



**MA in Construction and Representation
of Cultural Identities**

**“An NDN Home Is Like a Dandelion”: Queer Indigenous Orientations in
Joshua Whitehead’s *Jonny Appleseed* (2018)**

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Abstract

Ever since Joshua Whitehead published his debut novel, *Jonny Appleseed* (2018), the (inter)national acknowledgements for his ground-breaking work have only flourished. The story follows its eponymous protagonist, a young Two-Spirit, Indigiqueer man who lives in the city, through a physical and a mental journey back to the reservation to attend his stepfather's funeral and visit his kokum's grave. *Jonny Appleseed* constitutes a homecoming narrative that conflates different temporalities and spaces in a non-linear account, from his apartment in the city to his kokum's house in his childhood memories; thus, creating a multidimensional tapestry that explores the gendered, sexual, ethnic and class configurations of the spaces – and times – that he inhabits.

By using the novel as a key to enter the emerging field of Queer Indigenous phenomenology, I aim to unravel the temporal and spatial possibilities of approaching Two-Spirit, Queer Indigenous home(making) by utilizing the dandelion as a metaphor for – Two-Spirit – Queer Indigenous frames of reference and home configurations. Moreover, departing from the idea that Whitehead's account is devised as a healing and transformative journey, this dissertation examines how the text inscribes queer Indigenous futurities throughout the novel. The first chapter: "Dandelion Clocks: Queer Indigenous Orientations" establishes the (temporal) framework from which the novel will be analyzed; then, "Roo(u)t(e)s: Memories of Inhabiting Home" dwells in Jonny's childhood memories, marked by the "traditional" Indigenous heteropatriarchal reservation and his kokum's house as a queer space, to demonstrate that "the Native Child was already queer" (Smith 48). The third chapter: "Flower/Pest: Present Being-in-Time" confronts the city and the reservation, as well as the virtual space that Jonny "creates" with his apartment in the city to reveal the converging temporalities and frames of

reference that he encounters in that porous dwelling. And finally, “Seeds: Queer Indigenous Futurities” considers the prophecies in the novel as expanding the limits of Queer Indigenous homes.

Keywords: *Jonny Appleseed* (2018), Joshua Whitehead, Two-Spirit, Home, Queer Indigenous Futurities, Dandelion.

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¹ Thank you, Dr Joshua Whitehead, for your work, for *Jonny Appleseed*, for sharing your knowledge and inspiring this work.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Maybe we're more like dandelions, a weed that's a pest in the yard but pretty to look at. Yeah, an NDN home is like a dandelion: pretty but disposable and imbued with a million little seeds that dissolve into wishes for little white hands that pluck.

My home is full of hope and ghosts.

(Joshua Whitehead, *Jonny Appleseed*, 20)

Home has increasingly become an exciting area of studies that has expanded how we can come to understand our own identities by examining its spatiality, the relationships there established – as well as beyond it –, and the individual or collective emotions evoked by/in it. Identified by Alison Blunt as a multi-scalar “space of belonging and alienation, intimacy and violence, desire and fear,” the material and imaginary geographies of home have grown out of the spatiality of the house(hold), out of the domestic towards a more global scale “in both material and symbolic ways” (3). In their seminal work *Home*, Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling articulate an entryway to the study of homes and dwellings from four different yet closely interconnected angles: the representation of homes, houses as homes, home as nation-empire, and transnational homes; acknowledging that home is a converging site of different perspectives and lived experiences, troubling its notion as a single, fixed place “where identity is grounded... by pointing to the complex and politicized interplay of home and identity over space and time” (21). In this influential work, they write what would be one of the first thorough approaches to the question of Indigenous² homemaking, considering both “the politics of home

² In this dissertation, the term “Indigenous” will be used as a collective identification for the Native peoples that expand across and beyond the United States, wherein the term “Native American” is the most commonly used. Although “Native” and “Indigenous” can – and have – be(en) written interchangeably in the some of the cited sources in this paper, “Indigenous” will be favoured in my own writing because of both Joshua Whitehead and Jonny Appleseed’s subject positions, as Natives belonging to the First Nations in Canada. Moreover, as the use of “Indigenous” also conveys a transcultural integration of diverse and multiple native communities under the

and belonging for settlers and Indigenous peoples as they are materialized in relation to the city and the nation” (185). This dissertation is interested in further unveiling the latter.

By addressing Canada and Australia’s effects of settler colonialism regarding indigeneity, home, and belonging, Blunt and Dowling discuss the ongoing repercussions of violent dispossessions of and relocation of Indigenous peoples from their homes (175, 179); consequently, transforming the spaces they – are forced to – inhabit as “unhomely homes” (173). This perspective, albeit pivotal, has nonetheless overlooked several factors on Indigenous homemaking that this dissertation strives to answer. For instance, how are these unhomely homes configured? Who is included and excluded in these spaces? Do all Indigenous identities occupy the spaces that constitute these ‘unhomely homes’ in the same way? Apart from the colonial, how have gendered, sexual, racial, and class intersections modified the space? Can we talk about the reserve – as an embodiment of Indigenous peoples – and its orientations from Euro-American frames of reference? To what extent can the space of the reservation be decolonized? What forms of backgrounding shape Indigenous perceptions and sense of belonging, given that they have been “displaced and dispossessed”? Can the ‘unhomely’ home become ‘homey’? And if so, how? How does this shape the idea of the community? What are the metaphors that can better describe these spatial configurations?

Concerning this last question, there exists a tradition of symbolically connecting Home/Houses to diverse images that are associated with the configuration of “identity”; such as those concerning the body (relating body parts to different rooms or associating gendered bodies to restricted spaces), the psyche (for instance, as explorations of the house as a

same umbrella term, I consider necessary to clarify that I do not mean to generalize the range of individual communities and experiences under (neo)colonialism as the same.

representation of the author's/character's psychological state) or the self (Mezei and Briganti 841-42). Moreover, homes can also be associated with other dwellings; for instance, when combined with the prison, there is an understanding that such a space is shaped by its disciplinary/punishing/surveillance character. Nevertheless, I had never read – until now – any instances of houses/homes as being metaphorically related to flowers.

The title of this thesis, “An NDN Home Is Like a Dandelion,” refers to one of the ground-breaking reflections on the idea of home in Joshua Whitehead’s *Jonny Appleseed* (2018), which has inspired this analysis not only thematically, as it has prompted a reflection on queer homemaking and temporalities from an Indigenous, Two-Spirit³ perspective⁴; but also, structurally, as I will explain in the following pages.

Ever since Joshua Whitehead published *Jonny Appleseed*, his first novel, the (inter)national acknowledgements for his debut have only kept on flourishing. Whitehead, an Oji-Cree, Two-Spirit, Indigiqueer storyteller and scholar from the Peguis First Nation (Treaty 1) has become the first Two-Spirit Indigenous writer to win the Canada Reads, as well as having received the 2019 Lambda Literary Award⁵ and the George Bugnet Award for Fiction;

³ The term Two-Spirit was coined in the 1990s in the Third Annual Inter-tribal, Native American, First Nations, Gay and Lesbian American Conference; serving as an umbrella term that mobilized the Euro-American category of “berdache.”

⁴ Before entering into the core of this dissertation, I must state that what is here written is based on an interpretation from someone who, as a white, non-Indigenous woman, may unintentionally overlook specific issues that, because of my own background, I have not experienced myself. Since this is the position from where I am writing, I have strived to include Two-Spirit, and Indigenous authors as the foundation of the conversation and my reading.

⁵ In 2018, Whitehead actually withdrew from his nomination for the Lambda Literary Award for his previous collection of poetry, *Full-Metal Indigiqueer* (2017). See Lai, Larissa. “Joshua Whitehead: Why I’m Withdrawing From My Lambda Literary Award Nomination.” *Tiahouse: The Insurgent Architect’s House for Creative Writing*, 14 March 2018, www.tiahouse.ca/joshua-whitehead-why-im-withdrawing-from-my-lambda-literary-award-nomination

apart from being shortlisted for other prizes like the Governor General’s Literary Award 2018, Indigenous Voices Awards 2019, or Amazon Canada First Novel Award 2019.

This milestone for both Two-Spirit and Indigenous literatures underscores that these budding and long-established⁶ voices must be heard (inter)nationally since they do (re)present outstanding, thought-provoking possibilities to address the outlasting consequences of (neo)colonialism in a myriad of ways: from questioning the enduring stereotypes that have constrained the identities of Indigenous peoples as “timeless,” to defying the non-Indigenous gaze that expects their writing to be “full of pathos and victimization” (Brant 39). After having been constantly overlooked and neglected by Western academia, Indigenous and Two-Spirit writing is beginning to receive the attention that it deserves, evidencing the ubiquity of the experiences described, without dismissing their distinct subject positions. As Beth Brant claims in *Writing as Witness*: “We write about being human. We write about our relationship with Earth and Her creatures. All of this is political, but when has our writing *not* been that way?” (37-38, original emphasis). In this way, Indigenous writing becomes – and has *always* been – a political act. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith contends in *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999), writing and storytelling are fundamental, since: “Each individual story is powerful. But the point about the stories is not that they simply tell a story or tell a story simply. These new stories contribute to a collective story in which every indigenous person has a *place*” (144, original emphasis).

⁶ Authors such as Tomson Highway, Louise Erdrich, Maria Campbell, Lee Maracle and Eden Robinson have indisputably made a room of their own with their ground-breaking, imaginative writings on and from Indigenous perspectives; however, their voices are rarely heard in larger academic contexts. Moreover, there are other authors such as Beth Brant, Janice Gould, Chrystos, Qwo-Li Driskill, and so many more, that have changed and still continue to transform the literary representations of Indigenous identities.

Jonny Appleseed is indeed such a story. The novel's plot is relatively simple: Jonny, the eponymous protagonist, needs to return to the reservation from the city to attend his stepfather's funeral and, to do so, he needs to earn enough money with his cybersex occupation in a week. However, the novel interweaves many different temporalities, spaces, and affective relations along his physical way back "home" that a lifetime has passed in front of our eyes when Jonny arrives. Whitehead constructs this "coming-of-age" novel "upside down," subverting Euro-American chronological perception and "turning back time" to present an account of how Jonny grew up as a queer Indigenous child in a heteronormative reservation. Although the physical journey back home is motivated by his stepfather's death, there are other affective connections that direct his mental journey *everywhere*⁷: from the past, through memories that are evoked by sensations, objects that are encountered along his way, experiences with the people he loves, in particular, his grandmother; throughout the present, as he struggles to orient himself in the city while remembering his home; and towards the future, by creating a healing and transformative journey that is filled with dreams and prophecies, stories and spirits from the past that come back to life to guide his way back home. Thus, the novel constructs a multifaceted, multidimensional place that is composed of many other spaces that exceed the limits of the reservation, such as the city, the streets and his apartment, the "virtual" platform he creates for his cybersex work, restaurants, the school, the summer camp, the mall, his kokum's house, Tias's house, photographs of other spaces... all converging in an unordered way, like a rhizome that expands throughout time and space. Thus, the novel takes disorientation as a form of dwelling and inhabiting spaces; it is a call to getting lost and finding one's way in the, at times conflicting, routing map that Jonny navigates.

⁷ My emphasis, I want to refer either to physical spaces and/or to temporal dimensions as encompassed in this "everywhere".

In this manner, Whitehead writes a beautiful “homecoming” story⁸ that narrates Jonny’s journey out from and back to the reserve, interweaving memory, stories, and dreams, as well as personal and collective traumas. In Joshua Whitehead’s words, the power of this story resides in it being “a key to community, to self, overall to healing and acceptance” (Jacobs and Whitehead 00:06:30 – 00:07:00). By using *Jonny Appleseed* as a key to enter the conversation of home, homemaking practices, and queer phenomenology, I aim to “open the door” to Queer Indigenous, Two-Spirit conceptions and configurations of home⁹.

Previous attention¹⁰ to Whitehead’s novel has revolved around “the economies of care¹¹” that direct the relationality between Jonny and his social circle – mainly composed of Indigenous women, such as his mother, his kokum, Peggy, a very resourceful Indigenous woman who drives him back to the rez, or Jordan, the “toughest” of the group; as well as by his best friend and lover, Tias. Reviews have notably praised its optimistic and humoristic outtake despite the trauma and the violence displayed in the novel, coinciding in the power of

⁸ This theme is actually ubiquitous in Indigenous literatures, especially by those who strive to heal the communities that have been (double)colonized. See, for instance: Fachinger, Petra. “Writing ‘Home’: The Healing Power of Métis Storytelling in Cherie Dimaline’s *Red Rooms* and *The Girl Who Grew a Galaxy*.” *Studies in Canadian Literature/Études en Littérature Canadienne*, vol. 43, no. 1, 2018, pp.146-167.

⁹ There have been few instances of “academic” approaches to the question of Indigenous “home(making),” and even fewer if the Two-Spirit question is introduced. For some instances, see: Chang, Li Ping. “(Re)locations of Home in Louise Erdrich’s *The Game of Silence*.” *Children’s Literature in Education*, vol. 42, no. 2, 2011, pp. 132-147; or Fachinger, Petra, as previously introduced. However, the most notable works are those by Rifkin and Qwo-Li Driskill.

¹⁰ Due to the novel’s recent publication (2018), the academic background on the novel consists of some reviews, for instance: Elliot, Alicia. “Joshua Whitehead’s *Jonny Appleseed* Is a Milestone Novel about Love, in All its Messy Forms.” *The Globe and Mail*, 4 June 2018; or Hardwick, Jennifer and Amei-lee Laboucan. “A Decolonial Love Story.” *Canadian Literature*, vol. 239, 60th Anniversary, 2019, pp. 126-127. One other recent academic article by Siepak, Julia. “Two-Spirit Identities in Canada: Mapping Sovereign Erotic in Joshua Whitehead’s *Jonny Appleseed*.” *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia*, vol. 55, no. s2, 2021, pp.495-515; which was actually published during the writing of this MA thesis.

