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**The Complexities of Cultural Identity for Urban Native
Americans in Tommy Orange's *There There* (2018)**

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Abstract

After the era of colonialism, people from post-colonial nations continue to struggle to find answers to different questions related to their ethnicity and cultural heritage. The dilemma of the colonial system has left indelible marks on these colonized communities that are still prevalent today. This dissertation attempts to study the ongoing challenges faced by Native Americans in Tommy Orange's debut novel *There There* (2018). The novel presents the complex experiences of Native Americans and the aftermath of colonialism on indigenous people living in metropolitan areas. This research delves into the theme of cultural identity and its complexities on the selected characters (Tony, Blue, Calvin, Thomas, Edwin, and Jacquie) who belong to the second Native American generation therefore grappling with cultural assimilation. Besides, they seek to reconcile conflicting aspects of their identity, understand their roots, and find a sense of belonging. The analysis draws upon postcolonial concepts of ambivalence and unhomeliness as explained by Homi K. Bhabha.

Key Words: *There There*, colonialism, cultural assimilation, cultural identity, ambivalence, unhomeliness.

Dedication

I am truly grateful to Allah (sbw) for His guidance that has been my source of strength and blessings in every step of my life.

I dedicate this work to my parents, who have been a constant source of love, encouragement, and guidance throughout every step of my academic journey.

To my dear sisters and brothers for their endless support, guidance, and help.

Asma, AZOUG

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my dear parents, thank you for your support along the way.

Djamila, BALIT

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General Introduction

General Introduction

Historically, Native Americans have been segregated into reservations, areas of land established by the American government. Living on reservations means restricted freedom and traditions. Many Native American families suffered turmoil and hundreds of Indians died during the long difficult journeys to the new reservation lands. Also, Native people suffered from injustices including poverty, limited access to resources, and loss of their identity. Through assimilation policies, Native Americans are compelled to leave the reservations and go to city areas to embrace the Western dominant lifestyle. These programs sought to promote economic self-sufficiency and prosperity. The majority of Native American land is taken by the U.S. government, and the Native Americans are compelled to either live on reservations or move to cities (Brave Heart and DeBruyn 64). By moving Native Americans to urban areas, the government hoped to break down traditional cultural barriers and encourage Indians' participation in the American mainstream.

In the heart of metropolitan cities, indigenous people face discrimination and fight to keep their heritage alive. Furthermore, they find themselves at the crossroads of the struggle for preserving their traditional values, and the expectations of contemporary society in a non-Native environment. The U.S. government policies alienate urban Native Americans from their culture and heritage. However, adaptation to contemporary metropolitan societies often leaves Native American urban dwellers either disconnected from their cultural roots or looking forward to the ultimate reintegration into mainstream society, due to the lack of balance between their roots and the demands of modern life since they are exposed to different societal norms. This internal dilemma only adds to the problem of self-identification for urban American Indians.

The question of identity is a key theme in Native American literature, which certainly contributes to the evolution of Native literature over time (Pérez 176). Through stories and poems, this literature aims to honor and preserve unique identities, traditions, and ways of life. Native American literature challenges stereotypes and highlights the diverse and complex nature of Native American identities. But through the lenses of literature, Native American writers create a space for expressing how the traditional Native American culture can co-exist with the urbanized life of today's Americans. Such literary works allow readers to understand the difficulties that indigenous people face while trying to define their identities in such a white-dominant culture. Among them is the Cheyenne author Tommy Orange, who through his writings, gives insight into how culture, history, and personal identity shape an individual's sense of self, ultimately inspired by his own experiences and turning it into fiction in his debut novel *There There* (2018).

This research seeks to highlight challenges, conflicts, and nuances that arise for Native Americans in urban spaces, and how they are dealing with their indigenous backgrounds in the United States. The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the identity issues faced by urban Indians in the United States.

The selection of this novel, *There There*, as the primary corpus for this study is based on its deep exploration of the struggles of urban Native Americans who navigate between their traditional heritage and the urban environment. The novel addresses issues of displacement, cultural identity, and the search for belonging. It deals with how cultural identity is shaped by historical trauma, colonization, and the U.S. Indian Policies that continue to impact indigenous communities. Thus, the significance of our research lies in revealing the impacts of the identity crisis on urban American Indians.

This research attempts to provide insights into the challenges faced by urban Native Americans in the United States related to their cultural preservation, assimilation, and discrimination. Moreover, this study aims to analyze and investigate the theme of the complexities of cultural identity within the contemporary postcolonial framework, in light of Postcolonial theory. We focus on Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of ambivalence and unhomeliness as elaborated in the book *Location of Culture* (1994) in our analysis of *There There*.

In *There There*, the selected characters are American Indians who grew up in Oakland, and who come from diverse backgrounds and with different experiences, reflecting the complexity of Native American identity in an urban setting. The conflicts they face are deeply rooted in the intergenerational effects of colonization, U.S. Indian policies, and stereotypes that have shaped their identities and interactions with the world around them. So, this dissertation attempts to answer the main question, of how the issue of cultural identity is represented in Orange's novel. In conducting the research we aim to answer the following questions:

- How does the experience of growing up in the United States influence the cultural identity of the Native American characters in *There There*?
- How do the characters negotiate their cultural identities amid feelings of ambivalence and unhomeliness in the novel?
- How does the novel portray the impact of colonization and historical U.S. Indian policies on the cultural identity of urban Native Americans?

Tommy Orange is a newly published novelist with recent scholarly criticism dedicated to his work. In this light, there are articles and critical discussions that offer insights into the novel's themes. We have managed to gather the following sources. The first article published

in *Pakistan Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* is entitled “A Study of Historical Trauma and Survivance in Orange’s *There There*” (2022) by Amani Sharif and Ghulam Murtaza. It explores the experiences of urban Native Americans as they grapple with past and present violence. The authors employ theories, including Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart’s historical trauma theory, which explains the impacts of genocide and colonization on Native Americans and their descendants, and Gerald Vizenor’s survival theory, which highlights resistance strategies and cultural preservation efforts of Native Americans. Through a textual analysis of Orange’s novel, the authors reveal how the characters are influenced by historical trauma and strive to reestablish their Native American identity and traditions in a hostile urban environment. The study’s findings highlight the resilience of urban Native Americans in the face of societal erasure and victimization, maintaining their identity despite all the obstacles their culture has faced for centuries.

The second article written by Meghanlata Gupta and Nolan Arkansas and published in *The Yale Undergraduate Research Journal* is entitled “‘But the city made us new, and we made it ours’: Reflections on Urban Space and Indigeneity in Tommy Orange’s *There There* ” (2020). The article focuses on the issue of indigenous displacement and cultural assimilation due to colonial policies and violence. It also looks at how cities are perceived as sites of colonization and the erasure of Indigenous presence. It shows how the characters in *There There* find power in the urban landscape by reclaiming their Indian heritage within the urban structure. The study’s results capture how well Orange narrates the complexities of Indigenous peoples living in urban American spaces and their ability to resist continued oppression.

The Third article published in the *Journal of Interdisciplinary Perspectives and Scholarship* is entitled “Embodied Prayer in Tommy Orange’s *There There*: Reaching the All-the-Way-There Place” (2020) by Christina Garcia. The paper explores the role of dancing and

drumming as forms of embodied prayer in *There There*, which deals with urban indigenous identity in Oakland. The author analyzes how the character of Orvil Red Feather learns to dance the powwow in secret and how he enters into a relationship with his ancestors and his community through dance. The article also examines how the character of Thomas Frank uses the drum and singing as a way to achieve a state of wholeness and belonging, freeing himself from his alcohol dependence. The paper uses an interdisciplinary approach, combining literature, Native American studies, and spirituality, to show how the characters in the novel use dance and drumming to connect to their ancestral heritage, their living community, and their inner being.

These articles fail to explore the identity crisis in *There There* as the characters navigate conflicting identities and struggle with cultural authenticity in urban settings. Our study then seeks to fill the gap by exploring how ambivalence and unhomeliness manifest in the characters' lives within the urban setting, shedding light on the lasting impacts of U.S. Indian policies on their sense of self and belonging.

The present research is based on postcolonial theory since it examines and analyzes the complexities of cultural identity in the chosen characters of the novel. This theory is selected for this study because it helps us to explore Orange's novel, which belongs to the historical fiction genre, shedding light on the impact of colonialism, on cultural identity and the experiences of indigenous populations in cities. It provides important insights into how identities develop after colonialism, which is crucial for exploring the cultural identity of urban Native Americans as depicted in the novel. Therefore, the study aims to explore how Native Americans identify themselves in the novel by using Bhabha's concepts of ambivalence and unhomeliness as defined in his book *The Location of Culture* (1994).

This research is divided into two main chapters. The first one is about the literary, socio-historical, and theoretical background of the study. The first section provides an overview of Native American literature, exploring its origins, evolution, themes, and influential authors in the field. It also includes a biography of the author, his literary influences, and then a summary of the socio-historical background of *There There*. The second section focuses on discussing key concepts of postcolonial theory as developed by Bhabha in *The Location of Culture*, which will be applied in the subsequent chapter of our analysis.

The second chapter explores the theme of cultural identity in *There There*; it explores how various characters in the selected novel try to define their authenticity in the urban space. It begins with a brief overview of what a cultural identity means. Then, we delve into the analysis of the dilemma of identity in *There There* in relation to Bhabha's postcolonial concepts of ambivalence and unhomeliness.

Chapter One: Literary, Socio-Historical, and Theoretical

Background of the Study

Chapter One

Literary, Socio-Historical and Theoretical Background of the Study

Introduction

This chapter is a literary, Socio-Historical, and Theoretical Background of Native American literature. It begins with a literary and historical overview of Native American literature, its significance, and its evolution as a distinct literary tradition. This chapter also provides a biographical account of the author, Tommy Orange, his literary influences, and a summary of his novel *There There* along with its socio-historical background to provide a contextual understanding of the narrative. Finally, it provides a general overview of Postcolonial literature and postcolonial theory, referring to Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial concepts of ambivalence and unhomeliness, which will form the basis for our subsequent analysis of the novel *There There* in the next chapter.

1.1 The Emergence of Native American Literature

The emergence of Native American literature has its roots in oral history and storytelling which is practiced among indigenous communities long before European settlers arrive. These oral traditions encompass all kinds of narratives, including myths, legends, history, and cultural practices, that passed on from one generation to another through spoken language. Native stories are oral-based and that means there is no proper writing and publishing. However, the writing down of native stories in literature gives visibility to the stories and allows communities to have their presence and experience in literature. Native American literature is based on human nature interaction with the natural world, considering the land as a sacred entity integral to their cultural beliefs. This connection can always be seen in their stories, most often when they are told during any ceremony or gathering. According to Clayton T. Russell, oral history within Native American communities

transcends individual narratives. This is because the culture considers the relationship between the land and the people as a central element of their traditions. This means that the voice of the land in these traditions is not just about persons and their people but the collective wisdom and experience of the land as well.

With the arrival of European colonizers in the Americas, Native American people were forced to assimilate to Christianity and European missionary culture. They are also introduced to the written English language in schools by Christian missionaries. Native Americans started learning by using English for speaking and writing, “As a result, Indians go from telling stories to writing them down using common literary genres like the novel, poetry, and autobiography” (176). In the 1700s, the Reverend Samson Occom, a member of the Mohegan nation, was among the first Native Americans to publish writings in English. Additionally, the first novel published by a Native American is *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta* (1854) by John Rollin Ridge. In the nonfiction genre, Native Americans write autobiographies which are considered as a platform for indigenous people to share their personal stories and experiences. One of the earliest Native American autobiographies is *A Son of the Forest* (1829) by William Apess.

Traditional Native American poetry is originally spoken rather than written down. It includes songs, such as lullabies, love songs, complaints, laments, curses, war cries, and death songs (Day). These poems are frequently spoken or sung at various events, such as ceremonies or storytelling gatherings. The earliest examples of Native American poetry in English can be traced back to the early 19th century. However, the poet Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, also known as Bamewawagezhikaquay, is recognized as the first Native American writer whose poetry is written in English (Holmes). She is well-educated, and speaks and writes both English and Anishinaabemowin; the Ojibwe language (Miller). Her

poetry often talks about her life as a Native woman; her writings reflect her Ojibwe culture, composed in the Ojibwe language and English (Miller).

Native American poetry is also influenced by European Romanticism, as can be seen from this statement, “Similarly, Native Americans wrote poetry in the 19th century that reflected very much the influence of European Romanticism” (Perez 178). Jane Johnston Schoolcraft's poems in *The Literary Voyager* or *Muzzeniegun* magazine as well as Ridge's poems in *Poems* (1868) reflect themes of loneliness, nature, religion, and love, showing a blend of Native American and European styles, serving as good examples that illustrate this impact (Pérez 178). This cross-cultural influence can be seen in the way Native American poets express their connection to the cultural world, and their focus on personal experiences, individualism, and imagination.

During the 20th century drama and performances emerged as a distinct literary genre within Native American literature. With plays that often draw inspiration from Native American myths, legends, and traditional stories, and are sometimes written by non-Native authors; the traditional Native American storytelling paved the way and forms the basis for later literary works such as the dramatic works. Pérez states that Te Ata (Mary Thompson Fisher) a member of the Chickasaw Nation, is considered to be one of the first Native American playwrights and started acting in her one-woman shows (performs alone on stage) in the 1920s initially on Broadway and later in Europe promoting Native Cultures (178). Consequently, through the dramatic performance or presentation of Native American stories, she is able to introduce her heritage to wider audiences. Her work is highly acclaimed inspiring a play in her honor by Chickasaw playwright Judy Lee Oliva in 1996 (Pérez 178).

Throughout the early 1900s, Native American authors started writing about their tribes' history and challenges on reservations. There are accounts written about personal experiences by Native Americans. Important works include autobiographies like *Indian*

Boyhood by Charles A. Eastman, which is his literary debut; the book is a story of childhood experiences that he has as a Sioux. Eastman's *Old Indian Days* published in 1907, a collection of short stories is considered an important part of American Indian literature (Pérez 179). In the *Handbook of Native American*, Peyer points out that Estman's intention of this book is to change the perception of whites that Native American women are not "mere beasts of burden" (234). On the other hand, Zitkàla-sá, also known as Gertrude Simmons Bonnin, completed three essays about her life which are published in *Atlantic Monthly* magazine in 1900. Such writings depict the author's childhood, education in white-run schools, and return to reservations.

