



**Queer Flowers: Queer Erotics, Mourning, and Utopias in the Art
of Flowers from the 1920s to the 1980s**

being a thesis submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of

Philosophy

in the University of Hull

by

Wenzhe Li

November 2023

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents Aimin Li and Longxia Zhan.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I am deeply grateful to Dr Barnaby Haran, Senior Lecturer in American Arts at University of Hull, who supervised this thesis. I thank for his kindness and patience. Without his generous help, support, and guidance, this thesis would not have been possible. Thank you to Dr Jo Metcalf, my second supervisor, for her sharp and inspiring comments on this thesis. There are many people in the School of Humanities who have supported me during these years. Thank you to Dr Rachel Williams, for her warm concern and her comments on Chapter 2. Thank you to Dr David Eldridge for his professional advice on Chapter 3. And thank you to Dr Sabine Vanacker, for giving me a positive review on my presentation of queer theory in her seminar. I would also like to thank Dr Cara Rodway, the Chair of British Association for American Studies Annual Conference 2022, who gave me positive comments on my conference paper "The Queer Flowers of Robert Mapplethorpe: Perfectionism and Queer Ideality in the Pre-AIDS Decades". Their encouragement gave me confidence and helped me to keep going. I also want to thank Dr Francesco Ventrella, Senior Lecturer in Art History at University of Sussex, who supervised my Master dissertation that formed the basis of this thesis. Thank you to Brynmor Jones Library at University of Hull.

I have received encouragement from friends and family, in particular my parents, Aimin Li and Longxia Zhan, who encourage me to be myself and unconditionally support my queer dream. Thank you to my dear friends, Xue Wang and Dr Yuri Enjo, for supporting me during the Covid pandemic.

Finally, with gratitude, I would like to say that I have had a wonderful four years.

Abstract

“The analogies between women and flowers have a long history in sex ideology” (Pollock: 2007: 106). Yet queer readings of flowers are sometimes different from heterosexual and patriarchal perspective. Some gender-queer artists have refused to see flowers merely as the symbols of femininity or female sexual desire that is oppressed into unconsciousness. Biologically, flowers can be queered because most of them are hermaphroditic. Some flowers, such as violets, pansies, and lavender, are considered as the symbols of LGBTQ+ culture. Queer qualities of the natural world seem to provide ethical legitimacy and identification for queer beings. However, in the story of queer flowers, are there any alternative connotations beyond this established connection of symbolism and identification?

This thesis discusses the queer art of flowers between the 1920s and the late 1980s. By examining the floral artworks of the American artists Georgia O’Keeffe, Charles Demuth, Marsden Hartley, Cy Twombly, Robert Mapplethorpe, and the British artist Derek Jarman, this thesis argues that the queer art of flowers not only symbolises nonbinary sexualities, but also contains a wide variety of sensibilities, aesthetic philosophies, ideologies, and politics. This study examines the erotic and temporary sensibilities that the artists perceived when they painted or meditated on flowers, exploring how queer desires circulate through botanical and natural agencies. Furthermore, it investigates the anecdotes, gossip, and queer memories of desires behind these floral works. This thesis considers queer floral art as an archive of queer desires, in which we could sense ideality and utopias that “can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future” (Muñoz, 2009: 1). This archival function of queer floral imagery therefore offers us an imaginative way of mourning and memorialisation, stressing that it is important to remember a queer ideality that contains both trauma and pleasure. This study argues that queer artists created floral art not because they were eager to liberate oppressed desires, and not entirely because those androgynous flowers morphologically resembled their queer sexualities. These artists created floral art mostly because they attempted to find strategies to negotiate, resist, and survive by interacting with flowers and natural environments. It is this interaction that opens up another space for exploring the significance of queer flowers beyond symbolism and the politics of identity. This transcorporeal connection between human beings, flowers, and natural environments illustrates how a wild nonhuman force supports and simultaneously disturbs the human body and system. This dynamic registers the vulnerability and porousness of human bodies, and thus deconstructs identity, subjectivity, individualism, and bodily autonomy. The flower-body connection potentially deconstructs the boundary between the human and the nonhuman and thus envisages a utopian “planetary” solidarity.

Contents

Dedication	1
Acknowledgements	2
Abstract	3
List of Figures.....	6
Introduction.....	8
0.1 Arguments and Methodology	9
0.2 The 1920s to the 1980s.....	15
0.3 The Artists & Their Chapters	16
0.4 Flowers: A Queer Story	24
0.4.1 Flowers in the 1920s and the 1980s.....	28
0.5 Utopian Dynamics in Floral Bodies.....	30
Chapter 1 Literature Review.....	41
1.1 Flowers, Femininity, Ecofeminism	42
1.1.1 The Traditional Interpretation.....	43
1.1.2 Interpretations of O’Keeffe’s Flowers in the Framework of Feminism	45
1.1.3 Ecofeminism	49
1.1.4 Queerness, Flowers, Women	50
1.2 Queerness, Utopianism, Flowers	51
1.2.1 Queer Utopianism	52
1.2.2 Floral Queer Utopianism	53
1.3 Queer Ecology, Transcorporeality, Wildness	55
1.3.1 Gardens, Erotism, Queer Ecology.....	59
1.4 Queer Temporality, Memory, AIDS/HIV, and Mourning.....	66
Chapter 2 Floral Bodies: Georgia O’Keeffe, Charles Demuth, and Marsden Hartley	76
2.1 Georgia O’Keeffe: Beyond Femininity.....	79
2.1.1 O’Keeffe’s Ecofeminism.....	82
2.1.2 Conclusion	93
2.2 Playing with the Code: Charles Demuth and Marsden Hartley.....	93
2.2.1 Charles Marsden in Eugene O’Neill’s <i>Strange Interlude</i> : Desiring Roses.....	93
2.2.2 The Unnatural Aesthetic and Queer Sensibilities in Demuth’s Floral Watercolours	95
2.2.3 Decoding <i>Calla Lilies (Bert Savoy)</i>	105
2.2.4 Conclusion	111
2.2.5 Marsden Hartley’s Floral Still-Lives and <i>Eight Bells Folly (for Hart Crane)</i>	111
2.3 Conclusion.....	124
Chapter 3 Cy Twombly’s Blossom: Queer Memory and Temporality.....	148
3.1 Encoding a Queer Desire: Twombly’s Representations of the Body, Desire, and Temporalities.....	152
3.2 Queer Stories in Botanical/Floral Imagery	158
3.2.1 A Botanical Artist.....	158
3.2.2 Sketching Flowers.....	161
3.3 A Watery Queer Anecdote and <i>The Rose</i>	165
3.3.1 Lake Eden: A Queer Anecdote	165

3.3.2	Late Blossoms: A Queer Aesthetic.....	171
3.4	Conclusion: Flowers in the 1980s and AIDS/HIV	174
Chapter 4 Derek Jarman at His Garden: Messianic Time, Futurity, Mourning, and Transcorporeality		190
4.1	Queer Temporality and the Memory of Flowers	194
4.1.1	Creating Messianic Time in the Garden.....	194
4.1.2	Redemption in the Garden	198
4.1.3	A Queer Aesthetic of Debris and the Trivial	209
4.2	Jarman's Transcorporeality	211
4.3	Conclusion.....	218
Chapter 5 Queer Ideality and the Politics of Remembrance: Vitality and Morbidity in Robert Mapplethorpe's Flowers.....		226
5.1	The Issue of Mourning in the AIDS Art	227
5.2	Mapplethorpe's Perfectionism	232
5.3	A Dialogue with the <i>Fin-de-Siècle</i> Floral Aesthetics	239
5.4	Queer Ideality in Mapplethorpe's Flowers.....	248
5.5	Conclusion: Queer Politics of Remembrance and Mourning	253
Conclusion Cruising Utopias in Queer Flowers		262
A Concrete Utopia		264
Jim Hodges: Utopia in Astonishment and the Quotidian		265
Nick Cave: Utopias in the Wild		270
Bibliography.....		285
Filmography.....		314

