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LITERARY GEOGRAPHY AND THE NATIVE AMERICAN URBAN IMAGINARY IN TOMMY ORANGE'S *THERE THERE*

Ever since Tommy Orange's novel *There There* was published in 2018, Native American urban experience has been pointed out as the novel's crux. The characters in the novel are Native American but most of them feel estranged from the community since they do not live on reservations, whereby the general implication is that reservations have become ossified as identity markers for many Native Americans. This paper aims to analyze how the novel's characters use urban areas to create spaces of belonging, thus debunking the myth of the "reservation Indian". Aided by Edward Soja's theories on Thirdspace and Robert Tally's theory of topophrenia, the paper discusses regional powwows, non-profit organizations, American Indian cultural centers, and digital storytelling/narrativization as specific examples of the subjects' awareness of space, their engagement and inscription into space through the above-mentioned practices.

KEYWORDS: Native American; urban; spatiality, Tommy Orange; identity; Thirdspace; topophrenia

1. REDEFINITION THROUGH SPACE

> *Being Indian has never been about returning to the land. The land is everywhere or nowhere.* (Orange 2018: 14)

Native American urban identities have been one of the major critical and thematic concerns in literary works by Native Americans ever since the Relocation Era[1], as is the case with Tommy Orange's novel *There There* (2018). The novel tracks the lives of a large group of urban Native Americans living in Oakland, their living conditions, health issues, and their struggle with feelings of displacement in a predominantly white society and space. The novel contains *Prologue* in which the author offers several stories on the pre-Columbian era and the Native American settlements, thus establishing the importance of reclaiming native spaces. As Orange (Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma) mentioned in an interview, he strives to debunk the myth that Native American identity is tightly linked to reservations:

> *We must leave behind some of this narrow-minded thinking on what it means to be Indian, because all this reservation identity based stuff didn't exist before reservations, and what did it mean then? Reservation consciousness is an adaptation after removal, after being pushed there. Being Indian meant something totally different before reservations. So we can't just refer back to reservations like we've been on reservations forever. We have to think of the new thing that we're going to be. How are we going to remain Indian and not have to fall back on trope and tired stereotype? We have to make new ways.* (Tommy Orange gives voice)

There is a variety of terms that Native American activists and (literary) critics use to refer to the above-mentioned construction of new ways, terms such as: retraditionalize, retribalize, revive, make-unmake, etc[2]. The great majority of them refer to space[3] as one of the crucial identity axes in Native American communities. The spatial turn in the humanities beginning in the 1980s has provided a valuable theoretical framework for the analysis of space and its importance for human identity, as well as

1 The term refers to the 1950s and 1960s relocation policies of the US government whereby Native Americans would be moved from reservations to cities in order to assimilate. Background and supplementary information can be found in: Dunbar-Ortiz (2014).

2 More information can be found in: Barnd (2017) and Dennis (2006).

3 Spatial theorists differentiate between place and space, whereby place is physical and locational and space is the emotional dimension given to place. Additional information in: Soja (1996); Lefebvre (1991); Lefebvre (1996); Anzaldua (1987); Tuan (1977); Foucault (1971).

with theories applicable to the construction and analysis of space in (US) literature. Worldwide migrations and movements as consequences of the Second World War, decolonization, and globalization have definitely affected our understanding of geographical boundaries and have influenced geopolitical organization to a great extent. Developments in technology, on the other hand, introduced the compression of time and space, which deepened the human sensitivity to space (Tally 2013: 12-19).

For centuries, and particularly after the Second World War, the United States of America have been attracting people from all over the world, eventually gaining the recognition of a *melting pot,*[4] a pot of hyphenated identities, which brings together people from different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. Many communities have felt jeopardized either by poor socio-economic occurrences they found themselves in or by assimilation practices which threaten(ed) their racial or ethnic identities[5]. Rethinking space as something much more than physical surroundings, something that human beings construct and interact with, became highly prominent in marginalized communities. In Native American communities, however, the feelings of displacement have been present for centuries and became even more pronounced in the Relocation Era, during which large groups of Native Americans were moved to live outside reservations. Many of them have developed feelings of estrangement from the community, even in cases when their families have been living in cities for decades. They felt the need to reconceptualize the urban space into a space they belong to, a space which does not diminish their indigeneity as portrayed in Tommy Orange's debut novel *There There.*