Likewise, Luther Standing Bear in his autobiography, *My People, The Sioux* published in 1928, also describes the change he goes through from tribal to white society (Pérez 179). Emily Pauline Johnson a Mohawk writer known for writing poetry, also writes short stories that are published in magazines like *Mother's Magazine* and *Boy's World* that are collected in *The Moccasin Maker* (1913) and *The Shagganappi* (1913) contain stories about Indian and Canadian women from the 1800s, as well as adventure stories for boys (Pérez 179). Ruoff states that Johnson's writing in poetry and stories makes her an important figure in American Indian women's literature; he adds "Johnson remains an important figure in the evolution of American Indian women's literature" (242).

In the period between 1920 and 1940 Native American writers started to focus on writing novels instead of nonfiction (Pérez 179). They explore the theme of assimilation in their narratives depicting Indian characters who face challenges in adopting white dominant culture and values. For instance, it is evident in prominent novels such as *Cogewea, the Half Blood* (1927) by Mourning Dove, that the theme of assimilation is central in this novel as the protagonist is a mixed-blood girl grapples with navigating between her full-blood Indian and the pressure of the white culture (Pérez 179). In addition, John Joseph Matthew's *Sundown*

(1934) follows the story of a young mixed-blood Indian torn between Native American tribal values and the white world, struggling with her identity upon returning to the reservation (Pérez 179). All of these works represent the political instability that characterizes the period. Further, the historical realities such as colonization and the subsequent attempts to erase Indigenous peoples' identities contributed to shaping the Native American writers' perspective.

In contrast to previous works, which often depict the erasure of Native cultures by the white society, McNickle's novel *The Surrounded* (1936) rejects the white culture and calls indigenous people to go back to their tribal traditions and values. McNickle's appeal to restore indigenous peoples' traditions and refuse white domination anticipates the Native American Renaissance of the Sixties.

1.2. Contemporary Native American Literature

American Indian tribe communities have endured a long period of suffering as a result of the policies adopted by the United States Government, characterized by forced relocation and urbanization, leading to the majority of the Native American tribes to becoming minorities in their home country. Subsequently, they undergo a revolutionary transition in how they live their lives and develop their literature. Due to catastrophic events such as the Trail of Tears and the termination policy, Native Americans become outcasts and are much more separated from their original lands. However, the traumatic episode of Native Americans' cultural suppression and extermination continues to have a great impact on Native American people, affecting their efforts to reclaim their identity, as shown in the writings of current Native American authors.

In the late 20th century, contemporary Native American literature begins to take shape as Native authors aim to reclaim their voice and provide an opposing narrative to the previous dominant colonial perspective presented in literature about Indigenous peoples. Contemporary

Native American writers highlight colonialism, indigeneity, identity, and contemporary obstacles faced by those communities. The primary objective of contemporary Native American writing is to preserve national culture by expressing honor to mythology, storytelling, and indigenous language. It emerges from a transformative period known as the Native American Renaissance, “a term originally coined by Lincoln (1983) in his book *Native American Renaissance* that refers mainly to the literary works following N. Scott Momaday’s 1969 Pulitzer Prize for *House Made of Dawn*” (López and Benali 100).

The essence of the Native American Renaissance as stated by Lincoln is a revitalization of the oral literature into Western literary forms. This transformative period signifies a renewal rather than a completely new creation in contemporary Indigenous literature. Lincoln uses the term ‘Renaissance’ suggesting that, as a result of a long period of inherent violence and forced assimilation, the modern world experiences a kind of renaissance and revitalization of Indian traditions, identities, and perspectives through novels, poetry, theatre, and other literary forms.

The period of the post-1960s is marked by various social and political changes in favor of indigenous cultural traditions, widely known as the 'Red Power Movement', which also helps strengthen indigenous ethnic pride. Additionally, there is a growing interest among non-native readers in learning about Native American perspectives, leading to an increase in the publication and readership of works by Native American authors. The Native American Renaissance empowered writers to challenge societal perceptions and stereotypes through their works “After the so-called Native American Renaissance, writers started to express their feelings when treated as inferior even to human beings. They wanted to change the idea mainstream society had of them and discovered that writing was a powerful tool that could help them change attitudes and stereotypes” (Pérez 13-14).

Many modern Native American writers use old ways of telling stories passed down orally to share stories about their culture and struggles, helping others understand their heritage. Native American authors often blend oral traditions in historical and modern storytelling “Today, many Native American writers draw upon the age-old customs and wisdom of this oral tradition of storytelling to tell both historical and contemporary stories of Native American life”(Garrett and Garrett 62). Through oral traditions, the writers convey both historical and contemporary accounts of Native Americans and work towards understanding, empathy, and preservation of their culture for future generations. This practice justifies the everlasting importance of storytelling in capturing the range and depth of the Native American experience to a wider range of people in contemporary times.

Contemporary Native American writers use both English and Native languages in their writing to show their multilingual realities and correct the misrepresentation of Native voices in mainstream literature, honoring their culture while also challenging colonial discourse. They are engaging in the preservation of their cultural heritage “Their work helps to continue and preserve the longstanding traditions of their tribes” (Garrett and Garrett 63).

The emergence of the Native American Renaissance revitalizes traditional Native American storytelling and poetry in literature. In the past, oral traditions of tribal knowledge were conveyed primarily through storytelling, but modern Native American authors are now using writing as a vehicle to reach the same end. Through utilizing Native tales in their works, these authors in turn create authentic modern Native literature that goes against earlier criticism. They seek to correct how North Americans perceive Native people and their oral traditions by using Western literary tools for Native purposes, dispelling stereotypes, and emphasizing cultural survival (Pérez 176).

As explained by Tara Ann Carter in her essay “First and Second Wave Native American Literature” (2016), contemporary Native American literature is marked by two

waves: the first wave focuses on returning to traditions, ceremonies, rituals, and lifestyle of the tribal people, while the second wave brings into question the identity in America and emphasizes life and connections beyond the reservation (Carter 1). The first literary wave starts in 1969 with N. Scott Momaday's novel *House Made of Dawn*. Before that, there weren't many Native voices heard in literature. Yet Momaday's novel alters that and gives Native writers more visibility. Simultaneously, activism like the Alcatraz Protest highlights the push for Native American rights and inclusion in literature.

Along with Momaday's success, such as winning the Pulitzer Prize, other Native American writers also want to share their stories (Carter 5). Following the Indian Self-determination and Educational Assistance Act of 1975, the second wave of Native American literature arises, full of newly acquired freedom; it is a new period embracing civil rights and enfranchisement. The writers in this wave explore their identity in different settings, for example on reservations or addressing the problems of being a Native American in modern times (Carter 7).

After the era of forced assimilation policies by the United States government in the mid-20th century, Native American writers began emphasizing their identity. Hence, identity becomes a prime concern among this generation as Perez states "They deal with Native identity and survival in the modern world, how history has determined and influenced tribal politics, and how these issues are related to Native sovereignty" (224). One notable example is Leslie Marmon Silko's novel *Ceremony* (1977), which explores the protagonist's struggle with his mixed heritage and cultural identity. Another significant work is Louise Erdrich's novel *Love Medicine* (1984) addressing issues of Native American identity.

The urbanization of indigenous people has a great influence on contemporary Native American literature. When indigenous peoples migrated to living in urban areas, they faced several issues including alienation, poor economic conditions, cultural assimilation, health

disparities, and discrimination. Many Native American have depicted the experiences of the Native diaspora in urban areas through their literary works. Specifically, Sherman Alexie in his narratives portrays the realities faced by his generation by presenting a new perspective on issues such as poverty, alcoholism, racism, and cultural identity crisis (Hossain and Sarker 395). In his collections of short stories like *The Toughest Indian in the World* (2000) and *Ten Little Indians* (2003), Sherman Alexie reveal the challenges and dynamics of urban life for indigenous people, capturing the diverse experiences and interactions they encounter in modern cities (Armendáriz 209).

According to Frederick Hale in “The Perils of Native American Urbanization and Alcoholism in Janet Campbell Hale’s *The Jailing of Cecilia Capture*” (1998), cities become a socio-geographical fulcrum of attention in Native American fiction starting from the 1969 novel by N. Scott Momaday *House Made of Dawn*, which provides an early example of an urban context in Native American literature and paves the way for further investigations of urban life and identity within Indigenous communities. Following Momaday’s footsteps, many authors produced works on this topic of Native Americans in cities, such as Louise Erdrich, James Welch, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, and Hyemeyohsts Storm. However, the migration to cities and changes in urban areas have an impact on Native American fiction which foremost manifests in the explicit description of alcohol and addictions as common literary themes in contemporary native American literature (Hale 1).

Contemporary Native American literature continues to evolve as Indigenous writers continue reclaiming their voices and sharing their stories with the world. Authors such as Louise Erdrich, Sherman Alexie, and Tommy Orange explore the questions of the urban Native American identity and trauma of the past on both individuals and communities. For instance, with a fragmented narrative style, blending traditional storytelling with a contemporary urban setting, Tommy Orange’s *There There* exemplifies the richness and

diversity of this literary tradition while shedding light on pressing issues like identity, belonging, and cultural heritage facing Indigenous communities today in a modern urban setting.

2. About the Author and the Novel

2.1. The Biography of Tommy Orange

Many American Indian authors are highly productive in modern times as they write both traditional and revolutionary novels and short stories. Julian Brave NoiseCat asserts that Tommy Orange as a modern Native American writer stages himself at the forefront in the era of “Native Renaissance”, following the success of his debut novel (NoiseCat). Tommy Orange was born and grew up in Oakland, California, where he currently lives, a citizen of the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes in Oklahoma. He is a part of both urban and Native American cultures. From the age of 14 to 24 he practiced roller hockey on a national level, and he began to play music at the age of 18 (Button). His mom is white and his dad is Cheyenne. Orange recalls his dad was brought up in traditional Native style in Oklahoma. However, he doesn’t get enough time to introduce his children to Native American culture, and this environment is very common for kids like him, growing up in a big city (Neary).

As a kid, Orange isn't much of a reader. He doesn’t do well in school and isn’t particularly encouraged to read. Orange pursued his education at the Institute of American Indian Arts and later earned his MFA. But after graduating from college with a degree in sound engineering, he couldn't find work, so he got a job at a used bookstore, Gray Wolf Books, where he developed a passion for reading. Orange starts his literary journey by writing short stories and essays that explore themes of identity, culture, and belonging. His early works reflect his personal experiences and struggles, laying the foundation for his future writing.

At Bioneers 2020 Conference workshop called “The Power of Words: Indigenous

Writers Workshop”, Tommy Orange states that the beginning of his writing career is outside formal education, but he concentrates on reading translation works and doing experimental writing as a starting point. As Orange delves into his writing, he begins to contemplate the significance of including his own experiences, family, history, and cultural background in his work with a Native perspective (*Bioneers*). Although his novel isn’t an autobiographical fiction, he acknowledges that many aspects of the story are inspired by his own experiences, as well as those of his family and community (*Bioneers*). In this context, the author maintains that it is pivotal to bring up the issue of Native voices in literature, and allow more Native people to be illustrated to give them a voice along with a fair representation (*Bioneers*).

Orange's first novel *There There*, published in 2018, was a success for its vivid depiction of urban Native American characters in Oakland. The story incorporates multiple viewpoints to reflect on identity, trauma, and belonging. The idea for writing *There There* comes to him randomly while he works in an urban Indian community at the Native American Health Center in Oakland, conducting a storytelling project. It becomes clear to him how important it is to show the world the stories of urban Native Americans, especially those who are in an urban setting (Button).

There There pushed Orange to literary prominence; it is selected as one of the best books of the year by such varied organizations as The New York Times, The Washington Post, NPR, Time, GQ, Entertainment Weekly, and O, The Oprah Magazine. It was also a Pulitzer Prize finalist and winner of the National Book Critics Circle John Leonard Prize, the Center for Fiction First Novel Prize, and the PEN/Hemingway Award. *There There* garners praise from notable authors even before its release. As Garrett states, “When Margaret Atwood, Marlon James, and Louise Erdrich rave about a book before its release, it had better live up to the hype and Tommy Orange’s debut, *There There* very much does”(Garrett). The positive feedback from these respected authors shows that Orange’s writing makes an

impression on readers and critics.

Tommy Orange's second novel *Wandering Stars* (2024) continues to focus on the theme of Indigenous people living in urban areas; it centers on the contemporary lives of family members in Oakland, CA. It is considered as a sequel to *There There*, writing about the Bear Shield family line featured in Orange's first novel (Scott). The Sand Creek Massacre opens Orange's latest novel *Wandering Stars*; the story begins with a young boy who escaped the massacre and follows the next five generations of his descendants. Released in early 2024, the novel draws on historical events, develops its characters well, uses some vivid humor, as well as authentic dialogue to explore the devastating experience occurred in Colorado (Estabrook).

In addition to his two novels, Orange published a profile of a Native American teen (17-year-old Jeffrey Martinez) for *Esquire* in 2019, revealing what life is like for a Native American today. He also participates in collaborative novels with multiple writers like Theodore C. Van Alst Jr, Margaret Atwood, Brandon Hobson, and more, resulting in the creation of narratives such as *The Decameron Project: 29 New Stories from the Pandemic* (2020), *I Know What's Best for You: Stories on Reproductive Freedom* (2022), *Never Whistle at Night* (2023), and *Fourteen Days* published in February 2024. Besides, he has published short story in the literary journal *Zyzzzyva* entitled "Session Drummer" (Ravas). In addition to his work in *Zyzzzyva*, Orange's short stories have also been featured in other publications such as *McSweeney's* and *Zoetrope: All-Story* (Deschutes Public Library).

Tommy Orange's works challenge the reader to acknowledge not only the most ordinary expressions of racism, but also the fake portrayal of Native people in mainstream media, the agony of the annihilated traditions, and the submerged voices of a turbulent past in the dynamic setting of the city. Additionally, he emerges as an important New Native

Renaissance figure with his works revealing profound reflections on being an Urban Indian. Nowadays, the relationships between Urban Indians and their tribal or ancestral roots become distant, often with many generations separating the two descendants. Urban Indians associate more with the urban areas where they live, instead of their tribal past. As Lucero states “there are likely to be few people from their tribes in an urban area who themselves have a high degree of cultural connectedness” (229).

