

Assimilation Crisis: A Reading of Sherman Alexie's The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian

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ABSTRACT:

This paper aims to examine the effects of assimilation in contemporary Indian communities on and off the reservations in Sherman Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. The paper discusses Junior, the protagonist, and how he has to encounter the white culture and society off the reservations. By the cultural study of the novel, Junior is presented as unable to assimilate with the Whites, and his attempts at assimilation are met by cultural erasure, identity loss, and internal turmoil. This paper intends to provide a broader view of the problems experienced by Native Americans in modern society by analyzing the novel through the prism of assimilation concept, the reservation issue and by employing the theory of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* to address the root causes of assimilation crisis in Alexie's fiction. Accordingly, this paper concludes that the surrounding cultural environment impose its effects on Junior and how he struggles to assimilate to meet its demands, yet the result would always be failure just because he, and other natives, would not be accepted.

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Introduction:

Sherman Alexie focuses in his works on the Native Americans and their way of life in general and Spokane family in particular because he is one of them. Alexie focuses on the life on the reservations during the colonial period where the Native Americans and European settlers had troubled and complicated relationship with each other. It is worthwhile to highlight that Native American efforts to regain their lands from the European settlers failed, due to new diseases, the slave trade, and the steadily increasing European population in North America. (Cole,

1998, p. 19-20). The Natives were given part of their land and they hoped the European expansion would end but this did not happen. Native American's life changed through the period of colonialism. Unknown diseases to Native Americans have been brought with the European's arrival. Guns, horses and alcohol were also brought so as to be able to change the Natives way of hunting.

The Land, for the semi-nomadic Natives, did not belong to one person. Therefore, problems would arise if anyone wanted a piece of their land and tried to ban its people from it because the land was supposed to be for all. Although the natives could not change their life, culture, and religion, some of them were aggressively convinced to convert to Christianity which led to changing their cultural identity. Those settlers suppressed the Native culture by imposing the colonizer's language, agenda, and ideology. They saw that the colonialists "ravaged and exploited the land and then, when all of its resources were gone, moved on to the next section and repeated the process over and over." (Cole, 1998, p. 9). The Natives saw their land in a different way than was seen by the Euro-American. With the American expansion, Native Americans were no longer able to resist this power so their society faced a new challenge especially that on the reservations.

Conceptual Framework:

During the colonial period, the first European settlers built their country over the Native Americans' land, and the aim was to encourage what's called civilization to enhance the English system of education, their cultural values, and force the language on the Natives. So the Natives consequently are forced to speak English, study the invader's history, attend church and leave their mother culture and values behind. Obviously the new settlers' real aim is to impose their language as an apparatus to dominate economically, culturally as well as to force their Christian religion on those people whom they saw as savages and pagan. This crisis of eradication was diagnosed and many efforts were exerted to resist. One of the figures who is aware of the danger of the role of imposing the colonialists' language is a Kenyan author called Ngugi wa Thiong'o who has presented a concept of colonialism and its politics in a book entitled *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. The reason to choosing this concept as a theoretical framework is the universality of the condition. Ngugi states, "we have the same bio-geographic roots ... we have shared the same past of humiliation and exploitation under slavery, and colonialism" (Ngugi, 1987, p. 98). Accordingly, Ngugi highlights "the real aim of colonialism was to control the people's wealth: what they produced, how they produced it, and how it was distributed; to control, in other words, the entire realm of the language of real life." (Ngugi, 1987, p. 16)

By applying this theory to examine Alexie's work, there are a number of issues that should be considered. First, it offers an in-depth comprehension of the concerns of assimilation, language, and cultural identity in this novel, thereby illuminating the intricate dynamics that are at play in the Native American experience. Second, it places Alexie's work within the larger framework of Native American literature and cultural studies, proving the significance of his writings to continuing debates about language, power dynamic, and identity in postcolonial settings. This is accomplished by putting Alexie's work in the context with the Native American literature and cultural studies. Finally, Thiong'o's theoretical framework makes it possible to understand Alexie's work in a more nuanced manner by emphasizing the ways in which Alexie's work simultaneously questions and supports preexisting power structures and cultural narratives.

