



## A Feminist Analysis of “What You Pawn I Will Redeem” by Sherman Alexie: Exploring the Issues of Cultural Identity and Gender

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### Abstract

The current work is a feminist critique of Sherman Alexie’s short story titled “What You Pawn I Will Redeem”. The paper is a qualitative descriptive paper in nature and uses textual analysis and close reading approaches. This research paper aims to analyse how the story narrates the aspects of gendered cultural representation, colonialism, and oppression using feminist and Indigenous feminism theories. The work draws attention to indigenous male and female roles depicted in the narrative as a way of asserting that indigenous genders were socially constructed in relation to the effects of colonialism and traditional cultural values. The findings of this study therefore add to the knowledge about gender and Indigenous cultural identity in Indigenous literature as informed by feminist and Indigenous feminist theories, as well as extend the understanding of the effects of colonization on Indigenous gender relations. Overall, this research paper contributes to the current literature on cultural identity and gender in Indigenous peoples from the colonial perspective with historical trauma. This work endeavors itself to try and complement the existing literature in an effort to offer a detailed account of gender from Alexie’s work.

**Keywords:** Sherman Alexie, Cultural Identity, Gender, Feminism, Colonialism

### 1. Introduction

Sherman Alexie is one of the most widely-read Native American writers, poets, and movie directors of the present generation. His concepts are linked with the problems of Native Americans, the questions of cultural displacement and historical trauma in general, and the challenges Indigenous people meet in modern America in particular. Alexie was raised in the Spokane Indian Reservation and more so the trials he faces in the white man’s world are reflected in his work. In that year he made his breakthrough with the stories in “The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven” and ten years later he published “The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian” for which he won the National Book Award for Young People’s Literature in 2007. Sherman Alexie became and still is one of the most influential voices in Native American and contemporary American literature in terms of comedy and advocacy for Indigenous peoples.

A Sherman Alexie piece titled “What You Pawn I Will Redeem” was published in the ‘New Yorker magazine’ in 2003. It is a short story that has the elements of cross-cultural displacement, social issue of homelessness, and relevance to the sufferance and endurance of a human spirit. The central character is Jackson Jackson, a Spokane Indian homeless man in Seattle who sets out to retrieve his grandmother’s stolen powwow dress in 24 hours, for \$999 that he finds in a pawnshop. The regalia identifies him as a man of the tribe and with them, the ethnic history of Jackson and his people. His attempts to get it back become a representation of the Indigenous peoples’ attempt at regaining what was stolen from them by the colonial masters. The story is laced with Alexie’s trademark comedy, yet it is not a happy tale; it is about grief, pain and the will to carry on. Jackson’s meeting with different characters in the story such as other vagrants, owner of a pawn shop, and barmaid] Rose of Sharon, paints the real-life with the life of the vagrants in society. It is therefore swept into the larger narrative of representation of native Americans in America where their culture and identity was downplayed. Jackson’s failures are depicted throughout the story; however, his spirit to fight and his determination make the story a powerful ending though not very clear but full of hope.

Using the feministic perspective expands the appreciation of the narrative “What You Pawn I will Redeem” focusing on gender dynamics and indigenous peoples of America. The search for the regalia for Jackson Jackson’s grandmother is highly associated with his manhood and cultural issues. Applying the Feminist approach: This is where the depiction of traditional genders roles can be analyzed especially concerning Jackson who typifies a particular type of Indigenous masculinity molded in the cultural and societal structures of indigenous people as well as the aftermath of colonialism. Essentially, a feminist perspective enables the author to look at how aspects of masculinity as well as Indigenous Spokane Indian ethnicity form Jackson’s experiences. The story uses colonialism racism and sexism to provide insight to the Indigenous people especially in how they negotiate their gender/sexuality in a society that oppresses them. Namely, using the example of the interjective oppressions, a more detailed understanding of the characters’ oppression can be provided under the lens of Indigenous Feminist Theory.

The purpose of this research paper is to undertake a feminist study of “What You Pawn I Will Redeem” with particular reference to the manner in which Alexie portrays gender in the two elements of cultural ethos/identity and colonization. In this analysis it will be useful to discuss how the Navajo women and men are being influenced by the intersecting oppressions, such as sexism, colonialism, and racism. It will also look at how the indigenous men and women are portrayed with regard to the cultural norms now and then and the effects of historical loss.