This reading of *There There* resonates with theorists whose works focus on the experience of space in the city, or urban space, such as Edward Soja's theory of Thirdspace. Soja employs a trialectic approach to space, whereby he combines concepts and elements of space, usually observed individually, to create a meeting point that is much more inclusive and encompassing. Soja's approach to space combines physical space (Firstspace) with the imagined and perceptual dimension of that physical space (Secondspace) to create an amalgamation of the two, a third category (Thirdspace). Evading exclusive dialectics, Soja shifts the focus to Thirdspace which is not

4 The term was first used in a play by Israel Zangwill in 1908 to designate the influx of immigrants of different races and ethnicities and their merging in the United States. See more in: Kearny Datesman & et al. (2005).

5 US Border Studies, first developed for examining literature produced alongside the US-Mexican border, are worth mentioning here because of their consideration of marginal spaces or in-between spaces in which different identities converge and converse with one another, includign Native American communities. Gloria Anzaldúa, Mary Louise Pratt, José David Saldivar, Louis Owens, and Arnold Krupat are some names involved in Border studies. Supplementary information in: Wilson & Donnan (2016).

only an in-between space. It is much more dimensional and encompassing, a

> space where all places are, capable of being seen from every angle, each standing clear; but also a secret and conjectured object, filled with illusions and allusions, a space that is common to all of us yet never able to be completely seen and understood, an "unimaginable universe". (Soja 1996: 56)

Robert Tally's theory of topophrenia is particularly applicable to the Native American construction of urban space. Topophrenia refers to the subject's consciousness of space and its involvement with space, actions, and/or social arrangements. Laden with possibilities of an individual's self-projection and inscription into space, topophrenia is the essence of human existence and experience, according to Tally (2019: 15). Drawing upon Soja's Thirdspace theory and Tally's topophrenia,[6] this paper shall provide a spatialized reading of urban Native American identities in Tommy Orange's *There There*. The paper shall analyze characters' projections of indigeneity onto the urban context as a means to create a space of belonging and a space of identity actualization – a Thirdspace. The Big Oakland Powwow infused with electronic music, non-profit organizations, and digital storytelling/narrativization shall be analyzed as specific examples of the subjects' awareness of space and as examples of the Thirdspace.

It seems inevitable to discuss Native American urban identities without considering the socio-historical background of Native American urbanity. Orange's prologue to the novel provides a brief overview of Native American history and position since the colonization era to this day, accentuating the importance of socio-historical context for understanding Native American urban identities: "Getting us to cities was supposed to be the final, necessary step in our assimilation, absorption, erasure, the completion of a five-hundred-year-old genocidal campaign. But the city made us new, and we made it ours" (Orange 2018: 12). The quote alludes to the redefinition through space. On that note, the section that follows shall provide background to Native American urbanity, which will serve as the foundation to the discussion of urban identity and literary geography in the novel *There There* in the main section.

2. NATIVE AMERICAN ACTIVISM AND URBANIZATION

Although the urbanization of Native American communities has frequently been stud-

6 Due to the ambit of the paper, detailed discussion of the spatial turn as well as Soja's and Tally's theories will be avoided and the focus will be placed on the primary text.

ied in the context of World War II and the 1950s Relocation Act, more recent studies on Native American urbanity show great orientation toward examining Native American settlements from the pre-Columbian era. There are numerous archaeological sites that testify to the urbanity of the Northern American continent prior to European colonization. For example, the predecessors of the Pueblo communities, the Anasazi of the southwest, are well-known for their carefully planned landscape architecture. Mesa Verde National Park is considered "most well developed example" while Cahokia, located east of St. Louis, is "the largest settlement" found, to name a few (Snipp 2013: 174-189). *Urban American Indians: Reclaiming Native Space* (2016) by Donna Martinez et al focuses on patterns of Native American urban community formation and their relatedness to North American pre-Columbian civilizations:

