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ECHOES OF THE SACRED: CULTURAL MEMORY, RESISTANCE, AND THE RECONSTRUCTION OF NATIVE AMERICAN IDENTITY IN LOUISE ERDRICH'S *THE PAINTED DRUM*

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Abstract

This article examines the role of sacred objects in the reconstruction of Indian identity in *The Painted Drum* by Louise Erdrich. The novel centers on a ceremonial Ojibwe drum whose history unfolds through interconnected narratives spanning multiple generations. Far from being a simple artifact, the drum functions as a powerful symbol of cultural continuity, spiritual presence, and collective memory within Native American traditions. Leaning on Gerald Vizenor's concept of survivance, Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial theory of hybridity, and Jan Assmann's notion of cultural memory, it explores how Erdrich uses the drum as a narrative and symbolic device to reconnect individuals with their ancestral heritage. The analysis demonstrates that sacred objects in the novel serve as communal memory that preserve Indians histories and spiritual traditions across generations. The drum, thus, embodies a form of cultural resistance against colonial narratives that historically attempt to suppress Native American traditions. By transmitting stories, ceremonies, and collective memories, the drum enables the characters to reclaim their cultural identity and reconnect with their community and ancestors. Ultimately, *The Painted Drum* shows how sacred objects function as sites of memory and instruments of resistance, allowing Indigenous communities to resist cultural erasure and reaffirm the continuity of their traditions in contemporary society. Through its emphasis on storytelling and symbolic artifacts, Erdrich's novel highlights the enduring resilience and vitality of Native American cultural identity.

Keywords: Sacred objects, Cultural memory, Resistance, Reconstruction, Native American, Identity

Résumé

Cet article examine le rôle des objets sacrés dans la reconstruction de l'identité Amérindienne dans *The Painted Drum* de Louise Erdrich. Le roman est centré sur un tambour cérémoniel Ojibwé dont l'histoire se déploie à travers des récits interconnectés couvrant plusieurs générations. Loin d'être un simple artefact, le tambour agit comme un puissant symbole de continuité culturelle, de présence spirituelle et de mémoire collective au sein des traditions amérindiennes. S'appuyant sur les cadres théoriques du concept de survivance de Gerald Vizenor, de la théorie postcoloniale de l'hybridité de Homi K. Bhabha et de la notion de mémoire culturelle de Jan Assmann, l'étude explore la manière dont Erdrich utilise le tambour comme dispositif narratif et symbolique pour reconnecter les individus à leur héritage ancestral. L'analyse montre que les objets sacrés dans le roman servent de réceptacles de mémoire communautaire, préservant les histoires et traditions spirituelles à travers les générations. Le tambour, incarne ainsi une forme de résistance culturelle face aux récits coloniaux qui ont historiquement cherché à éradiquer les traditions amérindiennes. En transmettant des histoires, des cérémonies et des mémoires collectives, le tambour permet aux personnages de réclamer leur identité culturelle et de rétablir des liens avec leur communauté et leurs ancêtres. Finalement, *The Painted Drum* illustre comment les objets sacrés peuvent fonctionner comme des sites de mémoire et des instruments de survivance et de résistance, permettant aux communautés autochtones de résister à l'effacement culturel et de réaffirmer la continuité de leurs traditions dans la société contemporaine. À travers son accent mis sur le récit et les artefacts symboliques, le roman d'Erdrich met en lumière la résilience et la vitalité durables de l'identité culturelle amérindienne.

Mots-clés : Objets sacrés, Mémoire culturelle, Résistance, Reconstruction, Identité, Amérindienne

INTRODUCTION

Native Americans' history was marked by centuries of submission, land dispossession, and cultural marginalization. Writers and scholars of this community such as, Geary Hobson, Gerald Vizenor, Jace Weaver, Paula Gunn Allen, and Louise Erdrich to name but a few, use literature as a space to revisit this dark and traumatic period. They seek to support Native people's struggle to be self-defining, to have representational autonomy, and to reject outside view predicates through literature.

