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The New Image of Indian Girl in Sherman Alexie's *The Search Engine*

Mundi Rahayu
mundi@bsi.uin-malang.ac.id
Department of English, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, INDONESIA

Abstract

The current paper examines the Native American people's identity, especially the main female character's cultural identity in the short story entitled The Search Engine. Sherman Alexie, the author of the story, is a Native American writer who harnesses the Indian identity as one of the main topics. The identity presented in the main character, Corliss, shows the challenges of the stereotypes of Native American girls. For that reason, the paper aims at exploring the new Indian woman's cultural identity represented in the main character, Corliss, in the short story The Search Engine. The study applies postcolonial feminist literary criticism by Gayatri Spivak that highlighted the importance of the women in the third world or she called the subaltern's voice. Spivak's ideas denied the universalities in women movement, and she advocates the women in postcolonial countries who are marginalized and silenced. Spivak's concept applied in this study enables the writer to deeply explore the issue of woman's identity among the American native people, as the native people are also in the position of postcolonial. The study shows that the main character, Corliss is represented as the new female image identity, in which she can challenge traditional stereotypes of Native American women. Corliss is described as a highly literate woman, with a lot of reading on English literary works, and has concern on her Indian-ness, which is often incommensurable to her big family's views. Her excellent literacy and attitude toward Indian and White people enable her build new consciousness in seeing the Indian men and women and their relation to White people.

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Introduction

The discourse of indigenous people has increasingly attracted international readers mainly since the raising awareness on the human rights. In the literary world, indigenous literary work affected young Indigenous people in how they perceived

themselves and built their own identity (Topash-Caldwell, 2020). There are various narrations of Native American literary works from which we can figure out the ideas on the stories and knowledge of the indigenous people. One of the main issues in indigenous literature is the position and image of native woman. In popular culture, American native women have almost always been portrayed with stereotypes of Indian princess or the ''squaw'' – ''a violent, degraded, and filthy creature,' or presented as fantasy that tinged with prejudice in the Wild West Shows (Green, 2000; Mandell, 2004). Under such background, this paper aims to explore further, the representation of Native American woman in a literary work of 21 century. The work discussed in this paper is the short story entitled *The Search Engines* which is part of the book *Ten Little Indians* (2003) written by Sherman Alexie.

In *Ten Little Indians* (2003), Alexie attracts readers' attention that the Indian narrative is worthy of special attention. In this collection, the nine stories highlight the people of the Spokane tribe of Native Americans in Washington state. The titles of the nine stories are: *The Search Engine, Lawyer's League, Can I Get a Witness? Do Not Go Gentle, Flight Patterns, The Life and Times of Estelle Walks Above, Do You Know Where I Am?, What You Pawn I Will Redeem, Whatever Happened to Frank Snake Church*. The writer narrates the Indian characters that are sincere, lovable, funny, and fallible (Coulombe, J.L., 2011). They reflect the life as Indians in the city of Seattle, a multicultural urban space with blurry cultural boundaries (Coulombe, J.L. 2002). For instance, some Indian boys are puzzled about what to do to get their way home, as they just sit at the bench of the coast and wait for their ships/canoes to pass by. On the other hand, there is a young Indian who found out his grandmother's regalia at the shop, but he could not afford to buy it back, and he spent the money he got for the drinking instead (the story *What you Pawn I Will Redeem*). The writer narrates not only his identity as an Indian, but he also talks about a multicultural society.

The first short story in the collection entitled *The Search Engine* narrates a young Indian girl who is highly literate as she is the only one in her clan who studied English literature in university. As an Indian girl, Corliss, the main character, faces many challenges in pursuing her literacy and study. She takes great efforts for her ambition to be an educated and literate woman. The challenges come from her parents and big family members who did not understand Corliss' thought. She realizes that she has different views from her parents and uncles, regarding her study, the success indicators, and different views on white people. The identity is the main issue in this story, as the Indian's perception on the world is affected by their history, and how they perceive their self-identity, and their interaction with the Whites. With the problems and challenges that she encounters in this story, the main character, Corliss is represented as an Indian girl with a new image.

There have been some researches on the issue of Native woman in American literature. Responding to the popular culture stereotype that Native American woman was often represented as princess or the ''squaw'' – ''a violent, degraded, and filthy creature,'' Annette van Dyke (2005) wrote that American native writers have developed the literary works by exploring the authentic native tradition elements such as the belief in the sacredness of language and earth, representing the place and landscape in their original view, and highlighting their traditional values (McGrath, 2000). To erase the bad stereotype of princess or squaw, Native American women writers have had to address the misconceptions about the importance of women in Native culture (van Dyke, 2005).

