



**“THE SPIDER-WEB IS BOTH A HOME AND A TRAP” : AN ANALYSIS  
OF THE BOOK THERE THERE, BY TOMMY ORANGE.**

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**RESUMO:** Este trabalho visa analisar como o escritor Nativo Norte-Americano Tommy Orange utilizou o símbolo da teia de aranha para projetar uma metáfora na narrativa de seu livro “*There There*” (2016). Ao explorar autores como Hertha D Wong (2009), Carol Patterson-Rudolph (1997) and Katarzyna and Sergiusz Michalski (2010), foi possível analisar a obra de Tommy Orange a partir um de ponto de vista fundamentado em um aporte teórico. Em particular, esta análise enfoca o uso da teia de aranha e suas qualidades simbologicas culturais para com os povos nativos americanos, e sua transformação em uma metáfora enraizada intrinsecamente dentro da narrativa. Os três personagens escolhidos para a discussão apresentam suas respectivas lutas internas que dialogam com a metáfora da teia de aranha analisada, a partir desta perspectiva, esta análise, - fundamentada no método de pesquisa bibliografica- foi executada com o fim de se obter uma melhor compreensão e outras interpretações acerca do livro.

**Palavras-chave:** Teia de Aranha. Metáfora. Narrativa.

**ABSTRACT:** This work aims to analyze how the Native North American writer Tommy Orange used the symbol of the spider's web to draw a metaphor in the narrative of his book “*There There*” (2016). By exploring authors like Hertha D Wong (2009), Carol Patterson-Rudolph (1997) and Katarzyna and Sergiusz Michalski (2010), it was possible to analyze the work of Tommy Orange from a perspective supported by theoretical support. In

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particular, this analysis focuses on the use of the spider's web and its cultural symbolic qualities towards Native American peoples, and its transformation into a metaphor rooted intricately within the narrative. The three characters chosen for the discussion present their respective internal struggles that dialogue with the proposed with the spider web, from this perspective, this analysis - based on the bibliographical research method - was performed in order to obtain a better understanding and other interpretations about the book.

**Keywords:** SpiderWeb. Metaphor. Narrative.

## INTRODUCTION

This article is the result of studies on the literary work “There There”, by the American writer of indigenous origin Tommy Orange<sup>3</sup>, organized by the students participating in the scientific research project named *Configurações de Resistência em Narrativas Anglófonas (CRENAC)*<sup>4</sup>, coordinated by Dra. Ana Lilia Carvalho Rocha.

There There is a literary work, that relates, in a fictional way, the life of twelve urban Native-American characters that even with their own set of events and perspectives, end up going in the same direction: the big Powwow<sup>5</sup> of Oakland. Subjects such as family, loss, identity, and power connect it to the many voices that narrate throughout the book. Each character carries their individual stories, beauty, and despair for what has lived in the past and what is living now.

The originality is noticeable since the beginning of the plot: indigenous people listening to RAP, living in a rush in big cities, trying to reconcile urban life with indigenous traditions, but also trying to keep their traditions to themselves, even when they insist on coming to the surface. These are frightened and worried characters, either with their past, their present, or their possible future, that have in common the fear of being themselves, due to the prejudice existing in society their identities are sublimated to suit in the urban environment.

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<sup>3</sup> Tommy Orange is an American novelist, born in Oakland, California. His first book, *There There*, was a finalist for the 2019 Pulitzer Prize and received the 2019 American Book Award. Orange is a citizen of the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes of Oklahoma.

<sup>4</sup> A research project focused on studying mainly resistance literature and its nuances, located at the Federal University of Pará.

<sup>5</sup> Powwow is a celebration of indigenous Native American culture, people from all over the country come together to dance, sing and honor the traditions of their ancestors, in addition PowWow also offer cash prizes for dance performances, as well as the opportunity to display their art, sell material goods and socialize.

