



RESEARCH PAPER

Metropolitanism, Genre Blending and Irony: Sherman Alexie's Poetics of Resistance

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ABSTRACT

This paper conducts a textual analysis of Sherman Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, *Ten Little Indians*, and *The Summer of Black Widows* to establish that Alexie disrupts discourses of both Eurocentricism and Native American tribalism through his art. Native American Literature is often studied in contexts of tribalism and modernity, but this paper showcases that Alexis blends the seemingly antagonistic demands of primitivism and modernization. He transports Native American subject from reservations to metropolitan settings and presents that actual Indian existence problematizes the textual stereotypes of 'manifest destiny' and 'vanishing Indian'. Alexie's art appears as resistance against every form of separatism that perpetuates the binary of superior white and inferior Indian subjects. He foregrounds tribe conscious metropolitanism as the viable mode of Indian survival, blends genres to articulate his dynamic vision, and employs irony to highlight the paradoxes of Native American existence.

KEYWORDS Genre Blending, Metropolitanism, Native American Literature, Sherman Alexie, Tribalism, Euroamericanism

Introduction

Sherman Alexie occupies a unique place in Native American literary tradition because his dynamic artistic vision resists compartmentalization of western and Indian cultures into static stereotypical identity boxes. This paper studies how does he reject Euroamerican universalism and Native American separatism to suggest that tribe conscious metropolitanism is the only pragmatic means of Indian survival? The paper also explores how does he promote a rational historical activism by rejecting outright radicalism against white culture? This paper investigates artistic features that Alexie employs to blend genres and invent his own literary style. Irony is the most consistent element of his artistic style and dynamic vision, and this article examines Alexie's employment of irony in relation to the paradoxes of Native American existence. Through simple ironical statements, Alexie criticizes both Western and Native versions of essentialism. This research paper intends to conduct a textual analysis of *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, *Ten Little Indians*, and *The Summer of Black Widows* to establish that Alexie presents Native American subject as a dynamic American citizen rather than a reservation ridden doomed Indian.

Literature Review

Native American Literature, entangled among myth, memory and modernity, witnesses the assertion of tribally informed metropolitanism in Sherman Alexie's poetics of resistance. He chooses popular culture, blends genres and employs ironical humor to

put forward a case of Native American resistance that investigates past, negotiates with present and delineates the possibilities of future. Native American Literatures in general and Alexie's works in particular are literatures of resistance that encapsulate Native American history, tribalism, cosmopolitanism, subalternity and sovereignty. Arnold Krupat (1995) asserts that "a very considerable number of Native people exist in conditions of politically sustained subalternity" so one must not attach the epithet of postcolonialism to Native American literature because "there is not yet a post to the colonial status of Native Americans" (p. 559). In a state of ever going subalternity, Native American writers and critics are involved in debates of sovereignty which is neither "adequately theorized" nor "practically achieved" (p. 559). Writers like Momaday and Silko, and critics like Warrior and Womack propound that a land-centered tribalism should be exercised in creative and critical thinking to attain intellectual and political sovereignty. Such approach culminates in cultural separatism that, instead of ensuring sovereignty, "leads to the hopeless project of recovering a Native essence, a project that, ironically, embraces another sort of colonial invention" (Pulitano, 2003, p. 61). Euroamerican discourses augmented by literature, anthropology, ethnography and photography, have always stressed upon establishing a Native American essence and exploited the discursively manufactured Indian essence to promote the notions of manifest destiny which claims that Indians are an inferior, static, vanishing race. For Euroamerican intelligentsia, modernity is an Indian's nightmare and the Indian cultures are vulnerable to extinction because of their essentially myopic mysticism.

Theoretical Contexts

Kent (2007) expresses that "American society has come to see Indian cultures as fixed in time" and "this static portrait denies the tradition and history of change that American Indian Cultures have always had" (p. 81). Essentialism of anthropological gaze converts Indian into museum items by systematically downgrading them to the stereotypical stature of frozen-in-time objects. Stereotypical representations of Indians in literature, popular media and press "obliterate the diversity of Native American cultures and lifestyles" (Healey, 2007, p. 314) by virtually fixating Indians into monolithic racial identity boxes. "Native Americans are often referred to more in the past than in the present, as if their present situation was of no importance or, worse, as if they no longer existed" (p. 314). Native American projection in popular literary and media productions depends more upon textual Indian essence than the actual Indian existence. Sherman Alexie's art grasps Indian existence in its actuality and stresses that an Indian's existence is his resistance because, despite the five hundred years of genocidal extermination as well as compartmentalization of Indian cultures into reservations, Native Americans are still living in metropolitan world. Alexie's world is a world of modernity, dynamics and possibilities. Instead of investing into mythical tribalism, Alexie constructs a hybrid world for his Native American subject that asserts its American individuality without losing contact with his native community. By creating a dynamic hybrid world, Alexie simultaneously resists both Euroamerican essentialism and Native American primitivism because Native American subject is a dynamic evolving American citizen and not some static vanishing doomed Indian.

