drunken thoughts were the dusky clattering of a high breeze in the cottonwoods" (321). This is not the language of an entrepreneur. Then as Lyman enters a dingy downtown bar, it too is transformed as he finds "a great, sad, lapping warmth" (321). He is no longer manager; he is someone needing and, at least temporarily, finding his home community. Lyman finds comfort as he reduces the factory uprising's meaning to an insult and injury to Marie. Adding to the stigma(ta) of the Church's abuse, Marie sustains an injury of automated industrialism when her hand accidentally gets caught in the birch bark machine and is cut with "stars, snowflakes, lucky spiderwebs." Both Marie and Lyman find healing as they "danced to the center of the floor" (324). In this concluding sentence, social critique is absorbed into personal forgiveness. Erdrich imagines no structural remedy here.

The destruction of the factory does not clear the way for reestablishing a traditional work culture on the reservation, yet there is a change. Lyman

shrewdly plans to turn his luck once again, this time by beating the system on its own terms. He conceptualizes an alternative based on revenge through reverse exploitation. "Money was the key to assimilating, so Indians were taught. Why not make a money business out of money itself?" (327). He plans a raid on the heart of the heart of capitalist country. He will "teach Chippewas the right ways, the proper ways, the polite ways, to take money from retired white people who had farmed Indian hunting grounds, worked Indian jobs, lived high while their neighbors lived low, looked down or never noticed who was starving, who was lost" (327). This is a new, more socially conscious way of conceiving reservation economics. Rather than a federally inspired project aimed at assimilating Indians into industrialism, Lyman engages finance capitalism with a twist.

While this planned revenge may seem almost as satisfying as the tomahawk factory uprising, Erdrich again indirectly cautions us not to become too comfortable. Although Lyman understands his tribe's history of exploitation, he only plans to reverse the economic hierarchy of exploitation rather than develop an alternative. When Lyman calls gambling "an Indian thing . . . an old time thing" and identifies gambling at a powwow as a "casino without electricity," he seems only to reassure himself of his own Indian identity as he develops another reservation project based on individual entrepreneurship (326). Though not industrial, this new strategy "based on greed and luck" will only attempt to assimilate Indians workers to a different form of capitalism (328). As if to reinforce the point, the third-person narrator adds an odd note as the bingo epiphany concludes: "Lyman sat down, dusted off his knees, lighted a wheaty chemical Merit, and tried not to draw too deep" (327). His revelation concludes not with ceremonial Native tobacco that heals but rather industrialized, commercial tobacco that he knows can kill. Erdrich seems to suggest and the next novel, *The Bingo Palace*, confirms that although he tries to control how much smoke he inhales, he will be corrupted.

CONCLUSION: ANSWERABILITY

If we focus attention away from Lyman and back to Lipsha, we can find in the novel a reassuring story of individual, family, and cultural identity. Yet if we use this perspective exclusively, we lose sight of economic struggle, class conflict, and worker alienation as central and inescapable aspects of characters' experiences and Native American life. My reading focuses on socioeconomic issues that remain unresolved in order to counter this.

Having failed to find success through cosmetology, June is immersed in poverty, a social status that shapes her hard life. She dies returning to the reservation, for her a place of hope that she does not reach. It is also a site of socioeconomic hierarchies. These structures wound Marie deeply enough that she spends most of her life denying her Native identity as a strategy for social climbing. Yet Marie's poverty is not just a social position; it is also an economic reality. Using the framework of class as an economic status related to work culture, we see another source of reservation conflicts in the clash between traditional work culture and new modes of production. While Lipsha

represents love medicine, Erdrich puts Lyman at the center of the novel's work culture and economic struggle. In focusing on him, I want to encourage readers to see how changing economic conditions and work cultures shape characters' lives. This perspective does not exclude the important issue of identity; it enriches it. We see the two come together in Red Cloud's quote, where he creates an identity for both Indians and whites based on their different modes of production. The former are associated with culturally integrated work, the latter with alienation. By understanding how characters engage various modes of production and their concomitant work cultures, we can better understand their strategies, successful or not, for confronting the continuing legacy of domination and for sustaining their own culture.