The narrative is intricate with all kinds of events: the young man planning to assault the Powwow, the nephew planning a tribute to his uncle, and a woman who had abandoned her grandsons and will have the chance to meet them again. Regular people became special by introducing us not in a forced or didactic way, but subtly and pleasantly, to the culture of North American native peoples immersed in urban life.

It is important to emphasize that the cultural representation of these peoples had come to us in an abstract and deeply prejudiced way, being portrayed by the great mass media, such as cinema, by “people in costumes”, painted and characterized with indigenous artifacts as if being part of the native peoples were just characters assembled.

It is common, in Brazil, especially, to have western films as the main characteristic of the North American Indigenous, in which they are shown with their plumes and clothes on top of a horse shooting at white people, and, therefore, they are almost always considered as villains, barbarians and violent during the Wild West setting. Perhaps, this is our first memory of the representation of a North American Indigenous person.

The writer Tommy Orange asserts in an interview with the “American Booksellers Association” that one of the book's main objectives is to expand and reframe the meaning of being a native.

I spent a bunch of years in the urban Indian community, working in mental health, doing a storytelling project, and realizing just how many stories there were that people should hear — especially other urban Natives, to see their own stories reflected in a bigger way. We're pretty invisible, Native people, in movies and TV shows and literature, so I was feeling like I wanted to try to tell a story that hadn't been told about a community that people know too little about. (ORANGE, 2018).

Orange's choice to weave the use of nature, animals, and insects into the development of his characters speaks to the authenticity of his writing to the Native American culture, incorporating traditional indigenous ideals in his writing makes *There There* an interesting novel to pick apart and analyze the complexities of the story.

Some readers can welcome the book as complex due to its narrative, it is clearly noticeable to attentive readers, maybe, that the literary representations are made through spider references, especially in three of the twelve characters' narratives that the author presents to us, being: Opal Viola Bear Shield, Jacquier Red Feather, and Orvil Red Feather.

However, when deeper analyzing the book, it is understandable that the plot is driven by a metaphor; the spider's web, which weaves all the stories of the characters and connects the different threads to an invisible web; which gives the end of the narrative, when each

character, with particular reasons, crosses the center of the web. It is on this attempt at literary intersections, and narrative ties, that the web is built, also relating to the cultures of North American indigenous peoples.

Therefore, this work aims to understand how these intricate narrative processes take place with the cultural relations that the text itself reassembles, recreates, and converges on the origins and future prospects of the characters, in order to illustrate that, the spider web symbolism will be discussed.

## **SPIDER SYMBOLOGY**

The spider's figure representations have been present in literature for a long time, for example, with the Arachne, a greek famous myth, the skilled weaver turns into a spider because of the anger of Athena, the spider is a symbol of moral human ambition through this creature that wanted to fight with a god, so it was punished this way. (FAKHRI; BAKHTIYARI; ALDEZADEH, 2013). Likewise in the young-adult literature with Harry Potter (2001) by J. K Rowling with a spider creature named "Araguogue ", or "Shelob `", the creature that attacks Bilbo in Lord of the Rings (1954) by J. R. R Tolkien.

The spider web runs through American Literature, poetry, in particular, writers' discourse about the spider figures in their works, for instance, in the famous *Upon a Spider Catching a Fly* (1960) by Edward Taylor, this insisting presence of the spider was reflected by Austin (1993) that illustrate through a long metaphor the poet/spider relationship: "But being a poet and working with language is a lot like being a spider and working with silk because the language comes out of your mouth much the way thread comes out of a spider so that it looks like you've made it but only in a way" (AUSTIN, 1993, p. 164.)

Many cultures around the world have a myth or legend about spiders, for example, in West Africa, it is portrayed as a treacherous god named Anansi, much like the Coyote in Native American culture, this spider symbol is greedy, lazy and sometimes smart; so it could deceive god and advice him, and in some places is associated with the creation of lore and storytelling.

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

It is mostly seen, however, that Native American literature has gained special attention due to its cultural significance for these people, the meaning of the spider can vary from one indigenous community to another, taking into account the native legends of each one.