Readers are given a clear picture of the characters' problems with their cultural identity by Alexie, who also gives them a window into the internal and external tensions that Native Americans face while straggling between two different worlds. The effect of past and current colonialism on Native American tribes must be acknowledged and addressed, as this investigation of cultural conflict and identity crises highlights.

Synopsis of Sherman Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*:

Sherman Alexie is a Native American writer known for his works that address issues of identity, culture, and the experience of being a Native American in modern American society. In many of his novels, he explores the failure of assimilation, particularly in the lives of Native American characters who struggle to reconcile their traditional culture with the demands of a dominant white society. *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* is one of Alexie's most well-known works. The novel is narrated by Arnold "Junior" Spirit Jr., a 14-year-old American Indian in a form of first-person diary format. He is an ambitious cartoonist who lives on the Spokane Indian Reservation in Wellpinit, Washington. Junior will be a representative of the condition of all the natives.

Junior's family lived in inevitable poverty illustrated in *The Absolutely True Diary* with an account about Oscar, his sick dog. Junior's father decides to shoot the dog to end its suffering because they do not have the money to take it to the vet and also according to Junior, because they are "reservation Indians", they never have an opportunity to realize or fulfill their dreams. "We reservation Indians don't get to realize our dreams" (Alexie, 2007, p. 10). On the reservation, Junior realizes the poor condition of his tribe which is represented by the inability of the school system to buy new math textbooks in 30 years. Junior gets furious and hurls his math book at his teacher's face.

Poverty and lack of resources represent a threat to achieving Junior's goals. Junior is suspended for one week, and the math teacher insists that Junior leave the Indian reservation. Junior plans to transfer to Reardan High School, a predominantly White high school 22 miles away. No Indian from the reservation has ever joined this school before. Joining this school is against Junior's tribe and fellow students, especially Rowdy, his best friend. At Reardan, the other students look aggressive, racist, and condescending.

Junior exposes to Gordy (a guy from science class) that his reservation community take him as a traitor because of his attachment to white people. At school, Junior often feels half-Indian and half-White. Having "betrayed" the community, the members of his tribe reject him. Rowdy becomes harsh with him and physically hurts him in the basketball game. Eventually, Reardan wins in a rematch, but for Junior, this is meaningless because he realizes that the White Reardan players and now himself have more advantages than the Indian players.

***The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* and the Ngugian Conception:**

Alexie demonstrates, with Junior's experiences, the challenges that Native Americans encounter while attempting to adapt into cultures that are inimical to their customs and beliefs by drawing attention to such challenges. Junior is struggling to find a way to integrate himself socially at school while still honoring the traditions of his ethnic background. He is trapped between two worlds. The challenges encountered by Native American youth in their attempts to integrate into non-Native communities are brought to light through their experiences of alienation, discrimination, and conflicting loyalties.

In this regard, Jessica Keating (2020) states that "Native peoples simply had to be trained in the ways of "civilization" (i.e., white Americans) while abandoning their old ways. Indeed, some schools were even opened at the behest of Native leaders" (Keating, 2020, p. 6). Consequently, they were put into reservations, but this new life affected the Natives negatively, they became drunken and violent against their children and women. Poverty also was widespread, they had no enough money to buy clothes, food or even could afford to go to doctors when they felt sick. Reservations according to Sherman Alexie in his novel *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* "were meant to be prisons" (Alexie, 2007, p. 172). However, the most important thing the Natives lost was their identity that became hybrid because of the different cultures they lived with and grew under their influence. But the environment did not suit many of them and created what Homi Bhabha termed "neither culture feels like home" (cited in Bressler, 2011, p.205).