Methodology

This paper is a qualitative reading of Alexie's selected works and employs Catherine Belsey's proposed research method of Textual Analysis. In her essay 'Textual Analysis as a Research Method', Belsey opines that the textual analysis of a literary text makes a reader focus upon "all the quotations that make up the text" during the "process of interpretation" (2005, pp. 162-163). We intend to read the primary texts of this research

paper to highlight those textual features that problematize stereotypical representations of Native Americans. Moreover, the analysis will be focused upon delineating Alexie's vision of a dynamic Native American existence.

Textual Analysis and Discussion

Reservation perpetuates cultural, economic and political marginalization of Native Americans as they are systematically cornered to live away from the mainstream American life. Tribalism, reserved and practiced in a reservation, cannot be a valid substitute of the modern cosmopolitan life. The image of reservation Indians doomed to remain indifferent to modernity is a stereotype contested in Alexie's works. In an interview with Joshua B. Nelson, Alexie condemns any stereotypical categorization of Indians and claims that "it's a kind of fundamentalism about Indian identity, and what Indian can be and mean, that damages Indians" (Nelson, 2010, p. 40). Arnold Spirit Junior, the protagonist in *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, goes away from the reservation where his "brain is fine" but his "balls are dying" (Alexie, 2009, p. 21). Junior decides to get modern education and his going away from the reservation resists the home-coming paradigm of Momaday's fiction. Reservation cripples Indians and confines them to the hopeless condition of emasculated tribalism. Reservation provides a hopeless home but Alexie's message in *Diary* is loud and clear: "you are going to find more and more hope the farther and farther you walk away from this sad, sad, sad reservation" (p. 43).

The contact between Indians and Europeans is traditionally read out as a tragic story of loss but Alexie's metropolitanism rejects such stereotyping and provides possibilities of a hybridized world of progress and development. Krupat (1998) argues that Native American cosmopolitan position is informed by the "recognition that long-term and persistent processes of cultural hybridization are ongoing and inevitable" and one must not read this hybridization as a "tragic narration of loss" (p. 622). Seattle in Alexie's *Ten Little Indians* "provides a common [metropolitan] space for shared humanity to materialize" dreams into reality (Ladino, 2009, p. 39). Instead of wasting away in Spokane Reservation, Corliss imitates Junior in the short story 'The Search Engine', and embarks upon her odyssey into the metropolitan world where she learns to distinguish between "white vanity...white rage...white ignorance" and "white compassion...white genius...white poetry" (Alexie, 2003, p. 14). Junior meets compassionate white Penelope at the college and Corliss learns the pleasures of solitude and poetry. Her learning as well as going straight into the metropolitan life challenges the stereotype of welfare dependent Indians who "had learned how to stand in lines for food, love, hope, sex, dreams, but they did not know how to step away" (p. 10). Corliss steps away from the stagnant reservation passivity and Alexie reconstructs an Indian's image to tell a story of gain by empowering her. Murtaza and Bhatti (2017) believe that discursive Euroamerican practices "shift [Indians] from living culture to an imaginary community non-existent in actuality" (p. 99). Alexie's art disrupts this discursive formation of fossilized Indians objects and portrays them as dynamically evolving subjects. Corliss is not going to be like Harlem Atwater who quits writing poetry after he was disillusioned by the pathetic acts of drunkard Indians. Corliss seems to be Alexie himself when she puts Atwater's book "with its front cover facing outward for all the world to see" (Alexie, 2003, p. 52) in the poetry section of the bookstore. She has a community to serve but she cannot remain stupefied in self-inflicting and self-deteriorating passivity. She must have to face the world in its actuality, as Alexie does, by leaving the Spokane reservation along with its historical baggage behind. Hafen (1997) observes that "Alexie focusses not on the tragedy but on the survival and means to survival" (p. 74). Education and employment are the actual means of survival as Alexie says in an interview, "the only way to improve our life and the life of our people is through our own individual efforts to educate ourselves and get better jobs" (Nelson, 2010, p. 43).