Paula Gunn Allen (Laguna Pueblo) Indian alludes to this intellectual awakening as "a willingness of lost Indians to identify themselves, to restore Indian dignity, culture, and tradition" (*The Sacred Hoop*, 1992, p. x). She even qualifies actions of white colonizers as : "[a] genocide practiced against the tribes aimed systematically at the dissolution of ritual traditions. This has included prohibition of ceremonial practices, christianization [that has] enforced loss of languages, reeducation of tribal people" (*The Sacred Hoop*, 1992, 195). She clarifies her opinion by considering storytelling as a way to restoring Indian dignity:

Since the coming of the Anglo-Europeans ... the fragile web of identity that long held tribal people secure has gradually been weakened and torn. But the oral tradition has prevented the complete destruction of the web, the ultimate disruption of tribal ways. The oral tradition is vital ; it heals itself and the tribal web by adapting to the flow of the present while never relinquishing its connection to the past (*The Sacred Hoop*, 1992, 45).

Geary Hobson a (Cherokee) Indian admits that :

Literature, in all its forms, oral as well as written, is our, [Indian] most durable way of carrying on [Indian People] continuance. By making literature, like the singers and storytellers of the earlier times, we [Indian writers and scholars] serve the people as well as ourselves in an abiding sense of remembrance (Hobson in Jace Weaver, 1997, 51).

He incites Indian writers to perpetuate and to remember their ancestors' cultural norms, values, and traditions through their literary productions.

Gerald Vizenor an (Anishinaabe) Indian also exhibits the willing of American Indians to counter the whiteman's domination and to rehabilitate their collective cultural identity through literature. He contends that : "The postindian warriors encounter their enemies with the same courage in literature as their ancestors once evince on horses, and they create their stories with a new sense of survivance"(Vizenor, 1994, p.4). The statement sees Indians literary productions as a commitment in the fight for their restoration as a distinguished people. In the same vein, Jace Weaver (Cherokee Indian) puts :

writing prepares the ground for recovery, and even recreation, of Indian identity and culture. Native writers speak to that part of us that the colonial power and the dominant culture cannot reach, cannot touch. They help Indian imagine themselves as Indians.” (Jace Weaver, 1997, 53).

Weaver reveals that literary productions as the means for Native American to rehabilitate their cultural identity and tradition collective memory. It is through writing Native American reveal to themselves their true identity, what the colonial system intends to hide.

Louise Erdrich (Ojibwe), one of these intellectuals, constructs in her book *The Painted Drum*, a narrative on the sacred ceremonial drum. The story unfolds through multiple interconnected voices and generations. The drum reveals as a key symbolic motif embodying spiritual significance, communal memory, and the enduring presence of indigenous culture. The book explores the complexities of Native American identity, history, and cultural continuity. It also reveals as a powerful vision of how cultural continuity is preserved and renewed among the Ojibwe Indian people. Rather than portraying cultural identity as something static or lost, Erdrich sees it as dynamic, resilient, and transmitted across generations through memory, storytelling, and sacred objects.

This article tries to answer the following major question: how does Louise Erdrich’s work utilize the sacred drum as a multifaceted symbol to reconstruct Native American identity through cultural memory, resistance, and survivance? This question raises three sub-questions which, in fact, constitute the core of my argumentation. First, how does the drum functions as a repository of Ojibwe cultural memory, preserving ancestral stories and countering historical erasure? Second, how do the acts of repatriation and reclamation of the drum exemplify the Natives’ resistance against cultural theft and assimilation? Third, how do the characters try to reconstruct their fragmented identity?

Drawing on Gerald Vizenor’s concept of survivance, Homi Bhabha’s postcolonial theory of hybridity, and Jan Assmann’s idea of cultural memory, the article demonstrates how the drum functions simultaneously as a spiritual symbol, a repository of collective memory, and an instrument of cultural resistance. The article is designed into three sections. The first section introduces the drum as a repository of Ojibwe cultural memory, preserving ancestral stories and countering historical erasure. The second section echoes resistance against cultural theft and assimilation. The last section is about the reconstruction of fragmented identity. A reconstruction assured through hybridity, storytelling, and survivance.

1. THE DRUM, A REPOSITORY OF OJIBWE CULTURAL MEMORY

Erdrich's *The Painted Drum* presents the drum as more than a sacred object. It is a repository of Ojibwe cultural memory, embodying ancestral knowledge, spiritual continuity, and communal identity. The drum functions as a living archive through which memory is preserved, transmitted, and reactivated. Drawing on Jan Assmann's concept of cultural memory, the drum resists colonial erasure by maintaining connections between past and present. Through storytelling, spiritual symbolism, and communal restoration, Erdrich transforms the drum into a dynamic site of memory and identity reconstruction.