¹¹ Hunt, Dallas. “‘But There Were Tender Stories Too’: Economies of Care.” Review of *Jonny Appleseed* by Joshua Whitehead. *Canadian Literature*, no. 239, 2019, pp.126-127.

its “decolonial love.”¹² In “Two-Spirit Identities in Canada: Mapping Sovereign Erotic in Joshua Whitehead’s *Jonny Appleseed*,” Julia Siepak continues the conversation on the novel by applying the concept of “Sovereign Erotic,” coined by Qwo-Li Driskill¹³. This concept reaffirms the role of the erotic as a healing tool “from the historical trauma that First Nations people continue to survive, rooted within the histories, traditions, and resistance struggles of our nations” (51). By focusing on Jonny’s sexuality, namely exploring his relationship with Tias under the scope of their bodies being cartographies of desire, this approach to the novel elucidates how Joshua Whitehead symbolically restores the connections between Indigenous communities and the environment, subverting settler geographical impositions (Siepak 512).

Taking as a starting point Julia Siepak’s work on the novel, this dissertation deviates from her perspective, and sets out to examine the alternative temporalities that Joshua Whitehead imbricates in this thought-provoking story. I contend that the range of non-linear temporalities that Whitehead enmeshes in the novel can be understood through the metaphor of the dandelion, possessing both spatial and temporal dimensions. As I attempt to demonstrate, dandelions are indeed queer (Indigenous) flowers that can expand the geographies of home by ‘unhousing¹⁴’ settler heteronormative spacetimes.

¹² As in Hardwick and Laboucan’s title of their review, note 9.

¹³ Driskill elaborates this notion of the “Sovereign Erotic” in an article titled “Stolen From Our Bodies: First Nations Two-Spirit/Queers and the Journey to a Sovereign Erotic.” *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, vol. 16, no.2, 2004, pp.50-64; that later proves to be paramount in Queer Indigenous perspectives. After Driskill’s article, there are other theoretical approaches that uphold the momentousness of the role of the erotic and Queer Indigenous sexuality in the decolonizing of settler heteronormative (biopolitical) nations, such as Mark Rifkin’s works: *When did Indians Become Straight?: Kinship, the History of Sexuality and Native Sovereignty*, Oxford University Press, 2010; or *The Erotics of Sovereignty: Queer Native Writing in the Era of Self-Determination*, University of Minnesota Press, 2012; among others.

¹⁴ I will define this term and what it implies more clearly at the end of this dissertation.

In this sense, I will be questioning Bachelard's statement on the inadequacy of studying metaphors phenomenologically (74-75), for I deem that Whitehead's dandelion's metaphor does have "genuine roots" (75) and that it is not an "accident of expression" (77). In the introduction to *The Erotics of Sovereignty*, Mark Rifkin discusses how the Two-Spirit, Queer Indigenous authors¹⁵ he approaches in this landmark book employ metaphors to "transform the immaterial into the material and as bearing the impression of what already exists but has remained unacknowledged in ordinary language," thus widening "the possible meanings of indigeneity" in ways that exceed "the literalizations of settler policy" (16-17); further adding that "[it] can provide a resource for uncoupling such continuity from dominant ways of narrating and regulating what constitutes Native being, opening up the possibility of recognizing other modes of being – other social formations – as really Indigenous" (18).

My reading on the novel is based on the idea that, by deploying the metaphor of the dandelion¹⁶, Whitehead creates an alternative "place" for Two-Spirit, Queer Indigenous peoples which is imbued with hope, with potential queer futurities that subvert (Indigenous and Euro-American) heteronormative reckonings of the future. Moreover, I contend that Whitehead effaces the limits of home as only associated with the reserve by decolonizing heteronormative forms of national self-determination, consequently destabilizing forms of national belonging that conceive "land as a commodity¹⁷," opting for a form of "homelessness¹⁸" that retrieves

¹⁵ In *The Erotics of Sovereignty*, Rifkin approaches the works of Qwo-Li Driskill, Chrystos, Deborah Miranda and Greg Sarris to assert the importance of the "erotic" as to claim individual and collective sovereignty.

¹⁶ I must credit here the work of Sara Ahmed *Queer Phenomenology*, and her usage of the table as a metaphor to build the theory around/on and beyond it.

¹⁷ Andrea Smith. Though I will be explaining this reference later.

¹⁸ I feel the need here to clarify that with this thesis I do not mean to perpetuate the Western stereotype of Indigenous peoples as being "unfixed" and therefore as preferring a "detached" form of inhabiting the world, since this pretext has been used by colonial institutions to further expropriate the allotted lands. Moreover, this perception also overlooks the structural homelessness problem that Indigenous communities suffer. To see more

and heals the relationship to the land and the community, thus including alternative identities and modes of being that have been previously excluded from these ‘unhomely’ homes.

My objectives in this dissertation are threefold. First, following the tracks of Mark Rifkin in *The Erotics of Sovereignty: Queer Native Writing in the Era of Self-Determination* (2012), and in *Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination* (2017); as well as those of Sara Ahmed in *Queer Phenomenology* (2006); this dissertation strives to provide an account of “contemporary,”¹⁹ urban, queer, Two-Spirit identity/ies and homemaking practices; by merging Queer Indigenous perspectives with phenomenological studies from an intersectional frame of reference; thus considering how gender, sexuality, class, race, and ethnicity, a) affect spaces and those who inhabit them, and b) direct bodies in some ways and not in others. Second, I aim to unravel to what extent the metaphor of the dandelion exemplifies the Two-Spirit, Indigenous orientation(s) as a form of world inhabitation. And finally, I want to delve into how Joshua Whitehead carves a potential queer future (home) in the novel.

To answer all the questions that have been posted in this introduction, this thesis is divided into four main chapters that are also envisioned as the parts of a dandelion. The first chapter, “Dandelion Clocks: Two-Spirit, Queer Indigenous Orientations,” provides the theoretical background on Queer Indigenous orientations that will shape how this dissertation “dwells” in Whitehead’s novel. Although the main focus is that of “alternative temporalities,” this section foregrounds how time and space are closely interlinked and, therefore, justifies

on this issue, I would recommend: Christensen, Julia. *No Home in a Homeland: Indigenous Peoples and Homelessness in the Canadian North*. University of British Columbia Press, 2017.

¹⁹ As I will explain later on, the question of contemporaneity must be examined, as it is a term crafted from a Western frame of reference.

examining the spaces that Jonny inhabits in the novel. Apart from introducing specific terms that will be used throughout this thesis, I will also present how dandelions serve as metaphors for (Queer) Indigenous ontologies of time, as exemplified in the novel.

Then, in “Roo(u)t(e)s: Memories of Inhabiting Home,” I will proceed to consider to what extent the memories and stories in Jonny’s account serve as a way of both exploring the directions (taken or not) that have constituted Jonny’s Two-Spirit (dis)orientation, and as the residual roots from which his identity flourishes. This chapter examines how Jonny both inhabits the reservation in general, as a space shaped after the “traditional” Indigenous hegemonic masculinity, and his kokum’s house in particular, which as a queer space allows Jonny to access alternative temporalities and other modes of being. Overall, this chapter aims to demonstrate that “the Native child was already queer” (Smith 48).

The next chapter, “Flower/Pest: Present Being-in-Time,” focuses on Jonny’s in-betweenness as experienced in the city, where he moves to pursue his queer identity despite having to “hide” his Indigenous background. In the first part of this section, I am interested in contrasting the city and the reserve, and the dynamics that underlie these spaces, as both “unhomely homes,” inhospitable spaces that, in one way or another, point to how the identities that merge in Jonny are regarded as disposable both by Euro-American settlers and “Traditional” Indigenous masculinity, to make “legitimate” claims on the land. On the other hand, the second part of this chapter dwells on/in the porosity of Jonny’s apartment in the city, which evokes affective and temporal connections through the “traces” of others encountered in this space; while also serving as a platform that exceeds the limits of the house and the nation and connects Jonny with different temporalities via the “virtual” space where he blatantly experiences his sexuality.

The last chapter, titled “Seeds: Queer Indigenous Futurities,” works at three different levels. First, it explores how *Jonny Appleseed* is a palimpsest of the eponymous American folklore “hero” and the significance of transforming this “modernist” and individualist account into a collective – and modern – experience of healing and transformation. Then, by approaching the prophetic dreams displayed in the novel, it will be argued that these medicinal bundles of past(s), present(s), and future(s) reconcile the relationship of Jonny to the land by invoking back the spirits, hence imagining new futurities where his Two-Spirit identity is found in the landscape. Finally, the seeds for a queer Indigenous future imply the revision of the idea of community, based on the stories that connect them to their roots but can move everywhere, like dandelion seeds, hence enlarging the notion of home.

II. Dandelion Clocks: Two-Spirit, Queer Indigenous Orientations.

Culture is ultimately lost when we stop telling the stories of who we are, where we have been, how we arrived here, what we wish we knew; when we stop our retelling of the past, our imagining of the future, and the long, long task of inventing an identity every single second of our lives. (Deborah Miranda, xiv)

Mark Rifkin opens his momentous *Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self Determination* (2017) by affirming that within dominant settler reckonings of time, Native peoples occupy a double bind: “[e]ither they are consigned to the past, or they are inserted into a present defined in non-native terms” (vii). As Andrea Smith brilliantly puts it: “they must *always* be disappearing in order to allow non-Indigenous people’s rightful claim over this land” (50).

Time, like space, has been thus colonized and re-inscribed under the universalist and “neutral²⁰” Western view, which dismisses Indigenous orientations as “prehistoric,” terminating “traditional” Indigenous knowledge(s) once they encountered “modern societies” (Tuhiwai Smith 55). But what is understood by “traditional” and “modernity”? What do such definitions entail? Rifkin suggests that “traditional” indicates “not simply chronological dating but qualities that belong to a different epoch – that do not fit the contours of the present,” whereas modernity functions as its opposite, as “a certain way of inhabiting and experiencing time” in the “now” (30, 8). Essentially, as Rifkin contends, modernity was defined by systematically denying Indigenous modernities, disavowing their participation in both the construction and the experience of “history” (9). Such definitions further constraint Indigenous

²⁰ Here I am consciously writing neutral, prehistoric, traditional, and modern societies within inverted commas because they are all terms that will be questioned throughout the section. These notions belong to the Euro-American vocabulary that has imposed their views on history and the world as a universal, all-encompassing frame of reference, hence omitting alternative perceptions.

peoples as not only “always vanishing,” but also as ahistorical, confined in the past that has inscribed their “Indian realness” in terms of “cultural purity,” spatially and temporally maintained by the forced consideration of the reserve as “the proper site of Indian *realness*” (Goeman 103, qtd. in Rifkin 140, 149). However, Indigenous peoples are still – and have always been – in the here and now, and, as Rifkin declares:

Viewing Natives as being *historical*, in the sense of acknowledging Native existence in and change over time, includes addressing the effects of settler colonialism on Native lifeways, choices, and modes of collective self-expression and organization. That awareness of how Native people(s) are affected by the passage of time – or, more precisely, of the operation of Native processes of becoming that are animated by the multifaceted and shifting social, political, and environmental networks in which they are enmeshed – often is portrayed as participation in a singular history alongside non-natives. (6-7)

This insistence on the synchrony of Indigenous and non-Indigenous “experiences, trajectories and orientations” implicitly recognizes Indigenous people’s emergence into the present (8). Nevertheless, Rifkin insists, this does not involve their “translation into settler frames of reference” (1). As introduced by Rifkin, the “frame of reference” encompasses: “one’s perception and material experience of patterns of individual and collective memory, the legacies of historical events and dynamics, consistent or recursive forms of inhabitation, and the length and character of timescales in which current events are situated” (ix). By recognizing a varied range of perspectives, the notion of “frame of reference” correspondingly foregrounds the plurality and diversity of time, as well as it defies universal temporal measurements, such as a shared “now,” defined in Western terms (21). Moreover, Rifkin continues explaining that these “frames of reference” also constitute the “background that orients quotidian experiences

of time and change, giving shape, direction, and meaning to them” (ix). Hence this definition follows the same line of thought that Sara Ahmed presents in *Queer Phenomenology* wherein she argues that: “Orientations shape not only how we inhabit space, but how we apprehend this world of shared inhabitation, as well as ‘who’ or ‘what’ we direct our energy and attention toward” (3). As revealed by Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Western frames of reference are characterized by the compartmentalization of time and space as linear, which consequently implant “systems of classification and representation which lend themselves easily to binary oppositions, dualisms, and hierarchical orderings of the world” (55); which enables both time and space to be measured and classified in dichotomies, listed as public/private, city/country, public/domestic, work/leisure, and so on (51).

Then the question now would be how one is oriented under the Indigenous frame(s) of reference – spatially and temporally – and what do Two-Spirit and Queer Indigenous “frames of reference” or perceptions imply. Considering how Western frames of reference have been conceived, can we understand Indigenous spaces –and time– as being perceived under the same dichotomies? Does this affect the idea of home? This section aims to answer the first set of queries by elaborating the framework from which *Jonny Appleseed* will be analyzed. On the other hand, I hope to answer the latter question throughout the analysis of the novel.

Rifkin addresses the first question of “how one is oriented under Indigenous frame(s) of reference, by explaining that Indigenous peoples “remain oriented in relation to collective experiences of peoplehood, to particular territories, to the ongoing histories of their inhabitation in those spaces, and to histories of displacement from them” (3). Throughout *Beyond Settler Time*, he addresses how each of the constituents from this statement is not stable but rather open to change over time; for instance, he points at the unfixed forms of collective identification (29-30) and the alteration of “modes of emplacement and enduring relations to

the homeland” – as in shifting locations during the period of removal, fractured spaces as in allotment, and geographical expansion, when leaving to urban sites and elsewhere (31). This (forced) flexibility shapes “Indigenous peoples’ becoming,” as well as the dynamics of being-in-time, of enduring ways of inhabiting time as open to alterations (31).