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In sum, a feminist approach provides fresh angles in understanding *What You Pawn I Will Redeem* and provides substantial understandings of how literature can address systems of oppressions regarding minority populations.

### 1.1. Limitations of Research

The concern of the analysis is narrow and points to Sherman Alexie's short story "What You Pawn I Will Redeem". Though the story offers a plenty of materials for gender and multicultural analysis, it is still one of the works in the author's bibliography. Therefore, this work may not include all the thematic and gender-related aspects that are present in most of his works. Additionally, the study's concentration is on the influence of Spokane cultural identity on gender. However, one must understand that indigenous people are varied, and the plight of the Spokane Indians may not be a plight of all Native American or Indigenous Peoples. The study might oversimplify gender and cultural identity issues and fail to capture the difference between various tribes and nations. These findings are therefore contextual and may not generalize to other Indigenous people's story. Additionally, While the study uses both feminist and Indigenous feminist theories, these theories are not the only theories in existence. Such an overlap of these theories is not very clear and depends with the scholar's training and culture. That these perspectives can be balanced may pose some difficulty, and the analysis may not fully get the purists from both field. However, these studies should be acknowledged as the work also embraces Indigenous feminism theories, despite the fact that possible limitations of the given researcher's positionality and a genuine Indigenous voice might be taken into account. It is crucial to use the first-hand Indigenous materials, people's opinions, and scholarly works to prevent misinformation; however, time, geographical or cultural limitations may limit the depth of the findings.

In an effort to avoid these limitations, this research paper will set out its objective clearly and accept the possibility that there are difficulties in understanding and interpreting issues of gender and cultural identity in Indigenous literature.

### 1.2. Significance of Research

The present research paper gives a new feminist analysis of Sherman Alexie's "What You Pawn I Will Redeem" raising the issue of how sexed bodies are constructed all over again. The study adds to the body of feminine literary criticism an approach that anchors gender on cultural marginality and imperialism. Furthermore, this research is theoretical because it incorporates Indigenous feminist theories, despite them being marginalised in the existing mainstream feminist theories. This paper centres Indigenous women and men as knowledges bearers and situates it within the frameworks of Indigenous feminism that gives culturally relevant gender analysis. Not only does it make Indigenous feminisms more audible, but it also allows for narrowed the divide between Indigenous and Feminist disciplines. Also, this research enriches the further dialogue about gender equations within Indigenous societies discussing how Indigenous masculinity and femininity is depicted in Alexie's story. The findings of the current work thus help to explain how these role are shaped by not only cultural values that may be traced back to a group's pre-colonial origins but also by the effects of colonialization. This analysis could be useful in framing further examination of how gender works in Indigenous communities, and how Indigenous men and Indigenous women experience and/or perform gender in the context of colonialism and present-day struggles. Furthermore, the study helps in the improvement of knowledge of cultural identity in literature, especially from the Native people perspective. The analysis of this particular work allows exploring the ways in which literature can become a space of resistance to oppressive discourses, erasure, cultural reclamation and self-creation by understanding how gender identity intersects with the concerns in 'What You Pawn I Will Redeem'. This has implications for the use of literature against colonialism, racism and sexism as the post-colonial criticism implies. Furthermore, the research brings one into the discourses of decolonization since it studies how the Indigenous characters to which the film belongs, with special reference to the protagonist Jackson Jackson, fight for their cultural selves to be recognized and not erased. The focus of gender in this context in the study makes it clear that any decolonization processes need to be aware of how colonialism has affected Indigenous peoples distinctly, and whether it affected Indigenous men or women more severely. This analysis is helpful in broadening the historian's perspective on decolonization beyond strictly political and cultural processes of subverting colonial domination to encompass also gendered processes of liberation. Finally, this research may be helpful for educators in understanding how to teach Indigenous literature in academic institutions. Thus, revisiting the feminist and Indigenous feminist analyses of Alexie's work, the study might prove useful to educators in their attempts to show students a broader and intersectional approach to Indigenous literature. This pedagogical value holds for racism, sexism, and matters of identity across literature courses in general.