Jan Assmann believes that, as cultural phenomenon, memory is always social conditioning. As the basis of human history and culture, it can never be only individual, but must be collective (Vladimir V. Zhdanov, 2020, p.216). The role of the memory is to preserve the history and culture of the community. Hence, the concept of collective cultural memory. Assmann argues that "In cultural memory, the past is not simply preserved but is reconstructed in a way that makes it meaningful for the present" (Assmann, 2011, p. 38).

In *The Painted Drum*, cultural memory is embodied by a list of Indian traditional objects mentioned by the narrator: "There are a lustrous, black, double-barrelled Maria Martinez wedding vase; an Ojibwe cradle board, the wrap intricately beaded on velvet; three very fine Navajo rugs; a bandolier bag that was probably carried by the last Ojibwe war leader, Buganogizhig; a few seed pots; several shaved-quill boxes; and some heavy old silver and turquoise" (*The Painted Drum*, p. 32) or "a cradle board, large birch-bark winnowing baskets, a bead-worked footstool, a drum, ... moccasins, leggings, beaded ceremonial breech clout, a vest, and two bandolier bags... small purses, a band for headdress from which the feathers are removed, tobacco pouches, woven carrying straps and reed mats" (*The Painted Drum*, 38). All these objects embody Ojibwe Indians' cultural memory. They preserve not only their traditional past but also provide meaning to their present life. Through these objects, they discover and reconnect to their ancestral cultural identity.

When the narrator discovers all these objects, she admits that they represent her people's past and that these objects certainly reconnect them with that past they ignore: "They [these objects] are in [Indian] line, probably reveal that [Indian] are more captive to [their] background than [they] admit" (*The Painted Drum*, p. 32). The discovery of these objects allows her to reconnect to her ancestors' cultural heritage. Indeed, cultural heritage, according to Erin Linn Tynen, amounts to "[being] intangible and tangible, is a representation of the past. It consists

of objects, buildings, statues, or sites to which individuals and communities in the present ascribe meaning and significance” (2020, p. 261).

Among all these objects which represent Indian cultural heritage, the narrator pinpoints the painted drum as a powerful symbol of cultural memory and spiritual continuity within Ojibwe tradition. The drum, in this circumstance, is not merely a musical instrument; it is portrayed as a living archive that preserves ancestral stories, trauma, and communal identity. It is the symbol of the collective memory of the community and embodies its history, grief, and communal resilience. Through its story and movement across generations, Erdrich demonstrates that cultural memory can be preserved through symbolic objects. The narrator reflects on the drum’s significance. Therefore, it is clear that “the drum was made from sorrow, yet it carried within it the power to call people back to themselves” (*The Painted Drum*, p. 172). This statement emphasizes its role as a vessel that transforms individual suffering into collective cultural predicament.

The drum’s story reinforces its role as a container of emotional and historical memory. It is created in response to profound loss, embedding grief into its structure. This is revealed by the narrator when she states that “the drum was made for a purpose that was never forgotten” (*The Painted Drum*, p. 72). The drum is not created accidentally; it is intended to preserve a specific memory and to transform personal sorrow into collective sadness.

The drum does not store memory passively; it activates it through storytelling. Its presence calls forth narratives that reconnect individuals to their cultural heritage. Faye Travers, for instance, reflects on hers in the following terms: “I found myself drawn into stories I did not fully understand” (*The Painted Drum*, p. 118). The drum also initiates a process of rediscovery, pulling Faye into a network of stories that reconnect her to Ojibwe identity. In Jan Assmann’s terms, this reflects the performative nature of memory: it must be retold and re-experienced to remain alive. The drum, additionally, embodies spiritual memory, linking the living world with that of the dead. It carries not only stories but also sacred energy. This echoes in the narrative through evocation of sound and resonance: “The sound seemed to come from far away and yet from within” (*The Painted Drum*, p.156). The duality of ‘far away’ and ‘within’ bridges past and present, external and internal. The drum, in a final analysis, reveals as a medium through which ancestral voices are heard and felt. In so doing, it helps resist cultural theft and assimilation.

