DISSERTATION TITLE APPROVAL FORM

NARRATIVES *BONE PEOPLE* AND *THE ABSOLUTELY TRUE DIARY OF A PART-TIME INDIAN*

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| TITLE OF DISSERTATION | Is the title of dissertation relevant to the dissertation topic?  Yes No Requires correction |
| Is the title of thesis intelligible and plain?  Yes No Requires Correction |
| TOPIC | Does the dissertation title specify the exact topic of the research?  Yes No Requires Correction |
| Has any operational definition for the dissertation topic been provided?  Yes No Requires Correction |
| PROBLEM (HYPHOTHESIS) | Is the main problem or hypothesis of thesis put forward in detail?  Yes No Requires Correction |
| Are the sub-problems or hypotheses specified?  Yes No Requires Correction |
| PURPOSE | Is the purpose of thesis specified clearly?  Yes No Requires Correction |
| RATIONALE | Is it specified clearly why the thesis is necessary?  Yes No Requires Correction |
| METHOD | Is the method of thesis relevant to its purpose?  Yes No Requires Correction |
| Are the data collection instruments valid and reliable? Yes No Requires Correction |
| Are the data collection instruments relevant to their purpose?  Yes No Requires Correction |
| SCHEDULE | Is the working schedule planned accordingly?  Yes No Requires Correction |

**THESIS TITLE (ENGLISH) :** DISABILITY AS A FORM OF EMPOWERMENT IN POST- COLONIAL NARRATIVES *BONE PEOPLE* AND *THE ABSOLUTELY TRUE DIARY OF A PART- TIME INDIAN*

1. **TOPIC**

The introductory sections of the research will provide rumination about disability studies’ theory and praxis, and it will simultaneously explore the theoretical pillars of post-colonial thought. Thenceforward, we provide an intersection of the foremost but unheeded theme of disability and post-colonial issues. The study will delve into analysing two works from different backgrounds. *Bone People* (1984) by Keri Hulme is set in New Zealand’s South Island area to explore the Maori culture and its relation with the spiritual connection to the land. The novel features, Simon, a protagonist who suffers from selective mutism due to a trauma. In a similar but contemporary case of colonial settlement, Sherman Alexie’s *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (2007) is set in the modern-day United States of America, and it is mainly set in Spokane Indian Reservation, Washington. The novel explores the protagonist, Junior, who suffers from hydrocephalus as a child, which causes him learning disabilities. In examining the role of physical or psychological disabilities in post-colonial contexts, this research aims to demonstrate how these disabilities can function as sources of redemption and empowerment. The study will initially examine how the two protagonists deal with their disabilities in the

context of their native cultures, which have formerly been suppressed and marginalized by colonial powers. *Bone People*’s Simon characterisation will be dissected to foreground his comfort and confidence regardless of finding himself within a crossroad of disadvantaged identities within New Zealand society. Simon will be examined as a personification of Maori culture as he manifests resilience and power through maintaining a strong connection to Maori culture as a disabled individual. The study will also pinpoint Simon’s rebellion against authority, and it will foreground his defiance against authoritative interpretations on disability, therefore, the section will indicate a larger movement against the colonial power dynamics that are being imposed on indigenous people. *An Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* will be handled to analyse the journey of Junior as a Native American minority in an all-white educational institution. Junior’s academic excellence as a disabled person will be assessed as revolution on the post-colonial authority and hegemony within the novel. Furtherly, during his experience in the all-white high school, Junior’s cultural identity will be explored to discover strength in his community and roots, but also the breakthrough of depth and resilience in that context. The unconventional nature of this composite argument necessitates a thorough investigation to deduce the implications about disability in post-colonial context and its implications for broader discourses of power and agency. It is anticipated that the results will have an impact on more general conversations about how colonial histories and upshots have been associated with disability leading to a greater understanding of the complexity involved in the continuous negotiation of issues in hand through literary representation. In the end, this study hopes to improve scholarly conversations about literature by offering new perspectives on the complex relationships between post-colonial literature and disability studies.