List of Figures

Figure 1 Gluck, <i>The Devils Altar</i> , 1932.	33
Figure 2 Gluck, <i>Lords and Ladies</i> , 1936.	34
Figure 3 Illustrations of <i>Les fleurs du mal</i> , 1857, 1890, 1900.	35
Figure 4 Aubrey Beardsley, <i>The Climax</i> , 1893-4.	36
Figure 5 Andy Warhol, <i>In the Bottom of My Garden</i> , 1956.	37
Figure 6 Andy Warhol, <i>Boy with Flowers</i> , 1955-7.....	38
Figure 7 Duane Michals, <i>A Dream of Flowers</i> , 1986.	39
Figure 8 Keith Haring, <i>Untitled (for James Ensor)</i> , 1989.....	40
Figure 9 Georgia O’Keeffe, <i>Jimson Weed/White Flower No. 1</i> , 1932.	126
Figure 10 Georgia O’Keeffe, <i>Abstraction White Rose</i> , 1927.	127
Figure 11 John Candelario, <i>Georgia O’Keeffe and Maria Chabot</i> , 1949.	128
Figure 12 Cady Wells, <i>Rebecca Strand and Georgia O’Keeffe</i> , Taos, New Mexico, 1929.	129
Figure 13 Georgia O’Keeffe, <i>White Calico Flower</i> , 1931.....	130
Figure 14 Georgia O’Keeffe, <i>Horse’s Skull with Pink Rose</i> , 1931.	131
Figure 15 Charles Demuth, <i>Poppies</i> , 1926.....	132
Figure 16 Charles Demuth, <i>Calla Lilies (Bert Savoy)</i> , 1926.	133
Figure 17 Charles Demuth, <i>Poster Portrait: Georgia O’Keeffe</i> , 1923-24.	134
Figure 18 Charles Demuth, <i>Study for Poster Portrait: Marsden Hartley</i> , 1924.	135
Figure 19 Charles Demuth, <i>Amaryllis</i> , 1923.	136
Figure 20 Charles Demuth, <i>Three Figures in a Landscape</i> , 1915.	137
Figure 21 Marsden Hartley, <i>Portrait of a German Officer</i> , 1914.	138
Figure 22 Marsden Hartley, <i>Flowers from a Lonely Child – for Mary of the Volcanoes</i> , 1935-36.	139
Figure 23 Marsden Hartley, <i>Night and Some Flowers</i> , 1935-36.	140
Figure 24 Marsden Hartley, <i>Still Life with Eel</i> , c. 1917.	141
Figure 25 Marsden Hartley, <i>Lilies in a Vase</i> , c. 1920.	142
Figure 26 Marsden Hartley, <i>Atlantic Window in the New England Character</i> , 1917.....	143
Figure 27 Marsden Hartley, <i>Roses</i> , 1943.	144
Figure 28 Marsden Hartley, <i>Eight Bells Folly: Memorial to Hart Crane</i> , 1933.	145
Figure 29 Marsden Hartley, <i>Summer Clouds and Flowers</i> , 1942.	146
Figure 30 Marsden Hartley, <i>Roses for Seagulls That Lost Their Way</i> , 1935-36.	147
Figure 31 Cy Twombly, <i>Coronation of Sesostris (Part V)</i> , 2000.	177
Figure 32 Cy Twombly, <i>Natural History Part II: Some Trees of Italy</i> , 1975-76.....	178
Figure 33 Cy Twombly, <i>Natural History Part I: Mushrooms Portfolio</i> , 1974.....	180
Figure 34 Cy Twombly, <i>Ferragosto IV (Rome)</i> , 1961.	182

Figure 35 Cy Twombly, <i>Empire of Flora</i> , 1961.	183
Figure 36 Twombly's drawing of flowers for Rauschenberg.	184
Figure 37 Cy Twombly, <i>Nicola's Iris, Gaeta</i> , 1990.	185
Figure 38 Cy Twombly, <i>The Roses (I – V)</i> , 2008.	186
Figure 39 Cy Twombly, <i>Blooming</i> , 2001-08.	187
Figure 40 Cy Twombly, <i>Untitled (to Leopardi)</i> , 1984.	188
Figure 41 Cy Twombly, <i>Analysis of the Rose as Sentimental Despair Part I</i> , 1985.	189
Figure 42 Howard Sooley, <i>Prospect Cottage, Dungeness, Kent</i> . 1990.	220
Figure 43 Derek Jarman, <i>Act Up</i> , 1992.	221
Figure 44 Joel Sternfeld, <i>Ailanthus Trees, 25th Street, May 2000 from High Line</i> , 2000.	222
Figure 45 Suzanne Szasz, <i>City "Farmers"</i> , 1973.	223
Figure 46 Unknown Photographer, <i>The Gate of Le Petit Versailles</i>	224
Figure 47 Howard Sooley, <i>Prospect Cottage, Dungeness, Kent</i> . 1990.	225
Figure 48 Robert Mapplethorpe, <i>Calla Lily</i> , 1988.	256
Figure 49 Robert Mapplethorpe, <i>Ken Moody</i> , 1983.	257
Figure 50 Robert Mapplethorpe, <i>Orchid</i> , 1988.	258
Figure 51 Robert Mapplethorpe, <i>Orchid</i> , 1986.	259
Figure 52 Robert Mapplethorpe, <i>Irises</i> , 1986.	260
Figure 53 Robert Mapplethorpe, <i>Tulip and Thorn</i> , 1985.	261
Figure 54 Jim Hodges, <i>Changing Things</i> , 1997.	275
Figure 55 Nick Cave, <i>Soundsuit</i> , 2008.	276
Figure 56 Amber Cowan, <i>Rouge Flambé and Mandarin Cluster No. 1</i> , 2022.	277
Figure 57 Rashaad Newsome, <i>To Be Real (installation view)</i> , 2019.	278
Figure 58 Yayoi Kusama, <i>Flower Obsession</i> , 2017.	279
Figure 59 Jim Hodges, <i>A Diary of Flowers (When We Met) (details)</i> , 1994.	280
Figure 60 Andy Warhol, <i>Still-Life (Flowers)</i> , 1950s.	281
Figure 61 Nick Cave, <i>Soundsuit</i> , 2008.	282
Figure 62 Nick Cave, <i>Soundsuit</i> , 2009.	283
Figure 63 Nick Cave, <i>Arm Peace</i> , 2019.	284

Introduction

A still-life painting by the British queer artist Gluck (Hannah Gluckstein, 1895 – 1976), titled *The Devil's Altar* (1932, fig. 1), inspired this study of queer flowers. In this picture, Gluck depicted a pair of potted white Brugmansia flowers (also called Datura or Angel's Trumpet) clinging to each other and growing downward like bells from its robust branch. The foreground flower receives the light, radiating a white illumination that Gluck masterfully crafted, whilst its companion hides behind in the hue. The painting is elegantly mounted in the "Gluck Frame" which was designed by the artist herself, normally consisting of three tiers and painted in a similar colour to the wall of the exhibition place. During the process of research, I learned that *The Devil's Altar* is associated with a queer love story. The painting witnessed the love affair of Gluck and the British florist Constance Spry (née Fletcher, previously Marr, 1886 – 1960). In the 2017 exhibition *Gluck: Art and Identity*, *The Devil's Altar* was displayed together with other floral paintings, many of which were inspired by Spry's floral designs, such as *Chromatic* (1932) and *Lilac and Guelder Rose* (1932 – 1937). These pictures of flowers, as Gill Clarke argues in the catalogue essay "Gluck: A Life in Art", "give tantalising glimpses into her close relationship with Spry" (2017: 31). Brugmansia was one of Spry's favourite flowers, and the two white flowers can be read as the portrait of Gluck and Spry, resembling bodily intimacy and queer love between them. Indeed, the picture is imbued with queer memories of physical intimacy, and thus, this seemingly innocuous floral still life can be read as the carrier of queer desire and memorialisation.

Queer readings of flowers are arguably different from the heterosexual and patriarchal perspective. Some gender-queer artists have refused to see flowers as symbols of femininity, or as female sexual desire that is oppressed into unconsciousness. For Gluck, flowers were queer rather than feminine organisms, and this idea can be found in her painting *Lords and Ladies* (1936, fig. 2). From 1936, Gluck fell in love with Nesta Obermer (née Sawyer, 1893 – 1984), and considered herself as Obermer's husband. In a letter to Obermer, Gluck expressed a floral-queer eroticism and subverted the feminine symbol of flowers. She wrote: "how can these flowers be female? Anything more male than this prominent feature I cannot imagine ... I feel like a bee ... penetrating them for their sweetness" (quoted in Souhami, 1988: 112). Gluck clearly flirted with her lover using such a botanical description, and she combined her queer passion with the mechanism of pollination. This queer statement registers a dynamic circulation between queer desire, flowers, and animality. The stories behind the pictures are rich historical testimonies of queer desires, which are necessary to acknowledge.

In the catalogue of the 2017 exhibition of Gluck, the subject of flowers was briefly discussed in three essays. Some books have examined floral art in relation to queerness, bodies, and sexuality in general or focusing on specific artists, including Lisa L. Moore's *Sister Arts: The Erotics of Lesbian Landscapes* (2011); Derek Conrad Murray's *Mapplethorpe and the Flower: Radical Sexuality and the Limits of Control* (2020), Alison Syme's *A Touch of Blossom: John Singer Sargent and the Queer Flora of Fin-de-Siecle Art* (2010); and Nira Tessler's *Flowers and Towers: Politics of Identity in the Art of the American "New Woman"* (2015). The most recent study of queerness and flowers is Dominic Janes's *Freak To Chic: Gay Men In and Out of Fashion after Oscar Wilde* (2023). In the chapter titled "The Floral Closet", Janes explores a floral gay fashion that was prevalent from the late 19th century. He explores flowers as symbols of homosexuality, contending that they function as a secretive language. In this thesis, I will consider this symbolic dynamic in queer representations of flowers. Yet importantly, I am more interested in the significance of queer floral art beyond symbolic representations and morphological likeness. In the following chapters, I will scrutinise the connection between flowers and bodies, arguing that creating floral art functions as a more profound strategy of survival.