Therefore, the Natives, especially young adults, started to feel the gap between their culture and wellbeing and the new one. They also felt the danger lurking ahead for the coming generation. Most of them showed resistance to the new foreign rules and orientations and felt it was their responsibility to preserve their forefathers' conventions and traditions. They tried to look for strategies of exploring a way to save their identity. They tried to keep on who and what they were in such a clashing cultural and linguistic environment. In effect, the quest for identity was considered the most controversial issue for all the adults due to the surrounding circumstances that affected their identity because of the different dominant cultures they lived under. The teenagers who grew on new terms and conditions witnessed two opposing as well as imposing standards. Accordingly, to be raised in a city was not the same as being raised on a reservation. Consequently, the identity development processes were affected in various ways by the distinctions present in each setting.

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian investigates the subject of assimilation and the difficulties it poses for young Native Americans. The experience of Junior's transition from the reservation to Reardan High School, where the majority of the student population is non-Native American, serves as an illustration of the obstacles that Native American individuals may encounter when striving to assimilate into the dominant culture. The individual's encounters with discrimination, competing allegiances, and a struggle with self-identification serve as a testament to the intricacy of assimilation and the imperative for individuals to navigate their dual identities.

Sherman Alexie portrays and conveys the true picture of the life he has lived on the reservations and he embodies this in the constructions of his characters. In that sense, Ngugi wa Thiong'o argues that literature has a role to play in decolonization and the fight against imperialism. His theory emphasizes the importance of using language that reflects the cultural identity of the people who use it because "the choice of language and the use to which language is put is central to a people's definition of themselves in relation to their natural and social environment, indeed in relation to the entire universe." (Ngugi, 1987, p. 4). So the issue that Ngugi wants to convey is that language expresses one's identity, that is why indigenous people have to use their mother tongue. In this context, Sherman Alexie can be viewed through the lens of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's theory.

Alexie writes in a language that is grounded in the Native American experience and incorporates elements of Native American culture, including traditional storytelling techniques. In this sense, his work can be seen as a form of resistance to the dominant culture's

attempts to erase Native American identity. Furthermore, Alexie's work often deals with themes of colonialism, cultural erasure, and the struggle for identity in a post-colonial world. His use of language and storytelling can be seen as a way of reclaiming the narrative and asserting the validity of Native American experience and culture, like "The Spokane Tribe holds their annual powwow celebration over the Labor Day weekend. ... and there would be singing, war dancing, gambling, storytelling, laughter, fry bread, hamburgers, hot dogs, arts and crafts, and plenty of alcoholic brawling." (Alexie, 2007, p. 13)

Ngugi wa Thiong'o emphasizes the importance of using language and literature to resist imperialism and assert cultural identity. Sherman Alexie's work can be viewed through this lens as a form of resistance to colonialism and an assertion of Native American identity and experience. As the Euro-Americans claim that assimilation process is an effort by Euro-Americans to remake Native People in their own image. To this purpose, the government attempts to abolish the Native American custom of sharing resources equally among all members of the tribe, especially those who have less fortunate beginnings. (Cole, 1998, p. 16).

The process of assimilation attempted by colonial powers to assimilate colonized peoples into the dominant culture ultimately fail because it is based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the cultural differences between the colonizers and the colonized. When applied to the work of Sherman Alexie, this theory sheds light on the ways in which Native Americans have resisted assimilation into the dominant culture.

In Alexie's novel, we see characters who are caught between two worlds - the traditional Native American culture of their ancestors and the modern Westernized culture of the dominant society. These characters struggle to reconcile their cultural identities with the demands of assimilation, which often require them to abandon their traditions and assimilate into the dominant culture. As Junior mentions, "It was like being Indian was my job, but it was only a part-time job." (Alexie, 2007, p. 94), the concept that being Indian is an aspect of Junior's identity from which he is unable to break free, even if he wishes to integrate himself into the culture of the majority of Americans. It's a never-ending battle for him, and he doesn't feel like he necessarily makes the decision to put up with it.