2. RESISTANCE TO CULTURAL THEFT AND ASSIMILATION

The Painted Drum explores cultural theft through the displacement of Ojibwe sacred objects. The drum itself symbolizes the removal, commodification, and alienation of Indian culture and its community. It is found in the house of an “Indian agent,” a figure historically associated with colonial control and appropriation. This reflects the broader colonial process where Ojibwe artifacts were taken and stripped of meaning: “The connection between Tatoo and the reservation is also of interest because it wasn’t uncommon for Indian agents to amass extensive collection of artifacts” (*The Painted Drum*, p. 30). The objective of Indians artifacts collection aimed at dislocating ritual traditions living system. That breaking of Indian’s living tradition, quickly disorients them, and favors the fragmentation of the community. The outcome of community fragmentation, was easy and quick assimilation in western model of living. It is that fact Paul Gunn Allen alludes as: “the genocide practiced against the tribes [that] aimed systematically at the dissolution of ritual traditions” (*The Sacred Hoop*, 1992, p.195).

Assimilation policies are embodied by the character of Faye Travers. She is disconnected from her Ojibwe heritage and initially rejects Indigenous systems of belief as reveals in the narratives: “[She is] not a sentimental person and [she does] not believe old things hold the life of people” (*The Painted Drum*, p. 39). Indeed, Faye’s attitude regarding Indians’ spiritual belief has been reshaped by colonial ideology which has categorized indigenous cultures as sub-cultures. Faye believes that “some people believe objects absorb something of their owner’s essence. [A belief] she does not trust” (*The Painted Drum*, p. 39). The denial or rejection of her native culture alludes to colonial epistemology that separates materialism from spirituality, contrary to Indian worldviews where objects are deeply in connection with human beings life. Cultural theft, in this context, involves the imposition of a worldview that negates Indians perceptions.

Assimilation operates in the novel through the character Faye Travers who is disconnected from her Indian heritage. As a woman of Ojibwe descent raised within a predominantly white cultural framework, she initially occupies a position of estrangement from her roots. Her description of her environment reflects this position. “This is where we live, my mother and I, just the road begins to tangle” (*The Painted Drum*, p. 4). The metaphor of the “tangle road” suggests confusion and fragmentation, capturing the psychological effects of living between two cultural worlds. This condition resonates with Homi K. Bhabha’s hybrid concept, where identity is constructed in an in-between space that is both constraining and potentially changeable.

Paradoxically, the act of stealing the drum is an act of resistance and even of survivance. The narrator's stealing of the drum is an act of defiance against the colonial rules and laws. He contends: "it seems to me, as I am lying in the dark of my room, that my instinctive theft signifies a matter so essential that it might be called survival. I have stepped out of rules and laws and am breathing thin, new air" (*The Painted Drum*, p. 44). By rejecting colonial laws, Faye both resists and challenges colonial authority. In this perspective, her attitude reflects what Gerald Vizenor calls survivance, that is to say, "an active sense of presence, the continuance of native stories, not a mere reaction, or a survivable name. Native survivance stories are renunciation of dominance, tragedy, and victimry. Survivance means the right of succession or reversion" (*Manifest Manners*, 1999, vii). Faye's action is not merely a personal emancipation but part of a large process of cultural reclaiming. The displacement of the drum echoes the resilience of Ojibwe Indian culture. Its recovery signals the possible restoration of what has been lost.

Resistance is not only physical but also narrative and cultural. The recovery of the drum leads to the re-connection to stories and cultural memory through storytelling. In the novel, storytelling plays the crucial role of preserving and transmitting cultural memory. The narrative structure, which interweaves multiple voices and temporalities, reflects the oral tradition of Native communities. Faye's role as a narrator underscores the importance of recording and connecting stories. She states: "We haven't the overview that the dead have attained. Still, I try to at least record connections" (*The Painted Drum*, p. 5). This act of "recording connections" aligns with Jan Assmann's theory of cultural memory, which emphasizes the transmission of knowledge through collective narratives. In this context of colonial disruption, storytelling becomes a form of resistance to counters erasure.

The return of the drum to the Ojibwe community embodies the culmination of the novel's exploration of resistance. It is not simply a reversal of cultural theft but a process of healing and re-connection. The drum's power lies in its ability to "bring together those who possessed those songs... [and]...fit the scraps together" (*The Painted Drum*, p. 250). The metaphor of "fitting the scraps together" suggests the reconstruction of fragmented identities and histories. The drum facilitates a collective healing process and restores the relationships between individuals, communities, and traditions. Resistance, in this sense, is not all about opposition to colonial forces but about reconstructing what has been destroyed. It implies the reestablishment of cultural continuity and the reaffirmation of communal bonds.