One of the outstanding native woman writers in the 19th Century, Winnemucca wrote her autobiography, *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims* (1883). For her, writing has become a resistance tool against the white people. Her resistance is expressed through the poetic and political discourse in her book, *Life Among the Piutes.* In this book, Winnemucca presented her mastery in rhetoric that combines her sentimentality and anger. She used tears as the prominent narrative device in the book. She also presented humor that attract the readers at

large. By doing so, she challenged nineteenth-century norms that excluded women from comedy. The rhetoric she developed in that book proved to be powerful narrative technique for criticizing colonialism (Carpenter, 2020).

The studies on Native American women above indicates the struggle that the native women encountered in their time. I argue that the struggle of the women as portrayed in the literary works might have some changes along with the shift and development of the social political context of the society. As written by Nancy Shoemaker in her book entitled *Negotiators of Changes* (1994), the European colonialization gave more complex impacts towards Native American women's power such as the adaptation, subversion, and economic changes, as well as other issues like the changing meanings of motherhood, women's roles and different gender ideologies. For that reason, the current paper focused on exploring Native American woman identity represented in a story written by an American Indian (Spokane) writer, Sherman Alexie in the early of the 21C.

This study aims at understanding the portrayal of the indigenous woman in a short story entitled *The Search Engine*. Like the other Alexie's literary works, for example, *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* (1993), *Some Signal* (1998), *Ten Little Indians* (2003), the story shed the light on the life of Native Americans in their involvement with the daily life of multicultural Americans. The story *The Search Engine* is the first part of the collection of short stories entitled *Ten Little Indians*. The 52-page story is the longest one in the collection. Interestingly, the story narrates some issues related to Native American woman identities, generational gap that contributes to the different identities, and Native's contested views on white people, as well as some conflicts related to the identities. As studied by Douglas Ford (2002), the identity of Aboriginality has become an ever-changing state since the contact of the Native people with cultures of people of other continents. In his works, Alexie represents the complexities of catastrophic events and expression experienced by the Native American people in daily life (Ford, 2002).

Sherman Alexie is one of the contemporary Native American literature writers, who is arguably the most renowned, innovative, and cosmopolitan as well as provocative native author today (Bockes, 2016; Farrington, 2015; Herman, 2009). His complete name is Sherman Joseph Alexie Jr., born on October 7, 1966, as a Spokane-Coeur d'Alene native American tribe of Spokane, Washington. He writes about the lives and emotions of his kinsmen and women from the "inside" of their tribal world (Donohue, 2008). Alexie is also popularly known as a novelist, short story writer, and filmmaker, inspired by his own feeling, thought, and concerns as an Indigenous. He grew up on the Spokane Indian Reservation, and now lives in Seattle, Washington. His background affects his works, especially on the theme of identity. His stories are fictions that plays with the art constructing stories, identities, and thus, interpretations of the world (Wyman, 2014). Alexie also uses the popular culture in his works, such as in *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*, which constructs a model of Native American identity that shifts beyond reaction to be as inclusive as it is divisive. His views on white culture functions to investigate the issues of identity which are at the heart of American Indian literature (Gordon, 2001).

Alexie' works addressed social issues that the Indian encounter across Native American history. He has received many prizes for his works. "Reservation Blues" was his first debut, of which he got the American Book Award in 1996. The other best work is the novel entitled "The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian" (2007). He also wrote a screenplay for the film *Smoke Signals* (1998), adapted from his book *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* (1993). Understanding Alexie's works gives the readers ideas on how the Native live for better or worse and the true story of the modern Indian (Banka, E., 2006). In critical perspective, his work becomes a provocative view into the modern Indian psyche (Bockes, 2016). One of important aspects in Alexie's work is humor. For Alexie, humor functions as his "green card" or his way of getting people's attention (Kertzer, 2012).

Native American literature has played important role in literary studies. One of the important points is that indigenous literary works present language, and knowledge as well as the philosophy of indigenous communities. In many cases, the indigenous literary works also function as amplifying the authentic voice of the tribes and countering the stereotypes and complications notion of Indian identity in productive ways (Ladino, J.K. 2009). The way of thinking is one of the most important aspects in understanding the Native people, in which it is based on their tribal cultures and how they see the world and universe (Fixico, D.L, 2009). In more general, Farrington found out that there are two categories of criticisms on Native literary works, those who denounce the author's works for constructing Indian stereotypes, and those who fight for the author's commitment to down-to earth portrayals of a tearing reservation community (Farrington, 2013). Of those two categories, Alexies belongs to the second one, and at the same time deconstructed the Indian stereotypes.

