Journal of American Studies of Turkey 62 (2024): 1-16
Research Article
Submitted: 16.7.2024
Accepted: 28.11.2024
Published: 30.12.2024

Resisting White Supremacy and Constructing Ethnic/Female Identity: Magical Resistance in Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*

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Abstract

Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*, which is rooted in Native American cultural context, expresses the 'other' or alternative version(s) of events and attempts to fill in fissures or silence of official history from the contexts of the followers of particular social, cultural and religious practices of reality. Erdrich has employed magic or the supernatural to subvert a realist worldview and to resist colonial supremacy. The article aims to show that by giving Native American women a voice using magic, *Tracks* is centered on the alternative version(s) of history or reality and the notion of comprehending the past and memory. The article also aims to show how Erdrich equips her female characters with the power of magic to resist female marginalization and protest white supremacy. From this perspective, Erdrich's magical realism serves a political purpose.

Keywords: Identity, ethnicity, resistance, magic

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Beyaz Üstünlük ve Etnik/Kadın Kimliğinin İnşası: Louise Erdrich'in *Tracks* Eserinde Büyüsel Direniş

Öz

Yerli Amerikalı kültürel bağlamından beslenen Louise Erdrich'in *Tracks* eseri, olayların "öteki" ya da alternatif versiyonlarını yansıtır ve belli sosyal, kültürel ve dinsel uygulamaları takip edenlerin bakış açısından resmi tarihin boşluklarını ya da sessizliğini doldurmaya çalışır. Erdrich, büyü ya da doğaüstü unsurları, gerçekçi bir dünya görüşünü altüst etmek ve sömürgeci üstünlüğe direnmek için bir araç olarak kullanmıştır. Bu makale, *Tracks*'in, Yerli Amerikalı kadınlara büyü aracılığıyla ses vererek, tarihin veya gerçekliğin alternatif versiyonlarına ve geçmiş ile hafızayı anlamaya odaklandığını gösterir. Ayrıca Erdrich'in kadın karakterlerini, kadınların ötekileştirilmesine ve beyaz üstünlüğüne karşı koymak için büyünün gücüyle nasıl donattığını göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu bakış açısından, Erdrich'in büyüsel gerçekçiliği açıkça politik bir amaca hizmet eder.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kimlik, etnisite, direniş, büyü

Introduction

Louise Erdrich's Tracks depicts the time when deprived of their rights to their lands and resources, Native Americans were forced to live in the wretched conditions of the reservation and face cultural extinction at the hands of white invaders. Their descendants began to forget their glorious past, traditions, and rituals. Due to the arrival of white colonizers, the violence they inflicted on the Natives, and the diseases they brought with them, the number of native people in the US decreased from "between four and five million at the time of the Columbian invasion [to] 250,000 to 300,000 Indians by the end of the nineteenth century" (Cheyfitz, "Introduction" viii). This violence towards Native people serves as the backdrop of the novel, which is evident from the very first chapter, where Nanapush narrates to Lulu

how people from their tribes died at the hands of the white invaders and how the survivors were systematically forced to leave their lands by the government (Erdrich 1).

The present article aims to show that by giving Native American women a voice using magic, the novel centralizes alternative version(s) of history or reality and the postmodern notion of comprehending the past and memory. Through the dominance of encroaching white supremacy over Native culture, Erdrich attempts to show the way the male Natives start practicing the gendering of social roles, ignoring the fact that Native American societies have always demonstrated gendered equality. The article also aims to show how, by giving women magical power, Erdrich enables them to free themselves from both patriarchal and colonial constraints and to assert womanhood. Instead of painting her narratives through magic, Erdrich has employed the supernatural to resist colonial supremacy and gender marginalization and to protect and mourn her Native culture.

Systematic Destruction of Native Culture and Erdrich's Magical Realism

Joy Porter notes that after the American Revolution, Native Indians were methodically devastated when "Americans created a national mythology that consigned Indians to a 'savage' past" (50). For the success of the changed America, the extinction of Indian culture was essential (50). This absence was done through various techniques, ranging from removing people from their land to converting them to Christianity or the Western mood of education. Porter also claims that the targeting of Indian children was part of a pattern of degradation of Indian family life, which was exacerbated by the placement and adoption of children into non-Indian homes. This pattern of abuse was not legally or completely stopped until the Child Welfare Act was passed in 1978 (52). The Indian Act, which was created in 1876, clearly conveyed the White concept of men as chiefs of families and women as subservient to their men. It also destroyed the traditional matrilineal relationship pattern and the post-marital residence system for women, which had been in practice for generations. Apart from suffering due to