0.1 Arguments and Methodology

This thesis aims to deconstruct a stereotype of queer art by examining floral representations of bodies and sexuality. "A stereotype", as Sara Ahmed argues, "is a repeated utterance, a characterization that in being simplistic as well as flattering is also, in a profound sense, false" (2023: 15). A stereotype undermines the diversity of queer art. The American queer scholar Jack Halberstam argues that "some ninety-eight percent of what people call queer art is naked male bodies painted by gay men" (2022, n. p.). Halberstam suggests that the stereotype overlooks queer dynamics that contains in many queer artists who work on diverse subjects such as abstraction, domestic interiors, still-life, and landscapes. Queer floral imagery shows a particular form of queer art that is not hardcore but ambiguous, ambivalent, abstract, intriguing, and tantalising. In this thesis, I focus on a form of floral bodies that "evokes, rather than pictures, the body" (Getsy, 2015: xiii). Floral bodies not only symbolise queer sexuality but also represent the dynamics of queer politics, and namely, this alternative representation of bodies is potentially utopian. Timothy Morton (2017) explains why this connection between the human and the nonhuman is political and utopian. In *Humankind: Solidarity with Nonhuman People*, he argues that to embrace the nonhuman is to establish a form of solidarity and to imagine a "planetary" communist politics that will be utopian (2017: 1 – 7). In the following paragraphs, I will introduce my methodology and explain why a flower-body

connection contains a utopian potentiality. In order to stressing the significance of the connection, I will begin with the meaning of queerness that this thesis will argue.

This thesis considers “queer” as both an identity and a concept of ideality. “Queer” as an adjective “was once commonly understood to mean ‘strange,’ ‘odd,’ ‘unusual,’ ‘abnormal,’ or ‘sick,’ and was routinely applied to lesbians and gay men as a term of abuse” (Halperin, 2003: 339). “Queer” is associated with identity politics, and it was used positively by the activist group Queer Nation, founded in 1990, repurposed the word with the affirmative slogan “we’re here, we’re queer, get used to it”. The group transferred “queer” into a political demonstration that is associated with “anger, strength, and the ability to defend oneself” (Rand, 2004: 295). Moreover, as Hannah McCann and Whitney Monaghan suggest, “Queer Nation marked a distinct turn towards constructing ‘queer’ as an identity” (2022: 107). Therefore, “queer” can be understood as “an identity that resists traditional categories” (Jakobsen, 1998: 516-517). To be “queer” means to resist both heteronormativity and homonormativity. As I will show in the later section “0.3 The Artists & Their Chapters”, the notion of “queer” as an identity influenced my selection of the artists and artworks. However, the meaning of “queer” can be expanded without overlooking its character of activism and identity.

The linguistic usage of “queer” is versatile, and it can be applied as an adjective, verb, and noun. As discussed, “queer” contains activist qualities. In this discussion of the definition of “queer”, I use its noun form “queerness” to stress its property as a theoretical concept of idealism that is built on the dynamics of queer desires and bodies. The expanded sense of “queerness” in the works of Jack Halberstam, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and José Esteban Muñoz has influenced the conception in this dissertation. Synthesising their definitions, I argue that the core of queerness is a form of relationality, which I term it a ‘connective dynamic’.

In *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, Muñoz theorises queerness as a philosophical concept derived from the tradition of Marxist idealism. As he argues, queerness is the core of utopianism, which is “a hermeneutic that wishes to describe a collective futurity” (2009: 26). This means that queerness can be considered as a political imagination that “does not yet exist” (2009: 22). Queerness not only refers to homosexuality but also contains political dynamics growing out of queer sexuality. As Muñoz argues, “sexual utopia feeds a transformative queer politics” (2009: 36). Muñoz provides a perspective to see queerness as a political proposal that is nurtured by “an economy of desire and desiring” (2009: 26). In *Cruising Utopia*, Muñoz defines queerness as an ideality that “can be distilled from the past

and used to imagine a future” (2009: 1). Thus, queerness means “desire for both larger semiabstractions such as a better world or freedom” and “*better relations* [emphasis added] within the social that include better sex and more pleasure” (2009: 30). I consider that Muñoz’s phrase “better relations” highlights the connective dynamic of queer way of life. In Samuel Delany’s memoir, the author documented an avant-garde public sex performance in Christopher Street, New York City (Muñoz, 2009: 51). Muñoz cites this story, arguing that Delany’s documentary explains how these men “took care of one another” in this sexual performance (ibid). The connection of bodies illustrates “a vast care for others – a delicate loving ‘being for others’” (ibid). This relationality – a fraternal love and a connective dynamic – can represent the impulse of making utopias.

Halberstam’s definition of queerness leads me to consider the relationship between queerness and natural environments. In *In a Queer Time & Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*, Halberstam argues that queerness is “an outcome of strange temporalities, imaginative life schedules, and eccentric economic practices” (2005: 1). Furthermore, Halberstam locates “the place-making practice” in a postmodernist framework, exploring the queer practice of creating space to resist “the logic of late capitalism” (2005: 6). Based on Halberstam’s definitions, I consider if connecting queerness with nature or natural environments might constitute an “imaginative life schedules” that refuses capitalist hegemony.

Finally, Sedgwick’s definition of queerness affirms my consideration of queerness as a connective dynamic. She argues that queerness creates:

the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone’s gender, of anyone’s sexuality aren’t made (or *can’t be* made) to signify monolithically (1993: 8).

This definition stresses the fluidity and openness of queerness, suggesting that to be queer is to exist in an unstable condition. This queer way of existence generates from nonbinary sexualities that cannot be categorised. The metaphor of “open mesh”, I will argue, illuminates the possibility of remaining connected.

In this thesis, queerness takes on meaning with a connective dynamic that operates in queer art-making and the artists’ lives, which enables queer desires to circulate between the artists, flowers, and wider natural environments. I argue that to be queer is to connect to other human beings and nonhuman beings by practicing particular queer desires. In this thesis,

queerness connects to flowers and a wider nonhuman world. To connect with something else indicates to become, which registers a certain openness of beings who will be in an everchanging condition. This thesis argues that queerness in floral art often represents a connection between bodies, sexuality, organisms, and nature, illustrating the potentiality of going beyond the boundaries of the human and the nonhuman. In this thesis, the connective dynamic of queerness can be detected in the way of wild dynamics manifesting in human bodies, and of queer desire circulating through nonhuman organisms and environments. Therefore, it conveys that human bodies are fundamentally vulnerable, fugitive, and porous. A non-figurative representation of the body is able to articulate a body that contains a potentiality of becoming and transformation – a body functions like an “open mesh”. This disposition of connection, I will argue, is crucial in queer theory.

Moreover, my definition of queer floral aesthetics is also built on queerness’s connective dynamic. In this thesis, floral aesthetics refer to a form of floral representation of queer sensibilities that contain connective dynamics. I focus on those floral works that closely connect to desires, bodies, and *queer* eroticism. Therefore, in this thesis, floral aesthetics does not refer to the genre of floral still-lives in general. The discussion of queer floral aesthetics will not include, for example, the floral still-lives of the Dutch masters, the Impressionists, and Post-Impressionists. However, it includes some floral works of the late 19th century because, as I will show later, these images suggest a floral-body connection, providing a historical lens to look at queer flowers in the 20th century, especially in the AIDS era.

I argue that a queer utopia resides in this flower-body connection. Before I explain how this mechanism operates, firstly, I need to highlight the dialectical forces at play in order to further clarify the meaning of queerness. As discussed, the concept of queerness has a traumatic background because it was historically used “abusively” as discriminatory slang for homosexuality, yet it was also used “positively” during LGBT activism (Sullivan, 2003: V). Queer emotions contain grief, shame, loss, and anger, as well as joy, revolution, nobility, and vitality, and these sensibilities combine to a full picture of queer sexual culture. An ideal and utopian political prospect grows from this contradictive dynamic of queerness. These seemingly dialectical dynamics can be found in some queer floral imagery. In this regard, art from the AIDS era will play a crucial role in this thesis. The vibrant floral works of the AIDS era seemed to represent a form of melancholic ecstasy, registering queer ideality that existed in the past. On the one hand, they indicated the dynamics of eroticism. On the other hand, they reflected disease, loss, death, memorialisation, and mourning. Alongside the traumatic disposition of these images, this thesis also stresses the ecstatic, upbeat, noble, and playful temperament of

queer flowers, in which one could *feel* the vitality of the sexual culture of the AIDS era. This sexual culture, according to Douglas Crimp, can be seen as a form of ideality that illuminates what Muñoz calls “better relations within the social that include better sex and more pleasure” (2004: 140; 2009: 30).