2.2 Orange’s Literary Influences

Tommy Orange’s literary influences are rooted in his own cultural history and personal experiences, which shape his writings. His first novel *There There* is inspired by his own experience of growing up in the urban Native American community around Oakland, California, as he states in the following:

And then as soon as I started writing from my own point of view and including aspects of my own life and being biracial, having a Native father and a white mother, and what that experience is like, this whole world felt like it opened up of things to write about. Having all this experience working in the Native community in Oakland was definitely also an inspiration as to what to write about. So it is partly writing what I know and through the lens of who I am, but there was also this huge gap and continues to be about urban Native stories.
(Estabrook)

Like most of his characters in *There There*, Orange is an “urban Indian”. Born and raised in Oakland as a Native American author, he is inspired by his cultural heritage, history, and the struggles of indigenous peoples. Growing up in urban areas and confronting with questions of identity and belonging have shaped his writing style and the themes he delves into. Through his works, he aims to break stereotypes, amplify marginalized voices, and shed

light on the challenges faced by Native communities, reflecting on US policies towards Native American people.

Tommy Orange found his passion for writing fiction when he worked at a used bookstore. He read a lot of works by writers like Clarice Lispector, Denis Johnson, Colum McCann, and Louise Erdrich. Out of all of these influences, Louise Erdrich is the most important (Mineo). She helps in shaping Orange's writing style with themes about identity and the rich development of characters. He was drawn to Erdrich's mix of family, heritage, and magical realism. In his own stories, Orange uses multiple viewpoints and deep narrative exploration to make his work complex and a bit enchanted, like Erdrich's stories (Cox 565).

In addition, Tommy Orange shared how prominent Native American writers such as Sherman Alexie and Terese Mailhot helped him write his book *There There*. In the 'Acknowledgements' section, he expresses gratitude to Alexie for improving the story and supporting Orange after it was published. Since Alexie writes about the experiences of Native Americans in modern times, it helped Orange find his voice. In the same way, he appreciates Mailhot for opening up about his writing life and for being a great source of inspiration. Mailhot, who grappled with issues like trauma and identity in her writings, might have been an inspiration to Orange, who could share similar concerns.

Tommy Orange's literary texts rely on postcolonial literature and historical fiction which challenge dominant discourses. Andrew M. Spencer argues that Orange's novel *There There* "writes back to colonial mythologies which seek to relegate Native people, cultures, and values to the past" (17). His inspiration arises from the injustices that are faced by Native American Communities in the United States, and he uses his writing as a means to counter the dominant white narratives.

Through the depiction of historical fiction, Tommy Orange raises issues of intergenerational trauma, cultural legacy, and the overall impact of colonialism. An example of this influence is shown through his novel *There There*, which depicts Alcatraz Island's historical incidents within the story. Likewise, his second novel *Wandering Stars* looks back at the Sand Creek Massacre from 1864 and analyzes the consequences of U.S. policies on native people. The author incorporates narratives of real historical events with historical fiction and encourages the readers to meditate on the consequences of colonization and its endurance.

Through storytelling, Tommy Orange portrays the resilience of the Native people group and their innumerable challenges which are not just historical but still relevant and being confronted in the present day such as cultural preservation, discrimination, and stereotypes. The writing of Oranges not only makes the term postcolonialism widely understood, but it also thwarts the dominant authorities and it appreciates indigenous stories. According to Andrew M. Spencer, “Orange undermines and resists competing Euro-American narratives by stacking layers of metanarrative discourse, narrative fiction, and oral storytelling” (53). In the same way, his inclusion of storytelling techniques also acknowledges the indigenous cultures and further disrupts the established structures of literature by showing the resistance to colonial legacies.

2.3. The Summary of the Novel

Tommy Orange's novel *There There* begins with a prologue highlighting colonization's impact on Native American communities and their identity dilemmas. The novel is divided into four parts, narrating the stories of twelve Oakland Native Americans. Each character faces unique issues like drug abuse, survival, and societal disintegration. The

novel ends with a powerful climax at a powwow in Oakland, where unexpected connections between characters lead to a dramatic ending.

The story starts with Tony Loneman, an Oakland native man with fetal alcohol syndrome, with shame on his face due to what he calls “The Drome”. He goes into the scheme with Octavio Gomez, a Native drug dealer. Octavio tells Tony that they will have to rob the forthcoming Big Oakland Powwow for the prize money in order to settle Octavio’s drug debts. He insists on Tony bringing the bullets and performing the robbery while he impersonates an Indian dressed in Indian traditional regalia.

Opal Viola Victoria Bear Shield is the second character in the novel, tracing her journey from Oakland to Alcatraz in 1970, where she and her sister Jacquie Red Feather and their mother protested against the “Indians of All Tribes” occupation. Jacquie was raped by a Native teenager named Harvey when they were both drunk. The occupation falls into disarray and they move back to Oakland. Jacquie gives birth to a girl named Blue, who later gives up for adoption. While working as a substance abuse counselor in Albuquerque, New Mexico Jacquie meets again Harvey by chance, and in order to make up for his actions, Harvey persuades Jacquie to attend the powwow ceremony in Oakland, and there she meets her sister Opal and her three grandsons.

Orvil, Lony, and Loother Red Feather are Native teens living in Oakland with Opal. They are actually Jacquie’s grandsons, but they’ve never met. In a documentary project for the Native community of Oakland, Orvil narrates his story about finding his mother Jamie passed out on drugs. Orvil Red Feather teaches himself Native dance by watching YouTube videos since his childhood, after having been prohibited to learn about “Indianing” by his great aunt Opal, Orvil gets ready for a dance competition at the Powwow. He sneaks out and goes to the Big Oakland Powwow where he will perform.

Furthermore, Edwin Black's and Thomas Frank's dilemmas of identity and place add layers to the plot. Edwin, a young native man from Oakland, who is living with his white mother, named Karen, has a master's degree in literature of the American Indians but is an internet addict, obese, and jobless. He uses Facebook to locate his Native father, whose name is Harvey, who doesn't know anything about his existence. This Harvey is also Blue's father. Like Edwin, Thomas Frank was born to a white mother and an Indian father. He finds a different fulfillment in the drum through music as he participates in a drumming group. He loses his job, but his yearning to drum at the powwow gives him a sense of belonging. In parallel to Edwin's search for his father and Thomas's journey of self-discovery through drumming, Calvin Johnson's involvement in the Powwow organizing committee brings a layer of tension to the narrative. He suspects that Octavio's men are the ones who have entrapped him to rob his marijuana, but either way, they need money as soon as possible in order to pay for the lost weed. Calvin ended up participating in Octavio's Powwow scheme and betraying his own community for financial gain.

The climax of the novel arrives in Part IV. Powwow has another meaning for every character as they all gather at the Big Oakland Powwow. Opal and Jacquie watch as Orvil does his dance for the first time wearing the regalia. Calvin, Octavio, and his men (Charles and Carlos) carry out a robbery of a large bag of gift cards from Blue and Edwin. Finally, when Carlos wants to grab the prize for himself, the robbers begin to shoot at one another. As the fighting gets bloodier, some innocent Powwow participants get injured and killed by stray bullets.

3. The Socio-Historical Background of the Novel

This section of the socio-historical background of *There There* addresses the effect of Indian policies on Native Americans, focusing on the terrifying impact of the U.S. Indian

policies such as the Indian Removal Act of 1830, the Termination Policy of the 1950s, and the Relocation Act. Such policies gave rise to forced migration, loss of cultural identity, and even a certain identity crisis among the community of the Native Americans. It also provides an insight into the most significant moments of Native activism, such as the Alcatraz Island Occupation in the late 1960s which aimed to reclaim Native lands from oppressive government policies, and the Contemporary Powwow culture as a way of showing the cultural resilience and resistance of indigenous people against their cultural erasure especially for those Native Americans who struggled to maintain their cultural traditions and authenticity experienced rootlessness in urban areas.

3.1 U.S Indian Policies

In the novel *There There*, the author reveals the impact of the U.S. Indian policies on Native Americans, their sense of identity, and their relationship with land and community. The USA has had a long history of occupying the land and annihilating the Native American races. The most remarkable is the Indian Removal Act of 1830, legislation that forced Natives to move west of the Mississippi River. Manifest Destiny served as the guiding principle of this policy that was triggered by resource demands. It led to the Trail of Tears, a tragic forced relocation of Native American tribes from their ancestral lands in the southeastern United States to designated territories west of the Mississippi River, which resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of Native Americans. This action was against the Native American sovereignty and rights, and thus it set up dangerous precedents for other policies that indulged in further marginalization and dispossession of the Native Americans. Although there are treaties and federal recognition, the historical impact continues to play a major role in the socio-economic and political landscape of the indigenous people. Efforts to assert tribal governance, bring back lands to Native people, and uphold Native cultures are gaining momentum which may result in a shift in thinking about Indian policies.

In the 1950s, the U.S. government put forward the Relocation Act and termination policy to integrate Native Americans into mainstream society. These policies not only terminated the unique status of the tribe's relationship with the federal government but also put an end to their sovereignty and promoted assimilation. This imposed acculturation led thousands of Native Americans to relocate, breaking their cultural customs and ties with their communities. Such policies resulted in more and more degradation and abandonment of the native tribes. These forms of marginalization experienced by the urban Native Americans have led to increased identity crises, mental health issues, violence, and substance abuse in urban settings.

3.1.1 The Indian Removal Act 1830

During the 1800s, conflicts arose between settlers and Native American tribes in North America regarding land ownership. This led to a movement to relocate the tribes from their lands in the southeastern United States. President Andrew Jackson approved the Indian Removal Act in 1830, authorizing the government to engage in negotiations with these tribes. As a result, thousands were displaced from their territories. Kevin Hillstrom and Laurie Collier Hillstrom in “Defining Moments American Indian Removal and the Trail to Wounded Knee” argued that as soon as Andrew Jackson got power, he adopted a belief that the South's last tribes had to be driven away in order to create space for white civilization (136). Tribal leaders faced pressure to surrender their lands in exchange for promises of territories out west, and a number of treaties were signed under coercion (Hillstrom and Hillstrom 29). However, these promises went unfulfilled, resulting in hardships, suffering, and loss of life among the communities.

Tribes like the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole were removed from the South under The Indian Removal Act, but the Cherokee people bravely resisted their exile as

they saw themselves as an independent nation with their own written language, roads, schools, representative government, and constitution (Hillstrom and Hillstrom 137). Kevin and Laurie Collier Hillstrom pointed out that President Jackson refused to recognize Cherokee tribe sovereignty and supported Georgia's expansion on Cherokee territory. He claimed the Cherokee people should leave state lines since they were wards of the federal government. The Cherokee Nation faced evacuation and dislocation in 1835 after President Jackson persuaded a minority to sign the Treaty of New Echota after the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed the tribe's sovereignty (Hillstrom and Hillstrom 137).

In 1838, the US military forces forced Cherokee tribes to leave their territory. They had no choice but to give up their homes and suffer the devastations of the "Trail of Tears". "Around 13,000 Cherokee were rounded up and driven west, and an estimated 4,000 tribal members died of cold, starvation, or disease along the 1,000-mile forced march" (Hillstrom and Hillstrom 137). Thus, this forced march shaped indigenous communities' heritage greatly and had a major impact on the way societies, traditions, and life were carried out for years. Families were forced to split up and adopt a tradition not their own. While Native tribes were displaced not only from their Native territories but also from their roots.

With the opening of millions of acres east of the Mississippi River, white settlers moved in great numbers. Consequently, the large masses contributed to the oppression of Native inhabitants as the settlers came into and took over the traditional territories of the tribes. Conflicts between native Indian tribes and white settlers in the West resulted in "Indian Wars" during the 1850s and 1860s. U.S. Army soldiers and settlers engaged in decades-long battles with these ferocious warriors throughout Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, Kansas, Colorado, California, and the Pacific Northwest (Hillstrom and Hillstrom 36).

As a result of the Indian Removal Act, the Native American tribes encountered catastrophic impacts. Because of war, illness, and cultural exploitation, indigenous Nations of the US lost many of their people in the 1800s. Compared to the approximate 2 million Indians in the 1800s, the US native population decreased to 250,000 by 1900 (Hillstrom and Hillstrom 79). The devastating blows suffered by Native American tribes in the 19th century continued into the 20th century with policies that aimed to erase indigenous identities and undermine tribal sovereignty. Therefore, coming into a strange territory led to alienation, traumatizing Native Americans, which resulted in a loss of culture, language, and mental health problems such as substance abuse and suicide.

3.1.2 The Indian Termination Policy and the Indian Relocation Act

With the beginning of the Second World War, a new wave of assimilationist policies was born, giving rise to a Termination Policy. From 1945 to 1960, the federal government removed the tribal status of more than 100 tribes, symbolizing a significant shift in the relationship between indigenous tribes and the U.S government; the U.S government altered its recognition of Native American tribes, seeking to dissolve tribal identities and integrate Native Americans into the broader American population. The American Indian termination policy was officially declared to be a major initiative of the United States government in solving the "Indian problems" and assimilating Native Americans into the American mainstream society by the House Concurrent Resolutions 108 on August 1, 1953 (Nesterak).

The Indian Termination policy was built on the prevailing assimilation ideology, which dominated the US at the time. The federal government believed that Native Americans should change their traditional cultural habits and way of life by imitating those of the white ones to live a better life (Nesterak). As Indian lands were turned over to settlers, the federal government grew more aggressive in banishing tribal societies, yet also supported and tried to

force Native Americans to relocate to urban areas from which they could allegedly do better in employment and education. Under the Indian Termination Policy, boarding schools were used as a tool to forcibly assimilate Native American children into the white, Christian mainstream. This was driven by Pratt's philosophy and approach towards erasing Native American cultural identity, embodied in the phrase "Kill the Indian, Save the Man.", aimed at eradicating their Indigenous languages, cultures, and traditions. The termination era brought hardship to Native American communities; it led to the loss of land, resources, and cultural identity for many tribes. "By 1960, a quarter of Native Americans were urban residents. By 1970, nearly half were" (Nesterak). More than 100 tribes lost their federal status. From 1953 to 1970, the US government tried to end its relationship with many American Indian tribes, leading to the loss of over three million acres of tribal lands ("Bureau of Indian Affairs Records").

The Indian Termination Policy was met with significant resistance from Native American leaders and activists who recognized the devastating impact it would have on their communities. Organizations such as the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) and individual tribal leaders lobbied against the policy, arguing that termination would only further marginalize Native Americans and exacerbate their economic and social challenges. Despite these efforts, the federal government continued to implement termination policies throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

As a part of the termination policy, the Indian Relocation Act, established in 1952 under the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), was a complementary initiative to the Termination Act. "This innovative program had two goals: to help American Indians find jobs and housing in cities, mainly in the western half of the United States; and, more importantly, to convince them to leave their homes, their reservations, and the traditional areas that they had come to

love" (Fixico 108). This policy tried to force Native Americans out of the reservations and into the cities with promises of job opportunities and better living conditions away from their traditional lands, which could have impact their sense of identity and belonging. As a result, Indians in Oklahoma and beyond freely migrated to metropolitan areas in the 1940s and 1950s (Gaede).