Junior and Corliss are not some “historical artifacts, anthropological phenomena, objects of literary theories, or simply earth’s children” (Hafen, 1997, p. 78) but responsible progressive Indians who are going to participate in and gain profit from metropolitan life.

Alexie rejects traditional Indian storytelling about myths and memories to create stories in which the Indians are embattling for survival in urban settings. He criticizes Momaday’s method of articulating Indian myths of bear and proclaims that “this adherence to the expected idea, the bear and all this imagery, I think it is dangerous and detrimental” (Purdy and Alexie, 1997, p. 08). The expected idea of Indian literature demonstrating myth, tribal rituals and stories of regeneration through Indian ceremonies does not attract Alexie and he believes that Native American Literature as well as Indians “have been stuck in place since *House Made of Dawn*” (p. 09). Alexie resists both Euroamerican and Native American essentialisms because the former imposes annihilating assimilation in form of modernism and the later celebrates separatism in guise of self-obliterating primitivism. Alexie’s way is neither assimilation nor separatism but integration into the mainstream metropolitan world without compromising his native identity. His approach is dynamic not static. He is not oblivious of colonial history of cultural extermination but does not let history handicap his sensibilities in *The Summer of Black Widows*. Instead of mourning over chaos, he is trying to seek a way out of chaos. He does not believe in Coyote myths but “trust[s] all the stories the grandmothers told [him]” (Alexie, 1996, p. 19). His skepticism against coyote but trust in grandmothers’ tales is projection of his adherence to his tribe as well as his criticism of the Indians who are situated in an irretrievable mythic past. Like Coyote, Alexis is “alone and angry” (p. 19) but instead of consuming his heart away into frantic stoicism, he multiplies his anger with imagination to ensure survival and creates an Indian rhetoric that is a direct interrogation of both European highhandedness and Indian submissiveness. Alexie’s art embraces the complexity of modern world and resists the trivializing strategies of dominant European discourses and simultaneously questions the validity of Indian primitiveness.

Alexie’s politically charged fictions and poems are a rhetoric of resistance as McFarland (1997) notes, “Alexie’s is a rhetoric, whether in his poems or in his stories, of political commitment” (p. 30). His commitment towards his community makes him discard the supernatural and situate his characters in the real world of problems and possibilities. He laments that mythic oral tradition of Indians have made them unmindful of the actual complications of life. Alexie admits sadly, “I come a long line of exaggerators” (Purdy and Alexie, 1997, p. 06). He criticizes Indian exaggeration of both words and acts in one of the stories of *Ten Little Indians* entitled as ‘What You Pawn I Will Redeem’. The homeless and penniless Indian understands that “we Indians are great storytellers and liars and mythmakers” (Alexie, 2003, p. 170) but practically does nothing to regain his grandmother’s lost regalia. Instead of earning money to get back the lost relic, he spends the little money, given by the white shopkeeper, in drinking. Alexie fiction is crowded with stereotypical drunkard Indians and Gloria Bird (1995) blames Alexie for strengthening Indian stereotypes: “stereotyping native peoples does not supply a native readership with soluble ways of undermining stereotypes, but becomes a part of the problem” (p. 49). Alexie does not promote stereotypes but makes Indians realize that they must come out of self-destroying alcoholism. Evans (2001) advocates Alexie’s stance and quotes him, “part of the process of healing is to address what is evil” (p. 53). Instead of looking away from the alcoholic Indians, Alexie looks straight into the problem and suggests that healing from ills of cultural loss, disease, alcoholism, homelessness and poverty cannot come from a stubborn residence in the past but from a rational comprehension of the present. Though Indians find themselves alienated from their homes in urban areas, yet they cannot remain fixated in homely but underdeveloped reservation and must deal with the urban culture with all its alienating ugliness. Tellefsen (2005) analyses the contact between urban and