In sum, this research paper has value and contribution to the academic discourse in literature, feminism, and Indigenous studies. In offering analyses of gender and cultural identity in "What You Pawn I Will Redeem", the study encourages its readers to critically engage with social questions and how they are reflected and answered in literature and, thereby, contributes to both the theoretical and cultural conversations.

### 1.3. Research Questions

1. In 'What You Pawn I Will Redeem' how are gender roles and identities both established and subverted?
2. How does the gender and cultural perspective of indigenous people s especially that of the spokane Indians apply in the story?

3. In what ways do feminist and Indigenous feminist theories shape the reception of the characters' relationship to systemic systems of oppression?
4. In what ways does Jackson Jackson use women in the story and what of gender, dominance, and survival?

#### 1.4. Research Objectives

- To critically examine how the notions of gender roles and gender identities are being built and dismantled in Sherman Alexie's "What You Pawn I Will Redeem".
- To analyze the aspects of gender with reference to a cultural lens in narrative, with special regard to Indigenous individuals, particularly Spokane Indians, and identify how culture defines gender and vice versa.
- To analyse how the notions of the slack and its characters were affected by the mechanisms of systemic oppression with a help of the feminist and Indigenous feminist theories.
- To engage the company into the dynamics of Jackson Jackson's interactions with female characters in the story, with the focus on how these relationships can be regarded as an representation of the major concerns of race, power, spirit, and decolonization.

#### 2. Literature Review

Sherman Alexie has been the main focus of any discussion in academia mainly due to the realistic representation of the Indigenous people and their lives. In his 'What You Pawn I Will Redeem', Alexie chronicles the ordeal of Jackson Jackson, a homeless Spokane Indian man who sets out for the purpose of regain possession of his grandmother's stolen blanket, which he recognises is actually a symbol of native Indian's lost identity in the USA. The short story has received numerous positive responses both for its humor and tragedy as well as for the social issue that captures the Native American society of the recent past. One of the considerable areas of focus is the review of cultural identity as well as gender roles as depicted in the story. As Weaver further pointed out in 2013, Alexie reflects coloniality of Indigenous masculinity in this novel and shows how Indigenous men manage their masculinities under a context that tries to erase them. Jackson's search for the regalia, thus, becomes a representation of cultural recovery as well as of the main character's struggle for individual recognition as a Spokane man. During the analysis of this story, feminists have also stressed the importance of the study of gender relations in Alexie's work. "What You Pawn I Will Redeem" by Johnson (2016), this work is underlined by the representation of Indigenous women's endurance through the figure of Jackson's grandmother. The regalia being a symbol of his grandmother comes in handy to analyze the position of women in passing the cultural heritage. This tallies with Indigenous feminism, where women as central agents in resilient Indigenous communities in opposition to colonial objectification. Furthermore, Smith (2018) stated that by using the intersectional approach, gender, race, and culture of Alexie's story are issues experienced by characters of the two cultures as the stories intersect. Smith opines that Jackson depicts relationship with the feminine and the female characters like Rose of Sharon and the dead grandmother to support how the Indigenous men and women are shaped by the gender roles. In the context of the gendered power relations, the given relations exemplify how the subordination manifests within the Indigenous peoples' society, as the response to the tendencies prevailing outside of Indigenous communities. Still, as some critics pointed out, while there are numerous opportunities for a feminist reading of Alexie's work, gender has remained in the shadow of the more global concerns of indigenous peoples' identity and colonialism. As Lomawaima suggests, some critics celebrate Alexie's works as the texts that explore Indigenous identity constructions, they pay less attention to these constructions as gendered. For Lomawaima, the narratives about Alexie require intersectorial analysis, especially, with the integration of Indigenous Feminist theory to analyze the gender's role as portrayed by Alexie. Cook-Lynn (2007) also states that Alexie employs humor and irony in the format of the story telling culminating in the redemption of the horse in "What You Pawn I Will Redeem" to present a true view of indigenous society based on poverty, homelessness and dislocation. Drawing from these premises, Cook-Lynn opines that Jackson Jackson's endeavor to find his grandmother's regalia can be understood as a call for cultural endurance in the destructive colonial context. However, it has been noted that emphasis on gender in the novel has been muted and rarely has gender been considered as the primary focus with race and culture being discussed more frequently. On the other hand, Holm (2010) rightly underlines that the message of Alexie must be understood from the gendered perspective at least. According to Holm, diary traces the manner how Indigenous women despite their absence are crucial in building culture among their people by observing and later passing their knowledge to the future generations. Regalia of Jackson's grandmother portrays strength and endurance of Indigenous women who remain as APKs despite colonization. Holm argues that the story's feminism gives a broader view of Jackson's transformation as it relates tradition, gender, and memory to survival.