For example, one Hopi<sup>6</sup> Legend tells the story of a “Spider Woman”, often portrayed as a teacher and guide, who thought about the universe while sitting silently, weaving her web.

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

Dussol (2011) points out that in some versions of the Hopi creations myth, she gives human being a language, and in the Navajo<sup>7</sup> creation myth, the Great Spider Woman gives the people ritual language and so participates in the power of language use. Carol Patterson-Rudolph in “On the trail of Spider Woman” (1997) identifies that to the indigenous people there is no reason to despise the spider figure in its realistic form, instead, it is described in symbols that reflect its attributes, it represents creativity, spirit, and wisdom. She adds that: “This elusive little figure is more powerful than any of the larger and more prominent deities.” ( RUDOLPH, 1997, p. 1).

Thus, all these different perspectives lead this spider symbol in different ways, but mostly the spider is related to creation, power, and divinity. For instance, Native American credit the spider web with providing a functional model for the world (MICHALSKI; MICHALSKI, 2010), it seems that the positive aspects of this symbol are more representative than its negative. That said, it is time to understand what a metaphor is and what is its function in literature, to see how this symbol manifests in the narrative of the book *There There*.

## **METAPHOR**

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<sup>6</sup> The Hopi are a Native American tribe who primarily live on the Hopi Reservation in northeastern Arizona, United States.

<sup>7</sup> Navajo, also spelled Navaho, second most populous of all Native American peoples in the United States, with some 300,000 individuals in the early 21st century, most of them living in New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah.

A metaphor is a comparison between two things that are unrelated, in this way when a literary piece has a metaphor in it, the meaning of something is figuratively carried into another, for example in a sentence of *The call of Cthulhu* by H.P Lovecraft there is the use of an expressive representation to suggest the limits of our knowledge, in the following quote; “We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far”, by bringing these representations into literature, it allows the reader to see things from a new perspective.

For this reason, a metaphor is a linguistic mechanism that causes the change of context in the use of a word, it is a representative expression or symbolic of something abstract, in other words, of something that exists only in an idea/concept, (MOURA, 2005). Another example of a metaphor in literature is in the novel *Invisible Man* by Ralph Elisson, which develops a metaphor of invisibility to express how black men and women are often pushed into the margins of North American society.

Earl McComarc suggests in *Metaphor and Literature* (1972) that metaphor has arisen as a fundamental tool for the writer, he points out that “literature without metaphor would become less imaginative and poetry would be so impaired as to become dull perhaps even trite”. A poem uses metaphor directly in the text to express emotions and opinions; a particular example of this is in Sylvia Plath's poem called “Metaphor”, despite the title of the poem, it is not about metaphors but contains various in its corpus.

As well as in the works cited above, metaphors have been an important component of society, either in literature, cinema or even in daily life expressions like “You’re the apple of my eye” or “Your words cut deeper than a knife”. On account of that, it is important for literary studies to investigate how the metaphor manifests itself in literary works, often unexplored, such as in *There There*.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study is a bibliographic research with a qualitative approach that will be organized in two stages: bibliographic analysis and literature analysis, which can be suited to the category of Comparative Literature, according to Carvalhal (2006). In the first phase the bibliographic research will investigate the meaning of the figure of the spider in the culture of the native American people, and also how it was inserted in literature works over the years, so

as the metaphor itself in literature, then it will be made the literacy analysis of the three characters that relate to Spider-Web: *Home and Trap* metaphor on the book *There There* by Tommy Orange, in which were collected some quotes from the book that had the connection with this metaphor and analyzed, relating to the cultural aspects and narrative of the book.

## **RESULTS**

From the results obtained in the first phase conducted in this research, it is evident that Native American literature supports many cultural artifacts and symbols to the foundation of the narrative, as in the case of the spider-web metaphor found in the book to reference a sort of home and trap portrait. Already in the second phase, it became perceptible in which moments and characters it was demonstrated how noticeable the use of metaphor to express the great spider web that unites all the characters in this narrative in a great trap, whether individual or not.