reservation cultures in Alexie's *Reservation Blues* and concludes that "commitment to an idealized, authentic culture...brings death not life" (p. 137). Authentic Indian and authentic Indian culture are anthropological constructs as "Alexie's texts suggest, one must recognize that the authentic is just another simulation" (p. 130). Simulation and simulacra "represented themselves: there was no other reality to which they referred" (Sim, 2011, p. 10). The self-referring and self-serving simulation of authentic Indian is detrimental because it produces static conceptualizations about Native Americans. Alexie suggests that both Euroamerican and Native American essentialism is nothing more than a simulation because both of them ignore the real dynamic existence of Native Americans. Newton (2001) evaluates Alexie's hybrid space encompassing both tribal and urban ways of life and expresses that "in Alexie's poetics of contemporary reservation, history is neither metaphorical, nor even tribal, but always emphatically a history of contact" (p. 415). The modern Indian is not the one who rusts in reservations but the one who resides in metropolitan world, and who is not a history carrying object but a history making subject.

Alexie's art blends genres to rearticulate American history from the perspective of an Indian who stands at the borderline of survival and extinction. He negotiates with the colonial past and his works demonstrate that "history is the burden that everyone-black, white or red- carries in America as an integral part of American experience" (Richardson, 1997, p. 42). He rejects Euroamerican version of history and does not let its literary tradition cripple his resisting artistic expression. For him, "the medium is the message" and 'his writing ceaselessly reinvents literary rules and seeks new ways of telling stories that matter' (Bernardin, 2010, 52-53). So, he chooses whatever suits his purpose, blends genres to create history and delivers a message that Indians are subjects rather than objects of history. Moore (2005) notes that there are "three narrative postures in Alexie's comedic aesthetic: assertive attitude, mixed tradition, and historical liability" (p. 300). Alexie is never apologetic in his tone and never does he let tradition constraint him from disrupting historical discourses. Alexie flouts generic demands as Murtaza claims that "all possibilities of deviation become norms with typical Alexien ease" (Murtaza et al. 2020, p. 76). *The Summer of Black Widows* situates Native American subject in a historical continuum and manifests genre blending as a discursive resisting strategy. 'Elegies' is "a poem for people who died in stupid ways" (Alexie, 1996, p. 49) and blends not only prose and rhyme but also mixes personal and tribal losses to trace the history of cultural, social, political and tribal genocides. 'How to Write the Great American Indian Novel' is a vigorous rebuttal of Euroamerican stigmatization of Indians as a vicious vanishing race and challenges the consistent stereotypes imposed upon Indian identity in literature. The poem follows neither strict metrical standards nor demands of a prose writing and combines personal anguish with tribal history to trace literary practices ranging from primitivism to postmodernism. Alexie's ironical disruption of Euroamerican literary discourses is unyielding as he concludes, "in the great American Indian Novel, when it is finally written, /all the white people will be Indians and all of the Indians will be Ghosts" (p. 95). The conclusive line of the poem is not some metaphoric abstraction but a concrete allusion to the genocide that seeks to find its legitimacy in Euroamerican literary tradition. Alexis is all inclusive and blends Native American history with Euroamerican literary tradition to secure an autonomous space for his Indian subject, as Bernardin says, "in declaring his right to claim all of it, all of the beauty and messiness of conflicting literary legacies, Sherman Alexie transmits and transmutes possibilities for re-envisioning our entangled national history" (Bernardin, 2010, p. 55).

Alexie in *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* combines prose with graphic sketches that counter the discursive practices of Euroamerican photography. The sketches, imbedded in the story of the novel, are a visual representation of the chaos inflicted upon an Indian who is conscious of his fragile place in the world. Alexie's blending of prose and