The forced relocation policy brought a disruption of the cultural connections that Native Americans had to their ancestral lands. Dislocation into foreign lands also caused a loss of cultural heritage as communities were broken up and distributed among other tribes. Many individuals who moved to urban areas as part of this policy encounter difficulties in adjusting to city life, faced discrimination, and struggled with unemployment. Moreover, "relocation is about assimilation, but it's also very much about racism and who was entitled to what sort of housing and where " (Nesterak) it underscores that the relocation program was influenced by discriminatory practices and unequal treatment, reflecting broader issues of racism and inequality within the context of Native American relocation efforts.

Following the Indian Relocation Policy, Donald L, Fixico in *Removing Peoples: Forced Removal in the Modern World* argues that Native Americans faced significant challenges due to racism and discrimination. Transitioning to urban life was already difficult, as Indians encounter rejection from other Americans due to racial differences. During the 1960s and 1970s, racism was prevalent toward various minority groups, including African Americans, Mexican Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans. The lack of understanding and prevalence of stereotypes led to a rejection of Native Americans by the urban mainstream based on their appearance and skin color (120).

Wilma Mankiller, the Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation in her autobiography *Mankiller: A Chief and Her People* (1993), shares the story of her childhood years in schools following relocation and moving to Daly city, California, she stated that the relocation

brought about difficulties in adjusting to a new environment, where she felt isolated due to her different speech, “unfamiliar name” and Oklahoma accent, leading to ridicule from peers (Mankiller and Wallis 125). Additionally, she faces other challenges such as belonging, identity, and physical changes, feeling overwhelmed and troubled by the relocation, “I hated what was happening. I hated my body. I hated school. I hated the teachers. I hated the other students. Most of all, I hated the city” (Mankiller and Wallis 125).

The shift to live in the big city was a hard thing to deal with for most American Indians who moved from reservations. Due to scarcity of economic opportunities on reservation, many people did not have any other option but to move to the city and start a new life. The first hurdle was cultural differences which were often unfamiliar to mainstream urban people because American Indian culture was different from urban culture. This cultural alienation was a constant struggle for Native Americans (Fixico 119).

The Indian Termination Policy and the Indian Relocation Act led to destruction of tribal communities, loss of cultural identity, and economic hardship for Native Americans. In response, the federal government in the late 1960s shifts its focus to tribal self-determination and sovereignty, authorizing, the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 which granted to tribes more control over their affairs and resources. The legacy of these policies still affected Native American communities today with cultural erasure and social unrest. However, persistence of Native American tribes led to rise of activism from indigenous communities as they struggled to retain their cultural heritage and rights which gave tribes more control over their affairs and resources.

3.2 Alcatraz Island Occupation

According to Troy Johnson in “The Occupation of Alcatraz Island: Roots of American Indian Activism” many history texts show American Indians as marginalized or dead in the 1890s, with many stereotypical presentations presuming they are taken out, sent to

reservations, or absorbed into mainstream America, supporting the notion that America's "Indian problem" has been dealt with (63). But this doesn't solve everything. Indians in America still live under U.S. government policies. In 1953, House Resolution 108 allows some tribes to get federal recognition for reservation lands. It is agreed that improving the economic conditions of the American Native people should take place. On the other hand, the Native Americans struggle with poverty and lack of social unity which contributes to a lack of independence and self-sufficiency. A lot of them have to sell their properties and move to cities, where they acquire an identity as City Indians. These individuals receive no economic support and federal help. This causes protests and the occupation of many federal sites, including Alcatraz Island.

The first takeover of Alcatraz prison is on March 9, 1964, a response of the Bay Area's new "Urban Indians" to the aftermath of the House Resolution 108 policy. The island is actually "taken over" three times by Native Americans. The first one on March 9, 1964, when five Sioux people occupy Alcatraz for four hours, declaring their ownership of the island according to the treaty of Fort Laramie 1868. The occupants make reference to a treaty clause that says in the event the federal authorities own any surplus property. It will be given back to Native Americans. Through the federal court, they aim to get control of the Alcatraz. However, the case is dismissed eventually (Kahle 59-60).

The concept of reclaiming the Island is resurrected in 1969 with the aid of the Bay Area college students who in the wake of a fire that destroys the San Francisco Indian Center which plays an important role in offering jobs, healthcare, legal aid, and social activities to American Indians (Johnson 64). In November 1969, the nation's attention is drawn to a 'takeover' of a former U.S. government penitentiary on Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay, by a group calling themselves the Indians of All Tribes (IOAT), it is planned by Richard

Oakes and a group of Indians from the cultural center. Some of them, predominantly students, draw inspiration and tactics from contemporary Civil Rights demonstrations. They argue that the United States government has failed to fulfill its treaty obligations and that the land rightfully belongs to Indigenous peoples. They ought to reclaim the island and establish it as a center for Native American cultural and educational programs. The group includes members from various tribes and backgrounds, united in their goal of reclaiming Native American lands and rights. The activists demand that the federal government honor the treaty and return the island to Native American control.

The Alcatraz Island Occupation, the notable Native American activist movement that goes on from 1969 to 1971 and is led by Indians of All Tribes (IAT), is one of the most important activist moves ever made by the native people. The basis of this demand is a deep-rooted ancestral disappointment with the U.S. government, which often breaks its promises to the Native American communities. Getting inspiration from the Red Power movement, they reaffirm their ancestors' land that was taken by seizing control of the abandoned Alcatraz prison located in the San Francisco Bay, claiming that "any surplus federal property would revert back to Native American ownership" (Kahle 60). The protest is an initiative of Richard Oakes, LaNada Means, and others. Approximately a hundred Indians occupy Alcatraz Island where the number of Indian students from UCLA is about 80 (Johnson).

The occupiers immediately establish a community and form an elected council on the island. Decisions are made by unanimous consent, and meetings are held daily to discuss the rapidly growing occupation. Meetings are held five, six, or seven times per day (Johnson). In "The Occupation of Alcatraz Island: Roots of American Indian Activism" Troy Johnson argues that the federal government insists that the Indians go away from the island, setting an ineffective barricade around the island (69). Eventually, the authorities agree to the needs of the Indian council to preserve formal negotiations. From the Indians' side, the negotiations are

already determined. They want ownership of the island; establish an Indian college, a cultural center, and a museum. However, the authorities' negotiators refuse a majority of these demands and insist that the occupiers should leave the island (Johnson 69).

In 1969, "the Indian organization begins to fall into disarray" (Johnson 70). After 1970, the Indian students are replaced by non-Indians from the cities and reservations. In addition to the Natives, other non-Indians including the San Francisco hippies and drug culture, who inhabit the same island, are later banned by the Indian occupiers. However, the last nail to the breakdown of the student organization is on January 5th, 1970 when Oakes' stepdaughter, Yvonne passes on. After the death of Yvonne, the Oakes family leaves, with two factions emerging to fight for leadership (Johnson 70).

The federal government does not get involved in the Indian occupation of the island. The FBI, Coast Guard, and GSA are instructed not to interfere. The U.S. government plays a waiting game, hoping for subsiding support for the occupation. The occupation slowly begins to break down due to lack of supplies and leadership, and as a result, the occupiers begin leaving the island. Moreover, the crash of two oil tankers in January 1971 at the entrance of San Francisco Bay is enough to push the federal government into action. On June 10, 1971, armed federal marshals, FBI agents, and Special Forces police swarm those who remain on the island until the occupation is over (Johnson 74).

The occupation does not bring back Alcatraz Island to the Native people but it is a point of turn for the Indigenous peoples' rights struggle. The protesters succeed in getting national focus on the problems the Native Americans face. The occupation of Alcatraz Island leaves a memorable legacy as President Nixon ends the termination policy in 1970, and Bureau of Indian Affairs funding is increased (Johnson). This struggle is listed as the most crucial political achievement of the Native people of the 20th century (Chavis).

3.3 Contemporary Powwow Culture

The Powwow is an event that is mainly built around traditional dances, drumming, singing, and regalia. Moreover, it provides a platform for the gathered Indigenous people to recognize and recount their past, to celebrate with songs and dance the preservation of their cultural heritage, and to honor their ancestors. Recently, Powwow becomes a cultural phenomenon concentrating on Indigenous identity. It is the assertion of a people that they belong to a certain tribe and are proud of their cultural heritage. The Powwow, which is a result of the Indigenous people's struggle with historical trauma, becomes the symbol of unity and reaffirmation of the Indigenous people, in "Indian Education for All: Your Guide to Understanding and Enjoying Pow Wows" Murton McCluskey writes that "The powwow brings the circle of people closer to their family, friends and Native American culture"(22). Powwows involve children and elders dancing in costumes, with competitions for prizes, but they also serve as a celebration and cultural participation.

Since the 17th century, the tribal people of the Great Plains celebrate their culture with different ceremonies and events. Powwow has its roots in the Sun Dance, the vital ceremony for the Plains people (Zotigh). This dance is the means to restore tribesmen's faith and identity, for which the individuals make sacrificial offerings to assure the community's well-being. Nevertheless, this dance was declared as illegal by the U.S. government in 1883, and all Indian dances became outlawed in 1923. This led to many Native Americans stop dancing and performing those ceremonies; thus, many dances are lost completely.

It wasn't until the 1930s and 1940s that the government started to dissolve its control over traditional spiritual beliefs, thus allowing indigenous peoples to openly practice their dances. "The Sun Dance was revived publicly by some nations in the 1960s, by others later, and is now observed annually in Canada and the United States" (Mark). The cultural heritage

of the Native American people in this last century, cast within the revival of Powwows, develops into an open ceremonial dance where people cherish their cultural heritage.

Today's Powwow is not restricted to the cultural aspect; it is also a therapeutic, empowering, and resistance function. As indigenous peoples face increasing pressure from the US government, and seek to assert their rights and autonomy, Powwow serves as a manifestation of Pan-Indianism movement, "Powwows, particularly on the plains, spread in the early twentieth century to celebrate "Indianness". Crossing intertribal lines, Powwows advance pan-Indianism through song, dance, costumes, honoring ceremonies, giveaways, and prayers and speeches in native languages and English" (Cowger).

Urban Native communities in modernized Powwows demonstrate that the existence of the Indigenous people on the tribal land is not extinct, and they continue to fight for their rights. The Powwow is considered one of the most ancient traditions of the Native peoples today, uniting them, and making them search for their history. Contemporary Powwow is a blend of traditional and invented practices, expressing dynamic Indian identity in Canada and the US, it reinforces cultural pride, celebrating ethnic tenacity and fostering a strong sense of cultural pride (Herle 26). However, stories and lived experiences highlighted in Powwow speeches are crucial in dispelling harmful stereotypes about Indigenous communities.

Although indigenous people celebrate Powwow as colorful manifestation of culture and unity, it cannot be denied that the themes of cultural preservation, resistance, and identity explored in the context of Powwows resonate strongly with postcolonial literature. Powwows raises concerns about the effects of colonization that remain ever present as a theme for the post-colonial literary critique and its portrayal of oppression and the continuous search for identity.

4. Postcolonial Literature: A Background

Postcolonial literature appeared at the end of the 20th century, after the long period of colonial rule by European colonialism. This literary genre gives voice to the neglected and suppressed identities of the colonized peoples (Natwarlal 472). It reveals the long-lasting effects and traumas caused by the cultural alienation, economic exploitation, and violence carried out by the colonial regimes. Postcolonial literature aims to reject the narratives, assumptions, and power structures that were created by the colonizers. It denies the European-dominated colonial discourse that systematically dehumanizes and "Others" the non-European societies as inferior, uncivilized, or incapable of governing themselves (Anithalakshmi 615).

Postcolonial literature consists of a wide range of works from around the world in many languages, but some of the most important texts were written by early 20th century in English including Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988), and Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* (1935). Authors like Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, and Chinua Achebe argue that the English language should be adapted in postcolonial literature to better reflect the indigenous experiences, thereby challenging the dominance of colonial discourse (Narayana and Satish 69-70). The major postcolonial theorists such as Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, lay the intellectual foundation for exploring the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, concepts of Orientalism, colonial Othering, and indigenous self-identity. Moreover, prominent postcolonial writers such as Chinua Achebe and Salman Rushdie reveal issues like nationalism, anti-colonial resistance, and the search for cultural authenticity in a diasporic context (Mambrol). As a result, many Postcolonial literary works evolve into the study of identity, belonging, dominant power structures, and the historical intersections of cultures, giving voice to the minority groups that were once brutally silenced (Anithalakshmi 615).

4.1 Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonialism as a theoretical framework and academic field of study gains traction in the latter half of the 20th century. Ashcroft et al assert in *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* that Postcolonialism “deals with the effects of colonization on cultures and societies” (168). It marks a significant shift in scholarly focus toward analyzing the lasting effects of colonialism, imperialism, and the decolonization process on societies around the world. Hamadi Lutfi highlights that Edward Said rises to prominence with the publication of his book *Orientalism* in 1978, which establishes the foundation for the development of postcolonial theory (39). Sawant argues that *Orientalism* brings about a revolution in the realm of postcolonial theory and literature, reshaping the scholarly discourse and understanding of colonial legacies (2). In the late 1980s, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin introduce postcolonialism as a theory in their influential book *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (1989) shaping the field of postcolonial Studies paving the way for researchers from the subsequent generations to get involved in the investigation and continue examining the lasting effects of colonialism.

This critical framework allows scholars to assess the colonial legacy, the construction of 'otherness,' and the continuing struggles of decolonization. Also, undermining and disrupting hegemonic narratives that have been used to oppress minority groups. Generally, this theory is a useful tool for deciphering the mechanism of the colonial-era and the post-colonial societies, since it brings out the relationship between the colonized and the system of power. Postcolonial theory brings a critical perspective on the relations of race, class, and gender issues in postcolonial society. It focuses on how people and groups battle against colonialism in the way it shapes their identity. It conducts close readings of writings on identity, bringing various ways people and communities cope with the trauma of their subjectivity touched by the idea of colonial legacy.

4.2 Bhabha Postcolonial Concepts

Homi Bhabha, is a literary critic and one of the most famous postcolonial theorists, is known for his conceptualization of the postcolonial theory. Born in the city of Mumbai, India in 1949. Bhabha got his education in India and the United Kingdom and obtained his doctoral degree at the University of Oxford in 1965. He is Anne F. Rothenberg Professor of the Humanities at Harvard University, where he also holds the position of the Mahindra Humanities Center Director.