There are many more accounts that other scholars have considered its depiction of Indigenous masculinity through the prism of feminism. In his papers, Evers (2014) explains how Alexie blurs ordinary ways of envisioning masculinity to depict Jackson as weak and strong at the same time. Evers, for example, rightly points out that it is impossible to understand the relations between Jackson and women like Rose of Sharon or the pawnshop owner, without referring to the historical and cultural aspects of Indigenous masculinity. Adding to the previous critiques presented in the discussion of the feminism of Alexie's work, Ortiz (2017) addresses the intersection of gender

and power in the representation of Indigenous people in work of Alexie. In this work, Ortiz is claiming that it is Jackson's family's women characters who give this narrative its symbolic heft.

In the context of "What You Pawn I Will Redeem" Erdrich (2012) notes that Alexie's portrayal of Indigenous ordinary existence is a commentary on what historical trauma is doing to Native Americans. More so, Erdrich touches on gender since Jackson's journey to look for his grandmother's regalia is a search of identity and repossessing himself only to embrace the feminine side. In far more detail, Owens (2015) analyzes how *What You Pawn I Will Redeem* comports with the theme of Indigenous survival in the sense of gender. According to Owens, Jackson's interactions with the women from the narrative—his grandmother and Rosilla 'Rose of Sharon' Morgan reveal how indigenous women are involved in power relations within the indigenous community. Certainly, Jackson is the story's hero, but it is the women he knows who are depicted as strong-willed and devoted, thus providing hope for continuity throughout the story. Feminist analysis of these characterisations, according to Owens is critical in as far as interpreting the organizational story for Indigenous genders and survival of the species is concerned. Building on the discussion, Allen (2017) analyses the gender representation in *What You Pawn I Will Redeem* as a case of postmodern Indigenous masculinity that does not fit a White Anglo Saxon Protestant narrative. Allen observes that another aspect of Jackson's personality that gets presented is him being vulnerable and rely on the women in his life, as that disorient the stereotype portrayal of Indigenous men as either brutal warriors or battered pathetic figures. Besides gender roles, Thomas (2019) discusses how the concept of systematic oppression of the characters in the story by Alexie can be explained with the help of the feminist theory. Here, Thomas is right to pronounce the elements of race, gender, and class, which we have seen in 'What You Pawn I Will Redeem' to illustrate how Indigenous women are especially affected by colonial as well as patriarchal power structures. With reference to the notion of 'powerful forces' of the society and within the inter-locking structures of oppression, the regalia, representing Jackson's grandmother, is symbolically transformed into a figure of indigenous women's defiance. When Jackson takes back the regalia, he also celebrates his grandmother, but, in doing so, he also protests against the systematic omission of Indigenous women's contributions to the culture.

### 3. Research Methodology

This research paper performs a Feminist critique of Sherman Alexie's Work "What You Pawn I Will Redeem". The paper is most concerned with gender and cultural dynamics in the narrative. The study is more qualitative descriptive in its approach and involves the method of close reading and textual analysis. To this end, this research paper will analyze the story in light of how it manifests the gendered aspects of cultural pursuits, colonization, and oppression using the lenses of feminism and Indigenous feminism. Furthermore, it also poses how the construction of Indigenous masculinity and femininity is complicated in the sexual story and how it is shaped by cultural resilience and colonization. In short, this research paper contributes towards the existing knowledge on the factors influencing Indigenous people's gendered cultural identity based on colonialism and historical trauma.

#### 3.1. Discussion & Analysis

In 'What You Pawn I Will Redeem', Sherman Alexie portrays and deconstructs the gender roles and stereotyping through the relationship between Jackson and the female characters; this is in addition to the meaning of the regalia. While the... tale does engage gender roles and gender roles expectations presenting them either in a stereotyped or essentialized way, it also connects the two concepts with culture and the necessity of Indigenous people's existence, as a result, providing a more complex view of the representation of gender roles in the story.