> "Ancient North America was comprised of some of the largest urban populations in the world. Many are familiar with the history of civilizations in Greece, Italy, China, Egypt, Mexico, and Central and South America. Yet few are aware of North American ancient civilizations; the idea of American Indian cities runs contrary to stereotypes of nomadic American Indians on unsettled vacant land waiting to be "discovered". Ancient Native space was not racially pure; American Indian civilizations were urban, multi-tribal, and multilingual". (Martinez et al 2016: 32)

Even though assimilation of Native Americans is associated with 1950s relocations programs, the process of assimilation had begun much earlier through assimilation programs, mostly through boarding schools and "Indian Praying Towns" on Native American land in order to obtrude European epistemological and ontological patterns (Coulombe 2011: 21). Many Native American children acquired literacy and language as a means of talking/writing back. For example, Zitkala-Ša[7] who is notable for her collection of short stories titled *American Indian Stories*. In these stories, Zitkala-Ša recorded her boarding school experience and activism. She fought ardently for the enfranchisement and self-government of Native Americans, which eventually resulted in Indian Citizenship Act in 1924. The decades to follow were even more turbulent and yielded more activism and results.

Fueled by centuries-long repression and removal acts as well as by the American Civil Rights movement, Native American communities strove to reclaim their sovereignty in the 1960s. Their self-redefinition and self-determination resonated with the Red Power Movement which adopted a confrontational policy, e.g., occupying Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay (1969-1971) and Wounded Knee on Pine Ridge Reservation (1972) (Fixico 2002: 388-389) and the occupation of the Bureau of Indian

7 Originally published as *American Indian Stories* (1921). Hayworth Publishing House.

Affairs in Washington D.C. in 1972 (Coulombe 2011: 34-35). They sought to contest the policies of the termination era which aimed at ending the responsibilities of the federal government toward Native American nations thus encouraging them to migrate to urban areas. A series of other events also helped Native Americans to obtain publicity and national attention, such as: the 1973 television appearance of Sacheen Littlefeather at Academy Awards, nomination of Winona LaDuke by the Green Party as a vice president of the US in 1996 and 2000, John Herrington being the first Native American astronaut to go to space, the establishing of Native American studies programs first at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, then at the University of California and Berkeley (Coulombe 2011: 34).

Termination era and the activities of the Red Power Movement coincided with an increase in the number of literary works by Native Americans. Notably, the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *House Made of Dawn* by N. Scott Momaday was published in 1968 which is termed as the inception of Native American Literary Renaissance that encompasses numerous other names including James Welch, L.M. Silko, Joy Harjo, to name a few (Weaver 1997: 121). Some of the most prominent themes in their works include Native American tradition and urbanity, living inside/outside reservations, cultural and religious clashes; themes which, undoubtedly, are present in many of the subsequent literary works by Native Americans.

A year later, in 1969, *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* by Vine Deloria was published, "advancing a forceful academic tradition of indigenous intellectuals that continues today. Native American scholars are increasingly defining the terms of academic debate, calling for more attention to the political and economic threats to indigenous people, land, and sovereignty" (Coulombe 2011: 34-35). Deloria's work served as a springboard for a number of other subsequent (non-)literary works which searingly discussed the importance attached to land and space in Native American communities, particularly after the removal, migration to urban areas, and uranium mining and nuclear waste on tribal lands.[8] The above-mentioned activism spawned a variety of organizations and associations which were "created to ensure the continuance of American Indian cultures" and which "contribute to the continued retaking of Native space", especially in urban areas (Martinez 2016: 52). In addition to poor living conditions, *There There* faithfully portrays a number of challenges[9]

8 Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo) wrote extensively on the importance of the land and its mistreatment in the contemporary era. More can be found in Silko's collection of essays titled *Yellow Woman and the Beauty of the Spirit* (1996) and the novel *Ceremony* (1977).

9 The Bay Area Equity Atlas, a data support system designed to track economic (in)equity of California's tribal nations, offers more resources and information about living conditions, housing, health disparities, and educa

faced by urban indigenous populations in the Bay Area[10], such as scarce economic opportunities, poor housing, low-wage jobs, juvenile delinquency, alcoholism, and urban racial hierarchy. It also delineates how urban Native Americans construct and navigate their Native identities amid the above-mentioned tribulations.