Although these reached results are also found in these other literary works such as in *Love Medicine* by Louise Erdrich, and *The Surrounded* by D'arcy McNickels, the novel *There There* by Tommy Orange, will be analyzed in this paper, continuing the research initiated in the scientific research project *Crenac*.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Representation of the Spider-Web in the Book**

Tommy Orange weaves a narrative from the stories of the twelve characters: Tony Loneman, Dene Oxendene, Opal Viola Bear Shield, Edwin Black, Bill Davis, Calvin Johnson, Jacquie Red Feather, Orvil Red Feather, Octavio Gomez, Daniel Gonzales, Blue, and Thomas Franco. All originating from contemporary urban indigenous communities with distinct histories but are connected to each other, and that will converge into Oakland's Great Powwow, divided into a four-part novel, with almost forty chapters.

I)Remain

II)Reclaim

III)Return

#### IV) Powwow

The author presents us with different Indian perspectives, by shifting these twelve characters' points of view, creating a great web of words about the violence suffered over the centuries of colonization, as well as the violence of modern times, not only but also creating a thematic web that is interrelated with the native origins and the families.

Throughout Tommy Orange's work, we come across the explicit presence of the spider figure in the narrative of three, among the twelve characters, and these are the ones we will highlight: Opal Viola Bear Shield, Jacquie Red Feather, and Orvil Red Feather. The first two are sisters and the third, which with the similarity of the surname can be deduced, is related somehow to them, Opal is his grand-aunt and Jacquie is his grandmother, the three characters respectively belong to the Cheyenne ethnicity<sup>8</sup>, and live in East Oakland.

#### **Jacquie Red Feather**

Opal and Jacquie's father abandoned them with their mother – Vicky – and with no choice, the three went to live on an island with indigenous people from different ethnic groups, a place organized by the American government<sup>9</sup>, during that stay, Jacquie got along with the teenagers on the island, and one day they drank too much and Jacquie was abused by one of them, a native named Harvey, Jacquie found out she was pregnant as a result of the abuse she suffered on the island and didn't think about continuing with the pregnancy, but her sister Opal questioned her, so she decided that after having the child she would donate the baby.

And as time went on, the government's neglect kept recurring and things on the island were getting more and more difficult, so they would move again. It is at this point of the narrative, – before the death of the mother –, that the first and more important mention of the spider metaphor is presented in the novel:

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<sup>8</sup> The Cheyenne people were initially located in the Great Lakes region in parts of Minnesota and Illinois. As the westward expansion of white settlers pushed them further and further westward, the Cheyenne were forced to relocate to North Dakota, South Dakota, and Nebraska. [...] Today, the Cheyenne people are split into two federally recognized Nations: the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho located in Oklahoma and the Northern Cheyenne and Arapaho in Montana. According to the latest survey, there are just over 10,000 Cheyenne today, with about half of them residing on the reservations. (NATIVE HOPE, 2022).

<sup>9</sup> As recently as a generation ago, at least one-third of American Indian children were removed from their households [...] These removals often became permanent over time, causing deep and wide-spread wounds. (BROOKINGS, 2018).

“Their mother never let them kill a spider if they found one in the house, or anywhere for that matter. Her mom said spiders carry miles of web in their bodies, miles of story, miles of potential home and trap. She said that’s what we are. Home and trap” (ORANGE, 2016, p. 119).

Opal and Jacquie’s mother had this sense of awareness of the spider web’s potential to be a home and a trap and what that could mean for her daughters’ life course, the relationship with spiders and their webs takes the form of “home” and “trap”, in her words. But as well as being cozy and positive, it can also be a cunning plot wrapped in negativity, as it is discovered later during the final chapters of the book.

In the course of the narrative, as time passed by, Jacquie, while being 11 days sober, flew from Albuquerque to Phoenix, as she held the position of counselor for substance abuse issues, she was forced to go to a Conference of the Administration of Mental Health Services and Substance Abuse.