Based on this dialectical perspective, a utopian potentiality emerges through the form of art practices, including the artists’ mannerism and techniques. A utopian potentiality resides in the connection between bodies and flowers. The ideal relationality represents not only the connection with other human beings but also with nature and nonhuman beings. Here, we can see the role Muñoz’s definition of queerness plays. By exploring the transformation between flowers and bodies, this thesis also aims to find a “planetary” solidarity that Morton argues (2017: 1 – 7). “Solidarity”, as Morton argues, “describes a feeling”, and it potentially disturbs the binary of “human-nonhuman” (2017: 13). As I hope to illustrate, we could receive this feeling of solidarity in queer floral art. This feeling itself contains a utopian paradigm, which enables us to anticipate a better world and to recall the ideality and utopias in the past. In the final discussion in this introductory chapter “Utopian Dynamics in Floral Bodies”, I will offer a further explanation.

The main methodologies of this research are visual analysis and theoretical analysis. Firstly, I will stress the significance of using analytical methodology. One of the main purposes of this thesis is to give the image an expansive interpretation, and analytical methodology maximises the possibility of creating an imaginative critique. The analytical methodology not only reveals what is in the image but also stimulates our imagination to perceive an invisible surplus. Therefore, this method proposes meanings and supports the development of new readings for these artworks.

Visual analysis is a key art historical method that can offer details of the image, such as artist’s composition and the texture of artworks. In this thesis, visual analysis corporates with theoretical analysis to provide a form of visual evidence. For example, in Gluck’s *The Devil’s Altar*, the intimate composition of the two flowers connotes the connection between the artist and her lover. Based on the artist’s manner of composition, we can go further – a queer love story emerges from this image, which shows how queer desires circulate between a queer artist and flowers. Thus, visual analysis is the foundation for theoretical analysis because it keeps artworks and theories closely connected.

Together with the method of visual analysis, I apply a set of theories to the artworks that I shall discuss in order to enlarge what we see. I use the frameworks of queer theory, queer ecology, feminism, ecofeminism, and other philosophical theory of utopianism, mourning, memories, and temporality to analyse these artworks. This thesis, therefore, involves theoretical-based research that is used to probe the artists' aesthetic manners, techniques, gossip, and anecdotes.

Gossip is important for art history especially for queer art history because it often contains information out of the official archive. In *Sister Arts* (2011), Moore stresses the importance of gossip in queer studies, arguing that:

listening to gossip means believing what you hear, see, touch, and feel; being unapologetic about what you love ... It means trusting hunches, intuitions, gaydar ... What we are recovering is a usable past for ourselves, based on rumors, fragments, secrets, and secretions (2011, XI).

Moore's methodology of constructing "a usable past for ourselves" resonates with a queer way of memorialisation. Together with this imaginative way of interpretation, I will suggest that it is important to "imagine" rather than restore a queer past. In *If Memory Serves: Gay Men, AIDS, and the Promise of the Queer Past*, Christopher Castiglia and Christopher Reed (2012) argue that an imaginative way of memorialisation can be a way of making the past performative. Castiglia and Reed argue that our memory is "not transparent recovery but imaginative ideality" (2012: 177). In this way, the memory will "serve(s)" for ourselves as well as for the future. I shall discuss this queer politics of memorialisation in Chapter 5.

The narrative of this thesis obeys a historical timeline, yet in each case, my method is sometimes nonlinear. I will interweave extra floral works from other queer artists in different historical periods. For example, I will interweave the floral/botanical legacy of the *fin-de-siècle* period into the discussion of modern artists. I also mention many queer artists who worked on flowers in different periods, such as Mary Delany, Gluck, Andy Warhol, Keith Haring, and Duane Michals. In the Conclusion, to keep this theme future-oriented, I will also discuss two contemporary artists who create floral works, which are Jim Hodges and Nick Cave. In doing so, I create an artistic dialogue beyond a linear temporality, proposing an alliance of queer floral imagery and queer artists.

Moreover, this floral investigation also has a wider context, in which I discuss the dynamics of gardens, gardening, and natural environments in relation to queer sensibilities. In doing so, I aim to offer a more extensive picture of the subject than has been previously done. The necessity of including the theme of queer gardening will be explained later.

0.2 The 1920s to the 1980s

This thesis discusses the queer art of flowers produced between the 1920s and the late 1980s. This period witnessed the growth of the feminist and the gay liberation movements in the United States and the United Kingdom, including the movement of feminism, the gay and lesbian protests that flourished after the Stonewall riots in 1969, and the activism of the AIDS era. All these movements shared a common conviction – is the autonomy of the body and the liberation of sexuality. Though many different genres of art emerged in these historical contexts, this thesis focuses on the representation of flowers. We will begin with a reconsideration of floral imagery by focusing on how the connotations of flowers changed between the 1910s and the 1970s when the feminist movement flourished. In doing so, I remark on queer potential in the feminist reading of floral imagery. Emboldened by the success of the feminist movements from the 1920s, queer communities also went through radical changes during these decades. Before the 1950s, some closeted queer artists usually implied their sexualities in coded manners, and flowers became one of these codes to suggest queerness. This secretive aesthetic suggests a task of decoding, which leaves a space for an imaginative interpretation. In the 1950s, on the one hand, homosexuality was becoming a popular topic (Bronski, 2011: 176 – 177); on the other hand, the period was particularly homophobic due to McCarthyism, which “viewed homosexuality as a source of national weakness” (Foner, 2005: 876). The obsession with bodies hit a peak in the 1960s when the artists in Greenwich Village started to understand the body as a form of power, and more importantly, as an organic system. In *Greenwich Village 1963: Avant-garde, Performance, and the Effervescent Body* (1993), Sally Banes suggests that:

In a period when the body was becoming ever freer of social restrictions in such general American cultural domains as sexual activity, social dancing, and fashion, the artists took a vanguard position in stressing the primacy of bodily experience. They pushed artistic representations of the body to their symbolic and material limits ... The effervescent body – with its emphasis on the material strata of digestion, excretion, procreation, and death – coexists in these artworks with the object body, the technological body, and the botanic or vegetative body. The avant-garde artists dealt in various ways with the social

classification of the body along racial and gender lines. They opened up new arenas of sexual expression. And their utopian project of organic unity also created a vision of the 'conscious body,' in which mind and body were no longer split but harmoniously integrated (1993: 191).

Banes's comment shows that, from the 1960s, artists started to explore bodies in multiple forms using various symbols and signifiers. The artists started to consider the body as a location of connections where "the effervescent body" was transformed into "the botanic or vegetative body". According to Bane, this can be read as a "utopian project" (ibid). Queer aesthetics, therefore, became increasingly corporeal, sensual, and material, which recalls Presocratic concept of *aisthesis*, in which the philosophers "tended to suggest materialist theories of perception" (Preus, 2007: 36). By the late 1980s, the flower appeared as one of the visual signifiers of AIDS-related art, which we shall discuss at length in relation to bodies and queerness.

0.3 The Artists & Their Chapters

This study will primarily examine the floral practices of Georgia O'Keeffe (1887 – 1986); Charles Demuth (1883 – 1935); Marsden Hartley (1877 – 1943); Cy Twombly (1928 – 2011); Derek Jarman (1942 – 1994); and, Robert Mapplethorpe (1946 – 1989). These artists have never not previously been brought together into a conversation about the theme of queer utopianism. In this section, I will introduce the main arguments of each chapter and explain why I have selected these artists' representations of flowers as case studies. This thesis concentrates on American artists because from O'Keeffe to Mapplethorpe, we can see how the art of flowers *became* queerer in an American context because of the political dynamic emerging in centres such as New York and San Francisco. These representations of flowers cannot be separated from the political events that took place between the 1920s and the 1980s in America, such as the feminist movement, Gay & Lesbian protests, and the activism in the AIDS epidemic. In this combination of politics and aesthetics, we can see a prominent connection between bodies, sexuality, flowers, and utopianism.

Before introducing the chapters, it is necessary to explain how these artists and artworks were selected. The first consideration is the motivation to choose these artists and artworks for this project and the second concerns the ways that artists' gender identities influenced my decision. Firstly, the consideration of structuring motivated me to look at these artists and artworks. In this thesis, I use the concept of queer utopianism as a framework to construct a

structure that can synthesise the queer art of flowers. According to this criteria, I selected case studies that can show a thematic coherence and illustrate the development of theories. The case studies that I selected reflect a theoretical process that I hope to illustrate – a procedure that operates from feminism to ecofeminism, queer ecology, and queer utopianism. Secondly, the consideration of gender and sexuality influences my selection. Most artists that I decided to explore were queer artists (although some of them were closeted). As discussed, queer identity needs to be emphasised in the light of activism. In this case, artists' sexual orientation is important in this study of queer art as it centred queer desires in art-making. Georgia O'Keeffe is distinct in this dissertation as an artist who has not been officially considered as queer. However, as I will discuss in Chapter 2, the friendship between O'Keeffe and other women artists illuminates queer qualities, and we can also find queer sensibilities in O'Keeffe's depiction of flowers, as well as in gossip and anecdotes.