The Search Engine presented the main character, Corliss, a woman who challenges traditional stereotypes of Indian women. Instead of living with her big family, she prefers to live independently in the city of Washington. As the history tells us, from the 1930s up to now, in the US, there have been some generations of the Native people living in the cities (Weaver, 2012). Corliss is a girl who has a strong commitment to literacy, and determined to study English literature, which is out of her family's expectations. To explore further the portrayal of the indigenous woman in the story *The Search Engine*, the study applies the postcolonial feminism perspective. In the indigenous context, patriarchy is often intersected with colonialism and racism to produce violence, affecting the contemporary realities of indigenous women (Luebke, J. et.al.,2021).

Postcolonial feminist literary criticism focuses on women's struggle to articulate her voice in the traditional patriarchal society of the Native American. Sometimes, women are successful in articulating their voice, but some other times they have to negotiate, or break social norms openly and silently (Rahayu, M. and Aurita, N.A., 2020). The concept developed by Mohanty (1994) and Spivak (1985) helps us understand the relationship between race-and-gender-conscious historical materialism. The connection enables us to figure out the complexities and interconnections between women, to understand the power, privilege, agency, and dissent that a woman can make.

In postcolonial feminism, some important influential writings dealing with the paradigm are Gayatri Spivak's "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism" (Spivak, 1985) and Mohanty's "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses" (Mohanty, 1988). Spivak criticizes western feminism as the perspective that reproduces the ideas of imperialism (Spivak, 1985). The imperialist ideas that Spivak criticizes are, first, the imperialism as the important part of the cultural representation of England to the English. Second, that literature had important roles in the production and reproduction of the cultural representation of imperialism. Spivak highlighted the importance to be critical on the imperialism ideas. Spivak also articulated the concept on subaltern and the importance of the voice of the women of the "third world" in facing the imperialist ideas (Spivak, 1988).

In line with Spivak, Mohanty's critique on colonialism stated that the image of the third world woman who is always oppressed is problematic, because this image maintains the illusion of women's autonomy in the first world, that assert the assumption of the western women's secular, liberated, and have control over their own lives (Mohanty, 1988). The writings criticize that Western feminist ideas tend to colonize postcolonial women. So, the criticism goes on to the point that it is necessary to build feminist individualism that highlights female problems by contextualizing them in their own context.

In the postcolonialism paradigm, the question is how the native's voices subvert the assumptions of colonial discourse. The imperialist assumption that justifies colonialism says that the feminine land out there is to be explored by male explorers (McClintock, 1995). The idea displays the interconnection between colonialism and the feminism movement which aims to raise

against the colonial power. Native's voice and feminist voice get the interconnection in the postcolonial studies, as one of the tools of analysis in scrutinizing the consequences of colonialism, dealing with the social and economic impacts of colonialism.

Under the postcolonial perspective, feminist criticism ponders how literary works and other cultural products emphasize or subvert women's oppression under economic, political, social, and psychological aspects (Mikulan, 2009). In reading literary works, the readers need to scrutinize and interrogate the portrayal of women, solicit the archetypes from the perspective of feminism, observe the feminist and communal values or the patriarchal system that has been in charge of the construction and possible subversion of gender inequality (Dresang, 2002).

Methodology

This study is qualitative research, in which it seeks to understand the social phenomena by engaging qualitative data collection and analysis to encapsulate the human experience (Harreveld, 2016). The social phenomena discussed here is represented in literary work so that it is specifically analyzed through literary criticism, a study to evaluate and interpret the literary works using the lens of literary theories. The literary work discussed in this study is a short story entitled *The Search Engine* written by Sherman Alexie, as the data source. The data are in the forms of words and sentences all of which describe the details of how the female character (Corliss) in the story builds and develops her cultural identity as a Native Indian girl. Under the perspective of postcolonial feminism (Spivak, 1985), the story is observed in the aspect of how the female main character takes efforts to build her native identify in the multicultural spaces.