The end of the 20th century marked the ignition of post-colonial criticism as an academic field, and the genesis of post-colonial criticism can be traced back to the mid-20th century during an era when colonized countries were gaining their independence from their colonizers. Intellectuals and activists from these recently said to be liberated countries started investigating the scarring of colonisation on their society, economy, and culture. These early phases of postcolonial thought shed light on various influential figures such as Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, and W.E.B Du Bois, whose works examine the cultural, psychological, and social insinuations of colonialism. The term “postcolonialism” acquired a vaster acknowledgement in the 1970s and 1980s succeeding poststructuralist and postmodernist movements in academia. Prominent scholars such as Homi K. Bhabha, Gayatri Shakravorty Spivak, and Chinua Achebe

enormously contributed to the field; however, the ultimate framework for postcolonial criticism reached its exquisiteness through the ground-breaking work of Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1978). The notable work has to do with the dissection of colonial discourse through manifesting the biased and distorted depiction of the “Orient”.

Principally, the post-colonial movement is a body of works that rejects the bequest of colonialism and its influence on the concerned regions. The movement gained a massive momentum that harmonized with the wave of decolonization in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and other regions. From the Indian sub-continent, Salman Rushdie depicts politics in a neo- colonized commonwealth country, and he manifests it in the form of power struggle and displacement in both his most prominent novels, *Satanic Verses* (1988) and *Midnight’s Children* (1981). Native of the African continent, Chinua Achebe prodigiously condemns the colonial entity for social and cultural distortion through various exhibitions on linguistic and traditional levels, and these aspects can be visible in his distinguished trilogy, *Things Fall Apart* (1958), *No Longer at Ease* (1960), *Arrow of God* (1964). The Nobel Prize author, Derrek Walcott, from the Caribbean Saint Lucia challenges colonialism on a divergent level in his poem *Omeros* (1990); accordingly, it delves into revising historical narratives of the Caribbean and Eurocentric account of the colonial entity.

Disability studies within the partition of humanities have commenced and expanded since the later period of the 20th century, since then, complex and thorough scrutinizes regarding the matter have been viable. Rather than being solely a physical condition, it can be regarded as a social and cultural construct formed by societal attitudes and structures, and these aspects serve to form an analytical argument within various disciplines. For instance, within representation and cultural studies, it is safe to form a critique around how individuals with disability are portrayed in any form of media and examine different perspectives of disability under contrasting cultures. For history, the main point is to explore the anamnesis of people with disabilities, including work at home and social seclusion. Social sciences tend to deconstruct the social model of disability by foregrounding the importance of social and environmental factors. When it comes to literature, the text specifically deals with how characters are represented and marginalized, and it also deals with autobiographical narratives and memoirs of disabled individuals. Authors such as Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, Lennard J.Davis, and Tobin Siebers have played an essential role concerning the contribution to the field of disability studies in humanities. If we generally scope into disability in the post-colonial studies, in the

*Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability* (2017), Jasbir Puar delves into condemning the imperial and colonial residual as a paramount factor for aggravating disability following the contemporary relation of power. *Culture – Theory – Disability: Encounters between Disability Studies and Cultural Studies* (2017) provides “a number of essays show a self-reflexive engagement with disability studies not only as a heterogeneous transdisciplinary academic apparatus, but also as an expression of the social, political, cultural, and corporeal experiences of persons living with impairments and disabilities” (Waldschmidt et al. p.12), ergo, similarly to the tangible world individuals, the disability of fictional characters in a novel can express such experiences and ultimately manifest the characteristics of post-colonial tangible issues. If we specify the scope of themes of post-colonial literature, we find that in the novel *Family Life* (2014), Iwona Filipczak (2020) contends that “to apprehend the significance of the family’s experience in the novel, it is necessary to look at disability and illness as intersecting with other social identities, namely, immigrant status, class, gender, race and ethnicity” (p.22). Filipczak exhibits the interconnectedness of a character’s disability with post-colonial themes such as ethnicity, class, and immigrant status to scrutinize the text through a different layer of analysis. “If the definitions of able-bodied and disabled become unclear or slippery, the business of legal and governmental administration would have problems functioning.” (Goodley et al. p.98). Therefore, defying the ubiquitous perspective of disability as deficiency calls for defiance against potent regimes and hegemonies, and this matter would usher in disabled and marginalized individuals into a position of power and redemption. In *An Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, Junior starts neglecting his phenotype as an initial step to overlook any ramification related to his disability, therefore, he overlooks the social and cultural construct about his physical condition and prioritizes envisioning himself as an artist who portrays himself; “I decided to draw self-portraits. I figured that even if I was an ugly, pimply, four-eyed freak, it didn't matter. I was still going to draw self-portraits because I'd already figured out that I was going to be an artist, and I didn't need to look good in order to do that.” Throughout the plot, Junior reaches several milestones of acquiring potency through excelling academically and gaining advocacy from the white community. It is commonly recognized that the existence of tension and defiance spurs the clash of powers, and the collection of a post-colonial novel’s thematic structure inevitably revolves around power dynamics as a fundamental issue in this body of works. Accordingly, in the novel, we discover that Junior climbs the hierarchical ladder in every possible aspect to show power in form of resilience and redemption. *Bone People*’s central character, Simon, explicitly exhibits restlessness from the hegemony; therefore, he

manifests acts of rebellion against authority, societal expectations, and limitations imposed upon him as a mute person; the narrator states that “Simon turned his back on the officer, refusing to acknowledge his presence. With arms crossed tightly over his chest, he stared out into the distance, his expression a mixture of defiance and contempt”. Furthermore, individuals who experience oppression or marginalization may seek power as a mean of gaining agency and autonomy. This can be a response to the injustice or inequality they face. Simon’s muteness expresses resilience and power against the post-colonial entity, and his muteness is a form of reclamation of Indigenous identity and culture. Simon’s reliance on non-verbal communication bolsters the Maori tradition to contravene the English language as hegemony. Both the novels’ argument will evolve throughout the research to form an anomalous deduction about the capability of disabled individuals to resist and rise into power as a symbol of a neo-colonized subject.

“Since the "post" in the "post-colonial" suggests "after" the demise of colonialism, it is imbued, quite apart from its users' intentions, with an ambiguous spatio-temporality. Spreading from India into Anglo-American academic contexts, the "post-colonial" tends to be associated with Third World countries which gained independence after World War II” (Shohat, 1992, p. 102). However, similarly to the novel analysed by Filipczak, Family Life, “it also refers to the Third World diasporic circumstances of the last four decades - from forced exile to "voluntary" immigration - within First World metropolises” (p.102). Consequently, post-colonial themes such as hierarchical interaction and cultural resistance also revolve around personal experiences like disability rather than solely being about geographical environments. The relation of power in a constructed hierarchy is a central theme in post-colonial literature, and as a post-colonial theme, it is not solely present in underdeveloped and recently colonized geographical contexts. Accordingly, it is stated in *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (1989) that:

The literatures of African countries, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Caribbean countries, India, Malasia, Malta, New Zealand, Pakistan, Singapore, South Pacific Island countries, and Sri Lanka are all post- colonial literatures. The literature of the USA should also be placed in this category. Perhaps because of its current position of power, and the neo- colonizing role it has played, its postcolonial nature has not been generally recognized. But its relationship with the metropolitan centre as it evolved over the last two centuries

has been paradigmatic for post-colonial literature everywhere. (Ashcroft; Griffiths, & Tiffin, p.2)