Alexie's novel often highlights the ways in which assimilation fails to bridge the gap between Native American culture and the dominant culture, leading to a sense of cultural alienation and loss. Instead of embracing assimilation, Alexie's characters often seek to reclaim their cultural identities and traditions, even in the face of pressure to conform. In this way, Alexie's novel can be seen as a form of resistance to the failure of assimilation, highlighting the ways in which attempts to assimilate Native Americans into the dominant culture ultimately fail to address the cultural differences and unique experiences of Native Americans. "It sucks to be poor, and it sucks to feel that you somehow deserve to be poor." (Alexie, 2007, p. 10) This quotation speaks the struggle of Junior, the protagonist of this novel, to assimilate into mainstream American culture as a poor Indian. By emphasizing the importance of cultural identity and tradition, Alexie's work offers a powerful critique of the failure of assimilation and the importance of preserving and celebrating cultural diversity.

In the sense of assimilation, the Whites forced their language and culture on the Native Americans not as an aim of caring about them and let them live alongside in their community. Yet, it is propaganda for spreading their culture throughout the world. Consequently, this assimilation process was a form of clearing up the Natives' culture. In this regard, students in

the reservation schools were forced to take up the white culture and abandon their mother's one.

As a semi-nomadic person, Junior lives on the reservation and knows nothing about the outside world, although there is no enough money to buy food, clothes or even buy medical drugs, that is why his dog is killed when it gets sick. "He's really sick, Mom," Junior said. "He's going to die if we don't take him to the doctor." (Alexie, 2007, p. 7) then Junior "heard the boom of [his] father's rifle when he shot [his] best friend." (Alexie, 2007, p. 10) It seems that killing or dying is easier than bringing money because there are no enough chances for getting jobs there. Yet, he lives peacefully with his family and tribe but he feels that he needs something bigger, something that would make him achieve his goals and dreams. Living on the reservation, being poor, having no jobs, and, the most importantly, being a nomadic, affect one's identity formation. That is why he decides that he needs to leave the reservation to join the Reardan school where he thinks he can find hope that would take him towards his dreams and maybe he could find himself there.

Before Junior's decision to leave the reservation and after he hits the teacher with a book, his White teacher Mr. P in Wellpinit school tells him that "When I first started teaching here, that's what we did to the rowdy ones, you know? We beat them. That's how we were taught to teach you. We were supposed to kill the Indian to save the child." (Alexie, 2007, p. 27). Arguing about the instrument of the colonizing power, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o stresses that:

colonial policy designed to educate the people of Kenya into acceptance of their role as the colonized. The education system at independence was therefore an inheritance of colonialism so that literature syllabuses were centred on the study of an English literary tradition taught by English teachers. Such a situation meant that Kenyan children were alienated from their own experience [and] identity in an independent African country. (96)

This can also be applied on the Indian education, that is how the teacher explains to Junior what he means by killing the Indian "We were supposed to make you give up being Indian. Your songs and stories and language and dancing. Everything." (Alexie, 2007, p. 27) The white people consider the native Indians as they were too Indian to be accepted and be truly white so the Indians were seen as a parasite that must be eliminated (Cole, 1998, p. 23). This is exactly what Mr. P talks about with Junior that "We were trying to kill Indian culture." (Alexie, 2007, p. 27) In this regard, white teachers on the reservation are dictated to eliminate all that is related to Indian. That is why English language was forced to be spoken in India.

Ngũgĩ also states that "English became the language of my formal education: In Kenya, English became more than a language; it was the language, and all the others had to bow before it in deference." (Ngũgĩ, 1987, p. 11). The colonizing instrument is the same in all conditions and all countries. It is obvious that the same thing was experienced and suffered by the natives where they were forced to abandon their language and use the English language which means they had to abandon their culture. Ngũgĩ also highlights that:

Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature; the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world. How people perceive themselves affects how they look at their

culture, at their politics and at the -social production of wealth, at their entire relationship to nature and to other beings (16).