From another perspective, the drum's displacement represents the interruption of cultural memory through colonial appropriation. Its recovery, therefore, becomes an act of resistance. Faye's decision to take the drum reflects this shift as she argues: "I could not leave it there, as though it had no story" (*The Painted Drum*, p. 140). The refusal to abandon the drum is a refusal to accept cultural erasure. By acknowledging that the drum "has a story", Faye recognizes its role as a repository of memory. This act aligns with broader Indian resistance to the commodification of sacred objects. The drum, therefore, must be returned to its cultural context to fulfill its function.

When the drum is reintegrated into Ojibwe community, it facilitates the reconstruction of fragmented identities. The narrative suggests this restorative power: "things once scattered began to gather again" (*The Painted Drum*, p. 233). The drum gathers dispersed histories, emotions, and identities, enabling a process of healing. Memory, in this sense, is not static but reconstructive. It allows individuals and communities to reassemble themselves in the aftermath of colonial disruption.

Ira, a character of the novel, continues traditional crafts and lifestyles. Through her acts, she embodies another form of resistance. She asserts that "[she] sell[s] [her] beadwork and stuff. If [she] moved into town, [she] guess [she] could do pretty well" (*The Painted Drum*, p. 211). Ira's choice to remain connected to her cultural practices despite economic pressures reflects a commitment to cultural continuity. This form of resistance, though subtle, is powerful and shows that survival often depends on the persistence of daily traditions. Such practices defy the logic of assimilation by maintaining alternative ways of living and knowing.

3. RECONSTRUCTING THE FRAGMENTED IDENTITY: HYBRIDITY AND STORYTELLING

In this section of the article, Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity and the third space, Gerald Vizenor's notion of survivance and Jan Assmann's theory of cultural memory serve as tools to elaborate on the reconstruction of American Indians' fragmented identity. In *The Painted Drum*, through the representation of characters like Faye Travers and Bernard Shaowano, Erdrich presents identity as something dynamic rather than fixed. Thus, Native American identity fractured by colonial history can be reconstructed through collective memory, storytelling and spiritual re-connection. Ultimately, the novel suggests that American Indian identity survives and evolves through resilience and cultural continuity.

Euro-American colonial legacy has profoundly impacted Native American identity, fragmenting it through displacement, force assimilation, and cultural suppression. At the very

beginning of the book, Native identity appears fragmented and disconnected. Faye Travers appears disconnected and fragmented from her Native self. She approaches objects from white perspective, arguing that: “[She is] not a ... person [who] believe old things hold the life of people. Some people believe objects absorb something of their owner’s essence. [She] I stay clearly [out] of that [perception] (*The Painted Drum*, 39). This perception is totally different from Indians’ connection to things that surround them. Vine Deloria Jr. echoes such vision when she argues that “Such thinking ignores the deep spiritual relationships that Indians cultures maintain with the word around them” (*God is Red*, p. 55). In this sense, fragmentation is not only cultural but also psychological. The character Faye is disconnected from her past, her ancestral traditions, and even from herself.

Yet, Travers’ disconnection from her tradition is not for a long term. Her perception that objects do not absorb their owner’s essence is quickly deconstructed, when she steps near the drum. Indeed, she acknowledges that when she comes close to the drum, it sounds without being beaten and that the sound she hears reconnect her to it. As she argues: “when I step near the drum, I swear it sounds. One deep, low, resonant note. I stop dead still, staring at the drum. I hear it, I know I hear it, and yet Sarah Tatro does not.” (*The Painted Drum*, p. 39) Obviously, Sarah is unable to hear the sound of the drum because she can not be spiritually connected to it as she is not of Indian origin. Conversely, Faye Travers hears the sound of the drum, because of her Indian essence. As such, she become automatically absorbed and spiritually connected to the drum.

Another interesting approach that helps understand Native Americans’ identity reconstruction in *The Painted Drum* is Homi Bhabha’s concept of hybridity. Bhabha explains that “hybridity creates new cultural meanings” (Homi K. Bhabha, 1994, p. 113). Faye Travers clearly represents this aspect in the novel. Her transformation begins when she encounters the drum and makes the unexpected decision to take it. She recognizes: “I have stepped out of rules and laws and am breathing thin, new air” (*The Painted Drum*, p. 44). This moment, for Faye, is crucial. She steps outside the rigid structures of the western legality and enters what Bhabha calls the “third space”, a place of uncertainty but also of possibility, a place where identity is no longer fixed but flexible and opened to change. Faye does not simply adopt an Indian identity; instead, she develops a hybrid sense of herself in both worlds.