Homi Bhabha's literary works related to postcolonial theory formed his own views of identity, culture, and power dynamics. He has brought forth numerous influential concepts such as hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence, and the Third Space. In his first book *Nation and Narration* (1990), Bhabha critiques essentialist views of nationality, arguing that Third World nations are constructed narratives resulting from the hybrid interactions of diverse cultural groups, challenging fixed traditions that maintain their subordinate position (Graves). His prominent theories are expounded in his second book *The Location of Culture* (1994) which is a collection of essays in which he examines the strategies and discourses shaped by colonialism on postcolonial societies, reflecting on the complexities of cultural identity and societal transformation in the postcolonial context.

Homi Bhabha's significant contributions to postcolonial theory are evident through his complex theoretical framework that incorporates Lacanian psychoanalysis, postmodern concepts of mimicry and performance, and Derridian deconstruction (Graves). Bhabha's influential writings have left an impact on the field of postcolonial theory and cultural studies as an influential theorist whose ideas in postcolonial studies remain relevant today (Fay and Haydon 6). These ideas they will be further discussed in the following section since they are important to our analysis.

4.2.1 Ambivalence

The term ambivalence, originating from psychoanalysis, is used to describe the continuous change from wanting one thing and wanting its opposite at the same time, and the parallel attraction and repulsion towards an object, person, or action (Young 153). The concept was adapted into colonial discourse theory by Homi K Bhabha In *The Location of Culture* describing the ambivalent relationship between the colonizers and colonized. Bhabha defines ambivalence in postcolonial discourse in terms of “partial” presence and “double articulation,” which means “almost the same, but not quite” (123) indicating a sense of incompleteness, contradictions, and ambiguity inherent in colonial relationships.

Ashcroft et al in *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* continue paraphrasing Bhabha’s definition that ambivalence designates “the complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterizes the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized (10). Ashcroft et al challenge the idea of viewing colonized individuals as either entirely ‘complicit’ or entirely ‘resistant’, suggesting that they can exhibit both complicity and resistance in a dynamic and shifting manner within themselves as colonial subjects (10).

Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* argues that ambivalence is a result of mimicry (122). When the colonized imitates the colonizer they don’t copy exactly but introduce some differences. This difference creates a feeling of uncertainty and complexity in the power dynamics between them, thus making clear distinctions and adding ambiguity to their relationship. Thus, the coexistence of these conflicting emotions results in a feeling of in-betweenness, where the individuals do not completely belong to either cultures.

4.2.2 Unhomeliness

In *The Location of Culture* Bhabha borrows Sigmund Freud’s concepts of ‘heimlich’ and ‘unheimlich’ which he translates as ‘homely’ and ‘unhomely’ applying it in postcolonial

context. Bhabha argues that unhomely “captures something of the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world in an unhallowed place. To be unhomed is not to be homeless, nor can the "unhomely" be easily accommodated in that familiar division of social life into private and the public spheres” (13) "unhomed" goes beyond mere homelessness; it signifies a deeper sense of displacement. In that discomfoting displacement Bhabha says that “the borders between home and world become confused; and uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting” (13) challenging traditional notions of identity and spatial boundaries.

Furthermore, Bhabha explores the concept of unhomeliness within the context of colonialism and cultural identity. He argues that the experience of unhomeliness is not only a personal struggle but also a collective one and there is no culture that is pure and defined completely and separated from the other cultures without being mixed by the interaction and influence of those other cultures, leading to a state of unhomeliness where individuals feel both familiar and strange in their own cultural context (Akçeşme 16).

The literary theorist Lois Tyson in her book *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide* refers to the concept discussed by Bhabha ‘Unhomeliness’ as a state of cultural displacement and psychological limbo, where individuals feel caught between cultures and struggle with a sense of not belonging to either. Tyson states that “Being ‘unhomed’ is not the same as being homeless. To be unhomed is to feel not at home even in your own home because you are not at home in yourself: your cultural identity crisis has made you a psychological refugee, so to speak” (421). According to Tyson, unhomeliness is not limited to physical displacement, lack, exile from, or a departure from home. Instead, the concept of unhomeliness can be regarded as psychological, mental, and sentimental detachment from home. It is the strangeness and feeling unfamiliar with the familiar.

Conclusion

Native American literature is a rich body of works that captures the experiences of indigenous people with their collective identities and struggles in North America. It incorporates oral traditions, poetry, fiction, and nonfiction, narrating issues like intergenerational trauma, identity colonization, and resistance. One of the most outstanding Native American writers of the second half of the 20th century is Tommy Orange, a member of the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes, who gained prominence with his first novel *There There*, which revolves around the lives of urban natives in Oakland, California. In his writings, Orange captures the struggle of contemporary urban Native Americans, navigating their identity in metropolitan cities. The next chapter is an analytical section that aims to study Tommy Orange's novel *There There*. It analyses the struggle of urban Native Americans facing the complexities of their cultural identity and the search for connection in American mainstream society, drawing on Bhabha's postcolonial concepts of ambivalence and unhomeliness.

**Chapter Two: The Complexities of Cultural Identity for
Urban Native Americans in *There There***

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The Complexities of Cultural Identity for Urban Native Americans in *There There*

Introduction

Drawing upon the postcolonial theory, this chapter delves into analyzing the chosen characters from the novel: Tony, Jacquie, Blue, Edwin, Calvin, and Thomas. We selected those characters for analysis because they offer diverse perspectives on urban Native Americans allowing us to explore cultural identity issues in the novel. We divide this chapter into two sections; in the first section, we provide a framework for the concept of cultural identity that sets the stage for the exploration of how identity is portrayed and experienced by urban Native Americans in the context of the novel. Our analysis in the second section expands upon Homi Bhabha's concepts of ambivalence and unhomeliness. These theoretical ideas are related to the complexities of cultural identity, which are experienced by the characters as well. We intend to go beyond their identity struggles, and how they are coping with the issues of belonging, heritage, and displacement in the city depicted in *There There*.

1. Cultural Identity

The concept of cultural identity has been explored by various scholars; therefore, it is difficult to trace the exact origin of the concept. Cultural identity is the feeling of connection or belonging to a specific group defined by cultural factors like nationality, ethnicity, race, gender, and religion. This concept is often explored in multicultural societies and those shaped by modern Western colonial legacies. The sociologist Stuart Hall introduced the concept of cultural identity in his essay "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" (1990). According to Hall, the sense of cultural identity "is not a fixed essence at all, lying unchanged outside history and culture" (236). It is constantly molded and shaped by social and historical factors. Besides, identity formation is diversified, intricate, as well as fraught with crises as a result of

colonial history, power relations, and newer cultural and social encounters (Guermit, et al 234)

Hall claimed that cultural identity is constructed through various factors such as race, gender, and displacements as more of a discourse than a substantive element, causing feelings of alienation from familiar customs that are changed in new environments (226). The consequence of these experiences is a split identity which stimulates the perception of the world in bipolar terms (Hall 228). In literature, authors frequently present the difficulties of cultural identity through characters that are suffering from problems of assimilation, alienation, as well as cultural conflict. For instance, Native writers try to illuminate the way in which the adopted cultural identity can be the source of both strength and resilience, as well as a source of tension and division.

Tommy Orange, in *There There*, looks into the complicated question of the cultural identity of Native Americans and the difficult situation they have in reconciling their roots; and finding a balance between their cultural heritage and urban environment. He depicts various characters through which he wants to show how the identity is created by both personal experiences and the common history of the community. The author unveils the struggles of Native Americans in the urbanized city, as they have to deal with postcolonial issues of ambivalence and unhomeliness in a world that usually ignores or disregards their experience.

2. The Complexities of Cultural Identity in *There There*

2.1 Ambivalence

Homi Bhabha introduced ambivalence into colonial discourse theory that focuses on analyzing the ways in which colonial powers construct and maintain their power to justify and perpetuate colonial domination. Bhabha believed that the term ‘ambivalence’ describes the

complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterizes the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized (127). In his *The Location of Culture*, he claims that this association is highlighted by the presence of what he refers to as “partial” and “double vision”, which occurs when each entity sees the others through a lens that is distorted and revealing, at the same time, creating a combination of curiosity and unease, wanting and dislike, attraction and repulsion. Exposure to a different culture can also create ambivalence regarding one’s own cultural identity, "advocating neither the preservation of cultural distinctiveness nor assimilation, but rather ambivalence and flexibility" (Chandramani and Reddy 81). Just as the colonizer and the colonized navigate a complex interplay of attraction and repulsion, individuals dealing with cultural diversity may confront internal struggles and uncertainties about their sense of self and belonging.

Tommy Orange presents the issue of the ambivalence of colonial discourse through characters such as Tony, Blue, and Calvin. These characters confront the complexities of Native Americans living in urban areas; they have to deal with the conflicting dualism of their cultural identity. They are exposed to an American society which leaves them feeling alienated from their own heritage. However, as much as they struggle to overcome or conceal racism and otherness, they still face these difficulties, which lead to ambiguous feelings about their indigeneity. They undergo ambivalent feelings resulting in uncertainty and contradiction of love and hate toward their culture. At the same time, they are lost in the limbo of desire and repulsion.

A. Tony Loneman

Bhabha notes in *The Location of Culture* that ambivalence, in the context of postcolonial narratives and political diaspora, refers to a state of uncertainty, contradiction, and conflicting emotions or attitudes towards a particular issue (7). In the context of Bhabha's definition of ambivalence, Tony Loneman's experiences in *There There* exemplify this state

of uncertainty, contradiction, conflicting emotions, and personal struggles. Tony, who is part of the urban Native American community in Oakland, is portrayed as an outcast mainly because of his birth defect (Fetal Alcohol Syndrome) which he himself refers to as “the Drome” (16).

Tony's relationship with 'the Drome' is depicted as conceptually ambivalent (Bushman and Toscano 5). He describes the concept of 'the Drome' as both his “power and curse” (16) and “the way history lands on a face” (16). It is a source of power because it gives him a sense of uniqueness that sets him apart from the others, “what gives me my soul” (18); on the other hand, it is a curse because it embodies the historical trauma related to his mother’s struggles with alcohol abuse when she was pregnant, and which led to Tony being born with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. 'the Drome' is Tony’s biggest insecurity, serving as a weight of history on his identity and emphasizing the huge gap between his personal identity and his Cheyenne descent (Xavier 1). In short, Tony Loneman struggles with his birth defect; 'the Drome' that reflects conflicting emotions and attitudes, illustrating the uncertainty and contradictory feelings. His experiences highlight the intersection of disability with Indigeneity (Bushman and Toscano 5).

Bhabha asserts that the term ‘ambivalence’ describes the complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterizes the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized (127). Thus, 'the Drome' could represent the image of white colonizers or oppressors in the face of Tony, appearing as a ‘super villain’ with a mask “I found it there..staring back at me like a villain” (Orange 16). Tony sees this mask as a threatening presence of colonizers who have historically oppressed and subjugated indigenous peoples, as Bushman and Toscano explain this presence could be represented in Indian’s bodyminds. Patrick Wolfe argues that “settler colonizers come to stay: invasion is a structure not an event” (388) reflecting the enduring impacts of colonialism on both land and bodies of indigenous people.

Tony feels a disconnection between his physical being and his mental state, suggesting that external influences related to colonization are affecting his sense of control over his body and identity. As a Native American boy growing up in an American metropolitan city, Tony shows his attraction to white American culture by referring to his connection with the hip-hop artist to whom he listens, MF Doom, as the best example for him. MF Doom is seen as an ideal public figure for Tony, who looks like him in wearing a 'mask' (Lindenman 5). Tony sees this MF Doom character as a reflection of himself since he looks too strange or odd strictly due to his genetic facial predisposition. On the other hand, Tony shows his feeling of repulsion toward white American identity when he wears regalia for the first time. He forgets about his facial deformity and feels safe and connected to his roots: "The Drome. I didn't see it there. I saw an Indian. I saw a dancer" (18). Thus, the only time Tony feels secure is when he has donned his traditional attire. It implies that his traditional attire provides him with a sense of security and comfort, possibly because it connects him strongly to his cultural identity or heritage.

Tony's ambivalence is characterized by his simultaneous feelings of attraction and repulsion toward different cultural identities and influences. He is attracted to white American culture which illustrates his liking of hip-hop artist MF Doom, but at the same time, he feels a sense of repulsion towards white American racial identity. When he puts on traditional clothing, Tony senses the calmness and the bond with his Indian heritage, if only for a short time, overcoming the prejudice from those who look at his facial deformity. This ambivalence reflects Tony's complex navigation of cultural influences and his internal struggle between seeking acceptance within mainstream culture and embracing his Indigenous heritage for a sense of authenticity and belonging.

Tony also captures the paradoxical feelings of attraction and repulsion towards his own indigenous culture. According to Windari and Anwar "Ambivalence is the idea of seeing

culture as consisting of opposing perceptions and dimensions” (342) this underscores the presence of opposing elements within cultural contexts. It is evident in Tony’s inner turmoil and conflicting emotions as he confronts with his cultural identity as a Native American living in an urban space. Tony's question, "What are we? Grandma, what are we?" reflects his deep introspection about his identity (288). His feelings of desiring and hating the same thing simultaneously are shown throughout the narrative. The desire towards his heritage is presented in his experience to learn more about himself and his Native American culture through Maxine's stories, the Cheyenne woman who raised Tony as his mom went to jail. She even makes him read her Indian stories from her favorite author Louise Erdrich, as he explores different aspects of his own identity and culture. “Maxine makes me read her Indian stuff that I don’t always get. I like it, though, because when I do get it, I get it way down at that place where it hurts but feels better because you feel it, something you couldn’t feel before reading it, that makes you feel less alone, and like it’s not gonna hurt as much anymore” (Orange 20).

When Tony reads Indian stories to Maxine, he describes a very strong personal attachment. This tie reaches a part of him that is both painful and reassuring, making him less lonely and more linked to his historical roots. Although Tony feels a desire for his culture, he shows contradictions and hate within him about his identity. He betrayed his own community by participating in stealing the prize in the Powwow. As an urban Native American, he is disconnected from powwows. This shows a change in his relationship with his indigenous identity, which can be considered as a feeling of ambivalence. As Octavio asks Tony for his views on why people go to Powwows, his inceptive response to Tony is 'Money'. Thereby, it appears that the main purpose of his participation is to get money rather than to maintain a deep connection with his roots and culture.