The Search Engine is part of the short stories collection of *Ten Little Indians* (2003). The concept of postcolonial feminism is applied in the data analysis. The interpretation is done through close-reading. In literary studies, a close reading is typically the occasion for more general observations and for quite wide-ranging reflections. The observations about the style or genre of the text at hand, or about its author, or reflections on the era in which it was written. The observations and reflections—more or less subtle, more or less original—about related human circumstances and experiences (Smith, B.H., 2016). In that way, the analysis aims to answer the question of how female Indian cultural identity represented in the story.

Results and Discussion

The Search Engine tells us about a young woman, called Corliss, a Spokane Indian who lives in Washington. As the Indian, Corliss grows up in a Spokane family, and now she lives in her apartment in the city while studying English literature at Washington University. The Spokane is a Native tribe in the Native American Plateau, who populate the eastern part of Washington state and parts of northern Idaho in the United States of America. The new image of Corliss that defies the stereotype of an Indian girl, can be classified into two, her identity as a girl of excellent literacy and her attitude toward Indian and White people. The history saw, since the Native people move out of tribal societies, and the traditional lifestyles changes, it affects the women's roles both in the context of mainstream American life and in tribal life, to be more challenging (Cook-Lynn, 1996).

Corliss' identity as an independent Indian girl with excellent literacy

Grown up in Spokane Indian in Washington, America, Corliss was raised in a big family of Indians. She loves her father and mother, uncles and nieces. Her father and uncles are all happy to sit together, share a story and nostalgia, and laughter so that it seems the world is friendly for them. However, as an Indian girl, Corliss builds an ambiguous perception of her clan. On one side, she loves her big family. On the other side, there are many things about her family that she dislikes at all.

Corliss is presented as an independent girl, in many ways. She is independent in making decision of what she wants to study in the university, and what she loves in her life: books and literacy. This also makes her

independent in making political stance of judging the white people, not following her father or clan's opinion. Her willing to read a lot of literary books shapes her critical thinking and makes her excellent in literacy.

Corliss's excellent in literacy can be explained in the following narration. As a 19-year-old girl who loves books so much that she wants to be "buried in a coffin filled with used paperbacks," (TSE, p.5) and has "never met one human being more interesting to her than a good book" (TSE, p.10). Corliss is a young woman who grew up on the Spokane reservation, and as an Indian girl, it is a high privilege for her to enroll the higher education. She had to make a great effort to reach her status as a university student, for example, she had to collect cans to get money before enrolling in the junior high school. Represented as a poor Indian girl, Corliss has a strong will to study, and she reads and memorizes the poetry of popular poets. Poetry plays an important role in her life.

Corliss is charmed reading literary works. Moreover, she chose English literature as her major. Different from Corliss, her family, father, and uncles are all dislike poetry or such literacy things. The Indian men were suspicious on anything of 'white book.' This can be seen from the incident when Corliss brings a book and her uncles call it a "white book." Her uncle hates the books written by white people, he called it "white book." Corliss clarified, that the name of the book writer was Gerard Manley Hopkins, who wrote in 19C. However, the uncle responds cynically, "white people were killing Indians in the 19C." In addition, the uncle said, *"I bet this Hopkins dude was killing Indians, too"* (TSE, p.13).

Not only white people the Indians hate, but also the Catholics. Her father replied, *"Oh, Corliss, those Catholics were the worst. Your grandmother still has scars on her back from when a priest and a nun whipped her in boarding school. You shouldn't be reading that stuff. It will pollute your heart" (TSE, p.14).* The view on the Catholics was affected by their bad memory in the past.

For her father and uncles, the books written by White people are just seen as bad things. Instead of getting wisdom, they perceive the book as something harmful, that can pollute her heart. The perception of the white book is affected by their historical events in which, White people have killed their Indian ancestors and grabbed their land and their future. The colonial memory of colonialization has haunted the Indian minds till now.

However, Corliss is determined to be independent for her future that she imagined, "she wanted a maximum life, an original aboriginal life" (TSE, p.5). She imagined that her future life is a "maximum life," that means, a life meaningful for/as a Native Indian girl who loves literary works. The identity as a native Indian aboriginal girl is important for her implying that people respect her as an Indian girl. She does not figure out a success like those living in urban, such as being an executive in a big company, or many modernity imaginations that happened to many young people in modern times. Instead, she loves her life as an native Indian woman, with the access of a good life for her and her family as aboriginal life.

The concept of the life is still an abstract idea, but it is elaborated further in the story. To reach her dream, she fought hard to go to an underfunded public college. She worked hard since young age, gathering aluminum cans and selling them in her summer break before she went to junior year of high school. In that way, she could afford the yearlong SAT-prep course. The course was successfully raised her scores and won her academic scholarship, but that was not enough. Corliss still had to fight more for her dream.

