

Thoughts on alexies lahiris and erdrichs short stories literature review examples...

[Family](#), [Parents](#)



In Sherman Alexie's story, *What You Pawn I Will Redeem*, the homeless narrator Jackson Jackson is a Spokane Indian. When he describes himself, he says, " Piece by piece, I disappeared. And I've been disappearing ever since," he is describing both a literal disappearance and a figurative one (401). Literally, he has been discussing his disappearance from his lovers' lives, meaning that he didn't simply walk out on them with no notice. Figuratively, he means he is slowly losing his identity as a person and as a member of his ethnic background as he becomes more absorbed in his alcoholism and vagrant way of living without real family support. At the end, I got goose bumps when he regained his grandmother's dancing regalia, puts it on, steps into the intersection and begins to dance; it is not just the regalia that is redeemed from the pawn shop. It is also a vital piece of his heritage, soul, and connection to life that perhaps will prevent his total " disappearance."

Part of Jhumpa Lahiri's story, *The Third and Final Continent*, is about social and cultural differences and how people adapt or not to change in both. The main character, the unnamed narrator, is a Bengali Indian man who has traveled from India to London for his education, then finally to America for work. He encounters social and cultural differences simply by moving, but also in dealing with Mrs. Croft. Mrs. Croft is another example concerning social and cultural change; at 103 years old, the narrator tries to imagine " the world she had been born into, in 1886—a world, I imagined, filled with women in long black skirts, and chaste conversations in the parlor" (425). Even within America, she is living within a world of her own and hasn't changed her values after a century of life. The story is also about the

marriage of the narrator and his wife Mala, an arranged marriage which he does not appear to care much about at first. However, their shared experiences in their new home of America bring them together, helping them to find love and a happy life together. I liked in the end how the narrator makes what seemed like an ordinary life become extraordinary by thinking of how much he has really been through.

I had to read Louise Erdrich's story, *The Shawl*, twice in order to fully feel the impact of the first part of the story. Although it is dramatic and caught me up in its flow, it was not until I finished the second half of the story that I realized the determined little boy in the first half who ran towards his mother and sister "until his throat closed, he saw red, and in the ice of the air his lungs shut" was the same person as the narrator says is "my own father" who "terrified us with his drinking" (2-3). It seems like the passing on of a story is the only way for his father to heal concerning the death of his sister. The passing on of the story from father to son allowed them to communicate and make progress as the son suggests it is time to burn the shawl, "to send it off to cloak her spirit" (6). Without the passing on of the story, the son could not retell it to his father and continue to heal his wounds. This is a story that gets better every time I read it.

Works Cited

Alexie, Sherman. *What You Pawn I Will Redeem*. American Literature Since the Civil War. McGraw-Hill, 2011. 401-415.

Erdrich, Louise. *The Shawl*. Web. <http://www.blogs.uni-osnabrueck.de/studyskills/>

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Lahiri, Jhumpa. The Third and Final Continent. American Literature Since the Civil War. McGraw-Hill, 2011. 417-430.