graphics is assertion of a sensibility that cannot be confined into the straightjacket of literary discourses. Junior's travels between reservation and town, and the accompanying agonies as well as excitements are expressed through words and visuals. Cox (1997) expresses that "Euroamericans make the stories one dimensional, static and vulnerable to parodic revision and Alexie exploits this weakness by intervening in the narratives" (p. 66). Alexie's stories and poems are neither static nor one dimensional. They neither follow any set pattern nor promote any monolithic political motive and keep on tampering both Euroamerican universalism and Native American tribalism. Alexie not only blends forms but also mingles contents to demonstrate a new hybrid place where competing ideologies can coexist. He examines the possibilities both in literature and life to construct an Indian subject whose "enterprise involves testing generic limits" (McFarland, 1997, p. 30). Alexie rejects generic limits and produces his creative vision that cannot be compartmentalized into any static motif. Art is cultural and reflects upon ever changing life. One must have to maintain a delicate balance between change and preservation as Alexie does in the content as well as form of his works. He adopts literary genres without adhering to strict disciplinary rules and introduces vital formal changes to convert art into a reservoir of lost tribal history. Hafen (1997) suggests that "the writings of Sherman Alexie present a fusion of historical sensibilities and grim realism of contemporary Indian life" (p. 71). Alexie's art emerges out of double-consciousness that simultaneously interrogates the past and contemplates over the future. Without losing sight of white colonization, he is determined to guide his community towards intellectual and political sovereignty. His notion of Indian autonomy does not reside in mythic tribal tradition but encompasses a world view that is dynamic, progressive, self-criticizing and liberating. He does not spare any frivolity no matter it is Indian or Euroamerican. On one hand, he exposes the fanaticism of Euroamerican discourses and, on the other hand, he criticizes the fundamentalism of Indian ways. The fusion of this two-way criticism poses a "challenge for mainstream critics to access his works in terms of tribal and intellectual sovereignty" (p. 77). Traditionally, Native American Intelligentsia considers a return to ancient tribalism as the ultimate goal of Indian autonomy but Alexie's art refutes such utopian wishful-thinking. His futuristic approach negotiates between irretrievable past and complicated present to promote a fusion of American and Native American ways. The past cannot be undone and the present cannot be consumed in futile mourning. So, Alexie pragmatically combines mourning over cultural genocide and jubilation over well-earned survival into a creative energy that keeps on blending genres and addresses immediate existential issues.

Alexie not only practices blending in form and content of his works but also receives blended criticism ranging from appreciation to condemnation. His dynamic creative vision keeps on juxtaposing antagonistic discourses to grasp real Indian situation. His passionate rejection of Euroamerican discourses is accompanied by a dispassionate assessment of Native American condition. *Ten Little Indians*, *The summer of Black Widows* and *Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* are a critique of both Euroamerican hegemonic activism and Native American stoicism. Though his stories and poems present an apparent simplicity and ease of expression, but underlying implications of his words are always more than a literary exercise. He combines contradictory elements, juxtaposes antagonistic discourses and mixes Native American and Euroamerican visions to arrive at some valid conclusion. His art is an incessant dialogue between competing ideologies and involves a bidirectional approach between idealism and pragmatism. This fusion of apparently incompatible approaches results in a complex amalgam of Native American tribalism and Euroamerican metropolitanism. Farrington (2013) studies Alexie's complex political stance and says that some critics "condemn [his] prose for trafficking moribund Indian stereotypes" and the others "defend his commitment to realistic portrayals of a struggling [Indian] community" (p. 521). Alexie's realism is troublesome for radical Native

American writers and critics but he does not want to hoodwink the Indians in name of myths and bygone primitivism because, for him, "a return to a precontact indigenous existence is not only untenable, but potentially detrimental to indigenous cultures as they currently exist" (p. 528). His presentation of reality is not based upon pessimism but involves a profound concern for bringing change into the patterns of his community. He does not betray his community by exposing their pathetic situation but invites them to do something practically meaningful. Indians in his works are neither doomed Indians nor agents of returning-home narrative but conflicted individuals who are bound to opt between complicated American life and destructive Indian isolation. Be it Junior or Corliss, they have to choose between: 'idealism and realism', 'tribalism and metropolitanism, "annihilation and integration'. Such juxtapositions between probabilities manifest that Indians can either become passive objects of history by clinging to their asceticism or they can become active subjects of history by integrating into the modern world. Richardson (1997) reads *Reservation Blues* to conclude that "Alexie proposes quasi-assimilationist possibility for twenty-first century Indians, one that is a beginning for Native Americans, not an ending" (p. 42). Richardson's view can also be applied to *Diary* and *Ten Little Indians* because the motif of going-away from reservation is pivotal in both works. The fusion of reservation and urban lives is not just a textual requirement but an actual condition of Indian survival. Elizabeth Cook Lynn (1993) disapproves western influence in Native American literature because she believes that "cosmopolitanism becomes the enemy of resistance literatures specifically because its criteria are the fodder of western taste" (p. 26). Alexie is also blamed of serving western taste for his being controversial and promoting cosmopolitanism, but it is pertinent to comprehend that Indian existence, the driving force behind Alexie's works, is also caught up between controversies. The irony lies in the fact that the Indian asceticism yearns for a pre-contact culture without understanding that the alcohol which induces the dreams of a pure Indian culture is not going to change reality. Irony, the most consistent element in Alexie's work, is a painful realization of difference between dreams and reality and disrupts history.