Bhabha introduces the concept of ambivalence into the postcolonial theory, which he considers essential in the colonial discourses of stereotyping, claiming that stereotypes operate out of ambivalence. He states:

For it is the force of ambivalence that gives the colonial stereotype its currency: ensures its repeatability in changing historical and discursive conjunctures; informs its strategies of individuation and marginalisation; produces that effect of probabilistic truth and predictability which, for the stereotype, must always be in excess of what can be empirically proved or logically construed. Yet, the function of ambivalence as one of the most significant discursive and psychical strategies of discriminatory power – whether racist or sexist, peripheral or metropolitan – remains to be charted (Bhabha 95).

In his *The Location of Culture* which embodies discussions about Otherness, Bhabha argues that the colonial discourse is marked by simultaneous recognition and disavowal of racial, cultural, and historical differences, which occur when the colonizers recognize certain attributes of the colonized and at the same time disavow or ignore it (105). One stereotyping holds mixed feelings about a person or group having both positive and negative views about them.

In *There There*, Tommy Orange presents Tony as an urban Native American boy from Oakland. He is portrayed as an outcast mainly because of his birth defect, which he himself refers to as 'the Drome', Tony is immediately dismissed or ignored, making him an outsider or 'other' (Lindenman 3). His meeting with a white woman on the train can also be considered an example of stereotypical perception based on ambivalence and racism, where people are recognized for their appearance but at the same time denied their full humanity and

individuality. This tension between both recognition and disavowal perpetuates biases and dehumanizes individuals.

While Tony is on a train dressed in Indian regalia going to the big Oakland Powwow, a woman asks him for directions to the airport, and she says: “So you're...a Native American?” (235) Tony has discerned that her first query for directions is a ruse: “She would have already looked it up on her phone numerous times to be sure” (Orange 235) what she really wants is “to see if the Indian speaks” (235). The lady shows her disavowal toward Tony by asking him if he is “a” Native American, which can be considered as a kind of racism as she did not consider that he is simply an American like any other human being. The woman does not question if Tony is Native American, but if he is "a" Native American. The fact that she is referred to as "a" represents the degree of her exoticism, objectification, and the annihilation of individual differences (Bushman and Toscano 7). This language choice also depicts that the white woman does not accept Tony as an integrated member of her society but rather as an ‘other’, from a different culture that is unfamiliar to her.

The recognition of Tony as Native American by the white woman may be seen in her clear reference to his cultural identity through her particular question on whether Tony is 'a Native American'. She is manifesting that she is well-informed and acknowledges his Native American heritage, especially since Tony stepped on the train with traditional Indian regalia, which surely she noticed. This kind of superficial recognition of the white woman about Tony's appearance in wearing traditional regalia is rooted in her existing stereotypes and biases which are the sources of the dehumanization and marginalization of Native Americans. Moreover, reinforcing negative attitudes and failing to acknowledge the Native American culture can lead to discrimination and exclusion. According to Bhabha, the colonial discourse is a racial system: “The objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a

population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction” (101).

The ambivalence displayed by the white woman in Tony's narrative shows the problematic effect of stereotypes; she refutes his identity and contributes to biases. Such a dehumanizing act which is dominant in the colonial discourses emphasizes the power dynamics, as individuals are suppressed to static representations that do not give them agency and individuality. Stereotypes are both ambiguous and factor humiliation and indifference, the struggle between the recognition and refusal in Tony's narrative showcases the inconsistent nature of stereotypes where people are appreciated and rejected relying on presumptions.

The meeting between Tony, a Native American boy, and a white woman on the train highlights Bhabha's idea of ambivalence. Even though the woman acknowledges Tony's Native American background, her mixed feelings are clear as she treats him as exotic and different, revealing racism and reinforcing stereotypes. This shows how ambivalence impacts the biases in colonial interactions.

B. Blue

According to Bhabha ambivalence involves a deliberate splitting or division that blurs the lines between conflicting ideas or positions, leading to an uncertainty or inability to decisively choose between them:

The colonial signifier - neither one nor other - is, however, an act of ambivalent signification, literally splitting the difference between the binary oppositions or polarities through which we think cultural difference. It is in the enunciatory act of splitting that the colonial signifier creates its strategies of

differentiation that produce an undecidability between contraries or oppositions (181-183).

The colonial signifier creates a sense of confusion by splitting the difference between two opposite ideas (like good and bad) or cultural differences. This confusion makes it hard to choose between the two and blurs the lines between them.

Blue is Jacquie Red Feather's first daughter. She is a Native American woman who was adopted by a rich white family, and who grew up in an elite suburb of Oakland. Blue's upbringing in a white community has become a challenge in shaping her thinking about her true self and cultural identity in America. Blue can be an example of a colonial subject experiencing ambivalence in her cultural identity. Loomba argues in *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (1998) that the division between 'colonizers' and 'colonized' or among races is challenged by the existence of cultural and racial diversity within each category as well as "cross-overs" (91). Blue is Native American and she was born and grew up in an urban area; therefore, she experienced a contradiction and split between the white culture and Native culture, as well as between racial prejudices and reality. Consequently, Blue feels always ambivalent about her life and her choices. Although she is an Indian with brown skin, she refuses to admit it and asserts that she is white.

In urban American settings, Native Americans were always regarded as an 'Other', facing stereotypes that stem from historical and colonial attitudes, leading to ambivalence and marginalization. As Bhabha claims "ambivalence that gives the colonial stereotype its currency: ensures its repeatability in changing historical and discursive conjunctures; informs its strategies of individuation and marginalization" (59). Blue, who has Native American blood but lives in Oakland, finds it hard to be described as the 'Other' in urban cities. The fact of being a Native American in a multi-ethnic area in America exposes Blue to diverse experiences. Her obstacles are shaped by the prejudice and stereotypes associated with living

in a society of ignorant people who are blinded by deep-rooted historical prejudices. Such stereotypes nurture within her the feeling of rejection and alienation from her community. Blue has always known that she wasn't white since she has brown skin; she was always the subject of racial insults in school. She narrates, "I brought home outdated racist insults from school like it was the 1950s. All Mexican slurs, of course, since people where I grew up don't know Natives still exist" (198). Even though she physically has the features of a person with dark hair and brown skin, Blue embodies a feeling of being white, and this shows the intricacy of racial identity formation and what negative colonial influences can bring as it is shown in this passage:

I knew I wasn't white. But not all the way. Because while my hair is dark and my skin is brown, when I look in the mirror I see myself from the inside out. And inside I feel as white as the long white pill-shaped throw pillow my mom always made me keep on my bed even though I never used it (Orange 197-198).

Thus, the duality between native and adopted culture evokes an ambivalent feeling about her own identity which is shaped by colonial stereotypes and historical prejudices. She could not identify herself as fully white nor as Native American, leading to an uncertainty or inability to decisively choose between them.

Katzenstein and Keohane in *Anti-Americanisms in World Politics* argue that Individuals have ambivalent feelings towards the United States involving "strong elements of both attraction and repulsion" (16). They may be attracted to certain features of American culture, society, or values, but on the one hand, repulsed by others which they find negative or inappropriate. Blue's ambivalence, as an American Indian living in Oakland, is represented by attraction and repulsion towards her identity and American society. Blue's attraction is evident from the way she sees herself, or how much she is drawn to the colonizer.

Although Blue is a Native American and has an Indian appearance with dark hair and brown skin she struggles with racism and feels white on the inside. This internal conflict comes out clearly and describes her whiteness, indicating a sense of identification with white culture despite her outward appearance as a person of Native American descent. This attraction toward colonizer white culture is rooted in colonial influences, upbringing by a white family, and societal stereotypes that shape Blue's sense of self and identity. Although Blue admits that she is white and does not feel that she is Indian, she shows her repulsion from white American society and begins searching for her original Indian identity, and for belonging. She begins to embrace her Cheyenne traditions; she gets a job in Oakland at the Indian Center, saying, "I got a job in Oakland at the Indian Center, and that helped me to feel more like I belonged somewhere" (198) a place where she can embrace her heritage and feel accepted, with an inner sense of belonging and identity.

C. Calvin Johnson

Calvin is another character in *There There* who embodies the issue of ambivalence. Bhabha argues that ambivalence creates a space filled with uncertainty and indeterminacy where the boundaries between cultures are constantly being negotiated and contested. According to Bhabha the encounter between the colonizer and the colonized creates a "third space" that is characterized by ambivalence (Krishna 95). This "third space" that Bhabha describes is filled with doubts, contradictions, and ambivalences inherent in colonial encounters. Calvin embodies ambivalence as a state of uncertainty, contradiction, and conflicting emotions or attitudes towards his Native American identity and moral decisions characterized by incompleteness and instability.

Calvin is a Native American man engaged with the Powwows committee at the Indian Center. He has no idea about his native heritage because he grew up without a father, "My dad never talked about being Native and shit to the point that we don't even know what tribe

we are on his side” (Orange 148). Calvin feels disillusioned about what it means to be Native when he cannot fully relate to or understand his own tribal background, symbolizing internal conflict and confusion about his identity. He feels more connected to Oakland, a place where he grew up and where he spent most of his life. Besides, he is more aligned with white American culture rather than identifying strongly as a Native American. He also notes that he rarely identifies as Native American at all “I feel bad sometimes even saying I’m Native. Mostly I just feel like I’m from Oakland” (Orange 148). Calvin's experiencing conflicting emotions and uncertainty about his culture makes him more of a white American than a Native American. His in-betweenness makes him present a danger to his native community as he no longer aligns himself with or feels a sense of belonging to them.

As a result of his indeterminacy towards his Native identity and heritage, he reveals very useful information about the Powwow arrangement and how the money is being kept to Octavio in order to steal The Big Oakland Powwow. After his brother Charles, who was involved with drug dealers (Octavio and his men), Calvin wanted to help Charles, he told them that the Powwow cash prizes would amount to \$50,000. He has made sure that the prize money is not about cash but in gift cards locked in a safe. Even though Calvin is engaged with the Powwows committee at the Indian center where his roots lie in the Native American community, he has difficulty accepting who he is because of his conflicting feelings, or not having any feelings at all when claiming his own cultural background.

His participation in criminal acts and arranging a theft during the Oakland Coliseum Powwow worsens his internal conflict since it shows his ignorance about the cultural importance of the occasion and his willingness to betray his community for financial gain. Calvin’s opposition depicts the battle within him as a Native man and his behavioral patterns towards himself. However, he could not relate to his Native roots because of the lack of

connection to his own cultural background. Those reasons might affect him in such a manner which could be that he no longer feels Indian enough despite being one.

As Bhabha suggests in *The Location of Culture* ambivalence generates an environment characterized by uncertainty and ambiguity, where the borders separating cultures are continuously under negotiation and dispute. Calvin betrays his community in order to save his brother, and even himself. His ambivalence covers the moral choices and duty for his actions. “ambivalence refers to a human inner conflict between opposing reactions, beliefs or feelings, as well as the experience of having such an attitude toward objects, places, and people that contain both positively and negatively valenced components” (Cho 2). The quote explains that ambivalence is feeling conflicted inside due to having opposing reactions or mixed feelings about something or someone. In this case, Calvin’s lack of connection with his own identity may lead to such acts as betraying the Powwow and indeed deceiving the entire community. This implies that due to the confusion and indecisiveness, the person might engage in contrary behavioral actions that are not acceptable in the community, thus becoming a betrayer and a deceiver. Calvin’s actions embody the issue of ethnic self-identification and uncertainty when confronted with ambiguities about one’s roots. The internal fight between what is right and wrong, love and hate, and loyalty versus self-interest is a reflection of the duality that exists in the process of resolving the dilemmas in a postcolonial environment.

To conclude, all these characters Tony, Blue, and Calvin are facing ambivalence towards their ethnicities. First, Tony perceives his birth defect as an advantage and disadvantage. Secondly, Blue struggles with being Native and growing up in a predominantly white household. Finally, Calvin lives with an identity crisis because of his half-blood gene and experiences treachery within him.

2.2 Unhomeliness

According to Bhabha, unhomeliness is a state of not being at home, perceived as a result of simultaneously being forced to reside in two cultures (13). So, the colonized people go through a lot of psychological difficulties, they remain unable to entirely put faith in cultural beliefs and practices, while at the same time they struggle to completely blend with the colonizer way of life. Moreover, unhomeliness can be the main cause of a merged or even a lost identity, Zohdi argues that “home plays a crucial function in stability of One’s identity” (147). Home provides a sense of belonging and familiarity and it is essential in maintaining the stability of one's identity.

Bhabha explores the concept of unhomeliness within the context of colonialism and cultural identity. In his *The Location of Culture* he says “to be unhomed is not to be homeless, nor can unhomely be easily accommodated in that familiar division of social life into private and published spheres” (13). Bhabha distinguishes "unhomeliness" from "homelessness" in this sense, since the former refers to the psychological state of being displaced culturally rather than the physical condition of not having a home. He argues that the experience of unhomeliness is not only a personal struggle but also a collective one and there is no culture which is pure and defined, completely separated from the other cultures without being mixed by the interaction and influence of those other cultures. The combination of different cultures can be a very turbulent process, as for those who are involved; it may lead to confusion and discomfort, since they are coping with this new, hybridized state of their cultural identity and home “unhomlin is inherent in that rite of extra territorial and cross cultural initiation” (13).

The concept of unhomeliness is pervasive throughout the novel *There There* as it explores the lives of Native Americans living in cities as they are away from their usual homelands and cultures. This feeling arises from the sense of dislocation, disconnection, and longing for home which many characters have and experience. Orange shows a wider range

of issues that deals with identity, cultural loss and the devastating effect of historical traumatized indigenous communities. Alongside this, the author describes the hardship of the travelers, who are trying to find the place to belong to. In fact, displacement is a very serious issue faced by urban Native Americans as they experience colonization, removal, and political suppression. This has reduced several Native Americans' desire to stick to their reservations as their homes while others become homeless. Tommy Orange explores the issue of 'unhomeliness' through characters such as Blue, Jacquie, Thomas Frank, and Edwin by depicting their disconnection, alienation and a lack of belonging in his novel.

A. Blue

Unhomeliness, as explained previously, is a term that refers to the condition of alienation, detachment, and discomfort which results among individuals or groups who are living between the two cultures or belong to one of them in a hybrid state (Bhabha 13). This term brings out the experience of not being entirely at home or limited in having an identity, which means a sense of not belonging to a certain community and a loss of identity. In *There There*, unhomeliness is represented in Blue who is left with feelings of isolation and strangeness as she deals with being disconnected, rootless and displaced from their cultural roots and community. The storyline is centered on how historical trauma, injustices, and individual struggles affect cultural identity into the matter of not belonging to oneself or not being at home with the world.

