



## First Indian on the Moon

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The gravest, most blatant failure of *FIRST INDIAN ON THE MOON* is Sherman Alexie's inability to break new ground, to explore new territories, to bring new light to themes already explored in his previous three books. Alexie's latest offering offers no surprises to those readers already familiar with his work. When *THE BUSINESS OF FANCYDANCING* first appeared back in 1992, readers were greeted by a new vision, a new voice that was, as the *NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW* noted, "capable of raising your neck hair." Yet here, in *FIRST INDIAN ON THE MOON*, it is like watching a washed-up magician dip his hand into a bag of old tricks.

It is clear that Alexie has a great deal to say about the dissipation and disappearance of Native American culture juxtaposed against a world of white bread and white power. Unfortunately, though, Alexie fails to show his readers what it is actually like to live at the bottom of this totem. Make no mistake: Alexie tells readers, time and again, about the abuses of alcoholism and poverty, the twin demon spirits that hang like some sort of genetic plague over the Spokane/Coeur d'Alene reservation. Only on occasion, however, does he offer a clear-eyed glimpse into the interior drama of the situation. Instead, Alexie grovels and dwells, pouts and shouts. The work itself reads like a chain-letter of political placards plastered onto telephone poles and streetcorner kiosks. What at first glance may be viewed as "vision" reveals itself later as nothing more than an agenda.

In interviews, Alexie has openly admitted that he is still learning his craft as a writer. Now would be a good time for him to look for a new story to tell, a new song to sing, a new skin to inhabit.

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