

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

This study will focus on analyzing *There There* novel by Tommy Orange. *There There* was published in 2018 and become the debut novel of Tommy Orange as the writer. This novel talks about the history, experience, and identity of urban Native Americans. Each chapter follows a different character, describing their story and why they went to powwow. There are twelve characters who have their own reason for traveling and participating in the Big Oakland Powwow in California, and each of the characters is Native American. In addition, *There There* narrate the colonialism experiences of Native Americans in the fifteenth century, detailing the genocide and dehumanization of the colonizer (West nation) and narrates in the prologue by an unnamed narrator. Furthermore, this novel tells each character's history and struggles in preserving culture and finding their identity as Native Americans.

Native Americans come from various ethnic groups such as Apache, Mohawk, Blackfoot, etc. Indian is the term given by Christopher Columbus to the Native Americans. Columbus was a European explorer who discovered the Americas in 1492. At the same time, his discovery also destroyed Indian culture. In the long term, this discovery gave birth to a new nation (White American) on the American continent, which very quickly distinguished itself from the Indians as the natives.

The European colonization of America resulted in a sharp decline in the Native American population.

The population decline was caused by war, ethnic extermination, to slavery by the colonial nation. After the United States was founded, wars and massacres against Native Americans continued. They are often expelled from their ancestral lands and forced to submit to discriminatory government policies. Since the 1960s, the African-American Civil Rights Movement has made Native's lives slightly better. This movement refers to movements in the United States prohibiting racial discrimination against African Americans and other racial minorities and restoring their voting rights. Today, about five million indigenous people have estimated in the United States of America. As many as seventy-eight percent of Native Americans live in California, Arizona, and Oklahoma. Generally, Native Americans live in urban areas and are known as urban Native Americans.

Urban Native Americans are the representative of Native Americans who live in urban areas (NUIFC, 2008). Urban Native Americans are widely spread in big cities like California, Arizona, and Oklahoma and in small cities in America. They are connected through communities and organizations involving Native Americans. Lobo, Talbot, and Morris (2016) stated that many urban Indian communities are not defined as a place but as the network of relationships that bond them. That's how they established and maintained their relationship as Native Americans.

Native Americans are considered a minority ethnic group, equated with Black Americans (African-American). As a result, they get a lot of discrimination, racism, injustice, and others. It is a form of current colonialism experienced by Native Americans, where colonialism is not represented by war but through immoral actions. The impact of colonialism narrows the space for Native Americans to show their culture and identity as Native. It is shown in the life of Native Americans, which is dominated by Western culture (White Americans). Colonialism is one of the popular issues widely discussed in postcolonial studies. This study also aims to uncover the actions of colonialism that still occur in the ex-colonial countries.

Postcolonialism is defined as a social study that emerged in the 1970s. Postcolonialism represents the process of oppression and the act of imperialism, which is still ongoing among all kinds of societies in their organization and continuity practices (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1995). This theory is part of a theory that examines the fields of philosophy, film, literature, and others that have the role of colonialism in it. Postcolonial studies also try to prove the practice of colonialism behind several literary works. Literature work is considered to have power either as a form of power domination or vice versa. In general, postcolonialism is known as a theory to understand the ex-colonial society in the modern era. On the other hand, it refers to objects before and during postcolonialism.

In the era of colonialism, there usually was a mixing of cultures between the two cultures caused by the dominance of the colonial culture that affected the lives of

the Native people. “Culture results from the complexity of the relationship between communities to other communities” (Efrilia & Setiawan, 2020:34). The influence of colonial culture, in the end, created identity problems for the Native people. Identity construction is one of the conditions experienced by most of the natives in the novel *There There*. In postcolonial studies, Homi K. Bhabha became a theorist in the discussion of identity construction. Therefore, this study will apply Homi K. Bhabha's theory of hybridity.

Tommy Orange's *There There* depicts the lives of Native Americans living in urban areas. They struggle to find the authenticity of their identity as Native Americans. In addition, this novel addresses the colonial problems experienced by Native Americans. These issues have drawn attention to how colonialism still works in today's era, making this novel even more enjoyable. The issue of identity construction is the writer's motivation to study it further. According to the writer, the issue of identity construction is not only reflected in literary works such as in the novel *There There*. However, this issue has become a problem that many people are experiencing today. Therefore, it is interesting for the writer to know why identity construction should be done by analyzing the narrative and dialogue in the novel.

This novel has attracted many researchers because of several issues, one thing that makes this research different is that the writer examines in great detail the identity problems experienced by the characters in the novel. The writer also chooses the topic of identity construction as the focus of this research. Furthermore, this

research is expected to be enlightening for further research, so the writer decided to write a thesis entitled *Urban Native American Identity: Postcolonial Study in Tommy Orange's There There*.

## **1.2 Problem of the Study**

According to the background of the study, the problem of this study is as follow:

How is the identity construction of urban Native Americans delineated in Tommy Orange's *There There*?

## **1.3 Objective of the Study**

According to the problem of the study, the objective of this study is as follow:

To identify how is the identity construction of Urban Native Americans delineated in Tommy Orange's *There There*.

## **1.4 Use of the Study**

According to the objective of this study, the research supposed could give several advantages as follows:

### **1.4.1 Theoretical Use**

This research is supposed to give scientific benefits to readers. This research is expected to provide an easy understanding of the issue of identity construction in Tommy Orange's *There There*. In addition, this research is also expected to provide an easy understanding of Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity. And the last, this research is expected to be enlightenments for further study.

#### **1.4.2 Practical Use**

This research is expected to provide additional knowledge for readers about the identity construction issue, especially in the novel *There There*. And this research is expected to be one of the relevant references in understanding the concept of hybridity for future researchers.

#### **1.5 Scope of the Study**

The research conducted to identify how is Tommy Orange delineated the identity construction of urban Native Americans in his novel *There There*. In addition, this study will discuss the struggle of Native American's life in the postcolonial era as delineated in the novel. To delineate the issue, the writer will apply the postcolonial approach, especially Homi K. Bhabha's hybridity theory.