Since Blue was adopted as a child and left by her mother, that makes her exposed to a different culture and feels unhomey. This is actually revealed by her inability to be at home. Although she knew all about her Cheyenne heritage, she never seemed to actually belonging to it, and this made her constantly feel as if she was part of her native community but never truly being native. She never truly felt connected to her roots, which brought an intense homeless feeling within her. Knowing about her birth mother is also a surprise on her

eighteenth birthday which leads to a more complex understanding of her own identity. However; she notes that though she is not white, she also cannot entirely be a Native American; she says “I kept feeling white” (198). Her growing up as an outsider in a white and wealthy family creates a double dilemma for Blue making her not feel at home. The disparity between her adoptive family's background and her Cheyenne heritage are two very different things that creates an inadequacy and a fake feeling inside her as she tries to solve this confusing situation of her identity.

Furthermore, despite all her efforts in revealing who she is and finding that connection through her Indian roots she doesn't know, Blue still lives through both a deep sense of alienation and disconnection. Acquiring a position at the Indian Center in Oakland is consciously done by Blue because it contrasts with the mainstream culture and connects her with Cheyenne culture. By immersing herself in a space that celebrates and preserves Indian culture, Blue seeks to find a sense of belonging and connection to her roots as she narrates “I got a job in Oakland at the Indian Center and that helped me to feel more like I belonged somewhere” (198). According to Bhabha, the sense of dislocation, which a person is subjected to in the ‘unhomely’ state, may also offer a chance to reconsider one’s identity (26-27).

The environment of the Indian Center helps Blue feel the comfort of being surrounded in familiarity rather than in the environment where she is recognized by others, seeing her as different. It makes it possible for her to reflect on her Indian heritage, which could help her to rediscover one's identity and self-confidence that could be once lost inside the margins of others' minds. Subsequently, after her husband, Paul, attacked her, Blue decided to apply for a job in Oakland and got the position of event coordinator for the Powwow. Blue makes efforts to understand and integrate her Native American heritage, more than before. Through this process, which is the rediscovery of her ethnic origin, Blue is able to become more confident,

it provides a way whereby she can heal herself as well as find her real sense of belonging:

Blue's experience shows the fundamental role that cultural heritage plays in finding one's identity, connection, and a place in the world through embracing it. However, the unhomeliness is a long-term shadow that continues to haunt her, she is submerging herself in Native American culture and her own work at the Indian Center is possibly the beginning of putting an end to the absence of her true self and attaining authenticity as Orange narrates:

It feels good to be back in Oakland. All the way back. She's been back a year. On a regular paycheck now, in her own studio apartment, with her own car again for the first time in five years. Blue tilts the rearview down and looks at herself. She sees a version of herself she thought was long gone, someone she'd left behind, ditched for her real Indian life on the rez. Crystal. From Oakland. She's not gone. She's somewhere behind Blue's eyes in the rearview (236).

Following five years of being away, in Oakland, Blue found a new affair she desired but confronted such challenges as being unhomey. As she tilts a rearview mirror, she meets another version of herself named Crystal (the name her white adoptive parents gave her). The character of Crystal has been portrayed as someone who disassociates herself from her present self. In this regard "Home is linked to a positive version of the past" (Parvaneh and Rostami 157) it means life before oppression. This inner conflict goes beyond the feelings of being unhomed as she is navigating the complexities of her past, present, and future selves.

Although Blue wrestles with her true identity by undertaking a journey to Oklahoma to learn more about her background, she ends up with a feeling of despair and detachment. Even the absence of explicit answers adds more to how she feels as an outsider. "She'd gone all that way to Oklahoma to find out where she came from and all she'd gotten for it was a color for a name. No one had heard of any Red Feather family" (Orange 237) this caused

more confusion in Blue's mind about her birth mother's tribe and the unhomey feelings she was experiencing. The lack of bond with her ancestral line makes Blue confront a deep feeling of homelessness, as she wonders about her own background and heritage.

Blue finds comfort and familiarity in Edwin as both of them do not have knowledge about their fathers. That's exactly what these two characters have in common in the feeling of the loss of the father. It is this shared experience of absence that creates a feeling of familiarity in a way that can become some sort of brotherhood. In addition, this can be quite evident with Blue taking Edwin as a relative even though he is not her family. This is a reflection that she is deeply desirous of a sense of belonging and connection in an environment where her own roots and identity are not clear as Orange narrates, "She liked Edwin. She likes him, There's something about him that feels like family" (189).

The nostalgia for a home environment that reflects Blue's personal life experience is the perpetual push to find identity in someone who comes from the same background and the desire to find the sense of belonging in this person. Blue's confusion and her attempts to comprehend her identity and the complexity of her cultural background, is described as the fragmentation or displacement, put her into the conflict between two cultures. According to Bhabha, being unhomed is a deeper sense of not belonging or being disconnected from a familiar sense of home (13). Blue finally gets to know her father Harvey and her mother Jacquie through Edwin. "Blue's face goes white. She reaches out her hand and goes for a smile, but it looks more like she's trying not to throw up" (260).

Blue's unexpected coincidental meeting with her parents upsets her notion of identity, bringing about the feelings of fragmentation and uneasiness. This experience makes her doubt her belief in family and belonging. Blue is afraid to know about her family and culture, The result is a strong feeling of unhomeyness while she is trying to explore the intricacies of her past and present identities and to face her unresolved feelings that makes her more alienated

from herself.

By applying the concept of unhomeliness by Bhabha, we can claim that even though Blue makes constant attempts to reconnect with her Native identity and give back to her community, she still feels alienated and displaced both from her cultural background and from the rest of the world.

B. Thomas Frank

Bhabha explains in *The World and The Home* that unhomely means something that doesn't fit in a specific culture or a group. Such incidents may occur when people from different cultures or backgrounds meet each other and they are not accepted or understood (142). This applies to Thomas, who goes through an inner conflict, which he deals with by creating a false self to hide his identity and cultural background and by always feeling alienated or not belonging as an individual and in the environment he lives. The cultural and religious conflicts between his parents' two different belief systems based on white evangelical Christianity of his mother's heritage and his father being Native American creates a distress for Thomas as he grows up that, in turn, shapes his identity. In addition, the conflict is deepened by his father's alcoholism, which eventually leads to Thomas's own addiction and affects his coping mechanisms. Just like what Orange claims "Your parents maybe burned a too-deep, too-wide God hole through you. The hole was unfillable" (217).

Thomas hated his look as a part Native and a part white and recognized that he was from a bloodline of the abused and the abusers, "You're from a people who took and took and took and took. And from people taken. You were both and neither" (216). Thomas represented Bhabha's concept of 'in betweenness' which means he literally oscillates between his American and Native American identity. As the story unfolds, Thomas is seen limping in the way his father did, and just like his father because he lost his identity which he sees through his father. Thomas becomes an alcoholic. he usually drinks because he wants to be in

what he calls 'the State', "Along the way you figured out there was a certain amount of alcohol you could drink that could the next day produce a certain state of mind, which you over time began to refer to privately as the state"(174). This is the term he uses to describe the mental state he falls into when he is just drunk enough. When Tom is not in the 'State', he feels miserable, therefore escaping from conflicts and tensions with himself is necessary. He finds that drumming also leads him to 'the State'.

Since his childhood, Thomas Frank has been teaching himself that the world is inherently rhythmic, "Once you were out in the world, running and jumping and climbing, you tapped your toes and fingers everywhere, all the time. [...] You were finding out that everything makes a sound. Everything can be drumming whether rhythm is kept or strays". (209) In a state of disorientation, the sound became a binding point that tied him to his identity, culture, and origin as Orange claims: "That full, that complete feeling, like you're right where you're supposed to be right now—in the song and about what the song's about" (262). The devastating impacts of Thomas's alcoholism, culminating in losing his job as janitor at the Indian Center, depict his messy and chaotic life. Even his drunken behavior is a mere reflection of his state of detachment and instability, he speaks to himself about the reason he was fired, "Your drinking, which was related to your skin problems, which was related to your father, which was related to history" (217). He gets on the train and thinks about his dad, never taking him to Indian Powwows because his mother had become an evangelical Christian. He goes to the coliseum for the Powwow and sits till it's time for drumming. The song will be his own prayer.

Thomas experiences the effect of the Unhomeliness already arising within him, the struggle within himself before the impending performance at the Coliseum station. The crossing of the pedestrian bridge with "butterflies in your stomach" (224) illustrates his internal conflict and mixed feelings as he heads to the Powwow. Thomas's impulsive need to

drum and his insistence that he is allowed to play the drums express his fundamental need for an identity and acceptance. This inner conflict is indicative of the deep rooted feelings of the marginalized position that Thomas has come to occupy. Thomas drumming at the Powwow symbolizes his connection to his native identity and cultural heritage. Despite participating in an activity deeply rooted into his culture, he experiences an inner conflict and disconnected from his cultural identity. This cultural alienation makes him a 'psychological refugee' who feels like he does not belong even among his people. His drumming is a moving narrative of his attempts to find how to integrate the external culture he experiences with the internal culture that he feels he embodies, "To be unhomed is to feel not at home even in your own home because you are not at home in yourself your cultural identity crisis has made you a psychological refugee" (Tyson 421).

As Thomas prepares to drum the opening song of the Grand Entry, a thoughtful mixture of feelings and prayers demonstrates the great inner conflict he is facing. When Bobby beats the drum too hard that feeling reflects the intense emotion and anxiety he experiences in that moment, "You watch for Bobby's stick to go up. When it does, your heart feels like it stops" (225). The fact of praying 'to no one in particular, to nothing in particular' emphasizes the search of Thomas for significance, sense, and relationship in a world where he feels wrecked and disengaged. Thomas represents what Bhabha calls in betweenness. He is stuck between two cultures. Through the drumming and the prayer Thomas discovered his refuge that became an inspiration to him. The drum reflects his native culture and prayers means Christian religion which represents the white American culture. The rhythmic beats of his drum become the act of meditation and expressing for him so that he finds a connection and a feeling that he belongs within all the hustle and the uncertainty. Through his interaction with Bobby Big Medicine, Thomas experiences a sense of fulfillment through drumming and singing at the Powwow as Orange narrates:

“Get all that junk out for this one,” Bobby says, and rotates his drumstick in a circle.

“I feel good,” Thomas says.

“It’s not enough to feel good. You gotta drum good for them,” he says, and points with his drumstick out at the field (261).

In addition, the act of drumming leads Thomas to a sense of belonging. Along with his personal experience of performing at the Powwow, it highlights the transformative power of drums and their ability to provide a profound sense of fulfillment and connection.

He wanted a drummer. He likes the way Thomas drums and sings. Thomas stands up to stretch. He really does feel good. Singing and drumming had done that thing, that all-the-way-there thing he needs to feel that full, that complete feeling, like you’re right where you’re supposed to be right now—in the song and about what the song’s about (262).

The Powwow allows Thomas to experience a road to inner tranquility, self-expression, and a feeling of belonging being in harmony with his cultural heritage through his drumming and singing.

Thomas’s unhomey moment is in some ways unsettling as a result of the confusion he experiences in his quest for belonging and purpose, as Aman and Dahlstedt note that “the most salient features of the unhomey moment are instability and a lack of clarity about where one belongs and what one should be doing”(728). Even at the Powwow, where drums simultaneously function as prayer and reminder of his roots, the tension and associated complexities between his past and present seem to add to his identity crisis. For Thomas, drumming was a powerful medium that allows him to tap into his cultural roots, channel his creativity, find inner peace, and discover the sense of connection. Furthermore, with the drum’s rhythmic beat, Thomas found a way to draw his strength, an identity, and a break in

the hurdles of difficulty that would give him peace and hope in his life.

After his drumming experience at the Powwow, the climax of Thomas's journey was reached when he came to terms with his impending death peacefully. Altogether, the overwhelming harmony that he finds within himself through drumming is a sad glimpse of what is to come. At the end of his life, Thomas comes to a stage whereby everything is calm and he is at peace with himself. As Orange expresses:

In the State. It doesn't matter how he got here. Or why he's here. And it doesn't matter how long he stays. The State is perfect and is all he could ever ask for, for a second or a minute or a moment, to belong like this is to die and live forever. So he's not reaching up, and he's not sinking down, and he's not worried about what's coming. He's here, and he's dying, and it's okay (275).

At this final acceptance and peace, Thomas moves beyond the unhomeliness that had been his whole life, gaining a moment of togetherness and quiet that enriches him through a very deep understanding and completion. Drums and the search for spiritual connection did help Thomas resolve his inner conflicts and soothe his pain.

C. Jacquie Red Feather

Orange embodies the feeling of unhomeliness through the character Jacquie Red Feather, the mother of Blue. She is challenged to be a new woman as she goes from a wild adolescence to being a mature, responsible woman. Dealing with disheartening situations from the past which includes the loss of her daughter Jamie due to suicide and herself being assaulted as a teenager, she finds solace and purpose in meeting her grandsons again in Oakland. Overcoming her long-held dependence on alcohol, which only made her pain burn stronger.

Jacquie is stuck between memories of her past and what she lives in the present. A night before she walks into the alcoholic anonymous meeting she stays in her room in the

hotel, she misses her family terribly, and she begins to mirror the memories and lessons of her own childhood, she feels a deep sense of loss, “Their mom told them stories about moving away for good. About getting back home to Oklahoma. But home for Jacquie and her sister was a locked station wagon in an Empty parking lot. Home was a long ride on a bus. Home was the three of them anywhere safe for the night” (Orange 99).

Jacquie's feeling of Unhomeliness arises from her displacement from her family or even from her community. According to Aman and Dahlstedt, "unhoming" is losing the sense belonging somewhere and realizing that what was once familiar now feels strange (225). Such experiences can cause people to get lost in their own environments and wish to have a home to belong to. Although Jacquie is now in a familiar but rather uninteresting and unknown place, the memories connected with her family and childhood fill her with desire, thus emphasizing the coldness of the present situation compared to the warmth of the past. This proximity intensifies her loss and loneliness, and she is fully conscious of her severed social identity and rootedness, as well as the transient environment 'the hotel' represents her current state of detachment as she is cut off from the life she knew. This notion of 'unhomeliness' is thus amplified and contributes to Jacquie's inability to fit into the present world or assimilate her past experiences into her new life, which makes her feel as if she does not belong anywhere.

Jacquie is a good representation of home longing, and family, for her is a precious thing. Jacquie relies on the comforting inclusion of nostalgia to fill the void left by her family and cherished reminiscences to anchor her sense of belonging. These reminiscences function as a protective guard in opposition to the overwhelming experience of displacement and rootlessness, putting forward her identity and connection to a place or community. Aman and Dahlstedt point out “the flexibility of Bhabha's unhomeliness means anything that is or has become unfamiliar it can with time and effort become familiar again” (728).

