

RESISTANCE WEBS: SURVIVAL AND RESISTANCE OF NATIVE AMERICAN PEOPLES IN 'THERE THERE' BY TOMMY ORANGE

Teias de resistência: sobrevivência e resistência de povos nativos americanos em Lá não existe lá de Tommy Orange

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ABSTRACT: This paper examines how the metaphor of the spider web in *There There* (2019) by Native American writer Tommy Orange is utilized to convey a message of resistance and survival of Native American peoples. The analysis explores the cultural symbolism of the spider web and its relationship to the three characters in the narrative, drawing on theoretical approaches from authors such as Hertha D. Wong and Sergiusz Michalski. Additionally, Achille Mbembe's concept of necropolitics is incorporated into the analysis, linking it to the historical policies of genocide and social exclusion applied to Native American peoples. By studying authors such as Vine Deloria Jr., Ward Churchill, and Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, one can understand how the cultural and territorial genocide policies applied to Native American peoples in the United States were used to justify the exploitation of their natural resources and the usurpation of their lands. Thus, this analysis offers a critical and broad perspective on the struggle of Native American peoples for their survival and resistance and seeks to demonstrate how necropolitics is present in the narrative and how it affects the mentioned characters.

Keywords: Resistance Literature; Native American Literature; Necropolitics; Metaphor.

RESUMO: Este artigo examina como a metáfora da teia de aranha em *There There* (2019), do escritor nativo americano Tommy Orange, é utilizada para transmitir uma mensagem de resistência e sobrevivência dos povos nativos americanos. A análise explora o simbolismo cultural da teia de aranha e sua relação com os três personagens da narrativa, valendo-se de abordagens teóricas de autores como Hertha D. Wong e Sergiusz Michalski. Além disso, o conceito de necropolítica de Achille Mbembe é incorporado à análise, vinculando-o às políticas históricas de genocídio e exclusão social aplicadas aos povos nativos americanos. Ao estudar autores como Vine Deloria

Jr., Ward Churchill e Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, pode-se compreender como as políticas culturais e territoriais de genocídio aplicadas aos povos nativos americanos nos Estados Unidos foram usadas para justificar a exploração de seus recursos naturais e a usurpação de suas terras. Assim, esta análise oferece uma perspectiva crítica e ampla sobre a luta dos povos nativos americanos pela sua sobrevivência e resistência e busca demonstrar como a necropolítica está presente na narrativa e como afeta os personagens mencionados.

Palavras-Chave: Literatura de Resistência; Literatura Nativo Americana; Necropolítica; Metáfora.

INTRODUCTION

There There (2018), a novel written by Tommy Orange¹, offers a unique portrayal of urban Native-American² life through the intertwining fictional stories of twelve urban Native-American characters who share a common goal of attending the big powwow³ of Oakland. Furthermore, the novel portrays Native-American people living in big cities, struggling to reconcile their urban lifestyles with their indigenous ancestry. The literary work provides profound reflections about the subaltern voices of indigenous peoples and this analysis is a result of the scientific research project CRENAC (Resistance Settings in Contemporary Anglophone Narratives), in which the authors are researchers.

Consequently, the narrative is complex, and the use of spider references throughout the book, especially in the stories of Opal Viola Bear Shield, Jacquie Red Feather, and Orvil Red Feather, creates a web-like structure that connects the characters' stories. In order to grasp the meaning of the narrative, the reader is required to read the characters' stories that are divided into five parts: Prologue, Remain, Reclaim, Return and Powwow. The narrative stream leads the reader into a spider web like movement in order to comprehend the connections among the characters. For these urban Native American people, the effects of the concept of necropolitics approached in this work are evident in the ongoing violence, marginalization, and erasure that they face in contemporary society. Despite their presence in urban areas, they are often relegated to the margins, subject to systemic racism, poverty, and limited access to resources. As a result, this erasure and marginalization of indigenous peoples is further perpetuated by the dominant cultural representations in media and literature.

This study employs a qualitative approach (Lakatos & Marconi, 2003), using bibliographic research and literary analysis, with a focus on the figure of the spider in the culture of Native American people and its representation in literature; we will also employ Comparative Literature, which, according to Carvalhal (2006), is a field of study that seeks to

¹ Tommy Orange is an enrolled member of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma and a graduate from the Institute of American Indian Arts MFA program. He is the author of the novel *There There*.

² We will use the terms Native American; indigenous people; indigenous American to refer to indigenous people who live in the United States. (Pauls, Elizabeth Prine. "Native American". Britannica, 30 Apr. 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Native-American>. Accessed 6 May 2024.)