#### 3.2. Jackson's Indigenous Masculinity

Jackson portrays one type of Indigenous masculinity as weak and strong at the same time, due to the circumstances of his life as a homeless Native American man; his trying to find his grandmother's regalia symbolizes his attempt to regain his Native identity. In general, masculinity is the set of traits such as strength and the ability to hide pain, but Jackson's character shows that it is possible to be successful and cry with loss.

#### Example

"I've been homeless for six years. If there was an Olympic event for homeless people—no, if there was a Decathlon for homeless people—I'd have won the gold medal."

Jackson's willingness to discuss his mistakes and periods of distress also subverts the portrayal of Indigenous males as unidimensional and dispassionate people. He is emotional, easy to forgive and apologetic, he looks to the women for support, especially his dead grandmother whose regalia he wears.

#### 3.3. The Symbolism of the Regalia

The regalia, which were the items, that belonged to Jackson's grandmother, represents the culture as well as the gender. It is an object of female nature, and it is linked to Jackson's grandmother and, therefore, female part of his Indigenous identity. Jackson's pursuit of the regalia is not only a heroic endeavor of restoring a native people's lost emblem; it is, equally importantly, a struggle for reconnecting with the self that he never got a chance to embrace, the Native American and the woman inside of him. Studying the construction of the main narrative by focusing on an object connected to a woman, Alexie underlines the role of indigenous women for the continuity and transmission of traditions within Indigenous cultures. That is why the importance of the regalia to the

continuity of the culture by the women of the tribe is quite evident despite displacement and colonization. Jackson's quest to retrieve the regalia can also be considered as an acceptance of the fact that indigenous women are key to the preservation of culture.

#### **3.4. Relationships with Women: Power Dynamics and Resilience**

Jackson burst traditional gender roles by portraying his interactions with the various female characters in the story. Rose of Sharon, one of the homeless characters that share their life with Jackson, takes up the role of a carer, and a motherly figure. The character embodies Indigenous women who despite of their harsh experiences they still rise to make sure those around them are also well taken care of. Jackson's reliance on Rose of Sharon replaces the masculine roles in which men play protector and supplier with a female character. IN addition, Jackson's interaction with his dead grandmother forms the core part of the movie. His link to her through the regalia as evidently depicts the passing of generational culture among Native Americans as well as strength. Her spirit is still active thus directing Jackson's doings despite the fact that she is no longer alive; they power of Indigenous women in their societies. Jackson's love and respect for his grandmother and his intention to reclaim the regalia for her clearly shifts the power between male and female, as it puts a value on the female voice in Jackson's life.

#### **3.5. Challenging Stereotypes**

In the course of the narration, Alexie speaks against stereotype portrayal of Indigenous men and women. Jackson is quite the opposite of the 'stoic Indian' maiden, for he cries at the slightest provocation and requires the support of the women in his life. On the other hand, the women Rose of Sharon and Jackson's grandmother are depicted as powerful women thereby defying the colonial discourse that Indigenous women are helpless. For instance, Jackson remembers his grandmother with admiration stating that, "She was a Spokane Indian warrior. She was just as tough and mean and ornery as any man, and she knew how to fight." However, what Alexie depicts as Indigenous women is strength and ability to fight for the existence of Indigenous people.

#### **3.6. Cultural Identity and Gender Roles**

Jackson's journey for the repatriation of his grandmother's regalia reveals the issue of indigenous identity and gender that affected Spokane Indians. Regalia is not just a thing; it signifies a part of Jackson's identity that he has with his grandmother, and his indigenous background. The mask is tribal and belonged to 'grandma' and the traditions symbolized by the piece suggest that there is a carry-over of Spokane ways of life from one generation to the next. This cultural capital is again gendered since it is affiliated with the figure of the matriarch in Jackson's life, that is, the grandmother. In this aspect, Jackson's respect for his grandmother's regalia portrays women society as a central figure in the maintenance of culture in indigenous societies. He mentions his grandmother as a warrior – Someone who fought, was as tough and unladylike as a man, "...she was a Spokane Indian warrior. She was just as tough and mean and ornery as any man and she knew how to fight." Her regalia represents ethnic origin and, at the same time, the importance of women in preserving and transferring cultural achievements from one generation to another.