White supremacy, Indian women also started to be marginalized by their people. With the help of colonial laws, the Indian Act robbed women of their sexual freedom, considered them unworthy of respect if they were not virtuous and chaste in terms of rigid Victorian standards, and relegated them as puppets to men from their community. Joan Sangster opines that female sexual freedom was controlled in various ways, with colonial law as "one crucial site of sexual regulation" (303). She added, "Any sexual relations that did not conform to monogamy in marriage were seen as uncivilized and counter to the government's civilizing mission" (308). Finally, the colonial authority prohibited women from any kind of political involvement, giving them no chances to become chiefs or band councilors and entirely excluding them from making any decisions in their community. Women thus suffered at the hands of both invaders and males from their community. Through Nanapush's tale, the novel explores the occurrences in the ultimate years of the extermination of Native people and their systematic displacement from their land. It also emphasizes the heroic struggle of the natives against both natural calamities and colonial forces, bravely attempting to protect their own culture from the clutches of dominant authorities.

This structural way of depriving a group of their home, tradition, heritage, and language is the reason several Native American literary pieces anchor in the notion of identity. Nancy J. Peterson emphasizes the necessity to create a Native history (and perhaps also a Native identity) before Native American authors can start deconstructing it. However, Native American Studies must show "indigenous intellectual sovereignty" (Cheyfitz, "The (Post)Colonial Construction" 4) and "Native nationalism" (Womack 11) to show its difference from other postcolonial movements. It is in their protest against colonial power and attempts to find a Native identity and resist female victimization that Native American authors, particularly female ones such as Louise Erdrich, Susan Power, and Leslie Marmon Silko, among others, have employed magical realism.

Erdrich's work is considered magical realist due to her employing supernatural phenomena in her writing and creating a notion or atmosphere of the imaginary through language, as Faris states, magical realism blends the mundane and the fantastic in such

a manner "that magical elements grow organically out of the reality portrayed" (163). Many critics have interpreted Erdrich's work as the assertion of Native beliefs, thinking that magical elements and figurative language lend an indigenous feature to her work. Although magic is employed to challenge the colonial outlook, there is no assertion of spiritual traditions through magic. Giving more importance to Erdrich's writing techniques and styles over her tribal heritage, Tankersley argues that instead of flooding her books with fantastical happenings, Erdrich creates this organic aspect by bringing a feeling of the extraordinary into the language used in all her novels. As a result, rather than coming from Erdrich's Ojibwe ancestry, the supernatural arises from her writing methods and abilities (21). Although Erdrich's novels might include a smaller number of magical actions compared to other magical realist works, and even those events can be doubted or questioned, it is other elements of her writing that cement her position as a magical realist. Erdrich's distinctive writing style and narration have a strong ability to create a magical effect, undermining the real as Stirrup considers the "fluidity of Erdrich's lyrical prose" a way of refusing "critical determinism" (91). Before introducing any magical scene, Erdrich employs her flowing sentences, which are laden with metaphors, to surprise or confuse the reader. She allures the reader by forming a realistic world before breaking it into pieces, creating a scene where both the magical and the real are intertwined. Through the use of dream motifs, the reader is defamiliarized, and the magical elements are incorporated; it is also used to undermine the colonial depiction of her native culture and to advocate an alternative and/or marginalized version of reality. The political message in Erdrich's work might not be as strong as that of many other writers, but her metaphorical writing style itself is a way of undermining realism and Western rationalism. From this context, her work can be placed side by side with other magical realist novels that challenge a colonial worldview.

Magical Realism as Means of Resisting Colonialism

It has been mentioned that the novel *Tracks* has two narrators—Nanapush and Pauline—who provide a non-linear and fragmented