Concerning categorisation, post-colonial literature shows some flexibility. Post-colonial literature is not solely of African or Indian origin but also emerges from American and New Zealand origin similar to the novels in hand, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* and *Bone People*. The novels in hand exhibit thematic circumstances that were lived by the authors, for instance, the writer of *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* expressed that he was also born in the Spokane Indian Reservation and suffered from the same disease as the protagonist, Junior. These facts have significantly influenced his writing and the representation of Junior. The novel is made to be semi-autobiographical to form a compelling and authentic portrayal of contemporary issues, and it also serves to highlight themes of cultural identity, resistance, power dynamics, and struggle. Concerning *Bone People*, similarly to the protagonist, the author’s background is convoluted and complex, accordingly, Simon reflects the complexity and the instability that spurs from tangible issues that were lived in New Zealand. The origin of the Maori and British conflict spurs from continuous violations of the Treaty of Waitangi that were set in 1840, and the various remnants of the colonisation and the treaty’s outcomes are visible in the author’s background and Simon’s complexity, namely, powers imbalances and conflict.

1. **PURPOSE/IMPORTANCE**

The research will unpack the complex parleys of post-colonial culture and power structure, and it will deeply delve into the core of post-colonial critique. The general analysis will revolve around the significance of the upshots of Subject-Occupier divide and its lasting repercussions based on pioneering insights into disability and post-colonial academia. The intersections between the two fields will be directed into a synthesis to indicate the capability of disabled and post-colonized individuals to resist, redeem, and rise again. Intertwining both academic fields will bring forth a distinguished and fruitful analysis, additionally, post-colonial criticism remains contemporary which allows contribution and extensive thinking, hence, the different historical contexts of the works in hand will lead to compelling research. Being originated from diverse backgrounds, the works *Bone People*, and *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* will elicit vibrant scrutiny due to their divergent economic, cultural, and social aspects,

furtherly, the analysis’ radius will be narrowed to fall under an examination through the lens of disability studies.

1. **FIELD, RESOURCES, PLACE-DURATION AND SUPPORT**

To set the foundation of this thesis, a respectable amount of data will be brought from reputable academic journals, reviewed articles, and authoritative books. The primary sources will mainly be brought from hard copies of the examined works, and the majority of the secondary sources will be web-based. The availability of the sources will be possible due to my access to the library of Istanbul Aydin University, Research Gate, and JSTOR. The deadline of the thesis submission is expected to be at the end of the academic term.

1. **METHODS AND TECHNIQUES**

The introductory section of the research will contain a pertinent outlook toward the post- colonial academia as a whole, and it will be succeeded by a similar outlook through the existence of disability studies as an academic discipline. To discover how disability is handled and employed in the post-colonial works, the combination of two culturally different novels, *Bone People* and *The Absolutely True Dairy of a Part-Time Indian,* will be necessary to form a deductive interpretation about the matter, thus, the relevance of the argument is enhanced by its cultural diversity that covers a wider range of data, additionally, narrowing it to fit in the radius of disability studies will specify the subject matter to be sustainable for a master’s thesis.

A relation between factual historical happenings, character representation, and social conditions will be discovered to be pinpointed throughout the research. The thesis will foreground the metaphorical significance of disability in terms of indicating post-colonial experiences, and this process will vary in accordance with the designated characters. The resistance between disabled characters and the social norm of post-colonial era will be illustrated alternatively. The ultimate objective of the thesis is to uncover the profound ways in which disability stands as a lens to examine the complexities of cultural resistance and hierarchical interaction leading to a process of rising into power. The prior sections of the research are going to be a build-up for a pivotal part of the argument, and they will serve to

make a deduction about how can disabled characters in a post-colonial context manifest resistant, redemption, and power.

1. **THESIS OUTLINE:**

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**INTRODUCTION:**

**CHAPTER 1:** RESILIENCE AND DISABILITY IN *THE BONE PEOPLE*

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  2. SIMON: OVERCOMING TRAUMA AND REDEMPTION

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1. ARNOLD: SURMOUNTING MARGINALIZATION: INTERSECTION OF DISABILTIY AND ETHNIC CONFLICT
2. ARNOLD: ERADICATING HIERARCHY

**CONCLUSION:**

**RESOURCES AND APPENDICES**

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