#### **3.7. Gender and Power Dynamics**

The themes of gender and culture are also evident in the relationships of power between Jackson and the various women he meets in the course of the novel. Jackson's relations with women, for example, Rose of Sharon, and the pawnbroker, highlight how gender is played out in Indigenous societies as well as in the context of settler colonial societies. Rose of Sharon who is one of the homeless women that Jackson befriends, symbolises the strength of the Indigenous women. In spite of her own problems, she nurtures Jackson emotionally which makes her act as a surrogate mother for him. Her role possesses the ability to symbolise the power of Indigenous women who have long been deprived of their rights from the systemic oppression of the world by reducing their roles to nurseries of their societies. Rose of Sharon has an interesting role of a caregiver but she defies the traditional femininity of a woman – she is a strong woman and not a fragile figure who needs support.

#### **3.8. Gendered Cultural Reclamation**

Jackson's journey to retrieve his lost grandmother's regalia is not only a personal journey; it is a gendered journey of cultural production. The regalia is symbolically associated with the figure of the Indigenous grandmother, and thus stands for the constant fight of Native women for their culture amid colonialism. Thus, both at the level of narrative and in the context of the struggle for the return of the regalia, image is a way of paying tribute to the Indigenous woman's duties stemming from her position of the cultural identity' keeper. This is due to the fact that the symbolisms of the regalia are further compounded in the last few lines of the story when Jackson puts on the regalia and dance. He states, "I was my grandmother, dancing." This moment is a sexual one as Jackson takes on a male version of his female ancestor, and it is an indigenous one as he reconnects with his Spokane Indian roots. In this act he overcomes the constraints colonialism and homelessness put upon him, and regaining his self-image as both a Spokane Indian man, and the descendent of a fierce native woman.

#### **3.9. Feminist Theory: Gendered Oppression and Resilience**

Perceiving gender as a crucial component of oppression and/or resistance, there is the feminist theory. For Jackson in *What You Pawn I Will Redeem*, the process of attempting to retrieve his grandmother's regalia is an allegory of the struggle to reclaim indigenous and indigenous gender and sexual identities in the face of colonisation. The regalia is a traditionally female artefact and is therefore a symbol of Indigenous women's culture

and resilience. Using the lens of the feminisms we are able to make sense of how the regalia is a form of the Indigenous people's cultural continuation through Indigenous women who are often the culture custodians in their societies.

The relationship which can be realized in the story is that of Jackson and his, posthumously, grandmother. Writing about her, he refers to her as "a Spokane Indian warrior" which directly goes against conventional gender standards where women would be portrayed as insignificant beings. Instead, such 'strengths' are exhibited by his grandmother as described through the feminine sexuality which is so often associated with masculinity. According to the Feminist theory we are supposed to regard her as an embodiment of Indigenous women's strength that survives despite colonialism. Additionally, the oppression that Jackson has to endure is also gendered as he tries to restore the regalia representing Indigenous male's struggle for his identity in the colonized society. His frailness as a homeless man struggling with the decimation of Indigenous culture forces us to reimagine 'masculinity' and raises questions about how colonialism has effectively castrated Indigenous peoples and disrupted the balance of power that colonialist ideologies sought to impose as masculine domination within Indigenous societies.

### **3.10. Systemic Oppression: Colonialism, Gender, and Power**

Feminist and Indigenous feminist frameworks show how the oppression is gendered, racialised, and manifest in the structures of power. In the story, Jackson's encounters with systemic oppression are multifaceted, shaped by his status as a homeless Indigenous man. Jackson's description of his situation underscores the systemic nature of his oppression: This line 'There are very likely some of you out there who think I did not even try enough to regain my grandmother's regalia, well, I tried' reveals how he could not fight the system that oppressed him based on his race and sex. His failure to retrieve the regalia on the spot has not a tinge of laziness, but is an indicator of the very overwhelming force of colonialism that continues to subjugate Indigenous People.