But, if all these elements are constantly shifting, how do(es) Indigenous identity/ies continue over time? Here Rifkin reintroduces the notion of the “background” as firstly deployed by Sara Ahmed, which refers to that which foregrounds perception, revealing what is held constant to perceive movement, including the passage of time (31-2); hence providing a means by which to distinguish between temporal formations, and distinctive ways of being-in-time, facilitating orientation devices “for everyday Native experience[s]” (Rifkin 29-30). These “backgrounding” devices are embodied as memories, presences, prophecies, and stories. In particular, stories –very closely related with memories– have been thoroughly recognized as a crucial element that has enabled the cultural survival of Indigenous peoples:

Stories help provide the background for indigenous experiences of time, shaping perceptual traditions while also influencing sensations of what’s possible; attending to story as a constitutive element of perception emphasizes the variability and changeability of Native experiences while also addressing the ongoing (re)construction of collective frames of reference, suggesting less the transmission of static narratives than active and ongoing dynamics of perceptual (re)orientation. (34)

Rifkin continues explaining that stories do not necessarily reproduce the linearity “of familial inheritance” for they are collectively transmitted, “out of” the Western notion of familiar kinship; conversely, they do constitute a genealogy that connects the people to places and to nonhuman entities through time, so stories are passed on as a “potentially open-ended

way of reconnecting to social and physical landscapes” (45). In this way, stories are the background that serves to “orient oneself through space and time,” functioning as “overlapping networks of affective connections... in ways that may be messy, multiple, and conflicted” (46). Both Sara Ahmed and José Esteban Muñoz have acknowledged the role of affects in the ways in which one is oriented (through time). Though Ahmed focuses on how loss may cause (dis)orientation (19), José Esteban Muñoz determines that the notion of “ecstasy²¹” enables “know[ing] time through the affective, and affect is tightly bound to temporality” (187). Therefore, alternative geographies and modes of being in time are conceived from the affective to subvert the chronological (“objective”) sequencing of Western frames.

By moving away from the linearity of time –associated with “compulsory heterotemporality” (Goldberg and Menon 1616) –, Indigenous orientations fall into the realm of queerness. In the same wise, Judith Halberstam, in their work *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (2005), has articulated that “a ‘queer’ adjustment in the way in which we think about time, in fact, requires and produces new conceptions of space” (6). By commenting on David Harvey’s *The Condition of Postmodernity*, Halberstam further claims that “the meaning of space” has been subordinated by (settler) heteronormative use values and time, thus naturalizing space(s) and spatial practices as gendered, sexualized, and racialized under – settler – capitalist heteronormativity. However, this does not mean that all Indigenous peoples are queer nor that they follow queer orientations *per se*; as we will see in the following chapter, settler heteronormativity has installed itself as “traditional” in Indigenous communities, which is why Two-Spirit, Queer Indigenous theories emerge. Halberstam uses “queer” to designate “nonnormative logics and organizations of community,

²¹ In *Cruising Utopia*, José Esteban Muñoz includes this concept by quoting *Being and Time* by Heidegger.

sexual identity, embodiment and activity in space and time” (6). This “queerness” of Indigenous temporalities instead points at the fact that there are Indigenous uses and conceptions of time that suppose a deviation from “straight” Euro-American timelines; some of these deviations are intentional, some are the result of postcolonial contact; as it is the case of Indigenous peoples’ divergence – for they have been pushed to alcoholism, drug overuse, and precarious jobs, among others.

In the novel, Joshua Whitehead employs the expression “NDN time” on several occasions to illustrate queer, Indigenous uses of time. For instance, when being late or distracted, they used the excuse “We were running on NDN time” (91); or when talking about the differences between “normal” and “NDN time,” poetically comparing his life span to that of a butterfly: “I was living on borrowed time and that my three short days had a deadline – but hey, it’s like I always say: what’s three days in regular time is five in NDN time” (168). Finally, in the “closure” of the book, Whitehead declares that:

We’re all telling our stories in NDN time.

But the ironic thing I’ve learned about NDN time is that it’s an elixir of an excuse and a toxin of a measurement.

It’ll kill you, you know, if you love it too dearly. (219)

In this evocative fragment, Whitehead convenes on the one hand that these alternative temporalities are a way of subverting heteronormative colonizing timescales, hence the “elixir”; whereas, on the other, it can also be used “against itself,” as when “traditional” ideas freeze it in the past, or when this use of time is a result of colonization, hence the “toxin.” As Jonny said, this made them all “time hustlers”: “Tick-tock, eh? Made sense if we live and die

by the clock” (123). This queer critique of time comes after considering the superimposed layer of Jonny’s Two-Spiritedness over his Indigenous orientation, though this queer lens diverges from the line of queer settler studies.

In their pivotal book *Queer Indigenous Studies*²², edited by Qwo-Li Driskill, Chris Finley, Brian Joseph Gilley, and Scott Lauria Morgensen, some authors assess why queer – settler – studies were insufficient to approach Queer Indigenous and Two-Spirit problematics. Andrea Smith and Qwo-Li Driskill, for example, contend that queer formations have been conditioned by colonization, diaspora, racialization, and globalization; therefore still “reproduce[ing] the violences of settler colonialism” unless they address that colonialism (Morgensen 24). Morgensen further deems it necessary to scrutinize (queer) Euro-American temporalities because they have produced settler colonialism as “processes of elimination and replacement and by teleologies of modernity and civilization” (24), thus leaving (Queer/Two-Spirit) Indigenous peoples either in a pre-colonial past or as in the verge of vanishing – both physically and culturally. To counter this view, Morgensen explains in her monograph, *Spaces between Us* (2011), that Two-Spirit constitutes an identity that disrupts colonial modernity because it is situated in the present, as well as “[it] does not merely imagine or invoke their existence but connects [it] genealogically to their continuation through *time*²³” (51). At the same time, it converges “multiplicity of languages, memories, and ontologies of embodiment, desire, kinship and collectivity” that already questioned Western universalisms by their mere existence (51). Moreover, as Morgensen describes in another of her articles, “Unsettling Queer Politics,” Two-Spirit is also regarded as a location which “GLBTQ and other Native people

²² This book constitutes a key map to approach the terminology, stories, activism, and theory produced by/on/about Indigenous Two-Spiritedness.

²³ Emphasis mine.

might occupy in the shared culture of a Native nation, which through kinship, economics, social life, or religion linked all Native people in a relationship” (135). In the same line, Joshua Whitehead actually articulates his Two-Spiritedness as a “home-calling” and a “homecoming,” as well as a:

celebration of the fluidity of gender, sex, sexuality, and identities, one that is firmly grounded within nehiyawewin (the Cree language) and nehiyaw world-views. I think of myself like I think of my home, manitowapow, the strait that isn’t straight, fluid as the water, as vicious as the rapids on my reservation, as vivacious as a pickerel scale. (“Joshua Whitehead”)

Two-Spirit and Queer Indigenous orientations, in the case of *Jonny Appleseed*, have to be understood as multi-scalar and overlapping, as (a) frame(s) of reference and perception that merge past(s), present(s), and future(s), while at the same time decolonizes heteronormativity and counteracts settler dispositions of time and space. However, as commented earlier, due to the shifting nature of Indigenous forms of backgrounding²⁴ and their “shared” experience of time with Western ontologies, Indigenous conceptions of time and space have been “contaminated;” or, as Tuhiwai puts it: “the Indigenous world-view, the land, and the people have been radically transformed in the spatial image of the West (51).

Because of the engendered, heteronormative, and racialized constructions of space(s) and time(s), Jonny’s body will have to be constantly negotiating to (dis)orient himself and thus inhabit different places to “feel at home.” Moreover, because of his intersecting identity as a

²⁴ It has to be acknowledged that there exist different frames of reference within the “Indigenous” category, as it is commented in the novel when Roger and Jonny’s mother’s background are contrasted: “Roger is Lakota, unlike my mother, who is Cree, so his stories always differed from ours” (177).

Two-Spirit, Indigiqueer, Indigenous urban, cybersex worker from the reserve, as well as by his “white passing”²⁵, Jonny will have different objects “becom[ing] reachable” or “out of reach” (Ahmed 14); depending on whether or not he aligns himself with the others inhabiting the spaces in which he dwells. Hence, Jonny’s intersectional frame of reference exposes the heteronormative, gendered, racialized and settler configurations that have become naturalized in the objects he encounters, as well as in the background –be it the reserve, the city, or his grandmother’s house.

Andrea Smith asserts in *Queer Indigenous Studies* that José Esteban Muñoz’s concept of “Disidentification” serves as a suitable model of political engagement for Two-Spirited people since it “forces us to admit that we cannot organize from a space of political purity, that we have been inevitably marked by processes of [heteronormative] colonization” (56). According to Muñoz, disidentification “is the third mode of dealing with the dominant ideology, one that neither opts to assimilate within the structure nor strictly opposes it; rather disidentification is a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology” (11-12). In other words, it internally counteracts the dominant cultural logics by “using the logic against itself” (Smith 53). In *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (2009), Muñoz further explains that: “Disidentification can be a world-making project in which the limits of the here and the now are traversed and transgressed” (169).

Similarly, another important form of backgrounding that I will reintroduce now concerning this “world-making project” is that of “prophecy”. In *Beyond Settler Time*, Rifkin studies “prophecy” in relation to the novels *Indian Killer* and *The Garden of Dunes* by Sherman

²⁵ This “white passing” is “praised” by his kokum when he was born, and later serves him as a camouflage in the city: “But whiteness got me here to Winnipeg” (Whitehead 42).

Alexie and Leslie Marmon Silko, respectively; defining it as a gathering of “chronologically disparate potentials,” and as a “non-successive relation to time that indicates both intimacy across periods and the action of nonhuman entities as casual agents that take part in the process of becoming” (160, 129). Rifkin concludes that prophecy “provides a way of talking about kinds of backgrounding and storying in which the past, present and future do not line up as an evolving, continuous causal chain but in which, rather, collective experiences of time are oriented by affects – and entities – that do not follow a developmental pattern” (129). In the case of the novel, Jonny’s account moves according to different affective relations, his kokum, Tias, his mother, his “clients”, and even Roger, his stepfather; as well as through dreams that bring back spirits. In *Beyond Settler Time*, Rifkin further contends that prophecy “creates something like a flow of time around a common center, a weblike network” which unlocks the present “to both the past and the future (and the transits among them)” (160, 168). Joshua Whitehead supports this view of prophecy – albeit not with the same terminology as Rifkin – in the introduction to a special issue of *Canada and Beyond*, titled *Counterclockwise*, wherein he collaborated as an editor, in which he indicates that: “We remember the future by peeking into loopholes, a circularity of time that isn’t straight, but rather sits like tipi rings, an entrance that never closes: elderhood and childhood, past and present, harm and healing, kin and communities all in such close proximity that they nearly kiss” (Lai et al. 6).

In fact, Rifkin argues that “this continuum of birth and becoming” that diverges from heteronormative genealogy and “Euro-American notions of newness” is expressed in the novels through “the movement and meaning of seeds” (168). In my introduction to this MA thesis, I presented how I believed that *Jonny Appleseed*’s metaphor of the dandelion enacted alternative, Queer Indigenous temporalities, and notions of home. I shall now proceed to unfold the first implication of this metaphor.

Dandelions²⁶ are indeed queer flowers since a sense of queer “time” is undoubtedly implanted in them. On the one hand, they are known as “tell-times” due to their regular opening and closing with daylight, certainly functioning as a metaphor for life and death. Moreover, their characteristic blowball of seeds is known as “clocks,” making it even more evident that Whitehead did not pick this flower arbitrarily. In the novel, Whitehead juxtaposes the image of dandelions with that of sunflowers, indicating that the latter: “are too fancy a metaphor for NDNs” (20). By doing so, dandelions embody two “confronting” gazes, the Euro-American and the (Two-Spirit) Indigenous one.

On the one hand, by considering dandelions as “pest in the yard but pretty to look at” (Whitehead 20), they are regarded as something that needs to be banished from the garden. Hence, if dandelions evoke Indigenous peoples, the garden is related to the settler nation or the world. Then, the “pretty to look at” situates their purpose as merely contemplative, as something “un-useful,” which reminds how Indigenous peoples are exposed in museums while at the same time are observed as belonging “out of time,” as well as to the fetishization and stereotyping they have undergone. But, on the other hand, dandelions are undeniably resilient plants, for they can endure harsh temperatures, survive the winter, and flourish anywhere. Likewise, (Two-Spirit) Indigenous peoples have survived despite constant attempts of genocide, colonization, forced acculturation, and “Traditional” Indigenous heteronormativity,

²⁶ I must mention at this point that it has been a challenging task to find “academic” articles *per se* approaching the symbology of this fascinating flower. The “common knowledge” that I will be including in this thesis about dandelions has been contrasted in, for instance: “Dandelion.” *Online Etymology Dictionary*, www.etymonline.com; or Grim, Garden. “Dandelion- King of the Weeds.” *Garden Grimoire: Magic in the Garden*, 22 February 2018, <https://gardengrimoire.wordpress.com/2018/02/22/dandelion-king-of-the-weeds>. Moreover, there is a very interesting entry on Dandelions in Wilkinson, Caroline Catherine and Charlotte Berrington’s “The Dandelion.” In *Weeds and Wild Flowers: their Uses, Legends and Literature*. London, J. Van Voorst, 1858, pp. 151-55. *Biodiversity Heritage Library Online*, www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/67169#page/191/mode/1up. Accessed April 4, 2021.

as this dissertation will explain further. Differing from sunflowers, which are undoubtedly associated here to Euro-American linear and chronological conceptions of time since they routinely follow the sun throughout the day (which could connect them with the Enlightenment); dandelions' clocks move everywhere, without a determined direction, spreading their seeds towards future emplacements, while the flower stays rooted somewhere else. Whitehead further adds that these little seeds “dissolve into wishes for the little white hands that pluck” (20), thus pointing out to Euro-American necropolitical movement towards the future because these “little white hands that pluck” see themselves as entitled “to dictate who may live and who must die” (Mbembe 11). In this sense, these “white hands that pluck” can also be associated with the figure of “the Child” figured by Lee Edelman. Yet, as aforementioned, this queer perspective does not entirely fit Indigenous problematics. Borrowing from Muñoz's critique of Lee Edelman's future of non-relationality, Andrea Smith asserts that a queer Indigenous perspective must counter the “no future” logic. Smith states that “in the context of genocide where Native people have already been determined by settler colonialism to have no future...the Native child may already be queered” if settler heteronormativity seeks to be disrupted (Smith 48).