3. NATIVE AMERICAN URBAN IMAGINARY IN *THERE THERE*

The beginning of the twenty-first century recorded a profusion of works on Native American urban life and space, mainly focusing on reclaiming Native space in urban areas and debunking the myth of the "reservation Indian". Contemporary Native American literature also shows orientation toward the issue of urbanity and space. When asked in an interview about the Native urban experience and the alienation from the land, Tommy Orange points out that it is not the land only but space in general that Native Americans value:

> *I think the idea of acclimating to a city environment is something that everyone has gone through. Also the way I frame environment through a Native lens has to do with understanding a way of life—to respect the "all your relations" thing. "All my relations" is a thing you hear in the Native community. It's a way to have a relationship to your environment that gets to the cities too. It sort of counteracts this "connection to the land" Native trope, it's a* way *to have connection to the land. Native people can have a connection to the city in the same way that you would any place. Like the way the sound of the freeway sounds like a river and how you can have that connection to it—a respect and love for the environment no matter where you're at.* (Tommy Orange gives voice)

Faced with alienation from community and poor living conditions, Orange's characters go through severe internal conflicts and identity issues caused no longer by confinement in reservations but by predominantly poor living conditions. The novel's prologues pose questions about home and native identity which is confirmed through that home or space of belonging. One of the prologues discusses home as a fluid space that is constructed by the individual:

> "An Urban Indian belongs to the city, and cities belong to the earth. Everything here is formed in relation to every other living and nonliving thing from the earth. All our relations. […] Urban

tion: https://bayareaequityatlas.org/about#us.

10 Bay Area American Indian Council (BAAIC), a non-profit organization for the promotion of rights of Native Americans in the Bay Area, was founded in 1996. BAAIC organizes cultural events and cultural mentorship, after-school courses and programs for 11 counties in California. More information available at: http://www.baaic.org/.

> Indians feel at home walking in the shadow of a downtown building. We came to know the downtown Oakland skyline better than we did any sacred mountain range, the redwoods in the Oakland hills better than any other deep wild forest. We know the sound of the freeway better than we do rivers, the howl of distant trains better than wolf howls, we know the smell of gas and freshly wet concrete and burned rubber better than we do the smell of cedar or sage or even fry bread—which isn't traditional, like reservations aren't traditional". (Orange 2018: 4)

The author also skillfully problematizes the post-colonial identification frames that have become ossified inside and outside Native American communities, i.e. the trope of reservation Indians and reservations as fixed places of Native American residence. The consciousness of and close connection to urban architecture, e.g. skyline, freeway, shows characters' rootedness in that space and the characters' inscription of those spaces with home-like qualities. Most characters move from one end of the city to another using cars, buses, bikes, and BART, or even to some other parts of the southwestern USA, eventually coming back to Oakland. Their acts of walking the streets, observing skylines, or using public transport are acts of writing and interpreting those spaces as their own: "appropriation of the topographic system on the part of the pedestrian (just as the speaker appropriates and takes on the language) […] is a spatial acting-out of the place (just as the speech act is an acoustic acting-out of language)" (de Certeau 1984: 97-98). Through their movements, the characters achieve narrative development which is intertwined with the use of technologies and the Internet which further help them overcome feelings of isolation and marginalization in the contemporary urban context. Thus, urban space is performed, reclaimed, and narrativized as a new category – a Thirdspace.

As noticed earlier, contemporary Native American scholarship concentrates on reinventing and reclaiming native spaces, which is also illustrated in the novel through Dene Oxendene (Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma) who thinks about Oakland as the land of his ancestors. In a wish to deploy his dying uncle's project of filming urban Native American experience, Dene appears before a panel of judges to receive a grant. In the waiting room, Dene starts a conversation with a non-Native man, Rob, whom he asks if he is from Oakland. The man's reply that "*no one's really from here*" (Orange 2018: 34) leaves Dene pondering about his ancestry and belonging in Oakland as a Native American. Incensed by Rob's remark, Dene feels an urge "to explain that they're not the same, that Dene is Native, born and raised in Oakland, from Oakland" (Orange 2018: 35). For Dene, Oakland is his "*buried ancestral land*"

(Orange 2018: 35), he did not only grow up in Oakland but his ancestors had inhabited the area before the European arrival. Dene's tendency to map Oakland symbolically and diachronically helps him evade spatial anxiety imposed by alienation from the reservation community and from the entrapment in poor living conditions. He takes an active role in constructing space or even reconstructing Oakland into a home space – in reclaiming Oakland.