³ Native American celebration of culture in which "people from diverse indigenous nations gather for the purpose of dancing, singing, and honouring the traditions of their ancestors. (...) Modern powwows can be grouped into two broad divisions: "competition" (or "contest") events and those referred to as "traditional." Competition events offer substantial prize money in various standardized dance and music categories." (Browner, Tara. "powwow". Encyclopedia Britannica, 28 Apr. 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/powwow>. Accessed 6 May 2024.)

establish relationships between different pieces of literature, cultures, and languages, through comparative analysis. This approach highlights the importance of examining the political and historical contexts that shape literary works, as well as the ways in which they reflect and comment on social and political realities of their time and place of production.

In the first stage of the work, the bibliographic research will investigate the meaning of the figure of the spider in the culture of the Native American people, as well as in the novel *There There* by Tommy Orange. In the second stage, the literary analysis will focus on the three characters that relate to the Spider-Web metaphor in the narrative.

Finally, in the third stage, the connections between the Spider-Web and the web metaphors and the concept of necropolitics will be explored. This analysis will draw on theories of necropolitics according to Achille Mbembe (2003) and will examine how the metaphor relates to the theme of death, violence, and power in the book. The methodology of this study contributes to a better understanding of the representation of Native American culture and the use of metaphors in literature, as well as the intersection of literature and politics.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Spider Symbology

The spider has been a recurring symbol in literature and mythology across cultures for a long time. In Greek mythology, the skilled weaver Arachne was punished by Athena and turned into a spider, symbolizing moral human ambition. In literature, spiders appear in works such as *Harry Potter*, in the figure of Aragogue and in the *Lord of the Rings*, as Laracna. In American literature, poets such as Edward Taylor use spiders as metaphors for the poet's relationship with language. The weaving of writing, thus reminds us of the weaving of webs and how it enriches literary works along history. According to Austin:

(..) being a poet and working with language is a lot like being a spider and working with silk because the language comes out of your mouth much the way thread comes out of a spider so that it looks like you've made it but only in a way (ANTIN, 1993, p. 164.)

In West African culture, specially from Gana, the spider is portrayed as a treacherous god named Anansi, known for being greedy, lazy, and sometimes smart, and associated with the creation of lore and storytelling.

In some tales, Anansi takes up the role of the demiurgic God Creator, a God who has created the sky and the stars but who also has woven the substance from which all men are issued. In the greater part of these mythical tales, Anansi does these works at the behest of his father, the sky god Nyame. (MICHALSKI; MICHALSKI, 2010, p. 167.)

Native American literature has gained attention for its cultural significance, since their conception of creation of the world and their relationship with nature takes into consideration that each living creature plays an important role in it. Indigenous American literature praises the voices of peoples who have been silenced along the history by the colonizers. Native American literary manifestations represent a side of history that has been neglected by the authorities and currently have been present and many academic spaces as a source of knowledge about peoples that were presumed to have their existence erased by the State. The meaning of the spider varies among indigenous American communities, but it is often associated with creation, power, and divinity. In Hopi⁴ and Navajo⁵ cultures, the Spider Woman is a revered figure who is often portrayed as a teacher and guide. The Great Spider Woman is believed to have preceded everything on earth and molded people from the clay of the earth, giving them language and ritual language, and participating in the power of language use. Spiders are also associated with creativity, spirit, and wisdom, and are described in symbols that reflect their attributes.

Especially the Pueblo and Navajo people believe that the Great Spider Woman preceded everything on earth, glowing brightly in the primordial darkness. This Spider Creatrix molded people from the clay of the earth and attached herself to them by means of a thread. Many Native Americans still believe that the great Spider lives somewhere in the Spider Rock in the Navajo land and might interfere in their daily doings; their children are warned that she might punish their misbehavior by taking them up on her web to her cavernous mountain lair. (MICHALSKI; MICHALSKI, 2010. p.167.)

The spider symbol carries diverse connotations across various cultures and works of literature. However, it is predominantly linked with positive characteristics, such as creativity, strength, and holiness. Furthermore, the spider web is often viewed as a practical blueprint for

⁴ The Hopi are a Native American tribe primarily located in northeastern Arizona in the United States. They have a rich cultural heritage and are known for their Kachina dolls, intricate pottery, and unique language. (Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Hopi". Encyclopedia Britannica, 19 Mar. 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hopi>. Accessed 6 May 2024.)

⁵ The Navajo, also known as Diné, are a Native American tribe mainly located in the southwestern United States, particularly in Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. They have a rich cultural and spiritual tradition, with a deep connection to the land and nature. (Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Navajo". Encyclopedia Britannica, 3 May. 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Navajo-people>. Accessed 6 May 2024.)

the structure of the universe. In essence, the spider emblem represents a complex web of interconnected meanings and associations.

“The spider’s web is a home and a trap.” (Orange, 2018, p. 82), as announced by the narrator, is the metaphor that leads all characters to the big powwow, that reveals itself as a place of ancestry (home) as well as a space in which the lives of the characters are in danger (trap). Not only the spider, but the spider web plays a significant role in the narrative, as we can see in the next section.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

Representation of the Spider-Web in the narrative

Tommy Orange's novel, *There There*, weaves a narrative from the perspectives of twelve characters, all originating from contemporary urban indigenous communities. The narrator presents different Indigenous American perspectives by shifting between the twelve characters' points of view, creating a thematic web that interrelates with their native origins and families.