Therefore, language also naturally expresses identity that is why the Indian people speak English thinking that to be civilized is to use English language so they can identify themselves in terms of the colonial culture. This leads to know why the natives accept their inferiority and consequently they "deserve to be poor" (Alexie, 2007, p. 10) and they continue believing they are poor because they are "stupid and ugly" (10). This is the Indian framework the dominant culture is trying to put them within its limits. Another consequence of adopting English language is creating "hybrid tradition" as well as a hybrid identity. (Ngugi, 1987, p. 26)

Junior (later in the Reardan school, he is called by his real name, Arnold) chooses to leave the reservation thinking that it is not the real place where he can achieve his dreams. In a certain sense it is true for him because the social and cultural services are destitute and one of these services is education. Therefore, he attends the white high school in Reardan, Washington. It is off the reservation and too far from it. On the reservation, he is accused of being a traitor while in Reardan, he achieves his dream to be a basketball player. Yet, Junior's statement "Reardan was the opposite of the rez. It was the opposite of my family. It was the opposite of me. I didn't deserve to be there. I knew it; all of those kids knew it. Indians don't deserve shit" (Alexie, 2007, p. 44) reveals something so important that feeling of inferiority and the rooted idea of themselves to be less than the whites and that what generates the sense of losing identity.

However, Junior could not choose between both, the reservation where his family is, his best friend Rowdy, and his tribe and Reardan where his dreams would come true. In this sense Junior comes in a struggle that determines his development of his social, cultural, and psychological terms (Garić, 2017, p. 191). Therefore, he becomes a part-time Indian in order to face the identity crisis.

Although Junior finds what he thinks as a hope in Reardan, his life there is not better than on the reservation. He again faces many problems and one of the biggest is that he is the only an Indian kid. Nobody wants to be his friend and other kids believe, thanks to the white dominant ideology, that Indian are killers, therefore they fear him, "None of those guys punched me or got violent. After all, I was a reservation Indian, and no matter how geeky and weak I appeared to be, I was still a potential killer. So mostly they called me names. Lots of names". (Alexie, 2007, p. 63)

That is why Roger, the white boy, does not do anything to him when Junior punches him in the face. Yet, Junior does not punch him haphazardly, it is because Roger and others call him names and Roger tells him "Did you know that Indians are living proof that niggers fuck buffalo?" (Alexie, 2007, p. 51) Junior feels insulted and that it is the most racist words he has ever heard.

The first personal characteristic Junior chooses to discuss is his birth condition, demonstrating both that he feels like he is "defective" and that he views himself as someone who overcomes obstacles. He is also acutely conscious of the manner in which he displays this data and creates his personality through this written "diary" Junior's medical condition is made more challenging to manage by the obstacles he encounters as an Indian living on reservations,

including the poverty of his family and their community and the dentist's racist ideas. These obstacles also make it more challenging for Junior to be normally integrated.

Junior emphasizes how people's characteristics at birth define their characters by starting his story with the line "I was born with water on the brain" (Alexie, 2007, p. 1) (a reference to his own disability of hydrocephalus) and calling his tough, hot-tempered best friend Rowdy "I was born all broken and twisted, and he was born mad" (Alexie, 2007, p. 12) implies that he initially holds a slightly reductive vision of identity. This conundrum is best shown for Junior by his decision to leave the reservations where he was born. His identity is called into question by this choice, which some Native Americans on the tribe see as a decision to become white, and he is left with two names: Junior on the reservation and Arnold when he attends Reardan High School. Penelope refers to him at one point as "the boy who can't figure out his own name." (Alexie, 2007, p. 58). Junior's decision to attend school in Reardan ve its metaphorical objective figuring out who he is, what his ambitions are, and the kind of man he would become. This is also one of the main issues in this coming-of-age story which he eventually would understand.