Furthermore, emphasising queer identity influenced my choice of artworks. This means that I avoided, as Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock argue in "Critical Stereotypes: The 'Essential Feminine' or How Essential is Femininity?", "any argument that proposes 'art has no sex'" (1981: 48). In this thesis, I selected floral artworks that are suitable to be examined by using the concept of queerness. I consider to what extent the meaning of artworks can be expanded by using theoretical analysis, and whether it is feasible to apply these theories to artworks. On the other hand, this thesis widens the definition of queerness, arguing that it not only refers to an identity but also to a connective force. In this context, it is feasible to carefully select those artists who have queer temperament yet have not officially identified as homosexual.

Chapter 1 will review the existing scholarly critiques on the representation of flowers, and simultaneously offer an overview criticism of the theories that I shall be examining throughout the thesis. In Chapter 2, I look at the floral pictures of O'Keeffe, Demuth, and Hartley. I chose this trio of members of the American avant-garde because they consciously represented gender queer bodies and personalities in botanical forms. As I hope to illustrate, O'Keeffe, Demuth, and Hartley were interested in exploring and representing bodies by using natural forms. They built a connection between the human and the nonhuman. The significance of this connection goes beyond the framework of gender and sexuality. Their aesthetics are overlapping and share an inward coherence, which means that it would be incomplete to only concern one without the other. Firstly, I will undertake feminist reading of O'Keeffe's flowers, and approach queerness gradually by applying ecofeminist theory to this subject. I select O'Keeffe as the first case study because her flowers have traditionally been considered symbols of femininity or female power, but I seek to bring her paintings out of this cliché. To

do this, however, I do not argue that O’Keeffe’s flowers simply represent a certain bisexuality or homosexuality. Rather, through examining three critical tendencies – the views of the essentialist, the feminist, and the ecofeminist – I contend that O’Keeffe’s flowers are the works of *connection*. The artist painted flowers not because they symbolised femininity but rather to study nature, and in doing so, she created a connection to a nonhuman world. Her paintings of flowers are *beyond* femininity and female sexuality, and in this sense, we can call her flowers queer.

To place O’Keeffe, a straight and cis woman (according to the official documents), in a queer project might be unconvincing because so far there is insufficient official evidence showing that she had sexual relationships with women. However, I consider that this research is legitimate, as Clare Barlow argues:

Sometimes this absence of evidence has been used as a justification to present everyone in the past as straight and cis (non-trans) unless ‘proven’ otherwise. This approach makes the fundamental error of assuming that the queer and the not-queer are closed categories that do not intermesh, ignoring the multifaceted ways in which even otherwise straight lives might be tinged with queerness (2017: 14).

To cite Barlow again, to *queer* a straight artist can be seen as a method that “has the additional advantage of allowing us to bring into view a greater range of relationships than the clearly sexual” (2017: 15). There are many studies discussing O’Keeffe’s relationship with her husband, Alfred Stieglitz, yet in this thesis, I will not focus on this subject. Instead, in the discussion of O’Keeffe, I examine her close relationship with other women artists such as Frida Kahlo and Rebecca Salsbury. These women connected to each other, to flowers, and to natural environments. I therefore consider that this form of romantic friendship is not homosexual, but queer.

The second part of Chapter 2 focuses on the floral art of Demuth and Hartley. Both artists encoded queer sensibilities in their floral pictures, and suggested a queer culture that links to the floral legacy from the late 19th century (I will also discuss the topic of the *fin-de-siècle* floral culture in Chapter 5 on Mapplethorpe’s flowers). It is evident that literature and European culture influenced both Demuth and Hartley, which was different from O’Keeffe, who seldom considered non-visual resources and European inspirations. As an Aesthete, Demuth admired queer characters such as Aubrey Beardsley, Oscar Wilde, Marcel Proust, and Joris-Karl Huysmans (Reed, 2011: 129). His adaption of the *fin-de-siècle* aesthetics gave his

pictures a delicate and a “feminine” sensibility. By contrast, Hartley’s paintings were more masculine, in which he praised manhood and comradeship that had been established by Walt Whitman. The intertextuality of Demuth and Hartley’s art enable us to work within broader cultural dimension.

Both Demuth and Hartley were closeted artists; their cases are crucial to this thesis because acknowledging the work of closeted artists is also one of its key aims of this study. Their coded desire on canvases provides an opportunity to investigate the early and the aesthetically intriguing 20th century queer subculture. To highlight this subculture that existed before gay liberation is to review the possibilities that these artists had and how they negotiated personal crises and homophobic society. It was this struggle of living, rather than the lack of sexual satisfaction, that arguably inspired closeted artists such as Demuth and Hartley to align with the nonhuman subject. I consider that Demuth’s *Calla Lilies (Bert Savoy)*, floral watercolours, and Hartley’s floral still-lives and *Eight Bells Folly (for Hart Crane)* were early queer imagery, which represent bodies, personality, and sexuality by using coded and nonfigurative forms. Demuth and Hartley’s contribution to abstract portraits registers what Reed suggests in *Art and Homosexuality*, that “the development of abstraction is tightly bound to the history of homosexuality” (2010: 126 – 127). By examining these delicate representations, this section traces a coded queer culture in the first half of the 20th century.

This coded approach also can be found in Twombly’s floral pictures. In Chapter 3, I set Twombly’s pictures in the theoretical frames of temporality, corporeality, and sensuality, investigating how queer memories constantly influenced the artist. By reviewing the homophobic situation in the 1950s, I argue it is evident that Twombly encoded his queerness in his later paintings that at first glance appear to be irrelevant to sexuality and the body. For Twombly, the 1950s witnessed the youthful queer experiences that he had never expressed explicitly himself. I argue that memories of the 1950s seemed to keep reappearing in Twombly’s later canvases; such traces of his queer stories lingered throughout his long career. I therefore read Twombly’s practices as the imagery of memories and non-linear temporality. In Chapter 3, I focus on fragmental memories, anecdotes, and gossip, acknowledging queer sensibilities inside of Twombly’s pictures. In addition, I also develop a discussion of Twombly’s floral pictures in relation to AIDS/HIV, which is rarely discussed in the existing studies of his art. Exploring Twombly’s queer story could be deemed gossipy because it seems that Twombly’s flowers are free from queer erotic suggestion. Yet Twombly was a closeted artist, the official record thus might be incomplete as the painter’s homosexuality was rarely acknowledged

before and after his death. The significance of gossip is particularly crucial in the case study of Twombly.

In Twombly's case, moreover, I examine how the natural environment influenced artist's life and work. As a sea lover, Twombly was close to the ocean throughout his life, and this respect for water can be found in his art. Chapter 3 connects the oceanic environment to Twombly's queer sensibility, gardening, and his floral paintings. In his studio in Gaeta, Twombly and his partner Nicola Del Roscio were fond of gardening and watching the sea from their home garden. This picture shifts the focus of the thesis from flowers and queer emotion towards bigger outdoor spaces including gardens and the sea.

The final scenario that I offered in the conclusion of Chapter 3 explores the garden and the sea in the AIDS era; we can see how flowers, bodies and desire, intertwined with the disease. The subject of gardens, parks, and natural environments is a variation of the theme of flowers. I argue that locations like gardens and urban parks are important places for queer activities like public sex and cruising. Gardens and parks play an important role in the history of queer culture, although many of them were not built for queer communities; queer dynamics have instead disrupted the heterosexual and familial essence of these spaces.

Chapter 4 will depart from the United States and moves to Jarman's garden on the South coast of England in Dungeness, Kent. I will commence the chapter by justifying by use of a British artist in a predominantly American study. Indeed, I select the case of Jarman's gardening in order to establish a transatlantic dialogue. Namely, I will see queerness as a cultural country or a dreamland without national boundaries. Developing this line of thinking, I read Jarman's garden alongside other practices of queer gardening from across the Atlantic, rather than reading them with their own national traditions of gardening culture. In Chapter 1, I will examine a lesbian legacy of gardening and suggest that Jarman's practices echoes with this lesbian tradition rather than a clear British culture of the garden. In some discussions of Chapter 4, I will also connect Jarman's gardening to lesbian gardeners and Sapphic drug culture. Moreover, I will argue that Jarman's garden resembles the ideology of community gardens in New York City's Lower East Side, where the residents see gardening as a political act of resistance (Shearman, 2015: n. p.). In so doing, I use this opportunity to review a queer garden legacy.