The spider figure is explicitly present in the narrative of three of the twelve characters: Opal Viola Bear Shield, Jacquie Red Feather, and Orvil Red Feather, Jacquie's grandson. Opal and Jacquie are sisters, and the three characters respectively belong to the Cheyenne⁶ ethnicity and live in East Oakland.

Jacquie Red Feather's personal history is partially described in the narrative, which is crucial to understanding the context in which Orvil Red Feather is raised. Jacquie had a daughter, Jamie, who left home due to her mother's alcohol addiction. Unfortunately, Jamie ended up taking her own life, leaving behind three children, one of whom was Orvil. Since Jacquie was not in a position to care for her grandchildren, her sister Opal legally adopted them.

Jacquie and Jamie's story is an example of the intergenerational traumas that affect many Native American families, especially those who have suffered the effects of genocide, forced

⁶Cheyenne is a Native American tribe that originally inhabited the Great Plains region of the United States. Today, the Cheyenne people are divided into two federally recognized tribes: the Northern Cheyenne Tribe of Montana and the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma (Northern Cheyenne Tribe, n.d.). The Cheyenne language is part of the Algonquian language family, and their traditional way of life centered on hunting buffalo and other game (National Park Service, 2021). Despite facing displacement, warfare, and forced assimilation, the Cheyenne people have continued to maintain their cultural identity and traditions (Brown, 2021).

re-education in boarding schools⁷, and the loss of their lands and culture. Jacquie's pain echoes many other Native American women who have lost their children and grandchildren to violence, poverty, and government policies that attempted to erase the culture and identity of Indigenous peoples.

By not speaking about Orvil's origins, Opal tries to protect him from the weight of these traumas and the difficulties that come with life on a Indigenous American reservation. For Opal, the preservation of Native culture and traditions is an act of resistance and a way of dealing with the pain and suffering her family and community have faced over the years. However, for Orvil, who has grown up with a sense of disconnection and curiosity about his roots, this lack of information may seem like a denial of his identity and a source of confusion and pain.

The narrative reveals a very important event in the characters' lives: an appearance of a lump in their bodies, filled with spider legs. Each character deals with it in a different way and to each one of them the supernatural presence of spider legs inside their bodies marks the arrival of a relevant change or challenge in their lives. From this moment on, each one of them deals with the presence of webs that alter their existences.

Jacquie Red Feather

Jacquie Red Feather's mother had a sense of awareness of the spider web's potential to be both a home and a trap and what that could mean for her daughters' life course. Her addiction was related to the physical violence she had suffered in the concentration space of Alcatraz⁸, where most of the Native American peoples were relocated to, when she was a teenager and led her to a vicious path.

Jacquie knelt in front of the mini-fridge. In her head she heard her mom say, "The spider's web is a home and a trap." Even though she never really knew what her mom meant by it, she'd been making it make sense over the years, giving it more meaning than her mom probably ever intended. In this case, Jacquie was the spider, and the minifridge was the web. The home was to drink. To drink was the trap. Or something

⁷ Forced re-education, also known as Indian boarding schools, was a policy implemented by the US government in the late 19th century with the goal of assimilating Native American children into white American culture. Thousands of Native American children were taken from their families and sent to boarding schools far from their homes, where they were forced to adopt Western cultural practices and abandon their own traditions and languages. This policy had devastating effects on Native American communities, contributing to the erosion of their cultural identity and causing long-lasting trauma for those who experienced it. (CLIFFORD, J, 1998.).

⁸ In 1968, the prison of Alcatraz became a jail to Native American people who rebelled against the occupation of their lands by the American government.

like that. The point was Do not open the fridge. And she didn't. (ORANGE, 2018. p. 77.)

Throughout the narrative, the spider metaphor continues to be present in Jacquie's life. It is a reminder of her past struggles with addiction and a symbol of the traps that she needs to avoid. But it also becomes a source of strength and resilience for her. She recognizes that, just like a spider, she has the ability to weave her own web and create her own path in life. She embraces her Native American heritage and becomes a leader in her community, fighting for their rights and preserving their culture. Besides that, Jacquie is aware of the damage and silencing imposed by white colonizers and their malicious acts against the Native American communities. As a poisonous spider, the colonizer behaves dishonestly, affecting these people's lives and imprinting their damage in their oral tradition and in their ancestry. Jacquie recalls this weedy white man's presence in her childhood, compared to the myth of Veho⁹, a crook spider.

The trickster spider, Veho, her mom used to tell her and Opal about, he was always stealing eyes to see better. Veho was the white man who came and made the old world watch with his eyes. Look. See here, the way it's gonna be is, first you're gonna give me all your land, then your attention, until you forget how to give it. (ORANGE, 2018. p. 77.)