And while settling in the hotel, she thinks about drinking, looks down through her spider’s tattoos on her feet, and remembers her mother's speech: "The spider's web is a home and a trap".

Jacquie kneeled in front of the mini-fridge. In her head she heard her mom say, “The spider's web is a home and a trap.” Even though she never really knew what her mom meant by it, she’d been making it make sense over the years, giving it more meaning than her mom probably ever intended. In this case, Jacquie was the spider, and the minifridge was the web. The home was to drink. To drink was the trap. Or something like that. The point was To not open the fridge. And she didn’t. (ORANGE, 2016, p. 77).

As we can see at this point in the narrative, the immersion of this character in the metaphor is noticed, when she sees herself as the spider, and the object of her greatest desire –the minibar– as the web. At that moment home was drinking, which was also the trap, and from that moment on, she decides that she no longer wants to live in the house that alcohol built for her and forces herself not to fall into the trap again.

### **Opal Viola Victoria Bear Shield**

In her last days on the island, her mother revealed to Opal that she had cancer, and a while after they settled in the house of a pseudo-uncle of the girls, their mother died, leaving them with this uncle, even though they did not like him, they only had him to take care of them. During this period, the second spider-related mention in the work occurred, when Opal

pulled three spider legs from a lump on her leg, and before that, she also had the blood of her first moon, which was her first menstruation, and both menstrual blood and spider's paws made her feel ashamed.

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

Opal kept that to herself, seeing as her sister already had a pregnancy to worry about. In that regard, spider legs may symbolize the coming of age and her escape from a home that was also a trap, since one night the “uncle” tried to abuse her sister Jacquie, and then the two sisters left the “home”.

It is important to highlight that even though the spider web has good and bad inherent to family and connection Opal accentuates the evil side of the spider; she sees Veho<sup>10</sup>, the spider trickster in her uncle, and she believes that this is the reason she found the spider legs in her body soon after escaping the trap she was into, as in this specific quote: “The trickster spider, Veho, her mom used to tell her and Opal about, he was always stealing eyes to see better. Veho was the white man who came and made the old world watch with his eyes. (ORANGE, 2016, p. 121.).

From this moment on she became afraid and apprehensive of anything related to the American Indian Community since everything she had lived through since that day had made her and her loved ones suffer, “Too many risks,” she would say. “Especially around powwows. Boys like you? No.” (ORANGE, p. 95), it is noticeable that this trauma influenced the third character related to the spider web analyzed in this work; Orvil.

### **Orvil Red Feather**

Jacquie, after giving up her first daughter for adoption, had another daughter, Jamie, who soon left home because of her mother's drinking addiction<sup>11</sup>. Still, Jamie killed herself

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<sup>10</sup> Though he is associated with spiders and his name means "spider," Veeho has the form of a man in every Cheyenne tale we know of. In some stories, Veeho plays the role of the clever and benevolent trickster/transformer hero, but in most stories, he is merely a silly and foolish character who behaves as inappropriately as possible by Cheyenne's social standards. (NATIVE LANGUAGE, 2020)

<sup>11</sup> Statistically, native individuals living in America reflect higher rates of substance abuse.(COYHIS; WHITE, 2022).

and left three children, one of them Orvil Red Feather. As Jacquie was in no condition to keep her grandchildren, her sister, Opal, officially adopted them.

Orvil was always curious about his origins, and he turned to Google for answers like, "What does it mean to be a real Indian?", as Opal refused to talk about it. Since their aunt believes that holding Native American culture and traditions from Orvil would be to protect him from the long lineage of traumas she, her loved ones, and her ancestors have suffered.

Orvil and his brothers decided that they would go to Powwow, —an act that will bring him more connection to his Native heritage than ever before, but also bring him closer to danger. Thus the spider symbolizes the connection, peace, and danger that can be found in home and community.