There is an urgent question in the novel about how Junior often sees himself and his world around him. The novel significantly revolves around strict dichotomies: white versus Indian, friends versus enemies, rich versus poor and even on the level of identity that is Junior versus Arnold. In this double way of life in Reardan and on the reservation, he often feels "Junior living on the north side of the river and Arnold living on the south." (Alexie, 2007, p. 48). These dichotomies blur his self-identification especially once he is confronted with the external world. This can also be applied to the level of his adaptation with the new environments. The once racist Roger at Reardan has become now a kind friend and a model while his childhood best friend Rowdy has at one point become the worst enemy. The basketball game won by Reardan against Wellpinit has turned in Junior's inner self both a triumph and a shameful defeat for him.

In the midst of all this blurred and confusing situations, Junior is confronted with a critical decision; whether he has to turn his back on the Indian community and stop being an Indian in order to have the kind of life he dreams of. This motivation is intensified by the fact that he is not the sort of kid who fits in from the beginning on the reservation when he is constantly teased and beaten up for his deformities. The more central decision for him lies ahead represented in the fact of joining the outside world of the whites. If he has never been accepted on the reservation, he would be rejected in a more profound way once he transferred to Reardan, the white high school.

Junior has to be accustomed to learning how to shape this contradiction into a coherent whole. This means he has to be assimilated and integrated in order to survive his crisis. Assimilation for him means abandoning the traditions and strengths of his native culture and rejecting what he sees as weakness, including alcoholism, "and he must incorporate values that are seen as "white," including a new way of thinking about education" (Sara Constantakis, *A Study Guide* 25-26). Eventual realization puts Junior into the crisis of belonging to many groups:

I was a Spokane Indian. I belonged to that tribe. But I also belonged to the tribe of American immigrants. And to the tribe of basketball players. And to the tribe of bookworms.

And the tribe of cartoonists.

And the tribe of chronic masturbators.

And the tribe of teenage boys.

And the tribe of small-town kids.

And the tribe of Pacific Northwesterners.

And the tribe of tortilla chips-and-salsa lovers.

And the tribe of poverty.

And the tribe of funeral-goers.

And the tribe of beloved sons.

And the tribe of boys who really missed their best friends.

It was a huge realization. (173).

Many Indians want to make friendship with the whites and got better life off the reservation. That is why Junior leaves the reservation to get better life, so he makes a friendship with Gordy, a white boy in his class. Yet, this friendship was not completed because Junior and Gordy did not "share secrets. Or dreams. No, we studied together. Gordy teaches me how to study." (Alexie, 2007, p. 74). It can be figured out from this quotation that Gordy and Junior's friendship is based on studying only. Gordy does not want to make friendship with Junior because he is an Indian and that the stereotyping image of Indian rooted in American's mind is that Indians are inferior to Americans and they are killers.

Hating the Whites and rejecting the idea of assimilation causes the same kind of blame that Rowdy blames Junior for killing his sister "Your sister is dead because you left us. You killed her." (Alexie, 2007, p. 168) Although it is not Junior's fault of his sister's death, yet he also agrees with Rowdy that he is the reason behind that "She had burned to death because I had decided that I wanted to spend my life with white people. It was all my fault." (Alexie, 2007, p. 168)

All these consequences cause self-realization inside Junior that whatever he does and will do is worthless so he can never assimilate due to the reasons mentioned earlier in this paper. Junior represents the mouthpiece of all Indians, they all face the same obstacles. One and most important issue faced by Indians during their assimilation process is "the Euro-American people did not want them because they were still too Indian" (Cole, 1998, p. 20) accordingly, even if an Indian tries so hard to be accepted and appear as civilized and so good in the eyes of the whites, they fail and at the end they find themselves caught between two worlds, two different cultures, and above all they get a hybrid identity. They ended up did not know which is which, which culture is theirs and which world they belong to.