The spider metaphor in *There There* is not just a literary device but a powerful symbol of the complex nature of human experience. It represents the duality of life, the potential for both good and bad outcomes, and the need for balance and awareness in navigating our way through it. Through Jacquie's journey, we see how the spider metaphor can be a source of both danger and empowerment, reminding us to be mindful of the webs we weave and the traps we set for ourselves.

Opal Viola Bear Shield

Opal's relationship with spiders is associated with shame and disgust, as she feels ashamed of her first menstruation and pulling out the spider legs from her body. This event,

⁹ According to the Native American culture, Veho the Spider is a trickster figure commonly found in various tribal stories and folklore. In some traditions, Veho is portrayed as a cunning and mischievous character who often uses his wit to outsmart his opponents and gain an advantage. In other tales, Veho is associated with creation myths and is believed to have played a role in shaping the natural world. (Michalski & Michalski, 2010, p. 167).

pulling the spider legs, symbolizes a transition in the characters' lives: their first period, moving to a new house, puberty, the acknowledgement and acceptance of their ancestrality and so on. As the narrative progresses, Opal begins to see spiders under a different light, as creatures that have both positive and negative aspects, just as the changes she has been through in her life.

Opal pulled three spider legs out of her leg the Sunday afternoon before she and Jacquie left the home, the house, the man they'd been left with after their mom left this world. There'd recently been blood from her first moon. Both the menstrual blood and the spider legs had made her feel the same kind of shame. Something was in her that came out, that seemed so creaturely, so grotesque yet magical, that the only readily available emotion she had for both occasions was shame, which led to secrecy in both cases. Secrets lie through omission just like shame lies through secrecy (ORANGE, 2018, p. 132.)

On the other hand, spiders also represent trauma and fear for Opal. Her discovery of spider legs in her leg coincides with the abuse and trauma she experiences at the hands of her "uncle" after her mother's death. She associates spiders with the white man who brought suffering to her community, and this trauma leads to her fear and apprehension towards anything related to her Native American identity. The uncle, Ronald, is an abuser and behaves mischievously, subduing Opal and her sister to his physical and psychological abuses, taking their culture as a tool to it, just as the white colonizers did.

Opal went cold when she saw Ronald come home in his truck. (...) Opal didn't know if she wanted to cry from relief, immediately run away, or go after him, wrestle him to the ground, and finish him off with her bare hands once and for all. Of all that could have occurred to her, what came up in her mind was a word she'd heard her mom use. A Cheyenne word: Veho. It means spider and trickster and white man. Opal always wondered if Ronald was white. He did all kinds of Indian things, but he looked as white as any white man she'd ever seen. (ORANGE, 2018, p. 135.)

Despite the bad memories, the spider symbology also brings Opal to the remembrance of good moments she used to have with her mother telling stories about spiders, as symbols of the complexity of the world and the dual nature of things. This relationship with nature is very different from the one supported by the white men and reveals a profound respect and awareness to the fact that nature is a home as well as a trap.

Opal and Jacquie's mom never let them kill a spider if they found one in the house, or anywhere for that matter. Her mom said spiders carry miles of web in their bodies, miles of story, miles of potential home and trap. She said that's what we are. Home and trap. (ORANGE, 2018, p. 130.)

Orvil Red Feather

Orvil's journey is a quest for identity and belonging. He wants to connect with his Native heritage, but his aunt Opal tries to protect him from the traumas that come with it. She believes that shielding him from his culture would be the best way to protect him. However, Orvil can finally connect with their Native roots on the web, on the internet. This Native American connects himself not only with the webs of nature, but also with the webs of technology.

And virtually everything Orvil learned about being Indian he'd learned virtually. From watching hours and hours of powwow footage, documentaries on YouTube, by reading all that there was to read on sites like Wikipedia, PowWows.com, and Indian Country Today. Googling stuff like "What does it mean to be a real Indian" (ORANGE, 2018, p. 130.)

The web symbolizes both the connection and danger that can be found if Orvil gets in touch with his ancestry. Although he is an American Indian, his ancestry is seen as harmful by his grandmother, Opal. Orvil is an urban native American and his ancestry is somehow mysterious for him. Orvil's discovery of spider legs in his body suggests that he is beginning to weave his own awareness about what it means to be an Indian into the native community.

And so what Orvil is, according to himself, standing in front of the mirror with his too-small-for-him stolen regalia, is dressed up like an Indian. In hides and ties, ribbons and feathers, boned breastplate, and hunched shoulders, he stands, weak in the knees, a fake, a copy, a boy playing dress-up. (...)He's waiting for something true to appear before him—about him. It's important that he dress like an Indian, dance like an Indian, even if it is an act, even if he feels like a fraud the whole time, because the only way to be Indian in this world is to look and act like an Indian. To be or not to be Indian depends on it. (ORANGE, 2018, p. 98.)