In this way, dandelions' convergence of temporalities ascribes to the notion of the “prophecy” that Rifkin describes in *Beyond Settler Time*. The potential futures of Two-Spirit Queer Indigenous communities are thus embodied in the seeds that have not yet flourished, “is not yet here,” as Muñoz's illustrious book on Queer Utopia commences (1).

In this chapter, I have attempted to provide a theoretical overview of the Two-Spirit, Queer Indigenous frame of reference from which this thesis will examine Joshua Whitehead's *Jonny Appleseed*. I have preferred to concentrate this notional journey through alternative temporalities and their consequent influence on spaces to dedicate more time to how all of these

backgrounding devices work in the novel. The following section will continue with the idea exposed by Smith, “the Native child may already be queered,” through a consideration of the childhood memories that Joshua Whitehead interweaves in his magnificent tapestry as the roo(u)t(e)s of his Two-Spirit orientation.

II. Roo(u)t(e)s: Memories of Inhabiting Home.

As presented in the previous section, memories –and stories– constitute one of the primary forms of backgrounding for Indigenous orientations. Following with Andrea Smith’s line of thought aforementioned, in this chapter, I will be arguing that by analyzing Jonny’s (dis)orientation in the spaces he inhabits, as well as where, how, and with whom he comes to feel at home; Jonny’s memories reveal that “the Native child [was] already queer” (Smith 48). This view is sustained by Shane T. Moreman in his article “A Queer Futurity Autofantasia,” wherein he contends that:

the act of remembering oneself as a queer child is an act of re-imagining and re-performing one’s childhood by imagining its links to the queer future one occupies, simultaneously projecting additional queer futures of continuity between the reclaimed past, the present act of imagination, and a future made more survivable. (189)

This intention in *Jonny Appleseed* is introduced from the very first line of the novel when Jonny begins his account by establishing that he “figured out [he] was gay when [he] was eight” (1). Borrowing from Ahmed, it can be stated that by determining from the outset how his consciousness is already situated, Jonny’s “way of inhabiting or dwelling in the world” is foregrounded (27). In this chapter, I argue that the memories evoked by Jonny in his multifaceted account can be considered as both roots and routes that condition his present “being-in-time” in the novel.

On the one hand, these “roots” that ground Jonny’s identity, and from which he flourishes, recall the image of the rhizome, envisioned by Deleuze and Guattari as having “no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*. The tree

is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance” (28). As re-embodied in his memories, Jonny’s Home involves both comfortable and uncomfortable spaces (Whitehead 20), which is why these unlikely alliances also include the more negative experiences lived at home. So, although his grandmother performs an essential role in the story, her house is not the only –isolated– space that Jonny considers Home; other spaces construct an overlapping sense of belonging that exceeds the household scale.

In *The Erotics of Sovereignty*, Rifkin reads Ricoeur’s *Memory, History, Forgetting*, and asserts that: “As an experience in the present, memory, like metaphor, both bears the impression of the materiality of the past as it animates the current moment and calls forth ways of engaging existing circumstances that were not materially present before but become efficacious in their employment now” (19). In other words, through the recollection and re-embodiment of memories, one can approach the material conditions that are evoked in such processes of remembering, enabling, in this case, an approximation to how the spaces –and time– are engendered, sexualized, racialized, and colonized in the novel, as well as marked by class distinctions. Thus, Jonny (dis) orientation exposes a multi-scalar routing map intersected by different and overlapping directions, those which are followed and those dismissed.

Because of the scope of this dissertation, the following pages will be divided into two sections to explore some of these diverse and multifaceted roo(u)t(e)s. First, I will be looking at how Jonny’s memory is marked by – violent – patriarchal heteronormativity whenever he cohabits the space with Indigenous men who see themselves as “traditional,” which, as previewed above, is a “cultural” trace from settler colonization that persists and has inscribed itself in the background of Indigenous communities. In addition to this, in this section, I address “scars” as temporal traces that reveal how vulnerable these groups actually are. Finally, I aim to address the queer space that can be more closely related to the notion of the refuge, his

kokum's house. However, although this space constitutes a thriving atmosphere for Jonny's queerness and his Two-Spirited identity, there are "silences" inscribed throughout the house that ascribe individual and collective experiences of cultural alienation and genocide as well as "foregone" beliefs (which Jonny's grandmother keeps alive). Therefore, complexity and ambiguity characterize these spatial and temporal experiences in the reservation; they have to be seen neither as intrinsically "good or bad" but rather as the consequences of alienation processes, intersectional oppressions, and coping strategies for intergenerational traumas requiring healing.

"Traditional" Man-Up Scars: Indigenous Masculinity/ies and Vulnerability Coalitions.

In *Indigenous Men and Masculinities*²⁷ (2015), Brendan Hokowhitu establishes that the naturalization of the gendered dichotomization of Indigenous societies results from the contact with Euro-American hegemonical heteropatriarchal cultures. Regardless of whether or not the previous societies were matriarchal or patriarchal²⁸, the emerging type of masculinity that proliferated ever since was one that "was in a constant apprehensive state regarding the contamination of the masculine by the feminine" (88). Thus, following Connell and Messerschmidt's line of reasoning, it could be claimed that (Indigenous) hegemonic masculinity is built upon the "subordination of non-hegemonic masculinities [as well as women

²⁷ This is a pioneering collection of essays gathering Two-Spirit, Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars to address the structural, symbolic, and personal consequences of the rooting of hegemonic Indigenous masculinities, such as —domestic— gendered violence, the widespread incarceration of Indigenous men, the toxic masculinity associated with violent gangs. The volume also provides a fundamental approach to the role of heteronormative colonization as one of the primordial causes for the establishment of hegemonic Indigenous masculinity.

²⁸ See the works of Indigenous feminists approaching this matter; for instance, Allen, Paula Gunn. *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions*. Beacon Press, 1986.

and other sexualities] and on the production of masculine ideals” (846, paraphrased in Piché 202).

However, different overlapping layers need to be unravelled to consider why Indigenous hegemonic masculinity today reproduces these dominating-dominated logics²⁹. Based on Chris Finley’s “Decolonising the Queer Native Body,” I argue that the “fear of the queer” is a direct result of the *queerization* of Indigenous men during colonization (35). As a way to re-exert power, hegemonic Indigenous masculinities require(d) the subordination, rejection and alienation of Indigenous women and queer, Two-Spirit identities. As Finley explains: “All sexualization of Native peoples constructs them as incapable of self-governance without a heteropatriarchal influence that Native people do not ‘naturally’ possess” (35). By representing Indigenous men as nonheteronormative and unproductive, the white settler heteropatriarchy enforces itself as the manager of both Indigenous women and the land (35-37). Consequently, to counter powerlessness, Indigenous hegemonic masculinity implements itself as the only (heteropatriarchal) solution that will retrieve self-determination, as well as the reproduction of indigeneity. Still, this imposition of Indigenous heteropatriarchy is a double-edged weapon because, by its naturalization and institutionalization “as if it were traditional” (Finley 34), it has served, in the name of “tradition,” as a strategy of biopower to cluster Indigenous peoples further into the past, “promoting nostalgia at the expense of an existential immediacy” (Hokowhitu 91). While at the same time, it has resulted in the exclusion of alternative Indigenous identities, namely Indigenous women and Two-Spirited peoples, “from

²⁹ With this, I seek neither to justify the violence exerted by Indigenous men to other collectives nor to “point the moral finger at the ethical corruption of colonization,” as Hokowhitu puts it; for “the contemporary heteronormative patriarchal face of many Indigenous cultures [consciously] remains to subjugate women and alternative forms of Indigenous masculinity and sexuality” (Hokowhitu 87). Instead, I aim to provide the background for the naturalization of “traditional” Indigenous masculinity as a heteronormative project that requires Indigenous queerness to be “out of sight.”

[the] community, from ritual, [and] from existence” (Hokowhitu 91-2). Hence, what is known as “Traditional” Indigenous masculinity is an outcome of this shifting background.

Additionally, by reading Indigenous masculinities from a Foucauldian perspective, Hokowhitu contends that “the discursive formation of Indigenous cultures as authentic and traditional” works as a self-disciplining structure (91). By solidifying certain assumptions on “real” indigeneity around heteronormativity and racial/ ethnic “purity,” this structure of self-disciplining and surveillance – inadvertently– reproduces biopolitical mechanisms of settler heteropatriarchal societies. Paraphrasing Sara Ahmed in *Queer Phenomenology*, it could be said that “Traditional” Indigenous masculinity also constitutes “a line” to be followed, hence also serving as a form of alignment and commitment (15). In *Jonny Appleseed*, the lines that constitute the “traditional,” heteronormative Indigenous masculinity are found in different spaces, from the most public, such as the reserve, to the most “private” spaces inhabited by other Indigenous men, most notably as depicted in Tias’s house³⁰. The intimate, associated with where men can halt performing this form of masculinity, is either contained in a small space or deployed on the skin, leaving little to no room for vulnerability.

Although I will be further examining the reserve in the following chapter, it is necessary to foreground some premises that lay the foundations of this dissertation. Previous approaches to reservations³¹ have undoubtedly focused on the interrelationship between the reserve and

³⁰ Although Tias’s foster father is “white,” the patterns of power and violence exerted on Tias’s body follow the same heteronormative masculinity “lines” that I will be approaching in this section, which certainly elucidates how both Euro-American and Indigenous hegemonic masculinities have been intermixed. Moreover, Tias’s foster father is also intersected by the precariousness of the life in the reservation and the same “queer” uses of time (alcoholism, bingo playing...)

³¹ For instance, see D’Arcus, Bruce. “The Urban Geography of Red Power: The American Indian Movement in Minneapolis-Saint Paul, 1968-70.” *Urban Studies* vol. 47, no. 6, May 2010, pp. 1241-55; or Razack, Sherene H. “Gendered Racial Violence and Spatialized Justice: The Murder of Pamela George.” *Race, Space, and the Law: Unmapping a White Settler Society*. Ed. Sherene H. Razack. *Between the Lines*, 2002. 121-56

the settler nation as the latter is one of the most determining factors for the appearance of the former. Borrowing from Foucault's taxonomy of "Heterotopias," it could be argued that reservations function as "heterotopias of crisis" (5), for they were devised to designate a distant place for Indigenous peoples to be contained away from the settler nation-state locations. Yet, as previously commented, albeit "separate worlds," they have reproduced the same power dynamics inherited from their biopolitical – and necropolitical – forms of governance. Kristina Aurylaite in "Spatial Politics and a Native American Reservation" approximates the representation of the reserve in Brian Wright McLeod's *Red Power: A Graphic Novel* (2011), establishing how reserves are "acute examples of such spatializations and spatial marginalizations of race" (3). By this, Aurylaite refers to how these spaces have been articulated as limited, bordered spaces that manifest "the colonizer's racist ideology," as they sustain the racial divide by configuring "enclaves" that (re)produce Indigenous subjectivities (2-3).

As previously argued, Traditional Indigenous masculinity has established the reserve as a place of "purity" that sustains "Indian" authenticity through the maintenance of "traditional" values, hence housing indigeneity within its limits, rejecting whiteness or mixed orientations within its borders. Proof of this is when, in *Jonny Appleseed*, Roger decides to call Jonny an "apple" when he communicates his desire of leaving the reservation: "'You are red on the outside,' he said, 'and white on the inside'" (11).

Moreover, heteronormative masculinity has occupied this space under the premise of surveillance. In Ahmed's words, the "traditional" straight masculine bodies have "extended" in these spaces, and accordingly, these spaces "have taken form by taking on their form" (92). As Marta Segarra states in *Room, House, Street* (2014), the sexual and "generic division of space is related with vision: public space is visible and offered to the sight of everyone using

it; nothing can be hidden, and nothing can be a secret” (61). Thus, it is no wonder that Whitehead juxtaposes the prison and death camp images with that of the reserves to address how the latter have become heterotopic spaces of surveillance and punishment (46); for the streets of the reservation are maintained as heteronormative spaces by instructing the children from an early age to reject contingent “queerness³²” by imposing their hegemonic masculinity over alternative identities. For instance, this is shown in the novel when Logan and his cousins, “on their four-wheelers,” found Tias and Jonny publicly together –though they were only walking–; exerting their power over them by “marking their territory” via urinating on Jonny and forcing Tias to do the same (91-3). This event explains why Jonny and Tias were “safe” from being violently targeted by others in the streets only as long as they “were out of sight, out of mind” (56).

In this regard, another of the “cultural authenticity” lines that have to be followed is that of “modesty” for those whose bodies do not align with the “straight” image of the “traditional” Indigenous man. On one occasion, Jonny finds himself interpellated by an elder at the sweat lodge, which Jonny was going to attend along with his grandmother to perform a ceremony to heal his bad drinking habits. Jonny, who was wearing a “long skirt adorned with ribbons,” which is a traditional piece of clothing, was commanded to change into “a pair of XXL Adidas shorts” because he was not wearing the “proper [masculine] attire” (79). Since he did not align with this requirement, he was excluded from the ceremonial practice: “It turns out that tradition is an NDN’s saving grace, but it’s medicine reserved only for certain members of the reservation, and not for self-ordained Injun glitter princesses like me” (79). The performance of traditional masculinity is also associated with what were considered men’s

³² In this case, Jonny’s “overt” Two-Spiritedness and Tias’s association with him.

“traditional” activities, as Jonny explains during his childhood: “The men in my family often tried to teach me practical skills like how to use tools, start a fire, hunt or skin animals” (Whitehead 172). The objects at reach (following Ahmed’s terminology) are thus also shaped by this performance of masculinity, from outdoors activities to “traditional” ceremonial practices.

This performance of masculinity is also embedded in the objects found in private spheres, as in Tias’s childhood room, which “was ridiculously masc: posters of the Manitoba Moose and the Winnipeg Jets, Tech Decks and Tony Hawk stickers, a nudie calendar his dad gave him” (38). All of these objects reveal different aspects associated with this hegemonic masculinity, which mainly revolves around sports interests, especially hockey (both the Manitoba Moose and Winnipeg Jets are hockey teams), as well as skateboarding (Tech Decks and Tony Hawk); and overt heterosexual desire, as displayed in the nude calendar. Tias’s room, therefore, is the most evident example of how this performance of masculinity is mutually shaping the “private” space and Tias’s body, maintaining in the background the objects that sustain the direction marked by compulsory masculine heteronormativity. Moreover, the “nudie calendar” given to him by his foster father upholds, on the one hand, the surveillance within the house’s premises; and on the other, it represents what Ahmed refers to as “a gift” (85), that further perpetuates the heterosexual, straight orientation by the compulsory requirement to “accept” the gift.