Louise Erdrich's explanation of the responsibility of Native American writers has become a touchstone for analyses of her novels. In her essay "Where I Ought to Be" she explains, "In the light of the enormous loss, they must tell the stories of contemporary survivors while protecting and celebrating the cores of cultures left in the wake of the catastrophe."⁵⁰ Critics have responsibilities too. Peter Hitchcock, writing about "the weight of [John] Berger's moral imagination" in his novels about French peasants, argues that "the reader who is not a peasant must commit to an imaginative sense that cannot be owned, rented, or borrowed. It is something that can only be achieved in the fullness and openness of *answerability*."⁵¹ That is a challenge indeed. In this essay I am arguing for a way of reading responsibly that neither evades nor elides characters' experiences of socioeconomic realities. This answerability, however, is not enough. We need to extend our work beyond our roles as readers and critics to our responsibilities as teachers and citizens, where we are privileged participants and, potentially, agents of change within cultural and socioeconomic structures of domination and exploitation.

Acknowledgments

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NOTES

1. Quoted in Bill V. Mullen, "Breaking the Signifying Chain: A New Blueprint for African-American Literary Studies," *Modern Fiction Studies* 47, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 147.

2. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, *Why I Can't Read Wallace Stegner and Other Essays: A Tribal Voice* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 138.

3. Mullen, "Breaking," 147.

4. Cora Kaplan, "Pandora's Box: Subjectivity, Class and Sexuality in Socialist Feminist Criticism," in *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, ed. Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 957. Kaplan argues that without considering class (as well as race) as a key intersecting factor for understanding sexual difference, feminist criticism has been "implicitly conservative in its assumptions about social hierarchy."

5. J. K. Gibson-Graham, Stephen A. Resnick, and Richard D. Wolff, "Introduction: Class in a Poststructuralist Frame" in *Class and Its Others* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 1–2.

6. Any analysis focusing on economics, class, and work owes a debt to Marxism. Ward Churchill, in his concluding essay to *Marxism and Native Americans*, states that "a central theme common to all the Indian contributors to this volume . . . [is that a] Marxist analysis of capitalism is a good beginning." However, Churchill and the others then argue that sharp contradictions arise between the indigenous and Marxist visions of an alternative society: "redistribution of the proceeds accruing from a systematic rape of the earth [is], at best, an irrelevancy to American Indian tradition." "Marxism and the Native American," in *Marxism and Native Americans* (Boston: South End Press, n.d.), 185. This disturbing conclusion and the arguments that support it demand careful consideration from Marxists as well as other activists working for social change. However, Churchill's starting point is important for this essay: his recognition of Marxism's usefulness for analyzing capitalism. As long as Native Americans participate in wage labor, some forms of Marxism can be useful for understanding present social realities represented in their literature.

7. Gibson-Graham et al., "Introduction," 13.

8. John Bellamy Foster, "Introduction," in Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capitalism: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century 25th Anniversary Edition* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1998), ix.

9. Martha C. Knack and Alice Littlefield, "Native American Labor: Retrieving History, Rethinking Theory," in *Native Americans and Wage Labor: Ethnohistorical Perspectives*, ed. Alice Littlefield and Martha C. Knack (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 3.

10. Basil H. Johnston, *Ojibway Heritage* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 7.

Hertha D. Sweet Wong acknowledges "the debates about the best name to use for tribal peoples. Erdrich's people, for example, are known variously as Chippewa, Ojibway, Ojibwa, Ojibwe, and Anishinaabe, to name a few. Such debates reflect continuing attempts to decolonize the language used to refer to indigenous peoples." She adds that although Erdrich had used the term *Chippewa* for herself and her characters, she more recently has adopted the term *Ojibwe*, the term I use in this essay. Hertha D. Sweet Wong, introduction to *Louise Erdrich's "Love Medicine": A Casebook* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 9 n. 1.

11. Knack and Littlefield, "Native American Labor," 5.

12. Alan R. Velie, "American Indian Literature in the Nineties: The Emergence of the Middle-Class Protagonist," *World Literature Today* 66 (Spring 1992): 264.

13. Renny Christopher, "Louis Owens's Representations of Working-Class Consciousness," in *Louis Owens: Literary Reflections on His Life and Work*, ed. Jacquelyn Kilpatrick (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004).

14. Tim Libretti, "The Other Proletarians: Native American Literature and Class Struggle," *Modern Fiction Studies* 47 (Spring 2001): 164.

15. *Ibid.*, 174.

