

THE SPIDER WEB METAPHOR AS A RESISTANCE SYMBOL OF SURVIVAL OF NATIVE AMERICAN PEOPLES IN “THERE THERE” BY TOMMY ORANGE

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines how the metaphor of the spider web in “There There” (2016) 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 book, drawing on theoretical approaches from authors such as Hertha D. Wong, Carol Patterson-Rudolph, Katarzyna, 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.

Keywords: Resistance Literature. Necropolitics. Metaphor.

A METÁFORA DA TEIA DE ARANHA COMO SÍMBOLO DE RESISTÊNCIA DE SOBREVIVÊNCIA DOS POVOS NATIVOS AMERICANOS EM “LÁ NÃO EXISTE LÁ” DE TOMMY ORANGE

RESUMO

Este trabalho analisa como Tommy Orange, escritor nativo norte-americano, utiliza a metáfora da teia de aranha em “There There” (2016) para projetar 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 3 personagens do livro, fundamentando-se em autores como Hertha D. Wong, Carol Patterson-Rudolph, Katarzyna e Sergiusz Michalski. Além disso, incorpora-se o conceito de necropolítica de Achille Mbembe, relacionando-o com as políticas históricas de genocídio e exclusão social aplicadas aos povos nativos americanos. Ao se estudar autores como Vine Deloria Jr., Ward Churchill e Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, pode-se compreender como as políticas de genocídio cultural e territorial aplicadas aos povos nativos americanos nos Estados Unidos justificaram a exploração de seus recursos naturais e a usurpação de suas terras. Dessa forma, esta análise oferece uma perspectiva crítica e ampla sobre a luta dos povos nativos americanos por sua sobrevivência e resistência.

Palavras-Chave: Literatura de Resistência. Necropolítica. Metáfora.

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INTRODUCTION

Based on the novel *There There* (2018), by Tommy Orange⁴, which offers a unique portrayal of urban Native-American life through the intertwining stories of twelve characters, the novel tells the fictional stories of twelve urban Native-American characters who share a common goal of attending the big Powwow of Oakland. Furthermore, the novel lies in its portrayal of indigenous people living in big cities, struggling to reconcile their urban lifestyles with their indigenous traditions.

Consequently, the narrative is complex, and the use of spider references throughout the book, especially in the stories of Opal Viola Bear Shield, Jacquier Red Feather, and Orvil Red Feather, creates a web-like structure that connects the characters' stories. In the case of urban indigenous peoples, 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. Comparative Literature, according to Carvalhal (2006), is a field of study that seeks to 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 the 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: Home and Trap metaphor in the book. Relevant quotes from the book will be analyzed in relation to cultural aspects and the book's narrative.

Finally, in the third stage, the connections between the Spider-Web: Home and Trap metaphor and the concept of necropolitics will be explored. This analysis will draw on theories of necropolitics according to Achile Mbembe (2011) 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.

1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 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* and *Lord of the Rings*. In American literature, poets such as Edward Taylor

⁴ 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".

use spiders as metaphors for the poet's relationship with language. "But 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" (AUSTIN, 1993, p. 164.)

In West African culture, 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. Anansi is also portrayed as a demiurgic God Creator in some tales, creating the sky, stars, and substance from which all men are issued.

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. The meaning of the spider varies among indigenous communities, but it is often associated with creation, power, and divinity. In Hopi⁵ and Navajo⁶ 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 the structure of the universe. In essence, the spider emblem represents a complex web of interconnected meanings and associations.

2 DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

2.1 REPRESENTATION OF THE SPIDER-WEB IN THE BOOK

Tommy Orange's novel, "There There", weaves a narrative from the perspectives of twelve characters, all originating from contemporary urban indigenous communities. The novel

⁵ 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.

⁶ 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.

is divided into four parts, titled “Remain”, “Reclaim”, “Return” and “Powwow”⁷, with almost forty chapters. The author presents different Indian 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 Cheyenne⁸ ethnicity and live in East Oakland.

The paragraph that mentions Jacquie Red Feather describes part of her personal history, 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 re-education in boarding schools⁹, and the loss of their lands and culture. Jacquie’s pain echoes that of many other Native 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 Natives 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.