One of the situations that expresses the impossibility of assimilation process is when the white teacher in Reardan school, Mr. Dodge asked a question and Junior answers him perfectly. Yet,

what this teacher, the Indian hater does is making a sarcasm of Junior, he says sarcastically "Where did you learn this fact? On the reservation? Yes, we all know there's so much amazing science on the reservation." (Alexie, 2007, p. 67). So, all the class giggle. But when Gordy says that Junior's answer is true, the teacher considers it true, because Gordy is hite but Junior is a red Indian so he is inferior to them. Here, Junior feels he is finally accepted, Gordy's action of agreeing with Junior makes Junior feeling good that he could assimilate, so he goes to Gordy and thanks him for doing so but Gordy's answer is "I didn't do it for you," (Alexie, 2007, p. 68). Junior is shocked, he does not know what to say or do, he just stands and "waited for the rocks to replace my bones and blood." (Alexie, 2007, p. 68)

Upon Junior's presence in the Reardan basketball team, he encounters the dual obstacle of assimilating with his Caucasian counterparts and enduring the disapproval of his own community for being labeled as a betrayer. Although Junior is hoping to win the basketball game, in this situation he is sad because he wins against his people and the way he sees them desperate, sends a feeling of guilt and that no matter what he does in Reardan for achieving his dreams that would not change the reality of life they live on the reservation.

Many Indians fail to live alongside with the whites because the Indians are seen only as a problem or an issue to deal with and the whites do not want them to be equal to them. That is why the Whites' way of treating Indians reveals how complex and hard the assimilation process is. In this regard, the old generation, may have known the consequences of leaving the reservation and co-existing with the whites and the obstacles of the assimilation process. The reason they felt that those Indians who went off the reservation to be ashamed of their tribes' culture. Consequently, Junior is called "an apple" because "they think [he is] red on the outside and white on the inside." (Alexie, 2007, p. 104) so he is ashamed of his people's tradition. After all, Junior does not have this sense of belonging. Everyone looks at him in a weird gaze which stresses the idea that he is strange to them.

In this regard, Chinua Achebe generally mentions that "Is it right that a man should abandon his mother tongue for someone else's? It looks like a dreadful betrayal and produces a guilty feeling. But for me there is no other choice. I have been given the language and I intend to use it." (cited in Ngugi, 1987, p. 7) What Achebe is trying to say is that adopting other language is not a choice for him, yet it is a must, he is forced to abandon his language.

The text's depiction of identity crisis is indicative of the wider difficulties encountered by Native American adolescents during the process of assimilation. This novel portrays protagonists who grapple with a range of internal dilemmas while navigating the intricacies of their cultural identity and endeavoring to establish a sense of inclusion. The novel *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* portrays Junior's pursuit of a superior lifestyle beyond the reservation, which prompts him to scrutinize his own sense of self and confront emotions of remorse and disloyalty. The protagonist's inner turmoil becomes apparent through his statement, "I felt like two different people inside of one body" (Alexie, 2007, p. 48) Junior expressed a sense of dual identity "I was half Indian in one place and half white in the other." (Alexie, 2007, p. 93) This quotation highlights Junior's struggle to integrate his two distinct cultural backgrounds and how he feels like he doesn't fully belong to either.

Taking the above mentioned reasons and consequences of using English language leads to a conclusion that by adopting someone else's language and values, then that person becomes alienated from their mother's culture. (Ngugi, 1987, p. 72). So people should resist not to use

English language as Ngugi emphasizes that Kenyan writers as well as Indians or any colonized ones "have no alternative but to return to the roots, ... to the sources of their being in the rhythms of life and- speech and languages ... if they are to rise to the great challenge of recreating, in their [literature] grandeur of that history [sic]" (Ngugi, 1987, p. 73) so the assimilation process can never be successful because people have this conscious that Whites do not want them and will not accept them.

In this regard, it can be seen that the Whites will never accept to let the Indians assimilate with them as Ngugi "wish to tell us [Amer-Europeans] ... have no desire to become one of us, that assimilation is not the solution." (cited in Weaver, 1997, p. 15) On the other side, the Indians did not want to assimilate because assimilation means leaving their history, their culture, language, and identity behind and it represents "as much a death to the Native American as extermination did." (Cole, 1998, p. 2) This reveals how much Indians hated the assimilation with the Whites, as a result they consider anyone tries to indulge and assimilate as a traitor and that those who assimilate like Junior find themselves not accepted by their tribes.