narrative. The struggle and different, sometimes opposing, narration of the two homodiegetic narrators center on Fleur Pillager, the protagonist of the novel. Susan Friedman considers both narrators physically opposite, where Nanapush "represents resistance to Euro-American culture" and Pauline "represents the colonized subject" (112). Both Nanapush and Fleur are associated with the 'Anishinabe' practice and, therefore, with magic. In the novel, it is Fleur who is the main source of the magic and a metaphor for the dying indigenous culture. She has a strong association with nature, particularly with water and the lake monster, Misshepeshu, who has a mad desire for powerful young girls like Fleur (Erdrich 11). Fleur also possesses the formidable power of metamorphosis, which is believed by the entire community without any doubt: "… in the snow or dust, we followed the tracks of her bare feet and saw where they changed, where the claws sprang out, the pad broadened and pressed into the dirt. By night, we heard a chuffing cough, the bear cough" (Erdrich 12). This magical event takes place in the middle of reality and is considered an ordinary occurrence by the community people. Again, Fleur being respected and feared by her community as she possesses healing power clearly shows the way magic and healing abilities are empowering for women. Her return to the reservation causes many strange events to take place: "The dust on the reservation stiffed. Things hidden were free to walk. The surprised young ghost of Jean Hat limped out of the bushes" (Erdrich 34−35). Fleur also takes revenge on Boy Lazarre, who kidnaps Margaret and shaves her hair by killing him with a mere bite of Margaret (120). Fleur has employed her magical power against Pauline and other characters who have developed a stronger tie with the colonial culture.

Fleur's revenge against her three coworkers who have raped her in Argus also highlights the way she uses magic against men to defy patriarchy and to assert her agency: magic is thus empowering for women and resistance to patriarchy. By magically transforming herself into a tornado, Fleur ensures the rapists' death after they take refuge in the meat lockers and freeze. The most crucial aspect of the tornado is that it is very selective in destroying since no one else is injured or died, and no property is destroyed. The freezer is found locked from the outside, and the event is considered "a tornado's freak whim" (Erdrich 30). Although the inhabitants of Argus do not hold Fleur responsible

for the tornado, it is through Pauline's narration the reader can establish a connection between the tornado's weird characteristics and Fleur's magical ability.

Tracks begin with Nanapush's description of the death of a significant number of his family members and tribal people in the winter of 1912 due to an illness brought by white people. The realistic depiction of the infection and its consequences are mingled with magical beliefs and the presence of ghosts who patrol the forest of the tribe. The tribal police have strictly been instructed by the white government to burn down the houses of people who died by consumption with their dead bodies inside, denying them a proper burial and thus insulting their tribal culture. Although Pukwan, a member of the tribal police, travels to the Pillagers' residence to accomplish government order, which clashes with a proper traditional burial, the house magically remains intact. It also seems to him that it is the angry and dissatisfied spirits of the Pillagers that saved their residence from burning down. Erdrich writes, "He … tried to burn down the house. But though he threw kerosene repeatedly against the logs and even started a blaze with birchbark and chips of wood, the flames narrowed and shrank, went out in puffs of smoke" (3). There is no logical explanation for why the Pillagers' residence cannot be burnt, but the event is crucial for many reasons. It helps us have an idea about the magical powers of the Pillagers. It also shows the inability of Pakwan and the colonizers to demolish Pillagers' residences along with their dead bodies and his realization that the Pillagers' more powerful magical scheme is at work to challenge his constant attempt to make and maintain power. Despite being dead, it is the Pillagers' magical power that challenges and wins, albeit temporarily, over the colonizers. It also shows Pakwan being torn between two ideological conflicts: his official duties and his respect for tribal culture. If readers look at the event more closely, they can realize that Pakwan's conflicting behavior is part of a much larger problem. If the US government had not forcefully imposed any law on the tribal people or if the European colonizers had not brought any fatal disease to the Natives, Pakwan would not have been forced to burn dead bodies instead of giving them a traditional Indian burial. This scene also shows the way the evil colonial venture destroys the cultural integrity of a tribe and turns the tribal people against one another.

Right after the abortive attempt to burn the Pillagers' residence, the death of Pakwan is narrated in such a matter-of-fact manner that it is considered a straight result of the curse of the Pillagers': "[He] came home, crawled into bed, and took no food from that moment until his last breath passed" (4).

Fleur's resistance to colonial authority through magic is also evident in the scene in which the tribal agent who visits her to collect the fee for the allocations of the land given to her by the government loses his mental sanity and is heard to be living in the forest: "He went out there, got lost, spent a whole night following moving lights and lamps of people who would not answer him, but talked and laughed among themselves. … the next thing we heard, he was living in the woods and eating roots, gambling with ghosts" (Erdrich 9). Although the reader gets a story based on reality—collecting fees on land allocation and a real treaty, the 'Dawes Act'—the passage highlights supernatural issues or events such as ghosts or spirits of dead tribal ancestors. The act of driving away the colonial agent and later slowly driving him mad demonstrates the magical power of the Pillagers, having the ability to secure the familial and tribal future and to resist colonial power. By continuing shamanistic traditions and keeping the tribal rituals alive, Fleur becomes an advocate of the faith, antiquity, and heritage of her tribe.