But they would not tell their aunt, and as the event drew near Orvil is troubled by an itchy lump in his leg that he has had for as long as he can remember, and when he picks up the pit, he pulls several spiders legs out. "The lump that's been in his leg for as long as he can remember, as of late it's been itching. He hasn't been able to stop scratching it" (Orange, 2016, p. 93).

Orvil also finds spider legs in his own legs at a point in the novel when he is planning to enter the powwow competition, it can be thought that the spider's legs symbolize his coming of age and his emerging sensitivity, and stories around him, as he is beginning to weave his home into the native community, a place his great-aunt Opal once warned that it could be a trap.

Orvil is walking back out onto the field when he hears the hots. He thinks of his brothers. His grandma would kill him if he survived and they didn't. [...] He smells the grass inches from his nose and he knows. [...] He wants to stand up, to fly away in all his bloodied feathers. He wants to take back everything he's ever done. He wants to believe he knows how to dance a prayer and pray for a new world. He wants to keep breathing. He needs to keep breathing. He needs to remember that he needs to keep breathing. (ORANGE, 2016, p. 216).

This character's arc is completed in the powwow when the metaphor of house and trap is structured and a native shoots Orvil during the powwow in which he would present his cultural dance performance, a place that was supposed to be his home, a place to (re) connect with his ancestry and to be safe.

## **Home and Trap**

From Jacquie's spider web tattoos to Orvil and Opal's respective encounters with wounds on their bodies that sprout splinters in the shape of spider legs, the spider web can be seen as a metaphor for imagination and for constructing your own way, a reminiscence of their origins, and the search for native identity.

Jacquie's addiction when she addresses "Home was to drink. To drink was the trap. Or something like that. The point was Do not open the fridge. And she didn't." (ORANGE, p, 89). As well as Orvil's wish to keep his ancestral memory alive, which resulted in violence, expressed on these lines of the book; "Orvil knew he wanted to dance the first time he saw a dancer on TV. He was twelve.[...] Hadn't been told. In that moment, in front of the TV, he knew. He was a part of something. Something you could dance to. (ORANGE, 2016, p. 97.)

And finally, Opal's ignorance and resistance to allowing her grandnephews to be a part of her people, in a sort of way, to protect them from a place where the violence has been really present.

And anyway, anything you hear from me about your heritage does not make you more or less Indian. More or less a real Indian. Don't ever let anyone tell you what being Indian means. Too many of us died to get just a little bit of us here, right now, right in this kitchen. (ORANGE, p. 98)

These are some of the aspects presented in the narrative that threatens to seduce them and at the same time shelter them, like home and trap, as Vick said.

### **Metaphor and the Narrative**

At the beginning of the book, when the connection between the characters and/or places is not much perceptible, the image of a web as the connector of these 12 short stories might more accurately reflect some strategies used for the Native American in literature as explained by Wong (1995): "cyclical and recursive nature of stories that are informed by both modernist literary strategies (for instance, multiple narrative voices) and oral traditions (such as a storyteller's use of repetition, recurrent development, and associational structure)." (WONG,1997, p.172).

As the narrative book progresses, it is possible to notice the connections being formed between two of the three characters, this particular passage of the book happens when Jacquie found out that her grandson Orvil is at the Powwow, the same place as she is, and most likely

hidden from his grand-aunt Opal, that do not approve of his wishes in doing a dance performance at the event. Consequently by the time the reader gets to the final chapters all the characters and places are interconnected to each other, in some way, to express this idea:

“At the powwow, Jacquie sits next to Harvey under a canvas canopy with the sound system and mixing board, the mic cord snaking out of it. Jacquie’s about to hand the clipboard back to Harvey when she sees Orvil’s name on the list. She pulls the clipboard closer to her eyes to be sure. She reads his name over and over. *Orvil Red Feather*. It’s there. Jacquie gets out her phone to text her sister.” (ORANGE, 2016, p. 202).

Knowing this Wong (2006) points out that "it should be clear to them that this is not an unrelated, or even a related, set of short stories, but parts of a larger scheme". Consequently, it can refer to the image of the spider itself building its web and connecting different threads (characters and places) to each other, all going in the same direction: the center of the web, the great Powwow of Oakland.