In an interview with Ngugi on CCCB channel on YouTube, Ngugi emphasized that "we cannot just accept the present conditions" he meant by conditions the era of colonialism when they were forced to use English language as their daily language and in their literature. So that language is "part of the identity of any given literature" (Ngugi wa Thiong'o: Europe and West Must Also be Decolonised, 2019). In this regard, Ngugi declared that African literature must be the center literature in Africa and then other literatures could be added to their culture. Native American writers must do the same in their literature and use their language in their works as a part of identity pride.

Conclusion:

By applying Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Decolonizing the Mind* to understand *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* offers vital insights on the difficulties of assimilation, language, and identity. These issues are addressed in this novel. According to Ngugi conception, the interpretation of Alexie's novel, and as a result, a fuller knowledge of the intricate dynamics at play in the Native American experience has been achieved. In *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, Junior's choice to join a predominantly white school outside the reservation is a brave move towards assimilation, Junior is motivated by his desire for a higher education and the opportunity to leave his community's restrictions. However, this pursuit comes at a cost. Junior faces ridicule, isolation, and the gradual distancing from his own culture. This reflects Ngugi wa Thiong'o's argument that assimilation and colonization often lead to the displacement of the Natives' languages and cultural values, ultimately causing a fragmentation of identity.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's concept of *Decolonizing the Mind* underscores the power of language in determining one's self-perception and worldview. Junior's experience of education and using English at his new school echoes the language shift forced by colonial powers. So, he unintentionally isolates himself from his native culture, language, and familial bonds. This echoes Ngugi's claim that colonial languages become instrument of oppression, erasing the Natives languages and maintaining a Eurocentric worldview.

Finally, assimilation in *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* is neither successful nor failure. Junior attends an off-reservation school and makes new links to assimilate into

white American society. He gains greater education and prospects, but his neighborhood opposes him because of what the Whites did to them. He also faces white prejudice and racism at the Reardan school. Thus, the novel shows the difficulties and ambiguities of assimilation and how it might entail ongoing negotiation of cultural norms and values.

قضية الاندماج: قراءة لرواية "يوميات حقيقية تماما لهندي بدوام جزئي" للكاتب شيرمان أليكسي

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ملخص البحث:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى بحث آثار الاندماج في المجتمعات الهندية المعاصرة داخل وخارج الحميات في رواية شيرمان أليكسي، "اليوميات الحقيقية تماما للهندي بدوام جزئي". تناقش الدراسة بطل الرواية، جونيور، وكيف عليه أن يواجه ثقافة ومجتمع البيض بعيدا عن الحميات. من خلال الدراسة الثقافية للرواية، يقدم جونيور على أنه غير قادر على الاندماج مع البيض، وقوبلت محاولاته في الاندماج بالحو الثقافي وفقدان الهوية والاضطراب الداخلي. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقديم رؤية أوسع للمشاكل التي يعاني منها الأمريكيون الأصليون في المجتمع الحديث من خلال تحليل الرواية من منظور مفهوم الاندماج، ومشكلة الحميات، ومن خلال استخدام نظرية نغوي ابن ثيونغو "تحرير العقل من الاستعمار: سياسة اللغة في الأدب الأفريقي" لمعالجة الأسباب الجذرية لقضية الاندماج في أعمال أليكسي. وفقاً لذلك، تخلص هذه الدراسة إلى أن البيئة الثقافية المحيطة تفرض تأثيرها على جونيور وكيف يكافح من أجل الاندماج لتلبية مطالبه، ومع ذلك فإن النتيجة ستكون دائما الفشل مجرد أنه لن يتم قبوله هو وغيره من السكان الأصليين.