Jarman's works have received significant attention in North America, especially in New York City. *The New York Times* has followed Jarman's films, paintings, activism, and gardening since

1988. In fact, Jarman did create a transcontinental bond with the New York art circles before his death in London, which establishes him as a witness as well as a participant of American queer culture. The queer dynamics from the other side of the Atlantic fascinated Jarman, who sincerely cared about what was happening outside of England. He “made a moody, prismatic Super 8 film” of Fire Island, which was the famous queer space in New York City (Koestenbaum, 2022: n. p.). Moreover, there were friendships that reinforced this transcontinental bond. In his journal, Jarman documented a phone call to his New York friend, Howard Brookner, who died from AIDS-related disease in 1989. Jarman called his dying friend one day and subsequently described Brookner’s weak voice in his journal, creating archival entries that reflect intense queer emotions, remembrance, and mourning. The phone call also can be understood as a metaphor for the transcontinental solidarity and comradeship that developed in the AIDS era. Furthermore, some studies consider Jarman’s practices as integral to Euro-American queer culture. Sam Moore (2020), for example, suggests that both Jarman’s garden and queer spaces in the US can be read as utopian locations. He indicates that these environments belonged to an international dreamland of queer utopianism, which can be explored together. In “Utopian Prospects”, Moore argues that “from Derek Jarman’s Prospect Cottage in Dungeness to the piers of Christopher Street in Manhattan, utopia has had a specific location” (2020: n. p.). Moore’s argument echoes my understanding of the international ethos of queer utopianism, and helps support my justification of bringing Jarman into a predominantly American thesis.

Secondly, I choose Jarman’s garden as a case study because his practices are unique. There are many examples of parks and gardens in relation to queer politics and sexuality that deserve academic attention, yet this study deliberately chooses Jarman’s garden. The importance of Jarman’s gardening is that, first, he saw gardening as a form of political protest that could negate patriarchy, heteronormativity, homophobia, and even capitalism. Second, as an HIV-positive queer individual, Jarman grew a garden *bodily* by himself. This fact illustrates a condition where the body, flowers, and natural environments become inseparable and vital. Considering the flowers in Jarman’s garden and his practical use of them, what makes this case unique is that it shows what Stacy Alaimo calls “transcorporeality”. In *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*, Alaimo argues that the concept of transcorporeality “traces the material interchanges across the human bodies, animal bodies, and then wider material world” (2012: 476). The human bodies therefore a transient combination of the elements from “more-than-human world” that includes all substance in natural environments (Alaimo, 2010: 2). In his diary, Jarman depicted the botanical history of flowers, revealing the philosophies and aesthetics behind them. Pragmatically, he also examined the medical and

dietetic uses of flowers. Therefore, the nonhuman material interchanges with his body in a very practical way. Such a level of physical closeness is hardly found in the other public parks and gardens that I shall be discussing in Chapter 1. Another uniqueness of Jarman's garden is its location, which hardly found in other queer gardens in the United States. Dungeness's shingle beach seems an impossible environment for growing a garden, where the wind is so strong that the plants are often destroyed. This challengeable coastal environment further registers a connection between the difficult living condition of both flowers and Jarman himself. He used his writing and filmmaking to create a queer aesthetics that responded to the living condition of queer communities in the AIDS era. For Jarman, gardening and garden became a way of facing illness and death, and thus, a necessary strategy of survival.

Furthermore, we can find a transcontinental bond in Jarman's meditation on pansies. In a journal entry, Jarman documented that the pansy (another slang of gay) is a strong aphrodisiac (2018: 29). According to Dominic Janes, the "pansy craze" was "an American Phenomenon", and later it spread to Berlin and Paris (2023: 159). The connection between homosexuality and pansies probably has an "American origin" (Janes, 2023: 157 – 159). In the late 19th century, the American lawyer Walter H. Butler "had attempted to introduce a bill into the American House of Representatives to make the pansy the national flower and to add it to the flag" (Janes, 2023: 158 – 159). Janes further writes that "in the course of the 1920s, the word came to be used on both sides of the Atlantic to refer ... to the homosexual man as an alleged effeminate being" (2023: 159). Considering one of the D. H. Lawrence's collections of poems titled *Pansies*, Janes writes that the word pansies, as Lawrence suggested, "derived from the French words *pensée* (thoughts) or *panseur* (to soothe or dress a wound)" (ibid). Apparently, Jarman's journal shows that he was familiar with the significance of the flower.

In Chapter 4, I will discuss Jarman's gardening, flowers/herbs, garden sculptures, films, and his journal, titled *Modern Nature*. I argue that Jarman expressed a set of philosophical and aesthetic reflections, which contains Messianic temporality and transcorporeality. As in Twombly's paintings, Jarman's garden and flowers can be seen as the material of time, which carried the past, the present, and the future. These representations of temporality, I argue, illustrate Benjamin's notion of messianic time. Messianic time is an important concept in Benjamin's late work "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (1940). In this essay, Benjamin argued that "the present, which, as a model of Messianic time, comprises the entire history of mankind in an enormous abridgment, coincides exactly with the stature which history of mankind had in the universe" ([1940] 1968: 263). This nonlinear dynamic resonates with the mode of queer temporality. Moreover, messianic time adds a historical dynamics to queer

temporality. The philosophical, rather than religious, figure of Messiah particularly links to Jarman's aesthetic because he often adapts and queers religious sensibilities in his art. Through Benjamin's messianic perspective, I consider Jarman's garden cited a queer culture and acknowledged the dead. I will give more details about this concept in the Literature Review and Chapter 4. Secondly, by locating queer temporality in the context of messianic time, this discussion also aims to explore the feeling of loss and a queer way of mourning. Jarman's garden and his flowers embody a traumatic yet ideal past, but they also document a critical present that Jarman was experiencing, and simultaneously illuminate a queer futurity that would be utopian. In this chapter, I argue that queer futurity resides in the act of mourning and memorialisation, rather than in a linear and progressive temporality. I argue that messianic time is not only a mode of temporality but also in relation to aesthetics that reflects the beauty of the trivial. Therefore, I suggest that Jarman's composition of temporality also created a form of queer aesthetic of debris. Finally, using the concept of transcorporeality, this chapter examines Jarman's practical use of plants, in which I will revisit the representation of botanical drugs in queer culture, and explore its utopian dynamics. This research of botanical drugs in relation to queer utopianism has never before been thought into the same discussion.

Both Chapters 4 and 5 examine the connection between floral bodies, AIDS/HIV, memories, and mourning. This thesis discusses the mechanism of memorialisation through examining floral imagery, and thus, in Chapter 5, I aim to illustrate a way of remembering by looking at Mapplethorpe's floral photography. I argue that Mapplethorpe's recognised perfectionist style contains the dialectics of vitality and morbidity. His perfectionism reflects queer ideality that also consists of trauma and pleasure of queer sexual culture before and in the AIDS era. I interpret the morbidity of Mapplethorpe's flowers as an embodiment of AIDS/HIV, because some of his floral pictures suggest the visible symptoms of the disease. The connotation of flowers and disease echoes the cultural discourse of the late 19th century, in particular the *fin-de-siècle*. As Dominic Janes argues, flowers "played a queer role in art and literature from Wilde to Proust through to the photography of Robert Mapplethorpe and beyond" (2023: 155). I will read Mapplethorpe's floral photography together with the *fin-de-siècle* aesthetics with a special focus on the legacies of Charles Baudelaire and Huysmans. I am particularly interested in building a connection between Mapplethorpe's flowers and the *fin-de-siècle* floral metaphor of disease, which can be read as a mode of transcorporeality. The dynamic paradox of morbidity and vitality registers the necessity of choosing Mapplethorpe as the final case study. This feature is less evident in other queer artists' floral works, such as Duane

Michals, Keith Haring, and Andy Warhol. More importantly, Mapplethorpe used a classic technique to express dialectic queer emotions, which is prominent in the field of queer art.

As discussed at the beginning of this Introduction, this thesis aims to deconstruct a stereotype of queer art. Yet Mapplethorpe's photography of hardcore nudity and S&M series seems to belong to this stereotype. These classic pictures were the focus of most of his public attention, which means that his pictures of flowers seem to be not as important as his hardcore photography. However, I will argue that not all of Mapplethorpe's pictures depicted bodies, sexuality, and eroticism explicitly. I will instead focus on his flowers and explore how the artist infused erotic sensibilities into these images without depicting figurative bodies. In Mapplethorpe's perfectionist floral photographs, I explore a queer memory – a form of ideality – that contains both trauma and pleasure. I contend that Mapplethorpe's floral pictures illustrate the politics of queer memory, showing that it is equally important to remember traumas and losses but also desires, pleasure, beauty, potentiality, ideals, and love in the AIDS era.