Tias’s most “private” space is contained in a drawer, where he hides from his foster father the photograph of his previous family, a picture that evokes both a previous loving atmosphere and the trauma of displacement from them – as Tias later reveals, this removal is actually conducted by white institutions, for it is “a white car” coming after him (39). Although this supposes a slight digression from the “line” of this section, I deem it necessary to address

how this traumatic removal from Tias's Indigenous family introduces a severe problem in Canadian history. By presenting Tias as a victim of the institutional violence, widely exerted on Indigenous children by the white-settler state, his lifeline resembles that of the thousands of victims of the settler state management of Indigenous lives, namely of Indigenous childhoods; hence implicitly invoking the large number of Indigenous children that overrepresent childhood welfare systems³³. The forced extraction of Indigenous children from their homeplace is "legitimized" by "discourses of Indigenous deviance" constructed and reproduced by the settler-state (Leeuw et al. 288). This deviation, associated with alcoholism or drug overuse, is undoubtedly related to those queer uses of time that Halberstam includes in *In Queer Time and Space*, which diverge from the reproductive, familiar, "longevity, risk/safety and inheritance" temporalities (6).

Returning to the realm of the "intimate," as previously stated, any form of sentimentality or vulnerability seems to be out of place in the masculine room. Marta Segarra identifies the intimate space as being "closely connected with the body," for its more common implication is that of sexuality (54). However, as the presence of his foster father permeates Tias's bedroom, the drawer appears to be the only physical space that is intimately connected to Tias's body. In "The Revolution Is for Everyone," Driskill et al. expose that Two-Spirit and Queer Indigenous Identities, and may I include alternative masculinities as well, have been forced to hide "[their] sexual and political desires [in] the space of a cupboard, not a closet," since they have been "physically, culturally, mentally and spiritually pathologized" (212).

³³ For instance, for an approach on how colonialism permeates these "welfare" systems, see: Trocmé, Nico, Della Knoke, and Cindy Blackstock. "Pathways to the Overrepresentation of Aboriginal Children in Canada's Child Welfare System." *Social Service Review*, vol. 78, no. 4, 2004, pp. 577-600. Moreover, Hill, Robert B. "Institutional Racism in Child Welfare." *Race and Society*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2004, pp. 17-33; also provides a thorough analysis on how these systems are imbued with racist premises in the context of Black populations.

Sara Ahmed invites her readers in *Queer Phenomenology* to especially pay attention to those times when bodies are interpellated³⁴ and demanded to “extend the[se] lines,” to what she coins as “points of pressure,” or “stress points,” because they reveal how the social insistence on following certain lines “feel like a physical ‘press’ on the surface of the body, which creat[e] [their] own impressions” (17). On the one hand, these “points of pressure” can occur as constant interpellations, such as when Jonny explains that: “‘Man up’ was the mantra of my childhood and teenage years” (79); or when he declares that “[they] liked to pressure me to butch myself up and ridicule me for my feminine ways” (172). Or, on the other hand, they can be actual “impressions” on the body exerted through physical violence, which leaves physical traces, such as wounds and scars, that are “souvenirs” that recall when one has deviated from the straight line. These bodily “impressions” happen, for instance, when Jonny comes back from dancing with a boy in the school and Roger violently “smacks” his ass and then commands him to “get out of his sight” (173).

In the novel, Whitehead re-enacts the harshest moments of violence by exploring Tias’s scars, which are constantly pointing at the moments during his childhood in which they were produced. For instance, one of them evokes when he questioned his foster father about whether he was his “real” father or not (32). Another scar reminded both Tias and Jonny when they painted their nails with silver-glitter nail polish, and consequently, Tias’ dad took a pair of nail clippers and decided to cut the feminine out of Tias’s hands himself, hurting the child while commanding him to stop crying: “Oh, grow some goddamn balls,” concluding after the butchery that: “That looks a hell of a lot more manly” (75-6). Another time, Jonny discovers a scar in Tias’s head that was produced once when his foster father pulled off his hair: “It was

³⁴ As Sara Ahmed remarks in *Queer Phenomenology* by retrieving Butler’s view on Louis Althusser, the question of interpellation and “turning” is “crucial to subject formation,” as it directs subjects in different directions. (15)

about time you got a man’s haircut anyways” (145). In this way, the scars present on the surface of their bodies are “spectral³⁵” remainders of the histories that explicate “the arrival of ‘the what’ that surfaces” (Ahmed 44). That is, they are traces of (failed) orientations or a result from taking specific directions, therefore rendering these “scars” as the “object at reach”(Ahmed) when performing hegemonic Indigenous masculinity. The male “role models” surrounding Jonny are scarce, and the teachings they transmit are generally violent. However, I want to recall a moment in which vulnerability appears as a “bonding” device between Roger, Jonny’s stepfather, and Jonny himself. This episode directly follows the one when Jonny recounts how Roger hurt him, after which Jonny experiences “the awakening of his queer body” as if Roger’s violence had eventually wholly turned him towards the “deviating” line of queerness (174). However, in this instance, Jonny represents Roger from a different perspective, as a more empathic “fatherly” figure. In this recalling, Jonny remembers how his body, and in particular his navel, were an object of mocking for others, admitting that this was the reason why he felt ashamed of his naked body (175). Although at first Roger approaches the situation by recommending Jonny to be violent – which is not surprising given that he “had a way of thinking he was the NDN Rocky Balboa” (175) –; Roger ultimately decided to expose his scars to Jonny:

There were stories for each of the scars in his body – some from surgeries, some from sicknesses, some from scrapping – stories that I’ve heard him rehash a million times.

³⁵ Actually, Marta Segarra talks about how these spectral moments “superimpose” diverse chronological times at once, following Derrida’s contention of these spectral moments as “no longer belonging to time” (Derrida, Jacques, *Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, Routledge, 1994 p. xx). See Segarra, Marta. “Community and the Politics of Memory.” *Differences in Common*, edited by Joana Sabadell-Nieto and Marta Segarra, Brill, 2014, pp. 177-190.

He had survived cancer, a few overdoses, and had been stabbed before – but he was still trucking along. At least he was then. (176)

By taking Roger's body as a representation of the Indigenous men living in the reservation, these scars can be collectively linked to the consequences of inhabiting the precarious life on the reservation, in which alcoholism, drug overuse, and violence, as well as scarce healthcare, are the "objects at reach". In fact, Jonny confesses how this queer use of time was normalized for him: "That's how I thought it was, that being drunk and high were natural processes of growing up" (95).

In this line, the exposure of the scars evokes what Judith Butler discusses in "Bodily Vulnerability, Coalitions and Street Politics" when she argues that "the body is vulnerable to economics and history" (114). By commenting on Bernice Johnson Reagon, Butler contends that vulnerability coalitions precisely occur because "solidarity" emerges in unexpected places where the interdependence with others is based on the threat to let live, that is, to understand that survival is an interdependent undertaking (116). Hence, using Butler's terms, in *Jonny Appleseed*, this vulnerability coalition takes the form of an unlikely alliance between the heteropatriarchal Indigenous men, as represented in Roger, who epitomizes the bodies of the Indigenous men that are seen as "ungrievable" by the settler-state; and the Two-Spirit identities that are deemed as "disposable" by the "traditional" forms of Indigenous masculinity (117). And by means of this unlikely alliance, the recognition of vulnerability "has the power to change the meaning and structure of vulnerability itself" (Butler, *Prearious* 43). By exposing his scars in trying to comfort Jonny, Roger recognizes his own vulnerability and shows Jonny how scars constitute routes on the body: "Roger always let me explore his body to appease my own anxieties. His was like a graveyard of injuries and ailments, while mine was just riddled

with shame” (177). Furthermore, by representing Roger’s “last³⁶” appearance in the novel under this light, Jonny is reconciled with this “fatherly” figure; and, as he himself later states: “that’s sometimes the strangest thing about pain, that sites of trauma, when dressed after the gash, can become sites of pleasure” (179).

I want to close this section by mentioning how these scars, these windows into the past written on the body, also recover traditional stories that are not “controlled” by heteropatriarchal “traditionalism.” Apart from the individual and collective memories embodied in Roger’s body as a “place/map,” Jonny becomes fascinated with “the scar inside his [own] belly button,” which, as Roger later reveals, is closely connected to spirituality: “They say that the belly button is where the spirits live,” further adding that it was the compass that guided him “to come home even if I ever got lost or left” (177). The belly button is thus the physical connection between spiritual and material placeness, regardless of displacement and dispossession, the trauma and its resulting consequences (such as the imposition of “Traditional” Hegemonic masculinity). By exposing the body and its stories as the orientation devices that direct Indigenous dwelling in the world, the Indigenous sense of belonging reinstated is one that is scripted in their own terms. By doing so, the idea of place is disengaged from the constraints of the reserve as a “traditional” emplacement, consequently subverting the “heteronormative relationship to the land as a commodity” which, as Andrea Smith contends, “must rely on boundaries to include and exclude” (61). Thus, Jonny “unhouses” the “unhomely home,” the dwelling that had been assigned to be their homeplace but that at the same time rendered him as being “out of place.”

³⁶ We do not know if this occurred before or after Roger violently hit him.

Home in the Unhomely: “Come and Get Your Love” in Kokum’s Queer space.

A Nation is not conquered until its women’s hearts are on the ground.

(Cheyenne saying, qtd. in Brant, 12)

If there is one space that could be more closely connected to the notion of home as a homey place, as a nurturing and familiar atmosphere, that is Jonny’s kokum’s house. At the beginning of the novel, Jonny declares that he and his mother lived for a while in his grandmother’s house after his father had abandoned them (7), making this home a predominantly female space. Moreover, Jonny’s memories are more clearly inhabited by his kokum because they spent more time together, as she usually took care of him while Jonny’s mother was coping with alcoholism –although mother and son also had their bonding moments. While being with his kokum, Jonny learned to inhabit a space that was not constrained within the hypermasculine frame of the reservation, and that was filled with stories, dancing, and intimacy.

Jonny’s memories of this place come in different ways: he may be remembering a specific situation or an experience that was situated within the frame that his grandmother’s house constituted; or, on the contrary, the memories of his grandmother (and her house) come to him by sensory experiences in the present, thus creating a multisensorial account of home that recovers the smells and the tastes that shaped this homey space³⁷. In this line, Jonny’s kokum’s house constitutes what bell hooks identifies as “homeplace,” for it is the space of care,

³⁷ Actually, this is a field of studies within the geographies of home, impulsed by the work of Yi Fu Tuan on how memory is evoked by the furnishings and the components of the household, rather than by the building itself (qtd. in Brickell, Katherine. “‘Mapping’ and ‘doing’ critical geographies of home.” *Progress in Human Geography*, vol. 36, no.2, 2012, pp.225-244). See Tuan, Yi Fu. *Space and Place: The Perspectives of Experience*. University of Minnesota Press, 1977.

physical and ideological nurturance “in the face of the brutal harsh reality of racist oppression, [and] of sexist domination” (384); a site of remembrance and resistance that is based on healing the wounds of those who have been forced to be “out of place.”

It is noteworthy how Whitehead converges these two ideas (sensory home and homeplace) by presenting Jonny’s meditations about what would Jonny’s grandmother taste like: “Bee Hive corn syrup,” which she consumed even when she was diagnosed with diabetes (139). Jonny’s kokum used this “magic in a two-dollar can” for nearly every purpose that one could think of, from eating it to use it as a cleanser (to wash one’s face, body, and hair), as an ointment for wounds... Those bottles were not only shaping her kitchen, “completely lined with bright yellow bottles” but also her hair, which used “to be coned into a beehive” (139). Another of these healing lessons that Jonny inherits in this background is that of the Indigenous management of time; for instance: “My kokum had always told me that sleep was not a waste of time, that it was a time of healing” (183). In addition to this, his grandmother transmits other teachings that retrieve traditional³⁸ relationships with the land and their nonhuman inhabitants. For instance, this is observed in the novel when Jonny and Tias discover a dead porcupine and decide to play with its corpse; while Tias’s foster mother laughs at the event, Jonny’s grandmother imparts him a life lesson on “always respect[ing] the animal,” making Jonny dequill it and eat it for three days to value the animal’s life, the spirit world and the cycle of life in general (37).

Thus, his grandmother’s house is one of the few places –if not the only one– where Jonny can access traditional stories, rituals, memories, and modes of being that elsewhere are

³⁸ In this case, this traditional is not permeated with the “Traditional” Indigenous masculinity’s values, it refers to the cultural inheritance transmitted by Jonny’s grandmother and that is maintained through stories.

either forgone or undervalued. Furthermore, it is not only that Jonny accesses these traditional values through the stories transmitted by his grandmother, but in this space, Jonny also cohabits the dwelling with uncanny presences, with ghosts and spirits that reside in the house. Some of these are welcomed into the house, like the “mannegishi,” which “are helpers to medicine people” (168); others are not. In one occasion Jonny explains that when he was a toddler, “he had a lot of ‘invisible friends,’” once seeing his dead grandfather’s spirit in the house (165); which consequently led to his grandmother performing a “secret” ceremony with “her smudge bowl, tortoise rattle, drum, sweetgrass, and sage to cleanse the house of spirits” (165). By this time, Jonny slept in the basement of the house, which was his “private” space, though this privacy did not last long, for: “around this same time, I began to see a lot of shadows” (166). Regardless of whether they are “good or bad,” these uncanny presences imbue Jonny’s grandmother’s house with alternative temporalities. These “shadows” act in accordance with what Mark Rifkin rationalizes by borrowing from Gerald Vizenor’s *Manifest Manners*: these shadows are “[the] silence and sense of motion in memories...the silence that bears a referent of tribal memory and experience” (qtd. in Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time*, 111-2). In this same line, these kind of “traces” are also examined by Muñoz, who refers to them as “ephemera,” defining them as “the remains that are often embedded in queer acts”(65). Consequently, Jonny’s kokum’s house serves as the stage for diverse queer objects that distort –colonial– chronological time, conjuring past(s) and future(s) into the current dwelling.