16. Susan Perez Castillo has analyzed Leslie Silko's "acerbic critique" of Erdrich's *The Beet Queen*, which evaluates the novel as devoid of "history or politics." Castillo asserts that Silko has missed the novel's "political commitment" because she has not

recognized Erdrich's subtlety. For example, "Erdrich's silences . . . are perhaps more politically effective than overt sloganeering." "Postmodernism, Native American Literature and the Real: The Silko-Erdrich Controversy," in *Nothing but the Truth: An Anthology of Native American Literature*, ed. John L. Purdy and James Ruppert (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2001), 15 and 17.

17. Cook-Lynn includes Erdrich in her attack of Indian writers who are cosmopolitan rather than nationalist. She states that "without effective politics" there is no "return to a moral world" that includes tribal nationhood. She finds political engagement missing in the fiction of many Indian writers: ". . . their own efforts toward the recovery of memory through writing seem thwarted, selective, and narrowly interpreted within the imposed context of Western knowledge and aesthetics." *Why I Can't Read*, 80 and 85.

18. Louis Owens, *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992), 204.

19. Louise Erdrich, "Where I Ought to Be: A Writer's Sense of Place," in *Casebook*, Wong, 48.

20. Erdrich begins her endnotes to *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse* by explaining, "*Ozhibi'iganan*: the reservation depicted in this and in all of my novels is an imagined place consisting of landscapes and features similar to many Ojibwe reservations. . . . It is not the Turtle Mountain Reservation, of course" (New York: Harper and Row, 2001), 357. This disclaimer is fair enough. On the other hand, Julie Maristuen-Rodakowski convincingly argues that *Love Medicine* and *The Beet Queen* are "solidly based in the facts of the Chippewa Indians of the Turtle Mountain Reservation." "The Turtle Mountain Reservation in North Dakota: Its History as Depicted in Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine* and *The Beet Queen*," in Wong, *Casebook*, 15. Mary Jane Schneider's textbook, *North Dakota Indians: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Dubuque, IA: Kendal/Hunt, 1994) offers an overview of historical, cultural, and socioeconomic conditions that is very useful for understanding Erdrich's novels.

21. James Ruppert, "Celebrating Culture: *Love Medicine*," in Wong, *Casebook*, 67.

22. Knack and Littlefield note that wage labor may be "an index of the extent to which Indians had lost control over the land on which they could practice their traditional subsistence activities of hunting, farming, gathering, and intertribal trading." "Native American Labor," 14–15.

23. Gibson-Graham, "Introduction," 3.

24. Louise Erdrich, *Love Medicine*, exp. ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1993), 1–4. Subsequent references are cited parenthetically in the text.

25. Owens, *Other Destinies*, 195. Rather than return from her desperate life to the reservation, June walks deliberately into a blizzard and accepts her death.

26. My reference here is to Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb's *The Hidden Injury of Class*. It analyzes the psychological injury inflicted on working-class people who have achieved a certain economic success yet who struggle to gain a sense of personal dignity. They do this in a society that defines those terms in inaccessible ways. "For them history is challenging them and their children to become 'cultured,' in the intellectual's sense of that word, if they want to achieve respect." Gaining respect, however, means rejecting their working-class culture and sense of self. "Social mobility creates status anxiety," Sennett writes, "a crisis in self-respect" (New York: Norton, 1972), 18 and 29.

27. Patricia C. Albers, "From Legend to Land to Labor: Changing Perspectives on Native American Work," in Knack and Littlefield, *Native Americans and Wage Labor*, 271–72.

28. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, tr. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 483.

29. Stanley M. Murray's essay, "The Turtle Mountain Chippewa, 1882–1905," provides useful historical insights into the conflicts between the full bloods and Métis, those of mixed French and Indian ancestry. *North Dakota History* 51, no. 1 (1985). See also Schneider, *North Dakota Indians*, 88 and 122.

30. W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, in *The Oxford W. E. B. DuBois Reader*, ed. Eric J. Sundquist (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 102.

31. Dennis Walsh, "Catholicism in Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine* and *Tracks*," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 25, no. 2 (2001): 109.

32. Kwinn H. Doran, "Ganienkeh: Houdenosaunee Labor-Culture and Conflict Resolution," *American Indian Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (Winter 2002): 3.

33. *Ibid.*, 4.

34. Quoted in Schneider, *North Dakota Indians*, 176.

35. Delos Lonewolf, "How to Solve the Problem," in *Great Speeches by Native Americans*, ed. Bob Blaisdell (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2000), 205.