For many Native Americans, moving outside the reservation boundaries, both physical and imaginary, means to contravene their Native Americanness. As an illustration, the protagonist of Sherman Alexie's novel *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* wants to attend school outside the reservation and is immediately condemned by the community for doing so. Similarly, Orange and his narrator, more openly than Alexie, aim to destabilize the idea that reservations are the loci of Native American belonging. Orange's characters debunk reservation identity and reservation consciousness by inscribing themselves into the city and its landmarks, as mentioned above: "We know the sound of the freeway better than we do rivers, the howl of distant trains better than wolf howls, we know the smell of gas and freshly wet concrete and burned rubber better than we do the smell of cedar or sage or even fry bread" (Orange 2018: 14). Through their acts of spatial engagement, they show that reservations and Native Americans are not inextricably linked.

New ways or identification frames for urban Native Americans are reflected in the blend of cultural and traditional modes of expression and urban environment. Orange portrays the establishing of different organizations, associations, cultural centers, regional powwows, non-profit organizations in the act of space-making:

> "We found one another, started up Indian Centers, brought out our families and powwows, our dances, our songs, our beadwork. We bought and rented homes, slept on the streets, under freeways; we went to school, joined the armed forces, populated Indian bars in the Fruitvale in Oakland and in the Mission in San Francisco. We lived in boxcar villages in Richmond. We made art and we made babies and we made way for our people to go back and forth between reservation and city". (Orange 2018: 12)

The Big Oakland Powwow is the fulcrum of the novel, all the characters presented in the novel are preparing for the powwow. Native Americans come from different parts of the USA to attend the powwow or to serve as emcees, dancers, and drummers. In other words, all members are included to keep up the communal spirit and perpetuate the sense of collective identity. The powwow serves not only as a gathering but as a channel of identity expression that has gained more weight and acclaim in the

contemporary era. After the removal from reservations to more urban environments, many Native Americans have been facing racism and discrimination, so the perpetuation and appropriation of their traditions was strongly needed for them to "maintain distinct identities in places that can be strongly anti-Native" (Johnson 2013: 224). Powwows have strong spatial dimensions since the ground is considered sacred after receiving blessings from the elders. For urban Native Americans, construction of space and immersion of oneself into that space generates a sense of orientation and belonging: "We made powwows because we needed a place to be together. Something intertribal, something old, something to make us money, something we could work toward, for our jewelry, our songs, our dances, our drum" (Orange 2018: 110). Powwows serve as spaces that give substance to the characters who feel lost by allowing them to (re)connect with the community and "recognize their shared sense of identity" (Krivokapić & Runtić 2020: 21).

Powwows are also spaces of learning, mainly for the youth unknowledgeable about their traditions or that have quandaries navigating their Native identity. For instance, Orvil finds regalia in his grandmother's closet and furtively puts it on believing it would solidify his identity since he believes he does not know how to be a Native American: "And virtually everything Orvil learned about being Indian he'd learned virtually. From watching hours and hours of powwow footage, documentaries on YouTube, by reading all that there was to read on sites like Wikipedia, PowWows.com, and Indian Country Today" (Orange 2018: 97). The virtual world provides him with *a window*, a new space, in which he can perform his Native American identity. In this way, technology feeds new expressions of indigeneity in the urban area or in the globalized world.

Older generations of urban Native Americans like Orvil's grandmother, Opal Viola Victoria Bear Shield, report different methods of keeping in touch with the community. She recalls numerous programs for Native youth while she was growing up in Oakland during which she learned from elders how to make regalia and other ornaments (Orange 2018: 130). Many urban Native American communities have established Indian centers[11] through which they would relay important information, languages, learn about and teach traditions and ceremonies. These centers usually have tribal councils presided over by the elders who provide the community with guidance and reassurance (Sage 2016: 68-69). Impartation of knowledge and trans-

11 Many of the above-mentioned centers have official web pages which showcase their mission and work. More can be found at, for example: https://denverindiancenter.org/, http://indiancenter.org/, http://www.maicnet.org/, https://www.friendshiphousesf.org/. Some of the websites have sections on elder services with detailed information on the enrollment criteria and application (e.g. https://www.cheyenneandarapaho-nsn.gov/elders).

mission of oral tradition, albeit in a different form, and environment shows that the communal sense of identity did not vanish in urban areas. Traditional roles, such as those of storytellers and grandmothers, are preserved in the urban environment and its challenges. Grace Sage maintains that "American Indian identity did not disappear in the city; rather, it developed in complex ways that combined elements of tribal culture, a broader sense of 'being Indian,' and the integration of experiences of rural reservation and urban life" (2016: 74).