What else, of potential value to the Two-Spirit child, becomes reachable for Jonny apart from these “queer objects” (stories, teachings, and spirits) available in this space? On the one hand, as Jonny is allowed into the “female spaces,” he could watch his kokum and his mom put on makeup, which he remembers as a mesmerizing ritual, that, in his grandmother’s case, only occurred when there were “bingo nights and funerals,” which seem to be the events that

scheduled her life at the reservation (104). However, this is not experienced as an exclusively “feminine” practice, since his kokum applied her makeup while watching a wrestling match on the TV. The same thing occurred with his mom: “Like with my kokum, I used to like to watch her put on her makeup for the night, although sometimes I thought Momma’s bordered more on drag than natural, which made me love the process all the more” (124). It was in this context that he wore makeup for the first time, intimately bonding with his kokum in the process: “I like thinking that she is impressed on my forehead even now – that the stories in her body are written on mine” (105). This intimacy is also shared with his mom when they both take a bath together, which was another routine from his childhood: “In the water, I was beautiful: my boy body was genderless in the tub...The water never set me straight” (67).

Nevertheless, his grandmother’s house is not a “haven”; the precarity of life at the reservation permeates it, and so do the people who come into the house (like Roger), the television, and even her own memories of previous orientations³⁹. Although this space presents conflicting realities, two aspects remain clear: this dwelling constitutes an alternative and safe space for Jonny’s queerness to flourish, as well as it reinstates the importance of Indigenous women in the preservation of culture, thus subverting the “traditional” hegemonic masculinity that was so embedded in the reservation.

Precarity is indeed an aspect that slithers in the background of the story, being explicitly mentioned at times, as when Jonny explains that: “My kokum was poor as they came, she only lived off a small bit of CPP and welfare cheques that was barely enough to pay for her medicine” (145); while, at others, it is implicitly understood through the spatial descriptions,

³⁹ In the same way as it occurs with Jonny and the spaces he inhabits, his kokum’s house is shaped after the lived experiences of Jonny’s grandmother, namely by her resilience after enduring the Residential School, or her marriage and widowhood, as I will be disclosing in the following pages.

as when Jonny depicts his room: “which was less an Ikea showroom and more a hand-me-down mattress without a boxspring on the floor and a hamper for a dresser” (87). Jonny learns during his childhood that there are certain comforts that are out of his reach.

However, this precarity is “domesticated” by the inhabitants of the reservation, particularly by the Indigenous women, in a myriad of imaginative and resourceful ways. For example, when inheriting heirlooms such as the toilet lid, which indeed turns a item of hygiene and intimacy into a genealogical object that evokes the people that had previously used it (12); or, by hustling the system, as Peggy does by smuggling different goods that were not available in the reservation.

There are several instances throughout the novel in which Joshua Whitehead remarks on the strength of Indigenous women in the novel, for example when he refers to his mother as “the toughest NDN in the world”⁴⁰ (47), or when he befriends Jordan and confesses that he survived the reservation by “Making friends with the toughest NDN women I could find because everyone knows that Nate girls are tougher than the men” (117). These observations are not unfounded, Indigenous women have had to deal with being double-colonized, first by Euro-Americans and later by Indigenous patriarchal systems, which have situated them in restricted positions, as either victims that required (Indigenous) men to manage their lives, or as traitors because of the sexual stereotypes that emerged in the contact zones.⁴¹ Moreover, like men, they were also survivors of the Residential School System, also known as “The Stolen

⁴⁰ This is actually a reference that Joshua Whitehead includes to Sherman Alexie’s novel: *The Toughest Indian in the World*, Vintage, 2001.

⁴¹ For instance, the dichotomy of the *Indian Princess* or the *squaw* that Europeans constructed and has prevailed until nowadays, stereotyping them as either women through which to acquire claims of national belonging or as sexual commodities that were “eager” to have sexual relationships with Europeans due to their sexual “appetite”. This was obviously a way of masking the rapes and the sexual violence that these women suffered.

Generations,”⁴² installed in Canada from the 1800s until 1996, which was devised not only to erase “the Indian” from their bodies but also to reproduce the gendered dichotomies that characterized Western ontologies. This experience is undoubtedly inscribed in Jonny’s kokum’s household since, as Jonny declares: “My kokum had an obsession with whiteness...I can’t fault [her] for looking up to whiteness, hell, that woman had lived through some intense shit – most of which will remain unknown to me. That’s her business, and those were her strategies” (42). Thus, whiteness indirectly also becomes a “line” of inheritance in his kokum’s household. However, it is not a compulsory line, nor is Jonny directly compelled to follow it; rather the contrary, his kokum’s house points towards a different direction: one that retrieves the values and the stories from their Indigenous background – especially those on Two-Spirit peoples.

One other way in which whiteness permeates the household is through the American popular culture that Jonny and his grandmother watch via TV. This “inherited whiteness” explains why Jonny looked up to “white” hairstyles to mimic, such as the one of Brad Pitt, or why when he daydreams of houses, these are shaped after what he perceives as “dream homes” in the movies. Jonny’s cultural background indeed serves also as a vehicle for him to contact “queerness” from outside of the reservation: “I liked to stay up late after everyone went to bed and watch *Queer as Folk* on my kokum’s TV. She had a satellite and all the channels, pirated of course” (7). Therefore, it is in this context of “intimacy” where Jonny had his first sexual

⁴² For an overview on the “Stolen Generations,” see for instance: Cassidy, Julie. “The Stolen Generations – Canada and Australia: The Legacy of Assimilation.” *Deakin Law Review*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2006, pp.131-171; as well as Quince, Annabelle. “Canada’s Stolen Generations: the Legacy of Residential Schools.” *Rear Vision, ABC*, 7 July 2015, www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/rearvision/canada%E2%80%99s-stolen-generations/6598518. I would also recommend reading the reports available in The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, “Truth and Reconciliation Commission Reports.” *National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation*: nctr.ca/records/reports

experience, dreaming of the possibility of being queer in a “white” way: “I wanted to be one of those gay men living their fabulous lives in Pittsburgh. I wanted to live in a loft and go to gay bars and dance with cute boys and fool around in gloryholes. I wanted to work in a comic shop or a university. I wanted to be sexy and rich. I wanted that” (7). The popular culture accessed through television or movies is a ubiquitous motif in the novel, thus showing the impossibility of cultural pureness in a context where Hollywood has transnationally penetrated every house regardless of the national borders or cultural background⁴³. As David Morley asserts by following Zygmunt Bauman’s claim: home is less a “self-contained space” and more a “phantasmagoric” place, as other geographies are brought “within” and “across” space (3). Thus, Jonny also reaches other spacetimes through the TV, grasping other forms of queer alignment that “promise” dream houses in return, or the possibility of being queer and accepted in the city. In this way, the houses he observes in the movies shape Jonny’s imagination of a dream home: “we wanted houses like the ones in *MTV Cribs*” (91). Another example would be the movie he loved to watch with his kokum, *Deuce Bigalow, Male Gigolo*, which was fascinating to him because of the furniture there displayed: “That was how you knew you had made it back in those days: animal prints and fancy candle holders” (41); which was unlike the “unglamorous” living conditions in the reservation.

Therefore, Jonny’s kokum’s house stands as a queer space spatially and temporally intersected, enabling Jonny to reach queerness and follow that line in a nurturing home that preserved traditional stories and practices that had maintained the spiritual connection to the land and their inhabitants. Although Jonny eventually leaves this home to pursue his queerness

⁴³ In fact, this cultural struggle has been a motif of –white– Canadian literature(s), which saw themselves as “surviving” the American acculturation, while overlooking the effects of their own assimilationist impositions on other Canadian minorities.

in the city, his kokum's teachings and her house are always present in the background (and in his apartment, as Jonny keeps her couch and her recipe book). In fact, Jonny leaves the reservation following his mother's advice: "You gotta leave if you want to survive, and when you do, you're gonna need the steadiness of those hands, m'boy. You're gonna need a rock and a whole lotta of medicine" (63-4).

There is one last moment that requires attention before closing this chapter. In *Cruising Utopia*, José Esteban Muñoz describes how dancing, and particularly queer dance, is linked to the notion of a "vanishing point": "Dance exists as a perpetual vanishing point. At the moment of its creation, it is gone" (81). However, Muñoz continues by stating that this does not mean that it de-materializes; it is instead "rematerialized" into the ephemeral: "Dance, like energy, never disappears; it is simply transformed" (88). This is shown when Jonny and his kokum crazily danced in the living room to Redbone's "Come and Get Your Love" song; it was their ritual, their routine, to defy and transform the chronological time that had attempted to trap them in "traditionalism," into an ephemeral trace that would always belong to Jonny's frame of reference, to the roo(u)t(e)s that have directed him to his present trajectories in the world that subvert the vanishing point.

III. Pest/Flower: Present Being-in-Time.

In *Queer Utopia*, José Esteban Muñoz states that “the present is not enough”: “it is impoverished and toxic for queers and other people who do not feel the privilege of majoritarian belonging, normative tastes and ‘rational’ expectations” (27). However, escaping the present is not the solution; the present needs to be unravelled as a form of inhabitation that serves as a stage for the necessary transformations and trajectories that project Queer Indigenous peoples into the future. Moreover, to consciously choose denying the present would further cluster them into the traditionalist pigeonhole, implying the prevalence of individualist –American– values over collective healing. In *Beyond Settler Time*, Rifkin defines “the present [as] bear[ing] within itself an impetus born from what’s been and directed toward particular goals, ends, and horizons” (17). As previously mentioned, he further argues that the present is not unequivocal; it is multiple and conflated with different perceptions and temporal formations that disrupt “settler historicism and rationalism” (149). So, then, how is Jonny’s present experience explained? What are the trajectories that he encounters while learning how to re-inhabit the city? How does this “presentness” alter the idea of home? Assuming the premise that Indigenous people’s home is already in the (settler’s) land, how does Jonny orient in the space?

This section is interested in contrasting the present conditions of the city and the reservation, on the one hand, and those of Jonny’s apartment and the virtual world, on the other, and how these spaces make manifest the existence of different frames of reference and conceptions of time –and space. In this “present” context, Jonny encounters different temporalities, both inside and outside his apartment, that transgress the limits imposed on these “enclaves,” thus ‘unhousing’ the present notions of limited and self-enclosed spatiality.

“Silly Little Bird... Building a Home in a Dead Place.”

The configuration of the city and the reservation as public spaces are not so dissimilar. Since Jonny moves from one place to another, he is able to discern the underlying patterns of similitude and difference that characterize each space. This awareness is similar to what Gloria Anzaldúa coined as “*La Facultad*” in her landmark book: *Borderlands/La Frontera* (60-1). Jonny’s liminal position, not only as an Indigenous living in the city but also as a Two-Spirit, enables him to perceive these differences and to orient himself accordingly to each of the spaces. An example of this double consciousness is when Jonny confesses that: “Hell, I played straight on the rez in order to be NDN and here I played white in order to be queer” (44). This view on having to choose a slice from one’s identity to “survive” has been acknowledged by several Two-Spirit authors and activists, asserting that:

Many times coming out means making a choice between being Indigenous -and remaining part of our communities without discussing or disclosing our queer and/or Two-Spirit identities – and being queer – without a community of other Indigenous peoples and exoticized by non-Indigenous queer people. (Driskill et al. 213)

Therefore, the commitment to queerness can direct Two-Spirit peoples towards the city, but having to reject their indigeneity to survive, or towards always being “in the cupboard” that orients Indigenous queerness –instead of the closet. In the novel, Jonny moves towards the first option, not coming out of “the closet of Indigeneity,” so that he can continue dwelling in the city without being interpellated by the white, Euro-American population: “If I did, they’d have started up a round of invasive questions, like a game of Guess Who, and I would sit there, never having been more violated than being the prize during a round of I spy” (44).

Jonny's frame of reference actually collides against the one of this collective when they start talking about DNA testing. This "rite of passage" that Jonny witnesses and which he cannot come to understand, is the perfect example to observe how, even within queer groups, there permeate heteronormative uses of time, since this interest in the bloodline and the genealogy legitimizes them to make claims of places as theirs, as it occurred with a guy who after discovering he had Cree ancestors (twenty-fifth Cree), he started "lecturing" on Indigenous issues (43). This anecdote leads Jonny to question: "how in the hell do white people have time to play around with their DNA? They must have a lot of free time, annit?" (43)⁴⁴. This points to whiteness's privilege of never having to be interpellated on account of their bodies not fitting a given space.

Jonny's effort to hide his indigeneity is futile because while going to the 7-11, someone at the store tried to throw him away: "Goddamn Natives, always sitting around here. Hurry up and leave before I call the cops" (101). Jonny replies by reaffirming his position in the place: "This is my land, you ingrate," after which the store owner responds that he was paying for the welfare that was maintaining him (103). This awareness of already "being at home" is the main difference with migrant orientations; Jonny's land is already there, although since he moves out from the reservation, his body is read as being "out of place". Then, another voice joins the 7-11's owner's chorus, that of an older woman – quite the opposite to his grandmother – who menaced him to go or else she would be calling the police (103). This violent encounter exposes how there are different frames of reference coexisting in the same site: on the one

⁴⁴ This reflection is actually denoting a poignant issue: the Blood Quantum. This system was installed by the Canadian government to manage the land and "legitimize" the claims of the Indigenous peoples on it if their blood was completely Indigenous. Joshua Whitehead presents in the novel how the same dynamic is now used by white populations. For more on this issue see, for instance: Lawrence, Bonita. "Gender, Race, and the Regulation of Native Identity in Canada and the United States: An Overview." *Hypatia*, vol. 18, no.2 Indigenous Women in the Americas, 2003, pp.3-31.

hand, there is Jonny's mere existence in the city, the Indigenous Two-Spirit who inhabits the present; whereas, on the other, there are people who regard him as being "out of place" and hence "out of time". In *The Erotics of Sovereignty*, wherein Rifkin explores different narratives that deal with the problematics of Indigenous – and Two-Spirit – urban mobility, he explains that this disavowal of their presence in the city is closely connected to the idea that the city is not open, but a "private" space that some bodies cannot enter if they are not controlled by Settler governance and imagination (235). Thus, the concept of "Hostipitality" by Jacques Derrida, which presumes the ownership of land as a commodity that is managed by the "host" who welcomes the "guest" in, exceeds the notion of the household, and is also applicable to the urban dwelling (Segarra 65). Therefore, the "promise" of queerness that the city embodies becomes a "rotten apple" instead, for the city turns into an inhospitable dwelling for Indigenous and Queer Indigenous peoples.