The spider legs symbolize his coming of age and his emerging sensitivity to the stories about the Native American communities around him. Orvil's desire to participate in the powwow represents a turning point in his life, as he is beginning to connect with his ancestry and to understand his place in the world.

However, Orvil's dream of finding a home in the Native community is shattered when he is shot during the powwow. The violence and trauma of his ancestral past catch up to him in a devastating way. The powwow, which was supposed to be a safe haven for him, becomes a trap. Orvil's realization that he needs to keep breathing suggests that he is not defeated yet. Despite the trauma he has suffered, he still has the will to survive and continue his quest for

identity and belonging.

Orvil is walking back out onto the field when he hears the hots. He thinks of his brothers. His grandma would kill him if he survived and they didn't. [...] He smells the grass inches from his nose and he knows. [...] He wants to stand up, to fly away in all his bloodied feathers. He wants to take back everything he's ever done. He wants to believe he knows how to dance a prayer and pray for a new world. He wants to keep breathing. He needs to keep breathing. He needs to remember that he needs to keep breathing. (ORANGE, 2018, p. 216).

In conclusion, Orvil's character arc in the novel is a powerful exploration of the quest for identity and belonging. His journey is both personal and cultural, and it is marked by both connection and danger. His story is a testament to the resilience and strength of the human spirit, even in the face of trauma and adversity. Orvil's connection to spiders represents a positive aspect of the spider web, as it shows the potential for healing connection to one's heritage. In contrast to Opal and Jacquie, who associate spiders with trauma and fear, he sees them as a source of guidance and strength. Through his connection to spiders and his heritage, Orvil starts to find a sense of belonging and purpose, and his story shows the potential for healing and resilience even in the face of trauma.

THE HOME AND TRAP METAPHOR AND THE NARRATIVE

The metaphor of home and trap is recurrent in the text when describing the experiences of the characters who try to find a safe and welcoming place in their lives. For example, Opal and Jacquie are left in the home of a man who does not want them, and this environment becomes a trap for them. The spiders also represent this duality of home and trap, as their webs are both the place where they live and a mechanism for capturing their prey.

Furthermore, the metaphor of home and trap can also be seen in the way the Native American reservation is portrayed in the book. On the one hand, it is a place of belonging and community, a home for Native Americans who live there. On the other hand, the reservation is surrounded by limitations and difficulties, becoming a trap for many characters who struggle to overcome the poverty, violence, and discrimination they face. This duality reflects the experiences of many Indigenous peoples, who have fought to preserve their cultures and identities in a world that often marginalizes and disadvantages them. These are some of the aspects presented in the narrative that threaten to seduce them and at the same time shelter them, like home and trap

In the beginning of the narrative, the connection between the characters and places may not be immediately apparent, but the use of a web as a metaphor to connect the 12 short stories reflects the literary strategies often used in Native American literature, these strategies incorporate both modernist techniques, such as multiple narrative voices, and traditional oral storytelling techniques, such as repetition, recurrent development, and associational structure as Wong asserts: “By using the web as a metaphorical connector, the author highlights the interconnectedness of the characters and their experiences, which are informed by both modern and traditional storytelling techniques.” (Wong, 1997, p. 172).

As the narrative unfolds, the connections between the characters and places become more apparent. One instance of this occurs when Jacquie discovers that her grandson Orvil is at the powwow, the same event where she is, but is being kept hidden from Opal, his grand-aunt who disapproves of his desire to perform a dance. This moment serves to foreshadow the ultimate interconnectedness of all the characters and places in the book. By the end, the idea is fully expressed:

At the powwow, Jacquie sits next to Harvey under a canvas canopy with the sound system and mixing board, the mic cord snaking out of it. Jacquie's about to hand the clipboard back to Harvey when she sees Orvil's name on the list. She pulls the clipboard closer to her eyes to be sure. She reads his name over and over. Orvil Red Feather. It's there. Jacquie gets out her phone to text her sister." (ORANGE, 2018, p.202)

