

Sherman alexie's "what you pawn, i will redeem" essay



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Sherman Alexie's "What You Pawn, I Will Redeem" appears on the surface to be a merely written narrative of a homeless, alcoholic Indian in Seattle who is seeking to gain adequate money to repossess his grandmas Pow Wow regalia from a local pawn store. But upon looking closely, there are many symbolic transitions that may lead an individual to much deeper decisions. Throughout the narrative there are many hints that hint at the fact that this pursuit may not have been existent, but a more "spiritual" experience for him. It could be argued that Jackson Jackson was on a modern twenty-four hours vision quest. In the debut of the narrative, Jackson bluffly describes himself as a homeless Indian who "...married two or three times, fathered two or three children, so went crazy" (9) and "...an alcoholic Indian with a busted stomach..." (15) . His alcohol addiction has become critical to his wellness. Old ages of intoxicant maltreatment and mental unwellness may have altered his sense of consciousness.

It is plausible that his quest to repossess his grandmother's regalia is genuinely a psychotic belief, which he has manifested within himself in an attempt to happen his connections with his household, his heritage and himself. His desire to reconnect with his people is evident early on in the narrative, and may be perpetuated by his state of affairs. " My people have lived within the hundred mile radius of Spokane, Washington for at least 10,000 years" (8) . Yet he is stateless. He feels unseeable, like so many other homeless Indians in Seattle. " Piece by piece I disappeared, and I've been vanishing of all time since" (9) . This transition could typify not merely his own feelings of grief from his household and civilization, but the Indian people's predicament in general. They struggle to stay frozen in their

civilization while being forced to go forth their hereditary lands and sacred topographic points behind. The above transitions set up the importance that he places on his household and his heritage.

He takes pride in the fact that he is a " Spokane Indian male child. an Interior Salish" (8) and he has intuitions of another Indian adult male he meets because he refuses to place himself clearly with a specific folk. This leads to his statement "...we Indians are great narrators and prevaricators and mythmakers..." (9) . which gives the reader the first intimation that possibly Jackson's narrative is non to be taken at face value. It may non needfully be the honest truth. but is a portion of his narrative. It is his truth. The sudden visual aspect of a pawnbroker's shop. on a corner that he has passed by many times creates a feeling that something may be awry. Throughout the narrative. it is portrayed in an about mystical manner. " We Indians have constitutional pawnbroker's shop radar" (10) . he quips. yet he has ne'er seen this one. It seems to hold as if by magic appeared. Later in the narrative. its mysticism is reinforced when. upon seeking to return to the pawnbroker's shop. it " seemed to hold sailed away like a shade ship... And merely when I'd given up...there it was. in a infinite I swear it hadn't occupied a few proceedingss ago. " (27) . Even the proprietor himself has changed in Jackson's remembrance. looking younger than he had appeared earlier.

Adding to the consequence that Jackson's experience with the pawnbroker's shop may hold been a psychotic belief is the fact that his Grandmother's losing regalia is hanging in the forepart window. This Pow Wow regalia is likely the most important accelerator that he could hold received towards his

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healing. Jackson has likened his family's bad lucks and even his grandmother's decease to the larceny of her regalia. " I wondered if my grandmas malignant neoplastic disease started when person stole her Pow Wow regalia...I wondered whether I could convey my grandma back to life if I bought back her regalia. " (14) Through his manifestation of the losing regalia. he has enabled himself a powerful manner to reconnect with his yesteryear and to decide a series of sensed household calamities which he slackly attributes to it's larceny. He makes repossessing it a personal pursuit. and believes that by winning it back he can pay award to his grandma and his civilization. every bit good as recover his ain.

When the police officer offers to look into the larceny he rapidly declines the aid. stating "...I attention about it. It's been a truly long clip since I cared about anything " (24) . He knows that he must gain the rights to claim it. and it is non something that anyone else can make. but something that he must decide within himself. The pawn store and the visual aspect of the regalia are the most easy recognizable hints that may take a individual to believe he may be sing a psychotic belief but there are other. more discreetly written niceties every bit good. In the narrative. we are introduced to the three Aleut fishermen. Immediately before their visual aspect. Jackson is sitting by the H2O. Alexie writes "...salt ever smells like memory. " (13) . This statement indicates that the undermentioned brush with the Aleuts may be a portion of his delusional brush every bit good. Although non to the full rounded characters. they contribute to his narrative.

Throughout the narrative. the three Aleutians are besides hankering and seeking for their place. and together they cry and miss their households.
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They are dead. taking to sit and wait for the return of their boat instead than seek another way to acquire them place. I believe that this may parallel Jackson's homelessness and alcohol addiction in the narrative. In a ulterior transition they portion religious chants and vocals with him. singing narratives about their grandmas and households. which help to steer him closer to his heritage and his ain grandmother's memory. Even their issue from the narrative farther promotes the feeling of mysticism. " Some Indians swore they walked on H2O and headed north" (27) . They had chosen. as he had. to seek to happen their manner place. The pawnbroker is the concluding character in the narrative that plays a portion in Jackson's psychotic belief. Even though Jackson still doesn't have the money that the pawnbroker has specified. he gives Jackson the regalia.

This leads the reader to believe that to the pawnbroker. the pursuit was non to obtain the money paid for the regalia. but to assist Jackson repossess the lost connexion he needed with his household and civilization. Throughout the narrative. Jackson tells in a casual mode how his friends and household have gone. " I wanted to portion the good intelligence with Junior. but he was gone. I heard subsequently that he had hitchhiked down to Portland. Oregon. and died of exposure..." (18) . The manner in which he presents the disappearing of his friends from his life gives the reader a sense of the surrender and hopelessness he experiences.

However. even though he seems to be resigned to losing those he cares for. he continues to make out and assist others. He refers to the Indians in the saloon and the Aleuts ' cousins' and assures the shopkeeper's girl that she is ' family' . In making this. he comes to recognize the connexions he has all
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around him and no longer experience entirely. "...it's ok. there are Indians everywhere" (28) . he tells the pawnbroker. The pawnbroker. upon contemplation. decides that he has " earned" the money. and so he has redeemed his family's heirloom. By setting on the regalia and dance in the streets. he signifies that he feels one time once more connected with his grandma and the civilization. He likens himself to the xanthous bead sewn into the regalia. He is imperfect. yet a portion of something beautiful. He is no longer unseeable. but seen.