### **3.11. Jackson's Relationship with the Pawnbroker: Gender and Power**

By making the female pawnbroker the main character of the performance, Karynpa expands on the ways in which power imbalance exist between Indigenous people and settler-colonial society. The pawnbroker who possesses Jackson's grandmother's regalia stands for the Colonial powers that have displaced Indigenous peoples and then co-opted their culture into exploitation. Jackson has no authority to retrieve the regalia and vehemently disagrees to restore them until he pays additional \$999 – a sum that is financially unreachable for a Native man – and therefore, the reinforcement of such brutal experience of colonization seen through the figure of the Shelby lies in the hands of a mean pawnbroker who owns the regalia. The fact that the pawnbroker controls access to Jackson's cultural reference points shows two aspects of power – gendered and otherwise. Despite the fact that she is a woman, she holds the power in structures that are actively capitalist and colonial towards Indigenous communities. Jackson's polite but submissive attitude in conversation with her evidences him as aware of the structural power differential. He tells her, "I don't have the money now, but I will have it in the future. You have to believe me." Here one sees a Caucasian male desperate to have his ancestral home returned to his family, with absolutely no hope but her benevolence. The male indigenous person relying on a white woman to get their own back shows how gender and colonialism worked hand in hand.

### **3.12. Jackson's Relationship with Rose of Sharon: Gender and Resilience**

Gender and resilience are illustrated in a strained friendship which Jackson forms with one of the homeless woman, Rose of Sharon. In the same manner, Rose of Sharon, the other homeless character, also has a motherly figure in the life of Jackson through keeping him company. Although she has problems herself, she is not afraid to show a kind of bravery that men are expected to portray in that time. In this sense, Rose of Sharon symbolizes the sustaining, affirmative aspects of Indigenous femininity despite oppressive conditions. For instance, Jackson refers to Rose of Sharon as a good woman who attempted to look after him – defiance of the conventional gender roles as Jackson is a male and Rose of Sharon is expected and expected to take care of him. This progressive reality disorients the traditional male as guardian and female as vulnerable subject. However, Rose of Sharon's personal strength stabilizes Jackson, with both of them enduring similar misfortunes in life. This can be linked to the role Indigenous women are often placed in the Indian society a resilient maternal figure despite the oppression they experience. This is in line with the theme of women as the pillars that keep cultures and individual's endurance going midst all the odds.

## **4. Conclusion**

This research paper has sought to explore the intersections of gender and cultural identity in Sherman Alexie's "What You Pawn I Will Redeem" through a feminist and Indigenous feminist lens. The study exhibits how Alexie's narrative each displays and resists the affects of colonialism on Indigenous communities by using focusing on the gendered dimensions of Indigenous identity. The analysis has validated that the studies of Jackson and the other characters within the tale are formed not best by way of their cultural identity but additionally by the complex interplay of gender, historic trauma, and systemic oppression. The have a look at has highlighted the significance of understanding gender inside the broader context of cultural identification and colonization thru the application of feminist and Indigenous feminist theories. The findings show that Jackson's adventure to reclaim his grandmother's stolen regalia is not only a quest for cultural recovery, however

additionally a reflection of the way Indigenous masculinity and femininity had been tormented by colonial history. The characters' interactions with every different and with the bigger society illustrate the gendered nature of their struggles, resilience, and survival. The research additionally underscores the importance of incorporating Indigenous feminist views into literary evaluation. By doing so, it affords a more nuanced know-how of the way gender roles and identities are built in Indigenous literature, emphasizing the need for culturally particular strategies to feminist evaluation. The have a look at contributes to the developing frame of scholarship that acknowledges the unique challenges confronted through Indigenous communities and the methods in which those challenges intersect with troubles of gender. While this research has made treasured contribution.

In short, during the examination, it was revealed that the book "What You Pawn I Will Redeem" is also a category that the influence of colonialism on Indigenous people has in the literary work and that this aspect can be investigated through feminist perspective to bring up additional facets of a text's meaning. As a result of this, the image of cultural reclamation, the gendered resilience, and literally, the relationship with self-conceptions is thus depicted in a way that gives a glimpse into the complicated realities that continue to characterize the present day Indigenous communities. In detail, this reading about feminist/indigenous approaches to literature accommodates why these approaches should not be used as a token or as a hortatory way and what a strong methodology of the intersection sincerely does in the process of the deconstruction of the identity of marginalized people.

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