Similarly, Derrida's "Hostipitality" also permeates the reservation. As previously mentioned, the reservation is constructed after Foucault's notion of "heterotopia," situating this "traditionally tribal" enclave as distant from the urban dwellings that represent "modernity," as well as "out of sight" from the Euro-American, settler gaze. This visual erasure serves to reclaim the "possession" of the land by denying Indigenous self-articulation. Moreover, this form of dwelling is foregrounded under the premise of the immobility of Indigenous inhabitants, who will remain in these enclaves because of the perception of these places as being the sites of "traditional purity," or because of the lack of economic resources to move elsewhere. These two last arguments are indeed complementary as they result from the colonial management of Indigenous territories. Proof of this is observed when Jonny returns to the reservation and goes into his mom's trailer – which is pointing at the possibility and the

impossibility of movement (195) –; and he states that: “All my cousins were still here, for the most part. Maybe Nates stay on the rez because they’ve been pushed so far already” (196).

In this sense, Zygmunt Bauman’s definition of the “ghetto” fits reservations, as they do operate as sites of “confinement” and closure that seek homogeneity as an objective. Moreover, as it has already been commented, there are homogenizing precepts undertaken in the reservation to preserve the “traditional purity,” even if that entails the disciplining and excluding heterogeneity within –as it occurs with Jonny. This inhospitable space is also shown in the novel when Jonny describes a party he attends in the reservation, personifying the image of these hosts that controlled the entrance as if they were “cultural cops”:

We made our way through a group of Natives who were huddled together near the door. There was always a group of them there, smoking up a storm and acting like the goddamn NDN police: “Who are you?” “Where are you from?” “Who you know?”- you may as well bring your passport and a list of your biological attributes with you if you want to get into a rez party. (16)

Furthermore, in the novel, Jonny’s description of the reservation is that of a dead zone, a “haunted house”: “I look at the nothingness, at the wasteland of filth, a holy hell if there was one” (21); that results not only from the homogenizing dynamics that discipline the bodies within but also because the people and their traditions and stories along with them, are dying under the burden of this type of constrained enclave. It is an oxymoronic place, a house for the living-dead, but still a house that signifies that they are still alive. As Jonny later confesses: “I got to thinking that us NDNs say ‘holy hell’ so damned much because we figured out how to live and love in the holy hell of apocalyptic shitstorms” (195).

In this way, both spaces are infused with “hostipitality” dynamics and render certain subjectivities as being out of time (the Indigenous in the city, and the Queer, Two-Spirit in the reservation). Therefore, both spaces could be connected with the frames of reference that regard Jonny as a dandelion, as a pest that needs to be vanished to reclaim the land as “private” possession. Still, like the flower, the inhospitable soil does not impede the dandelion/Jonny from growing. According to Jonny: “wherever we end up, we can take pride in knowing that we can survive where no one else can and that we can make a home out of the smallest places, and still be able to come home and say, ‘I love you mom’” (196).

The small place that Jonny is learning to inhabit as home, situated in the city, also requires some consideration. First, this space is full of whiteness: “white lights, walls, ceiling, even toilet” (12), contrasting the coloured home at the reservation. While, at the same time, it “is a room of scents that stick to the walls: the smoke from a Saskatchewan forest fire, kush, the too-sweet smell of browning bananas, the pungent stink of sex” (23). This space becomes a stage for Jonny’s mixed orientations, converging the whiteness of the city, his background from the reservation and his sexuality –that can now be unashamedly expressed. In this vein, Homi Bhabha’s concept of the “Third Space” explains the hybridity of Jonny’s apartment as a space that “enables other positions to emerge...a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation” (210). Thus, the apartment is shaped after Jonny’s hybrid body, and it also merges objects from diverse places: his kokum’s couch and her book of recipes, the traces of Tias’s body on the bed... These objects infuse the apartment with multiple temporalities and memories, consequently orienting Jonny’s background; but, at the same time, they disorient his present, for when he looks at those objects, he is reminded of the (failed) orientations that had led him to leaving his home – with his kokum – at the reservation:

Leaving made me feel as if I'd split myself; this throb, a residue of pride, having left – for the life of me, all I wanted now was this: to regress, to crawl backwards into time, into a womb that smells of earthworms and eggshells, for my knowledge of the world and its pains to be a second thought; for my idea of home being bound by only four walls in the rez. (68)

The concept of home has already changed in Jonny's imagination, as the "four walls" were constricting his identity, but at the same time, this contemplation exposes how Jonny will always consider the reservation his home since it is there where he learned what home meant. Jonny's "new" idea of home does no longer extend the articulation of his identity as only belonging to one place; it involves disorientation and unhousing fixed articulations of home, creating a "new world" that enables the existence of *incommensurability*. This incommensurability also implies the recognition of other modes of being. In this vein, Muñoz elaborates a term that orientates Jonny's way of relating to others, that is, "communism" (203). This communism maps "a relational schema that is not based on commensurable singularities but, instead, on a vaster common of the incommensurable" (204). This project, however, involves a constant form of renegotiation that at times might seem impossible. If there is one moment that needs to be mentioned in this line is that of his uncanny neighbour, the pigeon:

I wonder if the bird thinks the same of me, if, in its own pigeon-head, it's saying: what a silly man, making a home on the land of ghosts. We are both two queer bodies moving around in spaces that look less like a home and more like desperate lodgings; both trying to make our beds with other people's garbage. Maybe we are both dreaming of utopia, thinking that these places once used to house celebrities and other important people, and that it will imbue us with a similar victory? (23-4)

Thus Jonny, like the pigeon, is attempting to make a room of his own in a world that, like the present, does not seem to be enough.

Creating an Entire World for Clients that Fits Us Both.

Jonny's apartment in the city is porous not only because there are traces and memories that bring the past into the materiality of his being-in-time; but also because through the screen of his phone (and computer), he can access other people that, like him, are looking for some love. There have certainly been exciting approaches to the question of how new technologies are shaping our everyday lives and our modes of being, as well as the possibilities they bring about concerning spatial configurations⁴⁵. Following Marta Segarra's discussion on the geographies of the virtual world as another form of public space which is also intersected by biopolitical powers (70), I argue that the realm of the virtual in *Jonny Appleseed* is enacting a "contact zone," as defined by Mary Louise Pratt⁴⁶, that is not only connecting Jonny to other people geographically, by "bringing the world into the house", but also temporally. The virtual space can be seen as a converging site of different time zones, which allows Jonny to work all day to earn the required money to go back to the reservation: "It was midnight and I had just finished my seventh client of the day... I could wait a few more hours and get my European clients who were six hours ahead" (99); as well as different uses of time. For instance, one of

⁴⁵ See, for instance: Morley, David. "Domesticating Dislocation in a World of New Technology." *Electronic Elsewheres: Media, Technology, and the Experience of Social Space*, edited by Chris Berry, So-yŏng Kim and Lynn Spigel, University of Minnesota Press, 2010; or Ashford, Chris. "Queer Theory, Cyber-ethnographies and Researching Online Sex Environments." *Information and Communications Technology Law*, vol. 18, no.3, 2009, pp. 297-314.

⁴⁶ See Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. Routledge, 1992. Also important in this context is: Pickles, Katie and Myra Rutherdale, editors. *Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada's Colonial Past*. UBC Press, 2006.

his clients “has a wife and two kids but secretly wants to sleep with men. That’s when I come in. He’ll take his lunch at 12:30, go to the office bathroom, turn on his iPhone and Skype with me for thirty minutes until he comes all over the bathroom stall” (78). Therefore, this space is not time-limited; it connects different modes of being that blur the lines between queer and heteronormative uses of time. In this sense, the virtual space also works as a place of incommensurability.

As Jonny argues, this space enables him to transform into other personas, to be whoever he wants to be: “I can inhabit so many personas while a client can only be one – that excites me. I have so much power when I transform – all that power over blood, veins and nerve endings” (26). However, this space reveals that this multiplicity also depends on the clients’ gaze, which is undoubtedly mediated by the static and “timeless” stereotypes attached to Indigenous peoples: from the shamanic fantasies (18) to the “twinks” and the “bears,” the frame of reference of Jonny’s clients’ is undeniably shaped after the “historical” accounts and the films where they have seen Indigenous peoples represented under the western gaze. Thus, his identity in cyberspace also becomes a performance:

Pictures and webcam shows are one thing, but let me tell you how tiring it is to create an entire world for clients that fits your body and theirs, and no one else. I can be a barely legal twink for them if they want, but that’s going to cost extra – I don’t charge them for the ugly memories those fantasies dredge up. Most times, though, they only want me to play NDN. I bought some costumes a few Halloweens ago to help me: Pocasquaw and Chief Wansum Tail. Once I know what kind of body they want, I can make myself over. I can be an Apache NDN who scalps cowboys on the frontier, even though truthfully, I’m Oji-Cree. (25)

Therefore, this fetishization of Indigenous identities recalls what has been mentioned about the image of the dandelion flower. The “pretty to look at” also establishes a form of external control on their bodies; they must follow the line of “performing” stereotyped Indigenous identities – like the squaw, the bear, the Apache...⁴⁷ – that are already established to maintain the fantasies; even when these superimpose the colonial past into the virtual world when clients ask Jonny to be “authentic”(26). In this context, Jonny’s sense of humour works during the narrative to redirect the gaze to these preposterous stereotypes that, instead of “domesticating” him into a fixed image, enable him to become an agent of his own representation subverting these stereotypes by acknowledging his transformative identity. Thus, this virtual world also has the potential to deconstruct and reconstruct Jonny’s identity and intersubjectivity.

In this line, Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm asserts that “to reclaim and express our sexuality is part of the larger part of decolonization” (151); thus, a revolution of the intimate that departs from this idea of communism that Jonny performs also unhouses the Euro-American concept of “sexuality.” In *The Erotics of Sovereignty*, Rifkin discusses this idea based on Akiwenzie-Damm and Driskill’s articulation of sovereignty through the erotic, pointing that precisely this (Western) concept of sexuality has ignored how sexuality is also intersected by other forms of “physicality, intersubjectivity and vulnerability” (28-29). Jonny’s articulation of identity and home involves the healing of sexuality as an orientation that exceeds the realm of the intimate and transforms the inter-relational dynamics of a world that is inhospitable and excludes those who do not align with straight orientations. In the novel, this is shown when Jonny addresses how the repudiation of his overt sexuality actually reaffirms him even more in committing to

⁴⁷ See, for instance: Merskin, Debra. “The S-Word: Discourse, Stereotypes, and the American Indian Woman.” *The Howard Journal of Communications*, vol. 21, no. 4, 2010, pp. 345–366; or Valaskakis, Gail Guthrie. *Indian Country : Essays on Contemporary Native Culture*. Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2005.

following that line of disorientation: “because one: I don’t sell sex, I sell fantasy and companionship; and two: when they call me what they call me it only helps me to know that I’ve found a home in myself” (45).

This section has demonstrated how incommensurability and communism also intersect Jonny’s inhabitation of the city and the reservation as inhospitable places, thus establishing potential modes of being that reflect Jonny’s home project. By ‘unhousing’ these spaces and bringing them together in Jonny’s hybrid apartment, a sense of belonging emerges that exceeds the enclaves’ frontiers and the temporal clusters that shape the frames of reference of the people that Jonny encounters in his journey. Thus, the presentness of Jonny’s trajectory involves the subversion of the pest/flower dichotomy by renegotiating the meanings of each of them, thus recultivating the dandelion as a site of survival, intersubjectivity, and vulnerability that grows even in the most inhospitable soil.

IV. Seeds: Queer Indigenous Futurities

Transformation. The act of changing the function or condition of. We begin by changing the internalization of homophobia into a journey of healing. There is a coming-clean that takes place on this journey. We cleanse ourselves according to our spiritual beliefs and worldviews. I like that phrase, *present yourself*. It seems to fit us so much better than *coming out*.

Recovery means that we transform ourselves. Presenting ourselves means that we transform our world. (Beth Brant, *Writing as Witness*, 44-46)

Up to this moment, this dissertation has examined how Joshua Whitehead, through the figure of Jonny, inhabits the different spaces that have (dis)oriented him in one way or another. Jonny's transitions and border-crossings have made it possible, despite dwelling in spaces that do not extend his body and that have, therefore, "stopped" him, for Jonny to find a way to reroute (and re-root) in even the most inhospitable places. The previous chapters of this dissertation aimed not only at unveiling the orientations, and the power dynamics underlying in the spaces that Jonny inhabited and that explained the present conditions of his trajectory, but they were also keen on demonstrating that Jonny's queer inhabitation of the world contributes to reshape and re-establish relational patterns that had been colonized and repressed. Thus, by taking disorientation as a way of inhabiting the reservation, the city and the virtual world, Jonny has revealed how heteronormativity and settler colonization go together. Therefore, as Whitehead commented⁴⁸, the transformative potential of this story lies in the individual and collective healing that emerges from Jonny's journey. In other words, as

⁴⁸ See Jacobs, Devery and Joshua Whitehead. "Canada Read Champions Devery Jacobs and Joshua Whitehead reflect on their big win." *Q with Tom Power*, CBCListen, 12 March 2021.

Jonny reshapes the spaces when his body inhabits them, he is seeding down new forms of relationality based on vulnerability and communism, even where, borrowing from Bauman, “the impossibility of the community” is what characterizes the space. Like this, Jonny embodies the “good medicine” that heals the dynamics found in different spaces: “You can’t win in every situation, that’s just the way it is... Shift when you need to – become your own best medicine” (43).