0.4 Flowers: A Queer Story

It is important to put forward a brief overview in order to show the complicated significance of flowers, and moreover, to illustrate how flowers were *becoming* queer. Flowers have provided an aesthetic pleasure and inspiration to artists and the audiences for centuries. Except for the visual pleasure, flowers and floral imagery are “complex historical objects” that are given rich symbolic meanings (Taylor, 1995: 1). As Janes argues in *Freak To Chic: “Gay” Men In and Out of Fashion after Oscar Wilde*, “blossoms could be employed in poetry and art to hint at a wide variety of thoughts and feelings” (2023: 1). In Christian culture, for example, the lily symbolised the purity of Virgin Mary. The rose and the incarnation signified the love, the sacrifice, and the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. Generally, as Annette Stott argues, floral motifs “have been employed to describe various attributes of femininity in art, literature, and thought at least since the Middle Ages” (1992: 61). Floral oil painting flourished in Netherlands from the 17th century; the Dutch masters painted splendid bouquets in vases together with butterflies, snails, beetles, lizards, caterpillars, dragonflies, or many kinds of fruits. These paintings reflect the prosperity of the Golden Age in Low Countries, yet “they could also act as reminders of the inevitability of death, or as bearers of Divine messages” (Taylor, 1995: 1). The disposition of *vanitas* delivers the message that the flowers are bound to be withered, just like fortune or life. In these still-lives, the Dutch masters remarked on the temporary characteristic of flowers and stressed their connection to fugitivity and death.

Before the Impressionists, Gustave Courbet's masterpiece *The Trellis*, as Syme suggests, "was an important precedent for later floriferous aesthetics" (2010: 3). In the 19th century, flowers regularly appeared in the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists' canvases. For the Impressionist artists like Claude Monet, the flower enabled him to scrutinise nature. The 2015 exhibition *Painting the Modern Garden: Monet to Matisse* (2015) explores the role of the garden/gardening and flowers in the Impressionist art from the mid-19th century. Monet's enthusiasm for flowers and gardening also shows a form of botanical therapy; as he said, "gardening was something I learned in my youth when I was unhappy. I perhaps owe it to flowers that I became a painter" (quoted in Robinson, 2015: 17). Of course, Monet was not the only artist-gardener at the time. He shared a common passion with his fellow artists, such as Henry Matisse, John Singer Sargent, Paul Klee, and Wassily Kandinsky (Le Brun & Griswold, 2015: 8). This male-dominated list shows that, firstly, there was a common tendency of considering gardening and flowers as a source of art-making, and secondly, many studies on garden-flower subjects focused on male artists and manhood, as the exhibition showed.

Yet to some artists, flowers were not only innocuous objects that only served as the source of visual pleasure. In other words, flowers are not only beautiful and innocent things. A connection between flowers, bodies, and queerness also emerged in the late 19th century Europe when the art of Symbolism was springing up. Janes suggests that "flowers were widely deployed in later nineteenth-century art to refer to sexual desires that could not be depicted openly" (2023: 145). Janes suggests that, at the time, flowers often symbolised "androgynous or otherwise transgressive forms of gendered expression" (2023: 145 – 146). Oscar Wilde wore a dyed green carnation – "the badge of French homosexuals" (Adut, 2005: 227) – to represent the oddity and the unnatural of his sexuality and Aesthetic attitude. Wilde himself, according to Syme, "was identified with various flowers: lilies, daisies, daffodils, sunflowers, and green carnations" (2010: 4). In the Aesthetic and later Decadent art movements, some artists used floral motif to embody the robust corporeality or an ideal social form. Caroline Arscott argues that during the Arts & Crafts Movement, the British artist, textile designer, and social activist William Morris waved "social ideal" into "the healthy organism", and his floral patterns registered "the human subject as social being, beautiful in itself and engaged in aesthetic experience" (2013: 248). Moreover, as Arscott argues in "Morris: The Gymnasium", "William Morris's designs for wallpaper and proposes that there is an evocation of physical strength in the designs" (2008: 29). The counterpart of Morris's robust flowers is the "fleurs malades" that appeared in the mid-19th century along with the publication of Charles Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal* (*The Flowers of Evil*, 1857). Flowers became more physical, but they represented

“malavides”. In the late 19th century, floral metaphors had been used for illustrating venereal disease in the medical field. In her book, Syme explores the case of the French surgeon and gynaecologist Samuel-Jean Pozzi, arguing that doctor Pozzi used floral metaphor to describe venereal infection (2010: 127).

The connection between flowers and venereal disease shows that flowers also can be sinister and coquettish, or even horrified. Instead of representing passive femininity, the artists used flowers to express the fear of female power. For example, the British illustrator Aubrey Beardsley’s piece *The Climax* (1894, fig. 0.3) depicts a scene in Wilde’s play *Salome* (1891). In this piece, Salome holds the head of John the Baptist after kissing him. The lily at the lower part of the picture is nourished by the blood of John the Baptist, who appears with snakelike hair like Medusa. Conventionally, the lily symbolises the purity of love and beauty, yet here it resembles an eccentric aquatic creature with its “tail” twisting from the other side of the blood pool. This creation subverts traditional meaning of the lily and transforms it into a sinister flower of vice. Regarding the collaboration of Wilde and Beardsley, Gilbert writes that “through a notable representation of perverse sexuality in their work, [they] participate in a devastating *fin-de-siècle* attack on the conventions of patriarchal culture even as they express their horror at the threatening female energy which is the instrument of that attack” (1983: 133 – 134). At the same period in the United States, according to Stott, a new genre emerged, which was called “the floral-female paintings” (1992: 61). In these pictures, women figure normally were depicted as beautiful as flowers, yet the “horror at the threatening female energy” seem to be depicted defensively. To cite Stott, “floral-female paintings encoded a traditional Victorian definition of femininity ... This type of painting can best be understood as a conservative response to the ‘New Woman’ of the 1880s, the flapper of the 1920s, and all their liberal sisters in between”. This means that the floral-female paintings, which depicted women as passive objects, can be read as patriarchy’s backlash.

From the mid-19th century, the sinister flowers of vice were still associated with women. Lesbianism and “the truly Decadent saga” of Sapphic culture “began with the publication of *Les Fleurs du mal* in 1857” (Albert, 2016: 22). Baudelaire published his scandal collection of poems *The Flowers of Evil* that was originally titled “Les Lesbiennes” (the lesbians). In his poems, Baudelaire searched the vital that grew out of the “mal”, the French word referring to the evil, ugly, crime, pain, and illness. The fantasy of lesbianism was central in Baudelaire’s aesthetics of morbidity. The triptych, “Lesbos”, “Delphine et Hippolyte”, and “Femmes damnées”, was related to the original title (Abraham, 2009: 3). In the “Dedicate” (Dedication), Baudelaire described his poems as “fleurs malavides” (the morbid flowers) ([1857] 2015: 11). His

symbolism was vividly interpreted in the illustrations of *The Flowers of Evil* (fig. 4). The drawings of Félix Bracquemond (1857), Odilon Redon (1890), and Carlos Scheabe (1900), captured this *fin-de-siècle* sensibility of the morbid beauty.

The flower was a symbol of femininity, yet there was also a legacy of associations with male bodies and manhood, which further illustrates the androgynous quality of flowers. In *A Touch of Bloom*, Syme suggests that, from the 19th century, flowers entangled with male bodies (2010: 35 – 50). As discussed, Wilde was one of the characters to use botanic metaphors challenging traditional masculinity, whereas other gay artists sometimes take vegetation as a symbol of masculine life. In America, Walt Whitman wrote *Calamus* to celebrate manhood and comradeship. In Chapter 2, I will examine how this Whitmanic botanical aesthetics influenced Hartley.

Another story between man and flowers can be found in the French author Joris-Karl Huysmans's (1848 – 1907) novel *À rebours* (1884, published in English as *Against Nature* or *Against the Grain*). After Baudelaire, the novel highlights the peak of the *fin-de-siècle* sensibility (Paglia, 1990: 429). Flowers were less relevant to femininity as *À rebours* has been considered a queer text. It is “known as the ‘hand-book of the Decadence’ and notorious for homoerotic reverie” (Reed, 2011: 86). Halberstam also argues that, the novel is a “despicable” and “seductive” (2020: 21). Indeed, in chapter eight, the author offered a disturbingly striking description of flowers, which is filled with the sense of morbidity. Furthermore, the novel also reveal a debate of the natural and the unnatural. Huysmans illustrated that the affection of morbid flowers is a queer sensibility “against nature” (Halberstam, 2020: 18). Halberstam argues that “*À rebours* deserves a closer look because it has established, more or less, the terms of an antinatural discourse that is associated with modern homosexuality, on the one hand, and with an emergent model of a prosthetic self, on the other” (2020: 17). Jean des Esseintes, the protagonist of the novel, “had always been madly fond of flowers” ([1931] 2018: 72). However, Des Esseintes is only interested in those flowers that are delicately collected by the florists or those that are artificially cultivated in the greenhouse. The “prosthetic” flowers, therefore resemble dandyish and campy queer aesthetics that refuse the rule of nature and decorate itself through the artificial and the unnatural. The *fin-de-siècle* artists, such as Huysmans and Wilde, chose the unnatural as their standing point to resist the natural and normalcy. This particular aesthetics is reflected in both Demuth and Mapplethorpe's floral works. Regarding the *fin-de-siècle* floral culture, the relationship between flowers and illness is historically evident, and I will explore this theme in Chapter 5.