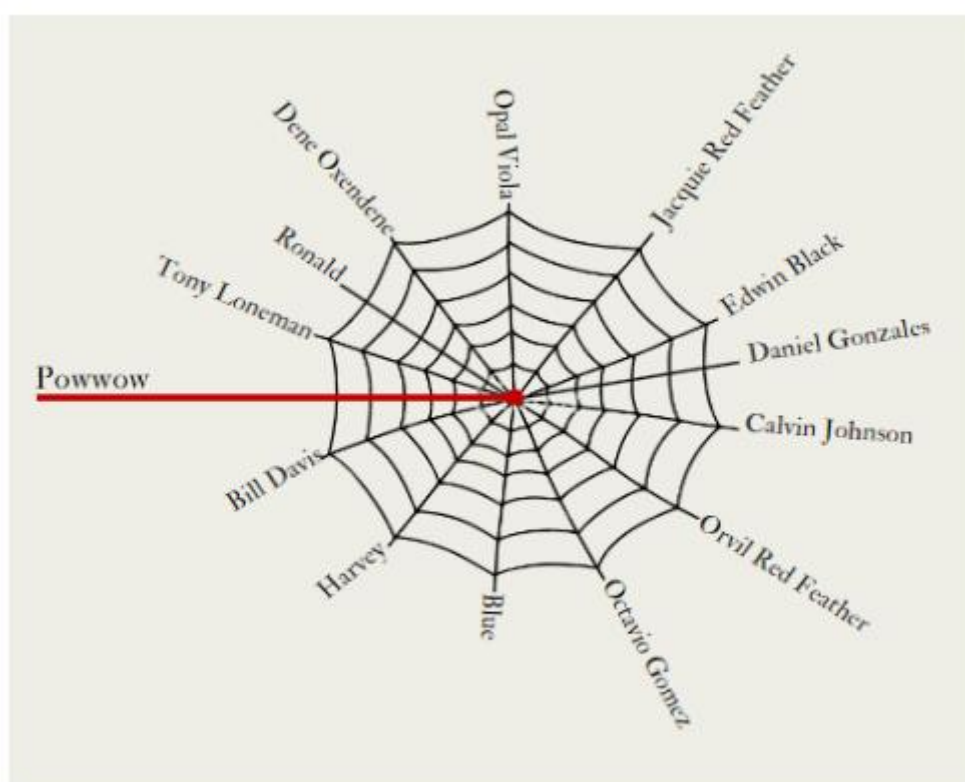
Wong (1997) emphasizes that it becomes evident that the collection of short stories is not merely a set of related or unrelated tales but rather integral parts of a larger narrative scheme. In this context, the image of a spider building its web, interweaving various threads such as characters and places, can be a fitting metaphor. These threads converge towards a central point, the great powwow of Oakland, drawing the reader into the heart of the narrative.

The unity and connection between characters and places in *There There* is exemplified by their preparation for the powwow event. Jacquie plans her trip to Oakland specifically for the powwow and texts Opal to ask if she can stay. Orvil wakes up thinking about the powwow and strategizes with his friend on how to avoid his disapproving grand-aunt, Opal. Even Opal, who initially resists attending the powwow, ultimately ends up there with her grandsons. This strong connection to the powwow and their respective journeys to get there ultimately brings these characters and their stories together in a meaningful way. By highlighting their individual preparations for the event, the reader can see how the powwow serves as the central point that

unites them all, as they move toward the center of the web.

To better illustrate the interrelationships between the characters in the novel, and how they all converge towards the final event of the big powwow of Oakland, we have created illustration 1 below. It depicts the twelve characters distributed in a spider-web-like structure, with the powwow at the center.

Picture 1 – Spider Web and Narrative Connections



This image portrays how Native American tradition and culture are aspects that connect all the characters and make them present at the powwow. What is particularly significant about the spider-web image is that it always has a central point that unites all its elements. Similarly, in the book, the powwow serves as the core that brings all the characters together, and their stories are woven together, creating a network of interrelationships.

According to Wong (1997), it is important to emphasize the connection between the characters and the plot. Each thread of the web is interconnected, and touching one thread sends vibrations throughout the entire network. While each individual story can be read in isolation,

it cannot be fully understood without considering its connections with the others. The narrative is governed by this metaphor, and each character presents their own set of events and perspectives. However, reading the narrative as a whole provides a composite and organized picture of the multiplicity of events and characters as “The characters are not hierarchically ordered or organized based on their importance, and there is a tendency to distribute value evenly among various elements. No element is foregrounded.” (Wong, 1997, p. 173).

To conclude this section, it is essential to emphasize the recurring use of the metaphor of home and trap in *There There*. The characters in the book are constantly searching for a safe and welcoming place in their lives, and their experiences are reflected in this duality of home and trap. The Native American reservation is portrayed as a place of belonging and community, but at the same time, it is surrounded by limitations and difficulties that become a trap for many characters. Furthermore, the use of the web as a metaphor to connect the twelve short stories reflects the literary strategies used in Native American literature. The interconnectedness of the characters and their experiences is highlighted, drawing the reader into the heart of the narrative. Ultimately, the powwow serves as the central point that unites the characters and their stories in a meaningful way. Through their respective journeys to get there, the reader can see how the powwow brings them all together, as they move toward the center of the web.