Jacque feels a profound sense of loneliness and disconnection when she recalls her sister and her grandsons. The pictures of her grandsons are symbols of her previous relationship and relatives she left behind. This sense of unhomeliness increases her disconnection from her family and from the immediate physical environment.

According to Leite, Jacque's dependency on alcohol represents the lack of recognizing herself as a separate entity with a distinct self identity apart from others (4). The sense of being secluded, isolated, and dislocated enhances with her getting mentally exhausted to the point of having a drink of alcohol. The fact that she resorts to Alcoholics Anonymous meetings to bring solace in her life attests to her effort to find comfort and home since she is out of home as she seeks support from people that understand her pain "Jacque found a seat in the back of the main ballroom. There was an old Indian guy in a baseball cap who had one hand uplike he was praying, while, The other flicked water out of a water bottle at the crowd. She'd never seen anything like it before" (Orange 102). Jacque feels marginalized and or foreigner surrounded by her community yet perceives herself as an imposter. She navigates her days pretending to be someone else. This feeling of displacement intensifies whenever she remembers a particular incident from her past leaving her with a sense of unhomeliness.

Although the meaning of home has changed for Jacque, she is disturbed by the notion of going to a place where she has long stopped living and feeling out of place, she is afraid of feeling unhomey or may even be unwanted there "don't come with me then, that's fine. Don't even listen to me. But you said It in The circle. You know what you want. You said it you wanna go back" Harvey said (115). Jacque experienced an intense unhomeliness like coming home from a place she no longer belonged to.

She then experiences a contrasting sense of personal and cultural underlying emotions that begin to intertwine into the complex web of longing and regret that flood her

inner being as she finds herself standing in the middle of the Powwow which represents at once a return to her roots and a confrontation with the specters of her past. It is the anxiety given by the doubt of her community acceptance and the unknown reaction to her absence for a long time that cause such nervousness for Powwow carries different meanings for many souls, but there is one thing common about it and that is giving an opportunity to experience a communal and spiritual bond with mother earth. This point of view naturally goes against what Jacquie is thinking. The events are just an opportunity for her to establish more confusion rather than belonging. Jacquie feels anxious and worried while Harvey is super excited. This illustrates that estrangement is a process of coping with loss and yearning for a place to belong.

Jacquie's unhomeliness shown in her alienation from her community, considering herself as a stranger "Jacquie was out of the room before the audience even started its hesitant" (105). She experiences a deep sense of unhomeliness, feeling disconnected from her community and recalls a sense of alienation and not fitting into the conference. Though present for work reasons, she perceives herself as a fraud among the genuinely committed attendees "these were career people, more driven by concern about keeping their jobs, about the funders and grant requirement, than by the need to help Indian families. Jacquie was no different. She knew it and hated this fact" (103). Jacquie experiences a deep sense of not belonging, she finds herself torn between the demands of her job and the true purpose of her work, to help Indian families. She knows that this preoccupation with job security and external factors eroded her sense of connection and simultaneously give her a profound sense of discomfort and dissatisfaction which means a disconnection from the environment she had devote herself to.

D. Edwin

The feeling of unhomeliness is reflected as well in Edwin's perception of being out of

place or being detached from his cultural heritage despite being multiracial. It is evident in a passage where Edwin reflects on his father's heritage: "All my mom remembered about my dad was his first name Harvey that he lived in Phoenix and that he was a Native American Indian, this weird politically correct catch-all you only hear from white people who've never known a real native person" (Orange 85).

Edwin hardly ever met his Indian father. His mom did not tell him anything about his biological father and his Native community. Consequently, Edwin experiences a profound social isolation and alienation and defines himself as being in the middle of two different cultures, the fact that he is half Cheyenne and half American. This results in an enduring sense of unhomeliness, not only in regard to the self but also in regard to culture. He dreams of going back to his cultural and geographical origin, but the lack of information about his origin combined with his mother's ignorance makes him confused and frustrated. This sense of being 'unhomely' is not only related to the state of being physically in a home but also in other areas of his life, he lacks companionship and feels isolated. When his mother tries to assist him to get back to the real world, Edwin sees her actions as being a violation of his space. He is an alien both to his community and his self, unable to identify with either his culture or his individuality.

Edwin's sense of unhomeliness is portrayed through his discovery of his Cheyenne heritage and his unexpected encounter with his biological father on Facebook. "I'll never fully recover from the feeling of trying to write as my own mother, is an alluring way to my possible father" (Orange 69). Edwin feels unhomely and out of place, this drives him to use his mother's account to talk to his biological father, making him feel dishonest and uncomfortable. Edwin does not have knowledge of what tribe he belongs to. Edwin's only link to a broader community is through Facebook. Influenced by his Native American friends there, he chooses to identify himself as "Native." He explains, "I use Native, that's what other

Native people on Facebook use. I have 660 friends. Tons of Native friends in my feed.” (69), suggesting that Edwin feels more connected and part of a community through his online interactions. His experience with Native peoples on the Internet allows him to be considered a non-white person even though he cannot identify as a member of a particular tribe.

Upon discovering his physical resemblance to his father on Facebook, Edwin enters into a state of confusion and uncertainty about his identity and origins “I’d gotten through four years as a native American studies major, dissecting tribal histories, looking for signs, something that might be resemble me, something that felt familiar” (71). Harvey told him that he is Cheyenne but this only made Edwin feel out of place. The known territories of his previous life were erased, and he was left with a disturbing and disorienting feeling of identity “Always defending myself, like I’m not Native enough, I’m as Native as Obama is black” (72). Edwin’s unwanted defecation was an obvious portrayal of his need to get rid of the things that were holding him back emotionally. Following a heated discussion with his father and mother, Edwin decided to put the issue of his true identity aside and try to overcome all the difficulties of this new world that he was going to face, even though he still felt alien to the Native American culture.

In addition, Edwin’s latest writing project focuses on how white culture colonizes and wipes out indigenous cultures. He feels imprisoned in a white culture that seeks to assimilate his people into their own ways of life. This culture silences people and makes them conform to the norm, while erasing the vibrant culture of neighborhoods that were once thriving. This is because Edwin was colonized and displaced from his own culture, which makes him feel uncomfortable and insecure about his identity. This culture forces people to fit in and leave empty spaces where communities once thrived. Edwin’s being pushed out of his culture makes him feel unhomey, confused about who he is and where he belongs.

Bhabha in his essay 'The World and the Home' argues that unhomeliness is a Space in which one Can see how a person's identity is a mixture of what is foreign and familiar (146-147). The intact feeling of unhomeliness comes from a disconnection between Edwin's own indigenous identity and the prevailing influence of white culture that he cannot escape with. He stands out in a place, where his experienced life and traditional knowledge are diminishing or covered by a mass narrative of the wider society. This policy thus uproots Edwin from his cultural roots and makes him see how the connection he once had to a place can be broken.

To conclude, all of these characters experienced unhomeliness and the loss of sense of belonging to their Native American identity and this resulted from the removal of American Indians to the urban areas where they felt completely disconnected from their traditional homelands and culture.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we examine the characters Tony, Blue, Calvin, and Thomas; we explore the identity formation problems faced by Native Americans, especially those who live in urban areas in terms of their intersection with the culture and belonging to their community. This internal struggle is manifested in their dealings with their culture, their family members, and their efforts to come to terms with their past and present lives. With regard to the concepts of ambivalence and unhomeliness, as proposed by Bhabha, we delve into the complexities of cultural identity of urban Native Americans, torn between two cultures and deprived of the lost heritage of colonization and displacement, which leaves them with the feelings of alienation and loss.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

Tommy Orange's *There There* is the exploration of the diverse and multifaceted experiences of urban Native Americans, who struggle with the challenges of maintaining their cultural heritage and negotiating their place in a predominantly non-Native society. The present research examines the complexities of cultural identity for urban Native Americans in *There There* through the lens of Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial concepts of ambivalence, and unhomeliness.

The first chapter lays out the theoretical framework of the study, and is divided into three main parts. The first part introduces the main themes of Native American literature and its emergence. The second part provides Tommy Orange's biography and literary influences, as well as a summary and the socio-historical background of the novel to give better understanding of the context. The third part deals with postcolonial literature and theory, explaining the key concepts proposed by Bhabha that are used in the subsequent analysis chapter.

The second chapter examines the application of Bhabha's concepts of ambivalence and unhomeliness in the selected novel to analyze the complexities of cultural identity faced by urban Native Americans. This analysis delves into the challenges surrounding the cultural identity of indigenous people living in the United States. We applied Bhabha's concepts on the chosen characters of the novel (Tony, Jacquie, Edwin, Thomas, Blue, and Calvin) in order to reveal the struggles and challenges faced by Urban Native Americans. It addresses the issues of their cultural identity and provides understanding of the impacts of cultural assimilation on urban Indians. As well as their challenges in maintaining cultural traditions as they integrate into white society. In addition, the chosen characters in the novel often find themselves balancing between their traditional beliefs and the practices of the dominant Western culture.

Delving into the complexities of cultural identity as a pivotal theme in *There There* in relation to Bhabha's postcolonial concepts, we have formulated the following results. First, historical displacement, assimilation, and colonizer oppression still impact contemporary native Americans in the United States. The shift from rural to urban areas presents cultural issues and identity crises, leading to internal conflicts within mainstream culture. In addition, Urban Native Americans have a bifurcated existence because they are in a constant process of adjusting to the urban lifestyle while at the same time trying to maintain their cultural practices.

Second, Indians in the United States often struggle with self-determination because they were socially and historically marginalized. They are often stereotyped and subjected to systematic racism, which further complicates their identity. This discrimination is rooted in historical injustices, forced assimilation policies, and cultural genocide. This forced process of assimilation deprived urban Indians of their cultural identity and link with their roots. Besides, US Indian policies had a strong effect on Native Americans' sense of identity and their relationship with land and community, one of them is the Termination and Relocation policy which aims to disintegrate Native American's communities by relocating them to cities where their culture and ways of life are interrupted.

Third, after analyzing the issue of ambivalence, the characters often feel not being 'Native enough' or that they are Native in the wrong way. It is a common experience among many urban Indians, who confront with questions about their cultural authenticity, identity, and belonging. So, this inner turmoil and uncertainty makes Native Americans feel guilty about their indigenous identity, distancing themselves from Indian heritage to adopt the white dominant values. But there are also some characters from the novel such as Blue and Thomas. Although showing contradiction towards their heritage they resist the subversion of their

cultural identity. Therefore, the characters show their resistance and resilience, also searching for belonging through participating in contemporary Powwow culture.

Furthermore, the analysis of the concept of unhomeliness shows that urban Native Americans are often dislocated and alienated from their roots. Feeling unhomey can lead to a sense of cultural disconnection, loss of cultural identity and lack of belonging. Throughout the characters' experiences we can say that unhomeliness is rooted in historical trauma, injustices, and struggles that affect cultural identity. In addition, exposure to the dominant culture makes urban American Indians alienated from their culture which brings an intense homeless feeling within them. Besides, mixed blood characters from the novel such as Edwin, Thomas and Blue due to their multifaceted identities and background creates a sense of ambiguity and not fully belonging to any single community or group. This demonstrates the challenges of mixed blood individuals with their authenticity whether (white or native), and struggles with a sense of belonging. Furthermore, the difficulties of living in urban areas as Native Americans, facing discrimination and racism intensify Indians feelings of unhomeliness. However, although some characters in the novel manage to reconnect with their heritage through Powwows, they still feel the deep rooted unhomeliness and alienation within them.

In short, the urban Native Americans in the United States struggle hard to define themselves and feel both positive and negative towards their culture and urban environment. They are trapped between the demands of their traditional cultural heritage and those of urban society in general. This duality thrusts them in the position of having to contend with the labels of their indigenous roots and the urban environments they live in. Additionally, they are confronted with the historical injustices, racism, and discrimination that further compound their feelings of not belonging. They thus find themselves in a perpetual state of becoming, with their cultural identity constantly changing and being transformed.

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Résumé

Après la période du colonialisme, les peuples des nations postcoloniales continuent de lutter pour trouver des réponses à différentes questions liées à leur appartenance ethnique et à leur patrimoine culturel. Le dilemme du système colonial a laissé des traces durables sur ces communautés colonisées, qui prévalent encore aujourd'hui. Cette thèse tente d'étudier les défis actuels auxquels sont confrontés les Amérindiens dans le premier roman de Tommy Orange, *There There* (2018). Le roman présente les expériences complexes des Amérindiens et les conséquences du colonialisme pour les peuples indigènes vivant dans les régions métropolitaines. Cette recherche explore le thème de l'identité culturelle et ses complexités pour les personnages sélectionnés (Tony, Blue, Calvin, Thomas, Edwin et Jacquie) qui appartiennent à la deuxième génération Amérindienne, donc aux prises avec l'assimilation culturelle. De plus, ils cherchent à réconcilier les aspects conflictuels de leur identité, à comprendre leurs cultures et à trouver un sentiment d'appartenance. L'analyse s'appuie sur les concepts postcoloniaux d'ambivalence et de l'intranquillité expliqués par Homi K. Bhabha.

الملخص

بعد حقبة الإستعمار، يواصل الأشخاص من دول ما بعد الإستعمار النضال من أجل إيجاد إجابات لمختلف الأسئلة المتعلقة بعرقهم وتراثهم الثقافي. لقد تركت معضلة النظام الإستعماري آثارا لا تمحى على هذه المجتمعات المستعمرة التي لا تزال سائدة حتى اليوم. تحاول هذه الأطروحة دراسة التحديات المستمرة التي يواجهها الأمريكيون الأصليون في رواية تومي أورانج الأولى "هناك هناك". تقدم هذه الرواية التجارب المعقدة للأمريكيين الأصليين وتداعيات الإستعمار على السكان الأصليين الذين يعيشون في المناطق الحضرية. يتعمق هذا البحث في موضوع الهوية الثقافية وتعقيداتها على الشخصيات المختارة (توني، بلو، كالفن، توماس، إدوين وجاكي) الذين ينتمون إلى الجيل الثاني من الأمريكيين الأصليين وبالتالي يتصارعون مع الإستيعاب الثقافي. إلى جانب ذلك، يسعون إلى التوفيق بين الجوانب المتضاربة لهويتهم، وفهم جذورهم، وإيجاد شعور بالانتماء. يعتمد التحليل على مفاهيم ما بعد الإستعمار للتناقض وعدم التآلف كما أوضحها هومي ك. بهابها.