And it is precisely this network of relationships and places that guarantees the unity and connection between these characters, to ensure this idea presented, the following lines of the book aim to represent this idea of connection with powwow and characters, since, in their respective stories, everyone somehow prepares to live the powwow event:

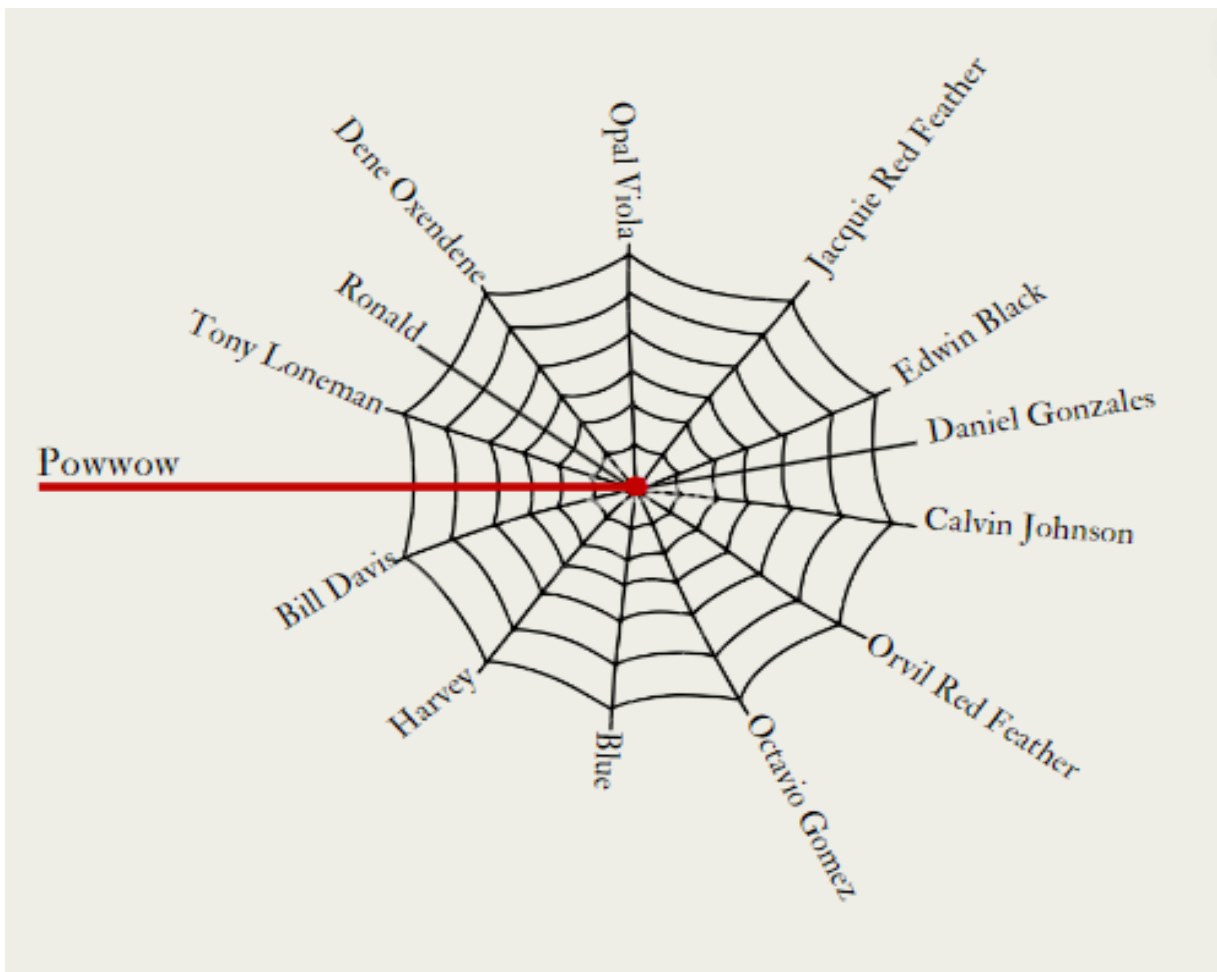
**Jacquie Red Feather:** “You know, I’m going back to Oakland this summer. In a couple months, actually, for the powwow”, [...] The text minute she sent Opal was just this: “If i come to oakland can i stay?” (ORANGE, 2016, p.93 ) [...] Jacquie and Harvey get into Oakland the night before the powwow (ORANGE, 2016, p. 202)