In this sense, this dissertation has already tackled some of the seeds that Jonny spreads throughout the book. As previously introduced, the seeds work as prophecies that converge different temporalities at once in a never-ending cycle. The question now would be how does this affect the idea of Home? How can these seeds alter the sense of belonging of Indigenous peoples? And what about the Two-Spirit communities?

This section aims to show how these seeds appear in other unexpected forms, from the appearance of dandelion seeds slithering in the background or the prophetic dreams that Jonny has, to the decolonization of the library. Moreover, I argue that the novel itself also works as a seed – well, rather as a dandelion clock that contains different seeds–; that constructs a place of identification that exceeds the spatiotemporal configurations of home.

There are few moments in the novel when the dandelion seeds are directly mentioned. One of these moments is when Jonny and Tias are together at the beach: “All around us, dandelion seeds billowed through the air, twirling like ballerinas” (27). On the beach, Jonny and Tias’s relationship is not constrained by the orientations of the spaces where they were raised; as a matter of fact, the beach, as a natural landscape, actually points at the artificiality of heteronormative configurations of space. As Gordon Brent Ingram comments, these spaces “challenge compartmentalized notions of culture, architecture, nature, sexuality, body and

landscape” (202). In here, Tias’s body responded to the “liberation” that dwelling in a natural space involved: “Tias’s face always seemed to soften whenever he was surrounded by nature; his usual pained expression disappeared, and the dimples in his cheeks rose like little stars” (27). In this atmosphere where they can be together and profess their love for each other – albeit each of them does it in different ways⁴⁹–, their bodies shape this space as queer, and it is there where they can find themselves in a space that extends their bodies. As Siepak argues: “the land defines queer love, providing its cartography, and queer erotic (re)defines the land, mapping the Indigenous and Two-Spirit presence” (508). Thus, this landscape provides a public place where queerness can occur, exceeding the household’s limits and the intimate space. By rendering queerness as “natural,” the perversion of not following the straight line marked by heteronormative spaces and the idea that queerness must remain “out of sight” is subverted.

This landscape is also the background of the dreams that Jonny has. In these dreams, Jonny’s sense of belonging and survival, as a Two-Spirit and as an Indigenous person, comes along with the performance of spirits. In the first dream that Jonny describes in the novel, there is this sense of “momentum” evoked by a wave that is arriving to destroy the city that screams in the background, his body barely surviving the strike of the wave thanks to an eagle that appears – which is actually the representation of the Trickster. However, while Jonny – and the eagle – hope to find a safe space behind the wave⁵⁰; in the horizon, all that he can observe is more waves (34-36). Though quite traumatic, nearly a nightmare, this dream is evoking the

⁴⁹ With this I refer not only to their sexuality *per se*, but, as already commented, to showing vulnerability, and other forms of intersubjectivity. It is in this space where Tias is more comfortable with sharing his intimate thoughts and desires with Jonny.

⁵⁰ Which is actually imagined as an island inhabited by Tomson Highway’s characters from *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, Doubleday, 1998.

resilience of Indigenous and Two-Spirit peoples in a world that is constantly pushing them to the verge of vanishment and disappearance. As Jonny comments: “We have mastered the art of dissolution” (21); yet these images, instead of leading him into pessimism, remind Jonny that there are spirits that are not foregone; they are there in the abyss, screaming “*freeme, freeme, freeme*” (22, emphasis in the original).

The second dream is also connected to the landscape, although in this one, the spirit that visits Jonny is not set on a beach that is about to be destroyed; instead, Jonny’s naked body is situated in the mountains, in an atmosphere that oozes a very different sexual energy: “all the land is horny as fuck” (69). As Rifkin argues in *The Erotics of Sovereignty*: “the land is both desired and desiring, is not a thing that can be priced and traded, is a feeling entity,” and due to it being a feeling entity, it “engages with the body of the people in dynamic ways that are central to their existence as such” (73-4). Thus, in the landscape, the Two-Spirit desire is both located and sustained. In the dream, Jonny remembers the words of a round dance song – a ceremonial practice that is also studied as prophecies⁵¹– and invokes the maskwa, a spirit shaped like a bear, with whom he has sexual intercourse. When the “ceremonial” practice finishes, Jonny explains that: “all of this treaty land is filled with me” (71), hence connecting himself through his sexuality to the colonized –and heteronormative– space.

The last dream described in the novel is one that his mother has, situating Jonny and herself in the river where some men try to fish. Those men first reject Jonny’s presence there, but then, when Jonny walks in the river that symbolizes the Two-Spiritedness, the fluidity and spirituality of the identity, he can fish more than the men there (206-207). As Siepak

⁵¹ In *Beyond Settler Time*, Rifkin studies the prophetic in the novels that revolve around the practice of a round dance.

acknowledges, borrowing from both Rifkin and Driskill, this relationship that is re-established between nature and Jonny, as a Two-Spirit, “symbolically heals both Indigenous communities and the environment” (512). Thus, the dreams interweaved in the novel serve as the seeds that connect Two-Spirit imaginations back to the landscape, not just to a determinate site as the reservation, but to a place that exceeds human constructions of space.

One of these constructions is also the library. The way in which Joshua Whitehead decolonizes the library is quite amusing. On the one hand, *Jonny Appleseed* opens with the story of how Jonny discovered who Johnny Appleseed was; when in a Christian summer camp where he is first pointed as a pervert because of his sexuality⁵², the children start calling him “Jonny Rottenseed” (10). After this, Jonny goes to the library at the reserve and accounts how: “there was no Dewey Decimal system there; books were scattered in piles that were designated as Pile A (the Cosmos), Pile B (Peguis Fishermen yearbooks), and Pile C (random shit)” (10); which is actually quite representative of the prevailing stereotypes of Indigenous “lack of knowledge”. As the archive that Derrida explores in his work, the library “determines the archivable content even in its relationship to the future” (17). The library/archive, in this case, works to maintain and preserve a determinate image of the Indigenous peoples living at the reservation. From the “piles” included in Jonny’s description, one could assume that this image that is being preserved is rooted in the “traditional,” static perception of what Indigenous peoples bring to the world. However, Jonny unhouses and deterritorializes the library at the end of the novel (thus completing a full circle), when he merges the image of that place with their bodies: “It’s overwhelming to think about all the stories we’ve made, helped to tell, helped

⁵² Because of the scope of this dissertation, I have not dealt with this heterotopic space. However, it would be very interesting to approach how the summer camp and the school, work as institutional heterotopias that are devised as a continuation of the Boarding School System, instructing Indigenous children about what culture is “the one” that has to be transmitted.

to create – our bodies are a library, and our stories are written like braille on the skin” (219). This is another seed that Whitehead plants in the novel, the recognition and the appraisal of Indigenous storytelling as an embodiment of knowledge, one that reconfigures their static image in the museums and the archives. In this way, Jonny also re-establishes their identity as being in the present, always in the process of creation, not in a “traditional” ahistorical past; and thus generating the possibilities for the future, by being the agents of their own histories.

In this same line, Jonny introduces the story of Johnny Appleseed⁵³, the American folklore hero, known as a “queer” individual that became famous for spreading apple seeds and the word of the Bible across the American frontier, “both Indian and White man trusted him completely and saw him as a man with no malice in his heart” (Kerrigan 2). In *Johnny Appleseed and the American Orchard: A Cultural History*, William Kerrigan⁵⁴ explains that this legendary figure that still “remains a staple in elementary school curricula across the nation” (1) was actually based on a real man named John Chapman, whose family had “brought modernity” into the new world by planting apple-trees in the Puritan colonies (10). Kerrigan’s investigation about the repercussion of John Chapman’s real-life occupation elucidates that this was not an altruistic move; it was the “mortal” blow that secured the acculturation of the land to European needs. Therefore, these orchards stood as heteronormative, colonial claims of the land, and planting one signified reclaiming the land as private property: “livestock, fences,

⁵³ This figure is certainly thought-provoking. Disney actually created a short cartoon film based on the story of Johnny Appleseed, see: *The Legend of Johnny Appleseed* 1948, Disney. Dir. Wilfred Jackson. In fact, in the Introduction to this thesis, I contended that the folklore legend was a “modernist” and “individualist” representation because of the Disney’s portrayal of this figure – as it restores the “natural” landscape in what seems to be an industrialized “Frontier” inspired background.

⁵⁴ Kerrigan’s work is actually ground-breaking. By constructing a historical account on the economic and agricultural evolution that this staple brought to the country, it reveals how the empire of apples was sedimented in the American soil, and with it, a series of socio-cultural changes that can be grasped from the representation of Johnny Appleseed in the legend.

fields and orchards defined the Puritan world, shaping Puritan ideas about property and forming the blueprint of their physical vision for the societies they sought to create” (11). That is, one based on private property and individualist (Christian) values.

This mythical figure is – undoubtedly – questioned by Jonny in the novel:

It turns out that Johnny Appleseed is some American folk legend who became famous by planting apple trees in West Virginia. I didn’t understand why we’d sung about him at camp – I wanted to know about Louis Riel, Chief Peguis, and Buffy St. Marie, but instead we were honouring some white man throwing apple seeds in frontier America. Apparently, he was this mortal martyr figure who remained a virgin in exchange for the promise of two wives in heaven. Oh, and he loved animals, and I heard he saved some horse by hand-feeding him blades of grass, Walt Whitman style. I would bet my left nut that he was a slave-owner too and planted his apple seeds on Treaty territory. (10-11)

Furthermore, I argue that Jonny’s subversion of this legend goes even further. If we understand the novel as a palimpsest of the legendary American figure, Joshua Whitehead’s *Jonny Appleseed* would be spreading dandelion seeds (across the nation, Canada, America and the world) that instead of seeking to claim the land as a private commodity, they reconfigure the land as an unhoused space. Moreover, as commented earlier in this thesis, the notion of “modernity” was established by confining the Indigenous populations into a “slice” of the past and by writing a character that embodies contemporary, urban, Indigenous, Two-Spirit, Indigiqueer identities, Joshua Whitehead is subverting this notion of modernity by providing a place that converges diverse temporalities. Thus, by revising the idea of home as property, the notion of community is also altered. In this way, community is based on the idea of “expropriation” and “dispossession,” as Joana Sabadell Nieto and Marta Segarra discuss by

following Roberto Esposito, this community “is opened by a ‘wound’ which exposes us to the ‘contagion’ of otherness” (9). A home for those who, like Jonny, “were born from a wound” (Whitehead 200).

V. Conclusions

This thesis, “An NDN Home is Like a Dandelion: Queer Indigenous Orientations in Joshua Whitehead’s *Jonny Appleseed*,” set out to examine the spatiotemporal configurations of Indigenous home(making) from a Queer Indigenous perspective. By exploring Jonny’s (dis)orientations in the different spaces he inhabits, this dissertation has shown that it is necessary to consider a Queer Indigenous perspective to decolonize heteronormative conceptions of time and space. Moreover, it has argued that the metaphor of the dandelion serves as a vehicle to approach queer Indigenous temporalities and notions of home. This metaphor, which has also structured the chapters in this dissertation, has been productive in explaining the forms of backgrounding that shape Queer Indigenous perceptions of time and space, as shown in the novel.

The first chapter: “Dandelion Clocks,” established that time can also be inhabited, and as it had been colonized by settler heteronormativity, a queer Indigenous approach to alternative temporalities and futurities must always choose for transformation and healing of the relational bonds – to the land, to the people, to the spirits – that had been disrupted by Western heteropatriarchal colonization. However, this healing does not imply the retrieval of a pristine pre-colonial state. Instead, it pursues the transformation of present and future conditions departing from the idea that there does not exist a space of “purity” – cultural, racial, ethnic...-. This chapter also introduced the implications of the terms “traditional” and “modernity” and how they have shaped Indigenous communities as being out of history and hence out of time and out of place.

The second chapter: “Roo(u)t(e)s: Memories of Inhabiting home,” has shown that memories work as a background that enables (re)construction of the material conditions there

evoked. On the one hand, the rhizomatic roo(u)t(e)s that explain Jonny's present experiences have been addressed under the premise that home is rhizomatic, constituted by the places where his identity flourishes, and the reservation, despite the trauma and the bad experiences there underwent. However, these roo(u)t(e)s are not a only physical place in itself; they are configured in the memory and through the stories and affects that Jonny shares with the people he cohabits with. The first part of this chapter analyzed how "Traditional" Indigenous masculinity had shaped the reservation, from the public to the private spaces, leaving little to no room for vulnerability or queerness. Nevertheless, Joshua Whitehead elaborates the narrative so there is a vulnerability coalition between the Indigenous men and Jonny as a Two-Spirit. Moreover, the second part of this chapter identified Jonny's kokum's house as a queer space intersected by diverse temporalities and orientations. This space constitutes a homeplace for Jonny in the context of the reservation, and, as it has been demonstrated, it re-establishes the essential role of Indigenous women in the cultural preservation of indigeneity.

The third chapter: "Flower/Pest: Present Being in Time," has addressed the in-betweenness of Jonny's position in the present, trying to make a home in inhospitable places that are constituted by "Hostipitality" precepts. This section has demonstrated how both the city and the reservation follow similar dynamics of biopolitical management of Indigenous peoples, either by creating the reservation as a heterotopic place or by removing Indigenous peoples from the city. Then, Jonny's apartment in the city stands as a Third Space that merges objects, spaces and times from both modes of being. Furthermore, this chapter also provides an overview of how the virtual world enables Jonny to connect with other people and negotiate his identity by addressing the prevailing stereotypes of Indigenous peoples and turning the gaze back to the clients.

The final chapter: “Seeds: Queer Indigenous Futurities,” has dwelt into the dreams and stories that provide the potential for queer indigenous futurities to emerge. This section has discussed how the novel achieves the decolonization and deterritorialization of both the account of the American folklore hero Johnny Appleseed and the notion of home. Moreover, by utilizing the concept of prophecy, both time and space are also unhoused. Therefore, *Jonny Appleseed* constitutes a way to heal and transform the notion of home, expanding the limits of the household and, with it, the idea of community.

Overall, the metaphor of the dandelion has served to convey the multidimensionality of Queer Indigenous homes, one that is rooted in the past, negotiates its existence in the present, and dreams of a better future.

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