36. The tribal work histories explored in the essays of Littlefield and Knack's *Native Americans and Wage Labor* reveal a range of strategies Indians have used to confront the encroaching and then dominating capitalist economic system. Indian peoples in many different circumstances found ways to balance necessary accommodation with a resistance that helped sustain traditional cultures. Kathleen Ann Pickering's *Lakota Culture, World Economy* analyzes this process for the Rosebud Reservation (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000). The essays in Brian Hosmer and Colleen O'Neill's *Native Pathways: American Indian Culture and Economic Development in the Twentieth Century* also make an important contribution (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2004).

37. Schneider, *North Dakota Indians*, 153.

38. Murray, "Turtle Mountain," 29.

39. Schneider, *North Dakota Indians*, 102, 153, and 184.

40. Libretti, "The Other Proletarians," 183.

41. *Ibid.*, 166.

42. In *Tracks*, which describes historical conditions leading to up to the conflicts in *Love Medicine*, Erdrich further complicates our understanding of Eli and Nector. We see Nector's political shrewdness as he secretly pays the taxes only on the Kashpaw allotment. Some characters see this as his typical greed; others see it as necessary for keeping at least some of the land. Eli defends Nector by saying, "Don't blame Nector. He's young, he's like my twin." Eli in *Tracks* is a young man in love rather than a distant and respected elder. Along with many others, he participates in the destruction of his culture when he joins the lumber crew clearing land by the lake. Even Nanapush, a generation older than these two, acknowledges that he too should have done what Nector did, "grasp this new way of wielding influence, this method of leading others with a pen and piece of paper." He realizes that if he had, the forests might not have been destroyed. Here again, Erdrich complicates the reassuring binary oppositions some readers desire (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 209, 211, and 217.

43. Greg Sarris, "Reading Louis Erdrich: *Love Medicine* as Home Medicine," in Wong, *Casebook*, 204–5.

44. The anonymous *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* reader alerted me to this point. Hertha D. Sweet Wong's essay, "Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine*: Narrative Communities and the Short Story Cycle," usefully explores differences in the two editions. Wong notes that the additions to the 1993 edition "include more overt reservation politics as well as social commentary" and mentions specifically the lack of jobs and poverty. Wong, *Casebook*, 95–96. See also the chart on 102.

45. Duane Champagne, "Tribal Capitalism and Native Capitalists: Multiple Pathways of Native Economy" in Hosmer and O'Neill, *Native Pathways*, 311, 320, and 322. Nicholas Christos Zaferatos provides a positive example of tribal economic development. "Planning for Sustainable Reservation Economic Development: A Case Study of the Swinomish Marina and Mixed-Use Commercial Development," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 27, no. 3 (2003). Stephen Cornell and Joseph P. Kalt, however, complicate Champagne's distinction. They share Champagne's concern that tribal businesses serve the needs of the people. Yet their study of approximately 125 tribally owned businesses on thirty reservations reveals that businesses "formally insulated from political interference" (i.e., business directly run by tribal presidents or councils) were four times more likely to show a profit. They argue for businesses that are neo-liberal in operation but tribal in purpose. "Sovereignty and Nation-Building: The Development Challenge in Indian Country Today," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 22, no. 3 (1998): 199–200.

46. Knack and Littlefield, "Native American Labor," 35.

47. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1989), 123–24 and 128.

48. F. W. Taylor in *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1911) developed methods of industrial efficiency that "appl[ie]d the Protestant ethic with mathematical precision." In doing so, workers were trained to operate like machines. Gilman M. Ostrander, *American Civilization in the First Machine Age, 1890–1940* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 208. This confirms Marx's observation that "owing to the extensive use of machinery and to division of labour, the work of the proletarians has lost all individual character, and consequently, all charm for the workman. He becomes an appendage of the machine, and it is only the most simple, most monotonous, and most easily acquired knack, that is required of him." "Manifesto of the Communist Party," *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 1978), 479.

49. Schneider, *North Dakota Indians*, 175–76.

50. Sarris, "Reading," 183–84.

51. Erdrich, "Where I Ought to Be," 48.

52. Peter Hitchcock, "Work Has the Smell of Vinegar: Sensing Class in John Berger's Trilogy," *Modern Fiction Studies* 47 (Spring 2001): 39 (emphasis added).