> *At the beginning of every semester, Corliss had called the history and English teachers at the local prep school she couldn't afford, and asked what books they would be reading in class, and she had found those books and lived with them like siblings* (TSE, p.5).

The citation above shows Corliss' strategies to be able to take the preparation school before going to the university/college, calling the teachers of History and English and asked them the books they read in the class, so

that she could read and learn the books by herself, any time. Corliss shows her commitment and strong motivation to study. She built the consciousness that the study would make her life better and maximum as an aboriginal girl.

Corliss builds her dream independently, which was very much different from her family's ideas. Corliss understands that her family loves and supports her for many things she could enjoy as a college student in Washington. The family sent her money, although it was not enough for her. As presented in the citation below, we can find out the language "miraculous twenty-dollar bill" that implies how big efforts her family support her, sending her money to survive in the university. Twenty dollars cannot be called a big money, but for the Indian people, it has been something miraculous, so that she felt guilty to question the importance of her tribe.

> *How many times had she opened an envelope and discovered a miraculous twenty-dollar bill? The family and the tribe were helping her, so maybe she was a selfish bitch for questioning the usefulness of tribalism. Here she was sitting in a corner of her tiny apartment, pretending to be alone in the world, the one poetic Spokane, and she was reading a book of poems, of sonnets, by another Spokane* (TSE, p.14).

Although her family was lack of financial resources, Corliss she was determined to build the dignity through literacy. She loves reading a lot of literary works and being in solitude. Her tiny apartment shows her simplicity of life. In addition, she does not want to share the apartment with other people, either White people or Indian. She knows Indian well, so she perceives that her Indian roommate would be busy with their big family culture, as she knows well how Indian people's lifestyle. "Indians were used to sharing and called it tribalism," but in Corliss's mind, they are failed communism. The Indians are habitual to living together, not daring to be alone, as the stereotype of Indians who were terrified of being lonely, of being exiled. That is contradictory to Corliss because she, as an Indian herself, had always dreamed of solitude (TSE, p.10). In addition, she made a safe place by living alone, as the violence and discrimination often happened to Native women (Le May, G., 2018).

Life in an Indian family and clan implies living with a mother, father, seven Indian siblings, and cousins. For Corliss, solitude life is what she looked for. She enjoyed her solitude and kept it sacred, implying that she does not allow anyone to enter her world. She just had minimal material things in daily life, so it is necessary to mention the content of the wardrobe in her apartment. "Maybe she lived in an academic gulag, but she had chosen that way" (TSE, p.10). "Gulag" means camps for labor which is terrible and miserable, so many people died in the camps. Academic "gulag" refers to the condition of the unenjoyable place in the academic sphere that made people study hard without enough facilities. The academic gulag in this context shows the situation in which Corliss had to work hard in her study and might not be supported by good facilities. Though living in limited resources, Corliss loves her life, and she is grateful that she can read so many books and has her own life, separated from her Indian family.

Corliss criticizes her Indian extended family that in her views, "they just look like people who have no ambition in life." Most of her uncles and most Indian people are mostly blue-collar construction jobs. The teachers and guidance counselors contributed to reproducing the stereotype of the Indian working type. They always said that the Indians could work only in blue-collar jobs. The blue-collar jobs are workers who engage in hard manual labor, typically agriculture, manufacturing, construction, mining, or maintenance. They have to work hard physically and do not get a good salary. In this case, Corliss took pity on her clan, especially the matter of "the Indian never ask questions, no interrogating on any matter of life." In Corliss' view, the ability to ask questions and interrogate life is a basic and important thing people have to do. Inability to raise questions means they are just passive recipients of their fate, that other people determine for them.

> *Her father and uncles never asked questions. How can you live a special life without constantly interrogating it? How can you live a good life without good*

> *poetry? She knew her family feared poetry, but they didn't fear it because they were Indian. The fear of poetry was multicultural and timeless* (TSE, p.13).

Corliss is ambiguous in viewing her clan. In one side she loves them very much, with their togetherness, but at the other side, she viewed the fears and collective lack of ambition of the Indian people. Moreover, she found out that her father and uncles never asked questions dealing with their lives, their works, and destiny (TSE, p.13). It is strong evidence that Corliss is represented as a new female image of an Indian woman challenging the habits and norms in her clan. When her father and uncles never asked questions of everything, Corliss did the question of anything. Constantly interrogating or anything will bring into a special life. And another aspect that Corliss challenged from her family is the love of poetry, by putting a rhetorical question, "How can you live a good life without a good poetry?" So, good poetry is the key to building a good life.