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. This awareness is expressed when Jacquie, that struggles with alcoholism¹⁰ thinks about drinking

⁷A powwow is a social gathering of Native American and Indigenous peoples, featuring singing, dancing, and traditional regalia. Powwows serve as an important cultural celebration and a way for Indigenous peoples to connect with their communities and heritage.

⁸Cheyenne 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).

⁹ 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.).

¹⁰ According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), Native Americans have higher rates of alcohol-related problems compared to other ethnic groups in the United States (NIAAA, 2021). Factors such as historical trauma, social and economic disadvantages, and limited access to healthcare contribute to the high prevalence of alcoholism in Native communities (BEALS ET AL., 2005; GONE; ALCÁNTARA, 2007).

during a conference in a hotel room and remembers her mother's speech. She sees herself as the spider and the minibar as the web. She decides not to fall into the trap again.

Jacque kneeled 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, Jacque was the spider, and the minifridge was the web. The home was to drink. To drink was the trap. Or something like that. The point was Do not open the fridge. And she didn't (ORANGE, 2016. p. 77.)

Throughout the narrative, the spider metaphor continues to be present in Jacque'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.

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 Jacque'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 SHIEL

Throughout the book, Opal's relationship with spiders evolves and becomes more complex. At first, she associates spiders with shame and disgust, as she feels ashamed of her first menstruation and pulling out the spider legs from her leg. However, as the story progresses, Opal begins to see spiders in a different light, as creatures that have both positive and negative aspects.

Opal pulled three spider legs out of her leg the Sunday afternoon before she and Jacque left the home, the house, the man they'd been left with after their mom [...]. Something was in her that came out, that seemed so creaturely, so grotesque yet magical [...]. But the legs [...] ended up meaning so much more (ORANGE, 2016, p, 121.)

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.

Opal's mother used to tell her and Jacque stories about the trickster spider Veho¹¹, who could be both helpful and mischievous. Opal starts to see spiders as symbols of the complexity of the world and the dual nature of things. For example, when she sees a spider building a web, she realizes that the web can be used for both good and bad, just like the spider in her uncle's abusive behavior.

¹¹ 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).

ORVIL RED FEATHER

Orvil's journey in the novel 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 and his brothers decide to attend the Powwow, where they can finally connect with their Native roots.

The spider symbolizes both the connection and danger that can be found in home and community. Orvil's discovery of spider legs in his leg suggests that he is beginning to weave his own story into the native community. The spider symbolizes his coming of age and his emerging sensitivity to the stories around him. Orvil's participation 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, 2016, 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, who associates spiders with trauma and fear, Orvil 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.

2.2 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.

Jacquie's addiction when she addresses "Home was to drink. To drink was the trap. Or something like that. The point was do not open the fridge. And she didn't" (ORANGE, 2016, p. 89). As well as Orvil's wish to keep his ancestral memory alive, which resulted in violence, is expressed in these lines of the book; "Orvil knew he wanted to dance the first time he saw a

dancer on TV. He was twelve[...]. Hadn't been told. At that moment, in front of the TV, he knew. He was a part of something. Something you could dance to" (ORANGE, 2016, p. 97).

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 threatens to seduce them and at the same time shelter them, like home and trap, as Vick said.

At the beginning of the book, 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, as explained by Wong these strategies incorporate both modernist techniques, such as multiple narrative voices, and traditional oral storytelling techniques, such as repetition, recurrent development, and associational structure. 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).