Alexie's resistance rhetoric employs irony to negotiate between; pessimism thrust upon Native Americans by the systematic historical suppression of Indians, and optimism generated by Indians' embattling with their accursed Euroamerican colonial history. The irony; pivotal point of his comprehension of Indian past, present and future, makes him lay bare the white atrocities committed against the Indians as well as enables him to optimistically address the real contemporary Indian situation. His optimism, neither unmindful of the colonial past nor dependent upon the restoration of an ancient Indian culture, is based upon an active engagement with the history. Under a seemingly conversational ease, he creates ironical situations to address the complicated state in which Indians are still living. McFarland (1997) observes that "Alexie offers a terse, hard-bitten satiric style most often couched in conversational diction" (p. 32) and invites the reader to ponder over the complicated situation in which Indians are trapped. His audience is not the literary elite but every Indian as he asserts in an interview, "If Indian Literature can't be read by the average twelve year old kid living on the reservation, what the hell good is it?" (Purdy and Alexie, 1997, p. 07). His simple style is the ironic demonstration of the complicated lives Indian are made to live by white dominance. Alexie's simple form is ironically his complex message. The irony, in which Indian existence is entangled, implies that assimilation into white culture ensures life for the Indians but means cultural death of Indian community. On the other hand, adherence to tribalism envisions cultural survival but simultaneously results in Indians' marginalization. Alexie's art emerges out of this ironic condition, resists both assimilation and tribalism, promotes Natives' integration into the white culture without compromising Indian identity, and demonstrates the constrained nature of Native Americans' choices.

Junior in *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* is constrained because despite his loyalty to tribal culture, he cannot be a 'full-time' Indian. The adverb 'absolutely' in the title of the novel carries ironic understatement that both Euroamericans and Native Americans are going to doubt the truthfulness of his vision. For Euroamericans, Alexie is radically offensive but for Native Americans, he is hypocritically defensive. Irony in the title of *Ten Little Indians* explicitly disrupts Euroamerican exclusionary practices because the reader finds "there are only nine stories in the collection, not ten as seemingly announced" (Moore, 2005, p. 304). The story of one Indian, perhaps the 'Absolutely True Red Story', is ironically erased by white essentialism. Alexie recovers lost Indian stories and narrates them in the "form of a stylistic feature of great rhetorical power- irony and frequently outright cynicism" (Brandt, 2017, p. 41). His cynicism wrestles with white authority on the truth when Junior says, "we Indians should be better liars, considering how often we've been lied to" (Alexie, 2009, p. 10). The juxtaposition between two sorts of liars ironically recalls white-washed colonial history: broken treaties, oppressive Acts, systematic genocide, assimilating Christianity, Euroamerican education, discursive anthropology, domineering literary tradition, forced immigrations and poverty stricken reservations. Junior wants to "hate [his] Dad and Mom for [their] poverty" (p. 11) but Alexie's ironic portrayal of Junior's anguish against his parents is implicitly directed towards white colonialism that is the cause of Indian poverty in the first place. Junior, entangled between tribalism and Euroamericanism, thinks, "Maybe I could just drop out of school completely. I could go live in the woods like a hermit. *Like a real Indian*" (emphasis added p, 58). The irony lies in the fact that there is actually no authentic Indian and authenticity is a white practice of reducing Indians to the status of backward, static, ignorant Nobel Savages. Moreover, Alexie satirizes both Euroamericans and radical Native Americans by juxtaposing school with woods. In actual, natives neither live in isolated woods as Euroamericans promotes the image, nor can native children stay away from schools as reservation Indians desire for maintaining cultural purity. For Alexie, "culture is a process, and the ethnic contours are dynamic and fuzzy rather than natural" (Fitz and Gross, 2007, p. 424). Alexie exposes the unnatural static essence of naturalized racial stereotypes and creates possibility of a hybrid space in which "culture is a dynamic balancing act between cultural change and preservation" (p. 417).