METAPHOR AND NECROPOLITICS

The use of the spider-web metaphor in Tommy Orange's novel *There There* provides a powerful way to understand the complexity of urban indigenous life and its connections to necropolitics. Necropolitics, as conceptualized by Achille Mbembe, refers to the use of state power to control and regulate the life and death of citizens, (Mbembe, 2003) and its presence is strongly felt in the experiences of urban indigenous communities in the United States. The spider-web metaphor, present in the stories of characters Opal Viola Bear Shield, Jacquier Red Feather, and Orvil Red Feather, serves as a way to illustrate the interconnectivity of indigenous communities and their struggle against necropolitics. This section will analyze the relationship between the spider-web metaphor and necropolitics, and how indigenous literature can challenge and subvert dominant narratives that perpetuate indigenous oppression.

The history of Native Americans is marked by violence and oppression, from the arrival

of European colonizers on the American continent. The forced displacement of native populations from their ancestral lands, cultural and religious subjugation, as well as widespread genocide, are central elements of this history. Even today, indigenous communities in the United States face high levels of violence and poverty, as well as limited access to basic resources such as health, education, and employment.

US history, as well as inherited Indigenous trauma, cannot be understood without dealing with the genocide that the United States committed against Indigenous peoples. From the colonial period through the founding of the United States and continuing in the twenty-first century, this has entailed torture, terror, sexual abuse, massacres, systematic military occupations, removals of Indigenous peoples from their ancestral territories, and removals of Indigenous children to military-like boarding schools. The absence of even the slightest note of regret or tragedy in the annual celebration of the US independence betrays a deep disconnect in the consciousness of US Americans. (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014, p. 09.)

Orange's narrative highlights the resistance against necropolitics since it is told by the indigenous point of view. In the prologue, divided into five parts: Indian Head; Rolling Head; Massacre as a prologue; Hard, fast; and Urbanity, a historical overview is given of how indigenous populations had their history, lands, identities, rights and even their existences systematically subdued to the colonialists. The Thanksgiving episode is now retold by a different perspective, the one from the silenced voices.

By the time Massasoit's son Metacomet became chief, there were no Indian-Pilgrim meals being eaten together. Metacomet, also known as King Philip, was forced to sign a peace treaty to give up all Indian guns. Three of his men were hanged. His brother Wamsutta was, let's say, very likely poisoned after being summoned and seized by the Plymouth court. All of which lead to the first official Indian war. The first war with Indians. King Philip's War. Three years later the war was over and Metacomet was on the run. He was caught by Benjamin Church, the captain of the very first American Rangers, and an Indian by the name of John Alderman. Metacomet was beheaded and dismembered. Quartered. They tied his four body sections to nearby trees for the birds to pluck. Alderman was given Metacomet's hand, which he kept in a jar of rum and for years took around with him—charged people to see it. Metacomet's head was sold to Plymouth Colony for thirty shillings—the going rate for an Indian head at the time. The head was put on a spike, carried through the streets of Plymouth, then displayed at Plymouth Fort for the next twenty-five years. (ORANGE, 2018, p.6)

The colonial power is imprinted in the bodies of the Native American communities. They are beaten, beheaded, tortured, dismembered, quartered and finally exposed as trophies and an example of how powerful the state can be when it refers to lives it considers as disposable ones.

Necropolitics is a present reality in the lives of these communities, as their lives are continually regulated and controlled by the state. From the imposition of cultural assimilation policies to the refusal to recognize ancestral lands, government policies have been marked by attempts to control and suppress the lives of Native American peoples. According to Churchill (1997) the majority of the Indian wars that have occurred on this continent have been waged by the United States government and its citizens against Native American people, in the interest of gaining control of Indigenous resources, Indigenous territory, and the American Indians themselves. In this context, indigenous literature emerges as a form of resistance and subversion, seeking to tell stories that reflect the richness and complexity of indigenous experiences and challenge dominant narratives that perpetuate oppression.

Deloria Jr. states that "the federal government [of the United States] did not try to convert Indians; they tried to eliminate them" (Deloria Jr., 1995, p. 105). This statement by Deloria Jr. illustrates how US government policies towards Indigenous peoples were marked by the intention to eliminate these peoples as distinct and culturally different groups. It can relate this statement by Deloria Jr. to Mbembe's definition of necropolitics, which argues that necropolitics is a form of exercising power that seeks to control the life and death of certain groups of people. For Mbembe, necropolitics transforms the social space into a space of death, where some people are considered "killable" and are subject to extreme forms of violence and abuse. (Mbembe, 2003).

The narrative of Native American peoples has been told, for a very long time, by the colonial point of view. These people have had their lives, their identities silenced and stereotypes disseminated, establishing a caricatural approach of these subjects, which would be limited to insignia such as coloured headdress of feathers or spears.

We have the sad, defeated Indian silhouette, and the heads rolling down temple stairs, we have it in our heads, Kevin Costner saving us, John Wayne's six-shooter slaying us, an Italian guy named Iron Eyes Cody playing our parts in movies. We have the litter-mourning, tear ridden Indian in the commercial (also Iron Eyes Cody), and the sink-tossing, crazy Indian who was the narrator in the novel, the voice of One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest. We have all the logos and mascots. The copy of a copy of the image of an Indian in a textbook. All the way from the top of Canada, the top of Alaska, down to the bottom of South America, Indians were removed, then reduced to a feathered image. Our heads are on flags, jerseys, and coins.

