

The “Prologue” in Tommy Orange’S There, There: Reinventing the Introductory Section

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Abstract : The proposed paper exams prologues in 20th and 21st century American literature in order to show how Native American writer Tommy Orange’s Prologue in his 2018 novel There, There is different. In an interview about his 2018 novel There, There, explains he feels “a kind of burden to catch the general reader up with what really happened, because history has got it so wrong and still continue to” (Laubernds). Orange, thus, includes a “Prologue” in his novel to do this work, catching readers upon Native Americans and their history. Prologues are usually from the narrator’s voice, a character’s voice, or even from a fictionalized version of the author, but the tone of Orange’s “Prologue” is that of a non-fictional first-person essayist. Examining prologues in American literature posits Orange’s prologue outside the norm. This paper also examines other introductory sections, the preface, in particular. The research and examination reveal that Orange is adding his personal voice in the Prologue to the multiple narrators of the novel, and his is the voice of a writer who knows that his audience comes to his novel with a plethora of misinformation. The truths he tells are horrifying and hopeful. He tells of Thanksgiving as a “land deal” and a “successful massacre,” but he also tells readers how urban Indians have found a sense of the land, even through concrete. Native American writers contributed and still contribute to the genre of autobiography in ways that have changed our understanding of this genre. This examination of Orange’s Prologue reveals the new and unexpected way to view this often under-examined introductory section, the prologue.

Keywords : native american literature, prologues, prefaces, 20th century american literature

Conference Title : ICALPP 2022 : International Conference on American Literature, Poetry and Prose

Conference Location : Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Conference Dates : December 20-21, 2022