In *Tracks*, the blending of the supernatural and the real gradually becomes problematic in Pauline's narration because of her constant untrustworthiness as a narrator. As a multifaceted and ambivalent character, Pauline transgresses different borders: between Indigenous and colonizers, supernatural and ordinary, regeneration and decay, and between stability and madness. Pauline is someone who never fits in her tribal community and is more interested in Western civilization, and by being converted to Christianity, she frees herself from her traditional beliefs. In the course of the novel, Pauline starts losing her mental sanity, which begins with her magical interaction with the deceased. At the death of the girl she has been taking care of, Pauline feels excited, elevated, and emancipated and considers it her future responsibility to support people to reach the world after death. Pauline's meeting is depicted in a magical realist manner, and her freedom is represented by her thrilling journey:

> If I took off my shoes, I would rise into the air . . . I tore leaves off a branch and stuffed them into my mouth to smother laughter. The wind shook in the trees. The sky hardened to light. And that is when . . . my wings raked the air, and I rose in three powerful beats and saw what lay below. They were stupid and small. (Erdrich 68)

The question or doubt that the event can be hallucinatory is strongly dismissed by the sheer height and smooth body of the tree, making it almost impossible for any human being to reach it. Although people are shocked to find her in such a high tree, she is not at all astonished as she can clearly remember the way she reached the top of the tree. However, since Pauline is considered an unreliable narrator and the entire scene is described through her words, it is also possible that the incident is a part of her hallucination.

The hunting scene where Nanapush spiritually guides Eli to accomplish his task is a remarkable instance of Erdrich's magical realist technique to blur the borders between two opposing realms and to magically connect two men over a great distance. This scene also clearly shows the communal aspect of magic: the way magic can guide and assist community people in danger and unite them. In the rough winter of 1917, Eli's journey to the North with his gun to get some food is paralleled to Nanapush's act of performing rites in his cabin to help Eli in his hunt. Nanapush's shamanistic rituals, where he calls his magical helpers through chanting, empower Eli and enable him to come with a sufficient amount of meat: "I began to sing slowly, calling on my helpers until the words came from my mouth but were not mine until the rattle started, the song sang itself, and there, in the deep, bright drifts, I saw the tracks of Eli's snowshoes clearly" (Erdrich 101). With the assistance of his magical helpers, Nanapush gains the power to observe Eli's activities, to read his mind, and thus to pass instructions. It is Nanapush's mysteriously conveyed directions that help Eli kill the animal, and it is his drumbeats that enable the exhausted Eli to return home. In this outstanding occurrence, the spiritual and the mundane world fuse, and the spatial distance and the borders between human beings become blurred and ultimately disappear. The spiritual assistance enables the tribal people like Eli to survive the hardship and thus poses a threat to colonial authorities.

Magical realism can challenge or doubt the traditional notions of time and space. As Faris opines, "Magical realism reorients … our habits of time and space [and] our sense of identity …" (*Ordinary Enchantments* 25). By writing from within two literary traditions—the Western and the Indian—, Erdrich merges two different and confronting concepts of time: the Western linear concept of time and the Indian cyclical and fragmentary concept of time. In discussing the Native sense of time over the Western sense, Paula G. Allen asserts that the conventional Native notion of time is timeless and ritualistic. She also opines that rather than being founded on industrial, religious, or agricultural orderings, tribal ideas about the nature of reality are what give rise to their achronological sense of time. While time in the industrialized West is based on machinery, Indian time is based on ceremonies (150). The chronological and linear organization of Western time supports the separation of individuals from the environment and God. In *Tracks*, the inclusion of flashbacks, digression, and intertwined dream imagery challenges and defies the conventional chronological notion of time and challenges Western colonial authority. The chronological event depicted between 1912 and 1924 later turns into a mythical notion of time. The non-linear notion of time is created by giving titles to the chapters and years about natural seasons and elements in both European and Native languages. The supernatural scenes like Eli's moose hunt, Fleur's conjuring a tornado in Argus, Pakwan's inability to burn the Pillagers' house, and his strange death are all temporarily taken out of time and put in a mythological domain. Just like time, space, too, is placed in a mythical dimension. The dark, holy space of the forests, which is patrolled and controlled by ancestors' ghosts, is starkly contrasted with the Western modes of sophisticated spaces like schools, churches, and offices where Western identity is prioritized and native identity is subjugated and ultimately made extinct. Erdrich's novel chronicles the final resistance against the conquering of the Native lands by government and lumber companies, pointing to a culture and tradition on the verge of extinction. The novel is thus not wholly a triumphant portrayal of the tribal people but rather the description of their decaying final days, which is hinted at by Nanapush's account of the wasting away of the tribal land, life, and culture.