Our heads were on the penny first, of course, the Indian cent, and then on the buffalo nickel, both before we could even vote as a people—which, like the truth of what happened in history all over the world, and like all that spilled blood from slaughter, are now out of circulation. (ORANGE, 2018, p.6)

Thus, we can understand the history of American Indigenous peoples as an example of how necropolitics has been employed in colonial contexts to control and destroy certain groups of people, as highlighted by both Deloria Jr. and Mbembe, it can be related to the prologue's section: Massacre as a prologue of Oranges' novel when the indigenous bodies are torn in the name of a bigger power. The beginning of Native American historiography is remembered in the literary text as a blood bath in which disposable lives are the tools for the colonial celebration. History retold by the subaltern serves the purpose of maintaining one's existence. Resist in order to exist.

They did more than kill us. They tore us up. Mutilated us. Broke our fingers to take our rings, cut off our ears to take our silver, scalped us for our hair. We hid in the hollows of tree trunks, buried ourselves in sand by the riverbank. That same sand ran red with blood. They tore unborn babies out of bellies, took what we intended to be, our children before they were children, babies before they were babies, they ripped them out of our bellies. They broke soft baby heads against trees. Then they took our body parts as trophies and displayed them on a stage in downtown Denver. Colonel Chivington danced with dismembered parts of us in his hands, with women's pubic hair, drunk, he danced, and the crowd gathered there before him was all the worse for cheering and laughing along with him. It was a celebration. (ORANGE, 2018, p.12)

The urbanization of Native American was also a necropolitical strategy and one of the ongoing effects of colonialism and the ways in which it continues to perpetuate the erasure and marginalization of Indigenous peoples, rendering them "killable" in the eyes of the colonial state, as described by Mbembe, as he addresses that

Colonial power is not satisfied with merely keeping the colonized at a distance from its centers of calculation and decision-making, nor with denying them access to their own resources. It must organize their separation from themselves, in such a way as to create for the colonizer a position of absolute dominance rendering them 'killable' in the eyes of the colonial state. (Mbembe, 2003, p. 27)

This idea of certain groups being deemed "killable" is reflected in the portrayal of the characters in *There There*, who are subjected to systemic racism, poverty, and limited access to resources, making them vulnerable to violence and abuse. However, urbanization, seen as a strategy for isolating and diminishing these people, violates their identity, but does not erase their courage and will to live.

Getting us to cities was supposed to be the final, necessary step in our assimilation, absorption, erasure, the completion of a five-hundred-year-old genocidal campaign. But the city made us new, and we made it ours. We didn't get lost amid the sprawl of tall buildings, the stream of anonymous

masses, the ceaseless din of traffic. We found one another, started up Indian Centers, brought out our families and powwows, our dances, our songs, our beadwork. We bought and rented homes, slept on the streets, under freeways; we went to school, joined the armed forces, populated Indian bars in the Fruitvale in Oakland and in the Mission in San Francisco. We lived in boxcar villages in Richmond. We made art and we made babies and we made way for our people to go back and forth between reservation and city. We did not move to cities to die. ((ORANGE, 2018, p.12)

Necropolitics has shed light on the interconnectedness of Native-American communities and the challenges they face in contemporary society. Through the works of scholars such as Vine Deloria Jr., Ward Churchill, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, and Achille Mbembe, we can see how the legacy of colonialism and systemic racism has led to the marginalization and erasure of indigenous peoples in North America. The metaphor of the home and the trap encapsulates the ongoing struggle of indigenous communities to assert their sovereignty and reclaim their cultural heritage. By recognizing the ways in which these issues are interconnected, we can work towards creating a more just and equitable society for all.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this article, we examined the relationship between the spiderweb metaphor in Tommy Orange's novel *There There* and necropolitics, which is the use of state power to control and regulate the life and death of citizens, as conceptualized by Achille Mbembe. We saw how the history of Indigenous peoples in the United States has been marked by violence and oppression, and how this oppression is still felt today in urban Indigenous communities.

The spiderweb metaphor, present in the stories of various characters in the novel, illustrates the interconnectedness of Indigenous communities and their struggle against necropolitics. We saw how Indigenous literature emerges as a form of resistance and subversion, seeking to tell stories that reflect the richness and complexity of Indigenous experiences and challenge dominant narratives that perpetuate oppression.

Finally, we can conclude that Indigenous literature and other forms of art and expression are fundamental in challenging and subverting dominant narratives that perpetuate the oppression and marginalization of Indigenous peoples. By telling their own stories and claiming their own voice, Indigenous peoples can resist and fight against necropolitics and other systems of oppression that affect them.

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