Faye Travers’ spiritual connection to the drum suddenly raises a sense of hybridity. Also Faye gives human attributes to the drum:

The Head of the drum glares out, huge, three feet across at least. ... it is intricately decorated, with beaded belt, skirt,... They are abstract but seem to represent a girl, a

hand ... One the face of the drum ... the red-flowered skirts, the tinkles, combined with the size of the drum, give it an unusual sense of both power and sweetness (*The Painted Drum*, pp. 39-40).

Through this personification, Faye elevates the drum to a status of human being. Though a spiritual tool, it connects generations to one another and helps preserve the collective tribal memory to pass on. This spiritual representation of the drum is later revealed to Faye by her mother Elsie when she contends that:

The drum is the universe. The people who take their place at each side represent the spirits who sit at the four directions. A painted drum is a living thing and must be fed as the spirits are fed, with tobacco and a glass of water set nearby, sometimes a plate of food. (*The Painted Drum*, p. 43).

This revelation is intended to deconstruct and to psychologically cure Faye Travers from her western's materialistic worldview and to reconnect her to her ancestral traditions so that she can now feel a new sense of self.

Another powerful tool that contributes to the reconstruction of Native American identity in *The Painted Drum* is storytelling. Through storytelling, fragmented histories are pieced back together. This perception aligns to Jan Assmann's idea that "cultural memory connects individuals to a shared past" (Jan Assmann, 2011, p. 37). Storytelling is not just about remembering; it is about rebuilding identity. As Craig S. Womack argues:

Oral traditions ... performed in their cultural contexts have always been nationalistic and are told for the purpose of cultivating a political consciousness. The purpose of the stories is to inculcate a sense of [self-knowledge] creekness in Creek listeners ... what it means to be from a clan, a town, a nation... Storytelling constitutes an act of [Indian] survival. (*Red on Red*, 1999, p. 62)

In *The Painted Drum*, Bernard's stories transform loss into meaning. "Don't you think she lifted her shawl and flew?" (*The Painted Drum*, p. 117). Here, trauma is re-imagined in a way that restores dignity and spiritual significance.

Spiritual re-connection is another important element in reconstructing American Indian identity. Shawnee's survival in the snow highlights this perception. The narrative reveals: "Roused by the drum Shawnee went on until she bumped flat into a wall. She move along it and felt a Window" (*The Painted Drum*, p.217). Shawnee's survival is not just physical; it is spiritual. She is guided by something beyond herself that reflects Indians' belief in interconnections. Old Shaawano's creation of the drum explains how cultural practices sustain life: "She has given him task that was meant to keep him here upon the earth" (*The Painted Drum*, p.155). Through the creation of the drum, he transforms grief into purpose. In applying

Vizenor's perception of survivance to Erdrich's novel, the drum symbolizes this ongoing presence. The object that carries the voices of previous generations and reminds characters that their cultural traditions continue to exist despite historical disruption. The drum, therefore, embodies survivance by representing of Indigenous cultural knowledge across time.

CONCLUSION

In *The Painted Drum*, Louise Erdrich elaborates on the drum as more than a sacred object. It is a repository of Ojibwe cultural memory embodying ancestral knowledge, spiritual continuity, and communal identity. It functions as a living archive through which memory is preserved, transmitted, and reactivated. Drawing on Jan Assmann's concept of cultural memory, the drum resists colonial erasure by maintaining connections between past and present.

Resistance in the novel operates on multiple levels: the reclamation of sacred objects, the preservation of cultural memory, the persistence of storytelling, and the maintenance of traditional practices. Also, the theoretical frameworks of Gerald Vizenor, Jan Assmann and Homi K. Bhabha helped demonstrate that resistance is not merely reactive but generative. It creates spaces for healing, re-connection, and cultural renewal. The drum, as both a material object and a symbolic force, embodies Native Americans' enduring resilience.

By carefully interweaving history and culture, Louise Erdrich explores Native American identity as something broken, yet repairable. Through hybridity, storytelling, and spirituality, the characters move from fragmentation to wholeness. Through the theoretical concepts of hybridity and third space of Homi K. Bhabha, Vizenor's perception of survivance and Jan Assmann's idea of cultural memory, the article has shown that identity is not about returning to a lost past but about activating something new from it. American Indian identity is not fixed, but rather something that shifts along with time, something that is adaptable, and deeply resilient.

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