The paragraphs above show that Corliss's excellent literacy is based on the idea that life should be lived in a critical perspective. The critical thinking can be obtained through the excellent literacy. Corliss reads a lot so that she is able to ask questions in her life. Asking questions is proven to be very important in life, especially when Corliss found out that her father and uncles never ask questions anything for their lives, and it turns out to be a miserable life. In other words, good life can be obtained through excellent literacy.

Corliss' ambiguous attitude toward White people

Corliss' view on White people is ambiguous too. On one side, she finds out the white people's romantic view of Indians. On the other side, she found out the White poets and White teachers are all the people she adored. She said how the white people did "goofy sentimentalism," such as when the white people looked at the natural wonder in Grand Canyon, Niagara Falls, or even seeing newborn babies and Indians, with the same "goofy" feeling. Goofy means silly. Corliss makes the example of goofy sentimentalism by making the parallel perception of the Grand Canyon, newborn babies, and Indian people in the eyes of the White people. "Being a smart Indian, Corliss had always taken advantage of this romanticism, but that didn't mean she wanted to share the refrigerator with it" (TSE, p.11). This allusion is funny too, the unwillingness to share the apartment with the White people that means sharing the refrigerator, the furniture that has to exist in one's room and is considered as something private, because people put many 'private' things like foods in this refrigerator. Unwillingness to share something means that Corliss celebrates her individuality which would not possibly happen when she is living with her Indian family.

As an Indian, Corliss realized that the White people are the ones who made the Indian or the Native colonialized and miserable life, who uprooted from their original land and made them powerless in most of their life. However, she made a politics of difference, she differentiates the white people who are good and bad. As we can find out in the following citation, Corliss is represented as a socially and historically literate young Indian girl who makes a difference in identifying the bad and the good white people, that white people is not a single face.

> *Sure, she hated all sorts of white people—the arrogant white businessmen … It was easy to hate white vanity and white rage and white ignorance, but what about white compassion and white genius and white poetry? Maybe it wasn't about whiteness or redness or any other color. Corliss wasn't naive. She knew racism, tribalism, and nationalism were encoded in human DNA … However, she also wanted to believe in human goodness and mortal grace* (TSE, p.14).

Corliss hated the white businessmen people (flannel-shirted rednecks) who are arrogant, and she said they represented the worst of Whiteness. She also understands the meaning of the terms "racism, tribalism, and nationalism". However, she also realized that the many good things are coming from White

people, especially the "white genius and White poetry." This implies that Corliss amplified the ideas that intellectuality, education, literature, and poetry are the parameter of the kindnesses of a human being.

On the other side, Corliss admires white people, especially the educated, the teachers, and the poets. She respected the teachers and the White people who were so kind to her. They helped her, although never met in person, with the information on the books of the courses at prep school that Corliss did not afford to attend.

> *And those same teachers, good white people whose whiteness and goodness blended and separated, had faxed her study guides and copies of the best student papers. Two of those teachers, without having met Corliss in person, had sent her graduation gifts of money and yet more books. She'd been a resourceful thief, a narcissistic Robin Hood who stole a rich education from white people and kept it* (TSE, p.4).

The citation above shows how Corliss took efforts to get learning resources from the teachers who were white people. They were very kind to a poor Indian girl who has strong motivation to learn and read books, so she feels like Robin Hood, a popular man in folklore who did many crime actions, stealing, robbing, and even hijacking the lord's caravan. He gave all of the things to the poor people and the needy. In this context, Corliss equated herself with Robin Hood because she had got the books and other resource material for study, only by calling the teachers, and she felt so fortunate for that.

The other point that Corliss applauds from white people is the poets. Corliss has been in love with poetry since she was young, while her family feared poetry. She loves poetry "because so many people feared it. Maybe she wanted to frighten people with the size of her poetic love." Her family and parent often laughed at Corliss' love of poetry. While Corliss thought that she had got a lot of pearls in her life through the book she reads, the other people in her clan just laughed at that.