**Orvil Red Feather:** “The day of the powwow Orvil wakes up hot. He covers his face with the cold bottom of his pillow. He thinks about the powwow”, [...] “We gotta get out without having to talk to her, she might have made us breakfast. We’ll tell her we’re not hungry.”(ORANGE, 2016, p. 104).

**Opal Viola:** As soon as she gets outside the front entrance, Opal sees the boys. But it’s just Looter and Lony. She runs to them. Looter’s still holding his phone. He’s pointing to it. She can’t hear him but she sees him mouthing, We been trying to call him. (ORANGE, 2016, p.223)

In view of this interrelationship of the characters correlated to the final event; the big PowWow of Oakland, it became possible to organize and elaborate an image to illustrate better how the spider web composes these relationships throughout the novel.

Illustration 1 - Spider-Web and Narrative Connections



Fonte: Elaborated for the author (2022).

To illustrate the interconnection between all of the characters presented in the novel, illustration 1 above presents the twelve characters distributed in a big spider-web that has the powwow as its center. In this case, what seems to be the central point for Native American culture is tradition, which is precisely what connects all the characters, and makes them present in Powwow. What seems to be the most important thing about the spider's web image, however, is the fact that a web always has its center, which unites all its elements, making the text a result of attaching, and bonding various little pieces of the narrative, with the objective of getting all interrelated, according to Wong (1995).

Still, according to the author Wong (1995) this connection between characters and plot, it is important to highlight that one thread can not be touched without sending vibrations throughout the entire network, even though these individual stories presented in the book can be read in isolation from the others, they can not be fully understood without considering its

connections with the others. With the narrative being governed by this metaphor, each character presents their respective set of events and their own perspective, but reading the book as a whole, thinking about the metaphor, provides a composite and organized picture of the multiplicity of events and characters, that makes them not hierarchically ordered or organized on the scale of most to least important issues; therefore, there is “a tendency to distribute value evenly among various elements”, and “no element is foregrounded” (WONG, 1995, p. 173).

## **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

In the construction of this work, many concerns arose in regard to some symbols in the Native American culture, and how some of them were inserted into the literature. It was investigated how they were represented in the book grounded on a theoretical basis as a subsidy to find the answers that were necessary to complete this work and to better understand the results of this research.

Before the investigation took place a deep reading was done and discussed with other members of the research project *Crenac*, which was important to reach the topic analyzed in this work, taking into consideration that during the period in which we carried out the reading project, we came across situations in the book such as the intertwining of the spider's web and these characters.

In this sense, it can be said that the objective of this work was achieved, considering that it was proposed to analyze and point out in which moments of the narrative and how it was present during the book, as well as understand the cultural basis literature of this people, that has expanded its knowledge and provided subsidies for us to appropriate the mechanisms of the narrative.

As seen in the analysis of this work the spider web manifests itself in three of the twelve characters in the book and its presence connects with events related to violence that occurs at the end of the book. Therefore, these data reiterate something previously stated; using some cultural artifacts and symbols, as in the case of the spider-web, can expand the meaning of a narrative and expand the possibilities of interpretation of the text.

This completes this research, emphasizing that knowing the cultural roots of a literary piece makes a unique contribution to the reading process, as in people's formation and life, because literary reading is an instrument that takes people to reflection and participation in

society, as helping subjects become true readers and not just decoders of signs and recognizers of codes

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