Edwin Black, a mixed-blood Native American, analyzes the coalescence of tradition and the modern through powwow music. He refers to a group of First Nations DJs and producers, A Tribe Called Red, who "make electronic music with samples from powwow drum groups. It's the most modern, or most postmodern, form of Indigenous music [Edwin has ever] heard that's both traditional and new-sounding" (Orange 2018: 65). The group is mapping space in and through music, permuting their indigeneity and transcending dialectics of being and belonging which tacitly requires Native Americans either to live on reservations to be Native Americans or to completely assimilate in the mainstream culture.[12]

The electronic powwow music, for example, is a Thirdspace, it is a new category that talks back to the either/or positions and spaces: "it does not derive simply from an additive combination of its binary antecedents but rather from a disordering, deconstruction, and tentative reconstitution of their presumed totalization producing an open alternative that is both similar and strikingly different" (Soja 1996: 61). Soja's notion of *thirding* and Thirdspace concurs well with Gerald Vizenor's (Anishinaabe) concept of survivance which is a portmanteau of survival and resistance coined to signify Native American cultural endurance and continuity.[13] The acts of spatiality and of Thirdspace-making are pure examples of survivance: "But what we are is what our ancestors did. How they survived" (Orange 2018: 13).

Dene Oxendene's storytelling project is yet another example of Thirdspace. Dene applies for a grant to film other Native Americans telling stories about their urban experience without predetermined questions. By creating a digital space of gathering of urban Native Americans, Dene not only brings their urban experience to light but also challenges the existing stereotypes and provides guidance to those who feel lost:

> "There are so many stories here. I know this means a lot of editing, a lot of watching, and a lot of listening, but that's just what our community needs considering how long it's been ignored, has remained invisible. I'm gonna set up a room down at the Indian Center. What I want to do

12 More about electronic powwow music can be found in: Charleyboy (2015).

13 More information to be found in: Vizenor (1999) & Vizenor (ed.) (2008).

> is to pay the storytellers for their stories. Stories are invaluable, but to pay is to appreciate. And this is not just qualitative data collection. I want to bring something new to the vision of the Native experience as it's seen on the screen. We haven't seen the Urban Indian story. What we've seen is full of the kinds of stereotypes that are the reason no one is interested in the Native story in general, it's too sad, so sad it can't even be entertaining, but more importantly because of the way it's been portrayed, it looks pathetic." (Orange 2018: 36)

Dene uses technology to ensure the continuation of storytelling, as one of the pillars of communal identity, while at the same time engendering a shared (virtual) space. He believes stories help Native people orient themselves vis-à-vis one another and other entities, similar to Michel de Certeau's theories on the equivalence of space and a narrative. To tell a story means to map, to narrativize means to spatialize, according to de Certeau (1984: 91-130). The stories that Dene wants to hear would serve the Native urban population as guidance in Oakland that is through these stories transformed into a new Oakland, an abstract space inhabited by urban Natives' systems of signs and practices.

Stories and storytelling in Native American communities have different purposes,[14] but generally they are observed as integral to individual's and community's well-being. For them, these virtual spaces enabled by technology are a real opportunity for mutual communication and practical confirmation of a Thirdspace or home that is not a closed space in the shape of reservations or poor living conditions in the urban environment. The role of storytelling is to aid self-recovery, reintegration into the community, and inscription into space (Kondali 2017: 113-137).