> *"I bet you're reading one of those white books again, enit?" the first uncle asked.*
> *"His name is Gerard Manley Hopkins," Corliss said. "He wrote poems in the nineteenth century."*
> *"White people were killing Indians in the nineteenth century," the second uncle said.*
> *"I don't think so," Corliss said. "He was a Jesuit priest."*
> *Her father and uncles cursed with shock and disgust.*
> *"He was a Catholic?" her father asked. "Oh, Corliss. Those Catholic were the worst. Your grandmother still has scars on her back from when a priest and a nun whipped her in boarding school. You shouldn't be reading that stuff. It will pollute your heart* (TSE, p.13-14).

As an Indian woman, Corliss defied the stereotypical Indian girl that men constructed. She was a typical woman who admired and loved poetry and poets because the literary works gave her many precious insights in life. The fact is contrary to her family, father, and uncles, who hate anything from the white people. The Native people constructed stereotypical characteristics of White people that are all evil and the poetry or literature as something useless. The assumption strengthens the understanding of poetry and literature that cannot be separated from the history of the White colonialization to the native Americans.

The Indian's enmity attitude is acknowledged as something common that Corliss understands but could not accept. Corliss mentioned that a book author is a White man named Gerard Manley Hopkins, who wrote in 19 Century, but the Indian men reacted that all White men killed Indians in the century. When Corliss replied that Hopkin is a Jesuit priest, the father and uncles responded with a more horrific comment that a priest and a nun had whipped her grandmother. The bitter history was produced and reproduced for generations of the Indian community so hate for white people has become a norm. This can be evidenced in the father's response to Corliss, "You shouldn't be reading that stuff. It will pollute your heart" (TSE, p.14). On the other hand, Corliss could not make a dispute with the elder people because of the Indian

norms, that arguing means disrespect to the elders. She realized that the 'education of hate' had been the norm in her clan, and she did not agree on this, but she could not make any open resistance to them.

As a literary student, Corliss learns to build commitment to humanity, so that she perceives the white men, especially the educated and poets deserve respect because of their works. She is a student of English literature that had learned and read a lot of white men's literary works, and she learned many things from the books, the white book, and poetry. Corliss also realized that her community reproduced the fear and hate of white people, and she was not on the same mind as her parents. However, considering the respect for the elders, Corliss never made an open resistance to the elders.

Corliss studies English literature that contrasts with her father and uncles' ideas, that they are all proud of her intelligence, her brave and smart brain. However, they expected that Corliss study science, math, law or politics, instead of literature. The idea of success for the Indian men is the career that resulted in much money and wealth, like a politician, or law professional. The Indian people are represented as people who did not recognize the importance of studying literature.

> *"You're pretty and smart, why are you wasting your time with poems? You should be studying science and math and law and politics. You're going to be rich and famous. You're going to be the toughest Indian woman around"* (TSE, p.15).

The Indian men perceived that learning the poems was just wasting the time. Instead of literature, they prefer her studying math, law or politics, because the people identify that these studies made them rich and famous. For Indian men, the success of a woman has not been perceived as a threat for them. They did not feel insecure about their wife's success financially or professionally.

The paradox presented by the Indian men in Corliss' views is that they are kind, decent, sensitive, stupid, sexist, and unpredictable. For example, the men's opinion on their wives. The wives were all successful in their jobs and made much more money than the men earned, nevertheless, the men were just happy and proud of their wives. Instead of jealousy, these men just bragged about their wives' prosperity, "Ha, my woman just got a raise! My honey makes more money than your honey! My wife manages the whole dang Kmart, and then she comes home and manages us! She's a twenty first-century woman!" (TSE, p. 15). In that situation, Corliss felt the paradox in seeing her clan, including her father, uncles, and the whole family, that made her feel strange. *"Corliss looked at her father and saw a stranger, a loving stranger, but a stranger nonetheless."* Corliss perceives herself as different from her clan and she thinks that her family and her clan are strangers, although she is proudly identified herself as a native Indian.

> "*And I'll tell you what," her father said. "After Corliss graduates from college and gets her law degree, she's going to move back to the reservation and fix what's wrong. We men have had our chances, I'll tell you what. We'll send all the tribal councilmen to the golf courses and let the smart women run the show. I'll tell you what. My daughter is going to save our tribe"* (TSE, p.15).

Corliss' father's idea on education is pragmatic, education is an investment for the tribe. The father quintessential is seeing his daughter graduate from college and have a law degree so she can take care of the problems of the Indian tribe. The stereotype of those who graduate from the university is that she/knows all the problems and the solutions. The idea is also grounded on the fact that the Indians were paralyzed in dealing with the White men throughout history. They were defeated, uprooted, evacuated in the reservation, which changed and omitted their culture and land. What they know is that the Indian men should have an advocate that defends their rights, and the father put this burden on Corliss' shoulder. Nevertheless, the idea would not happen, since Corliss preferred to study English literature, and it means she loves the humanity in literary works, instead of the idea of vanquishing the White.