Magical realism has often been associated with the concept of the grotesque and the carnivalesque. In his research on Rabelai's

work, Bakhtin places grotesque realism, which features exaggeration and humiliation, at a significant point in time when traditional culture, humor, and oral customs begin to wane (Bakhtin 18). Robert Morace associates Bakhtin's carnivalesque with Native American culture in Erdrich's novel. Since the carnivalesque attempts to dissolve hierarchies and prohibitions of an official system, it has the potential to represent the struggle between colonized traditions and colonizing supremacy (36-37). Like magical realism (at the same time as an instrument of magical realism), the carnivalesque is also inspired by our necessity to transgress borders and turn the world or established notions upside down. In *Tracks*, Fleur's colleague Lily becomes involved in a fierce fight with a snoozing sow, which is depicted in grotesque terms:

> Their steps picked up pace and went wild. The two dipped as one, box-stepped, tripped one another. She ran her split foot through his hair. He grabbed her kinked tail. They went down and came up the same shape and then the same color until the men couldn't tell one from the other. (Erdrich 25)

In this terrible fight, the boundaries between men and animals dissolve, and they become one. Although this comic scene contrasts the next scene of Fleur's brutal rape, to some extent, the inflicted violence on the animal body (the sow) substitutes the sexual violence of Fleur.

The association between the carnivalesque and Native American literature can particularly be drawn through laughter and trickster figures. In analyzing contemporary Native American novels through the Bakhtinian lens, Alan Velie describes trickster figures as "Footloose, amoral drifters with strong appetites for women and wine, they play tricks, are the victim of tricks, are callous and irresponsible, but essentially sympathetic to the reader" (122). In Native American culture, trickster figures are characterized by the ability to change physical form and to use bawdy humor. Representing both good and bad, trickster figures break established rules, challenge norms and traditions, dissolve boundaries and hierarchies, and "survive to build a new world on the ashes of the old" (Gross 49). Nanapush is a legendary trickster figure in *Tracks* whose name has been taken from Anishinabe trickster, "*nanapush or nanibozhu*" (Owens 212). Nanapush's name mirrors his trickster nature because "it's got to do with trickery and living in the bush" (Erdrich 33). His strong sense of humor, both gentle

and vulgar, clearly associates him with a trickster figure as Paul Radin states, "[l]aughter, humor and irony permeate everything Trickster does" (x). For example, when Nanapush invites an impassive Eli to share food with him, he wants him [Eli] to "see for himself that the meat in the pot was only one poor gopher that should have hibernated while it could" (Erdrich 96). Nanapush also possesses supernatural and healing abilities, with the healing scene of Fleur after her miscarriage being one of the greatest examples of it. Although Nanapush's act of putting his hands in boiling water without getting burnt is later explained by the fact that he has used ingredients made of herbs in his hands, the magic lies in his coming across this healing method in his dreams. By stressing Pauline's effort to execute the identical trick, chanting in Latin (the language of the Catholic) and getting severely burnt, Erdrich shows the conflict between both Native and colonial practices, and by highlighting the Native superiority, she thus poses a challenge to colonial authority and their practices. Here, magic is shown to be empowering for the Natives.

Through a mocking and disparaging treatment of Pauline, Erdrich links the trickster activities with the grotesque, as Bakhtin considers humiliation to be typical of the grotesque (21). Through the humiliation process, everything lofty and heavenly is brought down to the earthly level, exactly what Nanapush has done to expose Pauline's double standards. By offering Pauline a different type of tea and by cutting several obscene jokes, Nanapush performs a brutal joke in a trickster fashion and makes her embarrassed. Bakhtin says again, "laughter degrades and materializes" (20), and carnival laughter is distinctive because of its enduring and indispensable connection with freedom (89). The collective laughter caused by Nanapush's treatment of Pauline can thus be considered a resistance against the invading Catholic belief of the colonizers: (crude) humor is a survival technique for Native Americans. Highlighting the role of humor in the life and literature of the Native, Erdrich says in an interview that it's another perspective on the world, far from the cliché of the stoic, unwavering Indian standing and gazing at the sun (Coltelli 46). It can be surmised that Erdrich is emphasizing an alternative worldview and reality, highlighting the significance of Native beliefs and culture.