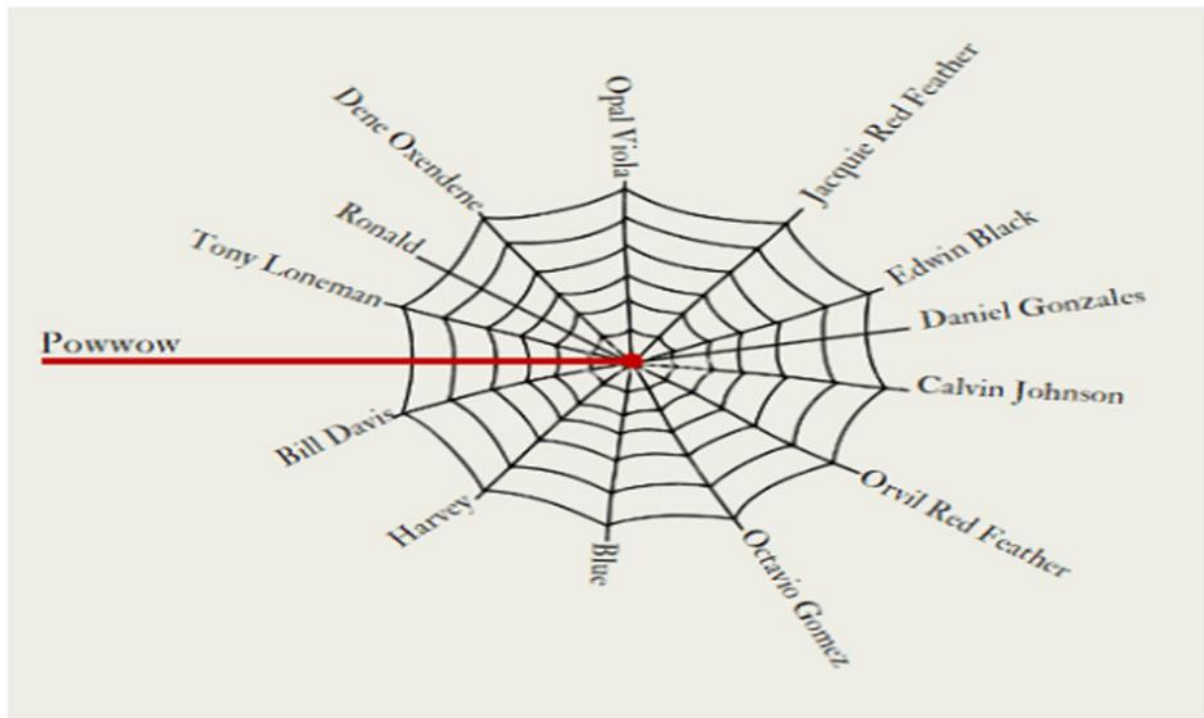
As the narrative unfolds, the connections between the characters and places become more apparent. One instance of this occurs when Jacquie discovers that her grandson Orvil is at the Powwow, the same event where she is, but is being kept hidden from Opal, his grand-aunt who disapproves of his desire 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, 2016, 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 above. It depicts the twelve characters distributed in a spider-web-like structure, with the powwow at the center.

Illustration 1: Spider-Web and Narrative Connections

Source: Elaborated for the author (2022).

This image portrays how Native American tradition and culture are the central points that connect all the characters and make them present at the Powwow. What's 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 central point 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 book as a whole provides a composite and organized picture of the diversity of events and characters. 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, according to Wong (1997, p. 173).

To conclude this chapter, 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 12 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.

2.3 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, 2019) 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 chapter 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).

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), "A majority of the Indian wars that have occurred on this continent have been waged by the United States government and its citizens against Indian people, in the interest of gaining control of Indian resources, Indian territory, and the 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, 2019).

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 final plot of Oranges' novel when the shooting that happens at the PowWow demonstrates the ways in which systemic racism and marginalization continue to shape the lives of Indigenous peoples in urban areas, where they are often relegated to the margins and denied access to resources.

Then came the pop-pop-pop, and they were all running, and Dene dove under the drum, and in his ear was the snap-crack of bullets whipping by, and he didn't know if anyone else had been hit, but he could hear screaming and shouting, and people yelling for someone to call 911, and then came more popping, and he could hear ricochets hitting the metal bleachers, and he wondered if he was going to die, and he thought of his mom and sisters and nephew, and he thought he was definitely going to die (ORANGE, 2018, p. 285).

This event also highlights 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. The shooting incident in the novel demonstrates how this vulnerability can manifest in extreme forms of violence, which further perpetuate the erasure and marginalization of indigenous peoples.

In conclusion, the analysis of the use of the spider web metaphor in *There There*, as well as the concept of necropolitics, has shed light on the interconnectedness of Native-American communities and the challenges they face in contemporary society. The metaphor of the spider web serves as a powerful symbol of the complexities of identity and community, as well as the effects of necropolitics on indigenous peoples.

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.

3 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this analysis, 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.

The end of the novel, marked by the shooting at the PowWow, demonstrates how systemic racism and marginalization continue to shape the lives of Indigenous peoples in urban areas, where they are often relegated to the margins and denied access to resources. This scene

also illustrates how necropolitics perpetuates violence and marginalization of Indigenous peoples, making them “killable” in the eyes of the colonial state.

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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