The most striking of Corliss' ambiguity is dealing with her perspective on the White poets. They are the men who contribute to acquaint the life through their works. This idea is contradictory to the tribe's assumption of the white people. This is a challenge for Corliss since she is afraid of misconstruing how to explain this issue to her father or uncles. Corliss admires the White poet, not because he is a White man, but because the work of the white men has enlightened her to take the commitment of humanity that she believed.

Corliss felt that she did not find comfort from her family and friends, nor in God, but continued to seek the comfort. She projected the same feeling to the Jesuit priest, a white poet who wrote poetry. She felt that she was destined for something larger, that she believed she was supposed to be eccentric and powerful and great and all alone in the world.

The other point of Corliss's identity as a new Indian girl can be elaborated in her split identities. "In front of the mirror, the young Indian girl, Corliss saw herself as an old white man in a white collar and black robe. She felt as a white Jesuit priest" (TSE, p. 15). She can identify herself as the White man Hopkin. She perceived that Hopkin was a sad, lonely, and lovely man who "screamed to God for comfort, answers, sleep, and peace," the same feeling that she experienced herself. Therefore, Corliss associated herself as Hopkin because of the similar sensitivity. The personal concern makes Corliss adore the poetry written by Hopkins that aspirates her ideas in searching for the meaning of life. Instead of identifying Hopkin as a white man, she acknowledged him as a man, who was seeking comfort as she did. She concluded that she recognized her own identity the same as the White man wearing a white collar and black robe, connotated as a Jesuit priest.

The Indian girl who loves reading and literacy, defies the stereotype of Indian women, who mostly did anything according to the men's desires. Most of the books Corliss has read are the works of the White men in English literature. This does not mean that the reading is something luxurious or made her in a higher position, instead, she felt that she realized that she felt ordinary (Grinnell, 2004).

Corliss was very surprised and intrigued when she found a very old, 30-year-old poetry book written by a Spokane author, Harlan Atwater. The book entitled "In the Reservation of My Mind, by Harlan Atwater." Corliss realized that she is knowledgeable anybody in her tribe, however, she was a bit surprised that she did not recognize the name. This fact led her to do investigation about Atwater. She asked her mother, and tracked the name in her clan but for unavailing. The mysterious name challenged her to search the identity of the poet. That is the title "Search Engine" refers to.

After a long search, Corliss finally found out the poet of Spokane origin. The reality that surprised her was that Atwater was now a forklift driver who cared for the aged White couple who adopted and raised him. She met Atwater in a used bookstore, and he told her that he gave up writing because of the feeling of being too ordinary to be a poet. After a long, serious conversation, they detached in different ways. From the meeting, Corliss got valuable knowledge on being a poet and a native people simultaneously, that being a Native poet should not be contrasted with the white. This has been a spiritual experience for Corliss in building the awareness that being a native people, she needs not to be the same as the other, she has her own authority to build her identity.

Conclusion

It can be concluded from the analysis that the main character of the story of *The Search Engine* is presented as a woman with new identity in which she is an independent and highly literate and her ambiguous views on white people. Her independence can be seen from her bold decision in choosing her study, English literature, as she loves books and literary works. Her high literacy leads her developing the critical thinking. She is also independent in making political stance of judging the white people, not following her father or clan's opinion.

Corliss is presented as a new image of Indian girl when she consciously differs herself from her clan and family in perceiving the white people. Her family has a bad perception on any white people in general, while Corliss

admires white poets and intellectuals. Corliss acknowledges that she is indebted to the white teachers who are generous and kind to her. She admires White poets who give new insights through their works. That is why Corliss feels ambiguous in seeing her own Indian identity. In one side she loves her family and her clan and her Indianness. On the other side, she feels different from her family. She sees the other Native Indian as the other, as 'stranger.' This strengthens the notion of 'new identity' as an Indian girl.

In sum, Corliss, the main character in this story, has practiced the politics of difference. She builds her power as a young woman who challenges the stereotype of traditional Indian woman. She is independent in making decisions of her own life, and she is highly literate. Her new image is also evidenced from her ambiguous views on white people. She learns a lot from white teachers and white poets. She is convinced that she can build her own identity which does not need to be the same as the others.

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