Alexie's ironic juxtaposing two antagonistic mindsets and promoting third space hybridity resist every sort of fundamentalism. Evans (2001) discusses Alexie's bidirectional approach and concludes that "as with any author, reading Alexie always is a consensual act" (p. 52). Evaluated from the position of white discourses, Alexie seems to be a radical propagandist; but discussed from the standpoint of Native separatism, he looks like an assimilationist. It is only the third interstitial space which makes a reader appreciate Alexie's dynamic activism. Corliss occupies an interstitial space in the story of 'The Search Engine' and denies that "a good gun will always beat a good poem" (Alexie, 2003, p. 04). The juxtaposition between gun and poem apparently seems a simple narration of 'pen is mightier than sword' narrative but its underlying implications trace a long history of white-armed brutalities committed against Native Americans. Though Alexie does not adhere to orature yet he never forgets the annihilation of native oral tradition. The natives had always sung their stories in face of white atrocities but their songs and stories were muted by the roaring white guns. Corliss is optimist as she should have been but history must never be forgotten. Alexie remembers history and his deep historical consciousness bestows him with a clarity of purpose. Alexie's purpose is crystal clear. He wants his native community to be educated and progressive, so he portrays Corliss as a "resourceful thief, a narcissistic Robin Hood who stole a rich education from white people and kept it" (p. 05). Corliss is modern 'Red Robin Hood' whose determination to steal education ironically alludes to white educational monopoly that kept the reservation students uneducated and

forcibly assimilated the Indian children in white boarding schools. Corliss is a beneficiary of white education but she, like Alexie, does not forget her tribal identity and falls in love with Harlan Atwater's poetry. Though Alexie is highly critical of Euroamerican education, yet he does not deny its importance because it is the only valid means of native survival. Moreover, he ironically demonstrates the prejudice of Native American separatism when Corliss, in order to learn something about Atwater, "sent e-mails to two dozen different Indian writers including Simon Ortiz, Joy Harjo, Leslie Marmon Silko, and Andrian C. Louis, and those who responded said they'd never heard of Harlan Atwater" (p. 20). The clear mentioning of such prestigious Indian writers in the plot of the story carries double meanings: on the one hand it demonstrates the indifference of prominent Native writers towards other unfamiliar Indian authors and, on the other hand, it refers to the white literary practices that systematically excludes native writers from the mainstream literary circle. Nelson (2010) observes that Alexie criticizes both white and red literary traditions and "his criticism of critics, and his stalk refusal to write again what Momaday and Silko or anyone else has already written" (p. 46) confirm his departure from Euroamerican and Native American historicisms. He ironically observes paradoxes in both red and white versions of history before disrupting and getting rid of them.

Conclusion

Lundquist (2004) observes that "most of the successful Native authors are college graduates whose understanding of both Western and Native approaches to life enable them to offer unique insights into conflicts between cultures" (p. 202). Alexie emphasizes the significance of education not only in his interviews but also in his works. His education enables him to comprehend history and makes him propose a pragmatic version of resistance against Western hegemony. Being an educated man, he is not confined to watersheds of static identity. His culture is neither elite western culture nor low Native culture but postmodern popular culture that blends differences, celebrates diversity and resists compartmentalization of identities. Junior and Corliss are embodiments of Alexie's poetics of resistance as they, like Alexie himself, are metropolitan American citizens. In their approaches, cultures are blended and an enlightened comprehension of complicated Indian existence makes them integrate into the popular culture. It is pertinent to remember that Alexie's resistance is neither outright radicalism against white culture nor myopic fundamentalism adhering to Native culture. He educates his reader and does not favor any exclusionary practice. His dynamic vision never forgets Native American history but he does not let history cripple his imagination. His imagination optimistically seeks and advocates education as the essential means of native survival.

Alexie's dynamic vision can be adopted by every postcolonial society entangled between demands of nationalism and globalism. A nationalism that does not address the global demands is lethal for any postcolonial community because rigid nationalism leads towards isolation. On the other hand, a blind globalism results in loss of national cultures because it sacrifices local interests. The postcolonial cultures are bound to secure a middle passage that ensures acceptance of differences without entering the blind alleys of local and colonial fundamentalisms. The postmodern ethic of resistance facilitates cultural exchange based upon equality. It is the duty of educated postcolonial intelligentsia to ensure this equal exchange because it is also common to see that western hegemony tends to favor the western cultures and marginalizes the native cultures under the guise of globalism. The Western hegemony can only be contested through education as Alexie envisions. One must be educated and learn the implications as well as complications of history. The victimized must remember history, not to seek revenge against the victimizer, but to stop him from furthering victimization.

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