Rewriting History and Reclaiming the Past

Nancy J. Peterson emphasizes the parallel progression of history and the narrative(s) in *Tracks,* where she discusses the colonial invasion, diseases, treaties between the government and the tribes, and many other documents to verify various occurrences in the novel. She considers it to be crucial for Erdrich, particularly for Nanapush, to give history a tribal identity and to rewrite history from the viewpoints of the tribe by renaming various historical events and accounts (985). Nanapush seems to be aware of the significance of naming and renaming in the case of ownership and identity, which is evident from his act of passing down his alternative (hi)story to his granddaughter, Lulu. His statement to Lulu —"'Nanapush is a name that loses power every time that it is written and stored in a government file'" (Erdrich 32)— suggests that the tribal people's authority over their land decreases with every time their lands and people are documented by the government. In the same essay, Peterson also stresses the impact of the use of oral storytelling and the way two opposing and incompatible frames of reference are established in the novel: one is associated with oral tradition, an episodic approach to history, and "a pre-contact culture": the other is tied to visual tradition, a linear approach to history and "a post-contact culture" (986). However, Erdrich neither prefers one over the other nor does the novel begin with an oral depiction of actions and ends with a direct, textual one. The novel rather moves through these two representations just the same way characters float between acculturation and preservation of tribal culture, simultaneously belonging to both and neither.

In magical realist narrative, magical events take place in a realistic framework. Although the realistic description of man and society in *Tracks* emphasizes its socio-political dimension, the employment of the magical realist technique challenges traditional orders and notions and proves prolifically effective. Erdrich's depiction of 'Turcot Company' and the destruction of an entire forest to be economically benefitted brings back to our mind the 'Banana Company Massacre' in Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* where to create a sense of collective amnesia,

neither of the brutal events is included in official history. Just like Márquez and Rushdie, Erdrich also wants to let the whole world know the damage of tribal heritage caused by the white colonizers and thus comes up with a marginalized version of history. The destruction of the ancient forest, a place where the Natives bury their dead ancestors on tall trees and which is patrolled by the ancestors' ghosts, stands for the disappearance of the entire tribe. Fleur, who is the last resident of this ancient forest, finally leaves her area amid a magical metamorphosis of nature. It is Nanapush's magical communication with his departed family members that helps him enter the kingdom of the dead and absorb himself in the past.

In a final powerful act of resistance against colonial power, Fleur summons a magical whirlwind that uproots the trees and thus frightens timber company people. The ultimate magical wind, which knocks down trees on the company people and takes revenge for Fleur's death, can easily be related to the scene in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, where the tornado destroys Macondo. The final cyclone is foreshadowed in Nanapush's narrative, which becomes real at the end, announcing the death of both the forest and the tribe: "I stood in a birch forest of tall, straight trees. I was one among many in a shelter of strength and beauty. Suddenly, a loud report, thunder, and they toppled down like matchsticks . . . I was the only one left standing" (127). Fleur offers the last resistance to the invading foreign ideas, and although, in the end, she has to leave the Pillagers' territory, she walks away victorious against colonial forces. Nanapush, the only survivor, opposes the colonizer's legal method to reclaim, revise, and rewrite his tribal history.

Conclusion

Tracks ends with an optimistic tone in the Native's struggle against the white invasion of land and culture. Magical realism in *Tracks* draws a parallel between magic and Native American beliefs, values, and traditions. Magic is undoubtedly an inherent part of Native American spiritual reality, a means of going beyond the Western discourse of realist truth. Erdrich equips her female character Fleur with magical means so that she can avenge her rape and challenge and attack white culture or

any colonial instrument or agent that aims to destroy her Native culture. Fleur's lonely battle against patriarchy and white invasion provides the novel with a political tone and thus establishes the proposition that magical realism is firmly anchored in social, cultural, and political reality. Interestingly, Erdrich includes the grotesque and the carnivalesque to assist magical realism in tackling dominant power structures and in turning established beliefs or ideas upside down. Through Nanapush's trickster characteristics and magical healing abilities, Erdrich highlights Native superiority and, therefore, poses a challenge to colonial authority and their practices. By providing her Native characters a voice through magic and local rituals, Erdrich enables them to rewrite history from their viewpoints, giving history a tribal identity.

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