Finally, the human need to narrativize is a spatializing practice and space at the same time, as Gerhard van den Heveer notices: "literary production itself has a spatial context, to which it refers either implicitly or explicitly through its coded rhetoric, and into which it functions and projects as a material instance of space-making itself" (2017: 70). Similarly, Robert T. Tally Jr. asserts that "narrative also makes place, establishing relations among places and assigning various levels of significance to different spaces and places" (2019: 20). Even though the spatial turn in literary studies took place under the aegis of late twentieth century socio-philosophical thought, it has been present in Native American systems of belief longer than that. Native American scholarship and literature often elucidates the strong cultural embeddedness of

14 This is due to the heterogeneity of Native American nations, and this statement is not meant to homogenize and generalize Native American beliefs but to point out a shared belief.

maps, places, and narratives:

> “Indigenous peoples have always had maps. We’ve had songs, chants, prayers, migration stories, shell arrangements, drawings on hides, on wood, and stone. These maps aid our memories; they give reference to our places of origin … places we hope to go. They also … define our relationship … because they are ours … we can relate.” (qtd. in Sage 2016: 56)

With their stories, the characters in the novel create a map which would serve as orientation, just like the BART map that they use, implying that even traditional Native American mapping can be adapted in the urban context: “When you hear stories from people like you, you feel less alone. When you feel less alone, and like you have a community of people behind you, alongside you” (Orange 2018: 98).

Orange, on the other hand, does the mapping with the novel for the reader. He says his target audience of readers is primarily his urban Native audience that is underrepresented in literature: “I came to find there was very little in literature about Oakland, and almost nothing about Native people living in cities. In fact, the Native fiction I read made me feel less Native” (Q&A: Tommy Orange). Writing a novel about and for urban Native Americans would not only provide a shared space between a Native author and the reader but would also help reinscribe the Native American urban experience and counter cliché-ridden representations. The gist is that the reader orients itself within the text, the reader takes on a performative role in the text and translates the text into a mental image that is further transposed in the relationship between the reader and the world.

4. CONCLUSION

There There is a considerable portrayal of the pervasive effects of displacement, with a strong emphasis on the politics of identity and its interplay with space. Namely, the author’s and the characters’ exploration and rendition of the urban experience show that this experience defies fixed definitions. It is rather transformative as the characters navigate between urbanity and indigeneity, successfully circumventing both binarities and creating a space where urbanity and indigeneity reside without excluding each other. The space they create resists and deconstructs the “reservation Indian” stereotype. By mapping Oakland with their Native hubs, centers, traditions, electronic powwow music, digital storytelling, the characters turn Oakland into a space of belonging, thereby transcending different types of confinement. The analysis of the novel also reveals the potentials of technology in creating a home-like space or be-

coming that space itself. Through their acts of space-making, Orange's characters narrativize their experience; for them, mapping and narrativizing have a liberating effect. Narrativization could also have a didactic purpose for the general audience, both Native and non-Native, that seems to be negligent of the urban Native American story, as outlined by the novel's central character.

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KNJIŽEVNA GEOGRAFIJA I URBANI IMAGINARIJ AMERIČKIH STAROSJEDILACA U ROMANU *TAMO TAMO* TOMMYA ORANGEA

Sažetak:

Urbano iskustvo američkih starosjedilaca se ističe kao srž romana *Tamo Tam*o autora Tommya Oranga sve od njegovog objavljivanja 2018. godine. Likovi u romanu jesu pripadnici američkog starosjedilačkog stanovništva, ali većina njih se osjeća otuđeno od zajednice jer žive van rezervata, pri čemu je opća implikacija da su se rezervati osificirali kao markeri identiteta za mnoge od njih. Cilj ovog rada je analizirati kako likovi u romanu koriste urbana područja za stvaranje prostora pripadnosti, time potkopavajući mit o "rezervatskom Indijancu". Uz pomoć teorije Edwarda Soje o Trećeprostoru i teorije topofrenije Roberta Tallya, u radu se razmatraju regionalne "powwow" manifestacije, neprofitne organizacije, starosjedilački kulturalni centri, i digitalno pripovijedanje/ narativizacija kao specifični primjeri svijesti subjekata o prostoru, njihovog sudjelovanja u prostoru i upisivanja sebe u prostor kroz te prakse.

Ključne riječi: američko starosjedilačko; urbano; spacijalnost; Tommy Orange; identitet; Trećeprostor; topofrenija

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