0.4.1 Flowers in the 1920s and the 1980s

Between 1908 and 1913, Gertrude Stein wrote a series of essays titled *Word Portraits*, in which she explored a manner of portraying people by using “unrelated words” (Tessler, 2015: 67). Through such manner, Stein “was meant to capture the psychological essence of her subjects rather than their physiognomic visible ‘truths’” (ibid.). Stein’s invention of abstract portraits influenced American avant-gardists in the early 20th century, and instead of using words, some of them used floral/botanical forms to portray people. These paintings constituted a visual code of personalities (see fig. 17, Demuth’s poster portrait of O’Keeffe). This secretive manner of portraiture was especially suitable for queer artists; they could conceal queerness by using a botanical language. Janes also suggests that in the early 20th century, flowers were concerned as the codes of homosexuality, “the floral closet”, as he calls it (2023: 145). As early as 1915, Demuth, who lived in Greenwich Village between 1915 and 1916, explored “the anthropomorphizing of flowers” (Haskell, 1987: 52). From the 1920s, floral motifs were more explicitly in contact with gender, sexuality, bodies, and politics, and the artists, activists, and writers enlarged the meaning of flowers. During the 1930s, together with the publication of D. H. Lawrence’s poem collection *Pansies* (1929), “the word ‘pansy’ had emerged as one of the most widespread terms of contempt with which gay men were forced to contend” (Janes, 2023: 156 – 157). These visual and literary works show that, during the first half of the 20th century, floral imagery often functioned as a secretive language of homosexuality.

Andy Warhol’s contribution to the subject of queer flowers and male bodies cannot be overlooked. In his 1950s illustrated book *In the Bottom of My Garden*, Warhol depicted androgynous fairies playing with flowers, pictures that are both sexual and mischievous (fig. 5). At the time, Warhol also created various of drawings that depicted male bodies with seashells and flowers. The 2020 TASCHEN collection *Andy Warhol: Love, Sex & Desire* shows these pieces, including flowers, male portraits, nudes, feet, hands, and the orchestrations of phalluses, flowers, and seashells (fig. 6). These works establish a luxury archive of queer flowers. In Muñoz’s account, some of Warhol’s floral drawings reflect the theme of queer utopias, especially the pieces detailing the rose with coke bottle. These images speak to the theme of this thesis, and thus, I will return to Warhol’s roses in the Conclusion.

The floral fashion of the 1960s and the 1970s led an androgynous chic in the communities of Hippies, as known as the “children of flower”. They fashioned the flower as the symbol of peace, and the slogan “Flower Power” demonstrated their negation of the Vietnam War. In the

hippie movement, flowers were not a particular symbol of sexuality or queerness, but they were infused with political and revolutionary dynamics that illuminate a utopian potentiality.

By the late 1980s, the flower appeared as one of the visual signifiers of AIDS-related art. For example, in *A Dream of Flowers* (1986, fig. 7), the American photographer Duane Michals created a sequence of photographs, showing that “the unstoppable linguistic progression of the initials A. I. D. S. corresponds with a steady accumulation of flowers that gradually obscures the handsome, inert head” (Reed, 2011: 212). In this piece, the accumulation of flowers parallel with the fading of the body, registering a contradictive queer way of life, in which vitality and illness coexisted. Facing the trauma of the AIDS era some artists, however, express a playful and flowery ecstasy, and the American queer artist Keith Haring is a case in point. In his *Dancing Flower* (1989), the dancing body with the flower head represent a form of childlike fantasy. A human being and a plant live in the same body, without a boundary, showing a bodily metamorphosis. Haring’s dual canvas *Untitled (for James Ensor)* (1989, fig. 8) also expresses a queer cheerfulness intertwining with the devastating tragedy of AIDS/HIV. In the introduction of *Keith Haring Journals*, Robert Farris Thompson writes:

Haring numbers the panels, to indicate sequence. In the first, a skeleton with closed jaws and constricted rib cage touches a ley. Strangely luminous, while ejaculating over a bed of flowers. This could be the key that locks us to our doom, but it disappears. In the second panel, the sperm of the dead man has caused the flowers to flourish. They reach for the sun, higher than his head. This is “pushing up daisies” in an elegiac sense. The skull is smiling. His ribs relax and open. Haring accepts his death. For in his art he found the key to transform desire, the force that killed him, into a flowering elegance that will live beyond his time (2010: xix – xx).

Haring’s work describes the playfulness and pleasure of queer love and desire, even though they would lead to a disastrous consequence. Haring’s dancing flower and flower silkscreen “shocked us to save us”, and “breaks depression with a strong and moving work” (Thompson, 2010: xix). Such a floral work reflects a politics of memorialisation, revealing that the happiness is as important as grief, and both dispositions should be acknowledged when we look back at the AIDS era. The queer flowers of Michals, Warhol, Haring, and Mapplethorpe can be read as the representations of a sexual culture in the AIDS decades. Today, this form of sexual culture is hard to rebuild, yet it will continue to disturb and to haunt the current world. Therefore, these images, which were filled with a revolutionary sexual culture, allow us to trace the ghost of queer ideality.

In this research, the story of queer flowers stops at the late 1980s, yet queer artists' exploration of flowers is still in progress. Many contemporary art practices (which in this thesis refers to the art circa the 1990s) show a common tendency of considering human bodies in botanical forms. This thesis is a future-oriented project, and thus in order to deliver a sense of futurity, I will look at two contemporary artists in the Conclusion, which are Jim Hodges and Nick Cave. Both queer artists are creating splendid floral installations that are able to address the trauma of the past, out current crises, and a queer futurity.

0.5 Utopian Dynamics in Floral Bodies

In the previous discussion, by using a dialectical method, I illustrated that a utopian potentiality resides in the flower-body connection. Queer floral imagery can represent the ideality of a sexual culture, and this interpretation mainly shows a theoretical bond between queer ideality, utopianism, and floral imagery. However, in what specific ways do flowers connect to bodies, and how this flower-body connection is utopian? Finally, I will answer these questions from the perspective of transcorporeality. As Stacy Alaimo argues in *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times*, "transcorporeality casts the human as posthuman, not as a historical progression" (2016: 77). A floral body therefore can be considered a posthuman body. From a posthuman perspective, the connection between bodies and flowers illuminates a utopian potential because it shows a relationality between ecosystem and human beings. This dynamic deconstructs the boundary between the human and the nonhuman, and thus envisages a utopian "planetary" solidarity (Morton, 2019: 1). Likewise, in *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari emphasize this dynamic of posthuman bodies, arguing that:

Not man as the king of creation, but rather as the being who is in intimate contact with the profound life of all forms or all types of beings, who is responsible for even the stars and animal life, and who ceaselessly plugs an organ-machine into an energy-machine, a tree into his body, a breast into his mouth, the sun into his asshole: the eternal custodian of the machines of the universe (1983: 4).

As we can see in Deleuze and Guattari's statement, a posthuman body is a form of hybrid body that contains other organic or inorganic substances. In *A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century*, Donna Haraway considers human bodies as "chimaeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism" ([1985] 2016: 7). Haraway focuses on a new form of body that she calls a "cyborg", whereas

this thesis will pay attention to the organic body, meaning that I stress the transformation between human bodies, nonhuman organisms, and natural environments. As such, I will apply Alaimo's notion of transcorporeality to this thesis, and I consider that transcorporeality is a more useful concept that can be used to describe organic posthuman bodies. In *Exposed*, Alaimo argues that "my term 'trans-corporeality' suggests that humans are interconnected not only with one another but also with the material interchanges between body, substance, and place" (2016: 77). This account of "the material interchanges" is crucial because it describes that a flower-body connection is not only theoretical but also pragmatic, physical, and molecular. It further illustrates that human bodies and identities are the fields of becoming and connection.

The disposition of transcorporeality is becoming an important agenda that allows us to imagine a better world. For example, the Venice Biennale Arte 2022 focused on the transformation of the body, and was titled *The Milk of Dreams*. In the curatorial statement, the director Cecilia Alemani wrote that:

The Milk of Dreams takes its title from a children's book by Leonora Carrington (1917 – 2011), in which the Surrealist artist tells dreamlike tales of hybrid, mutant creatures that seem to terrify young and old alike. Carrington's stories describe a magical world where life is constantly re-envisioned through the prism of the imagination and where everyone can change, be transformed, or become something it someone else. The Exhibition takes Carrington's otherworldly creatures as companions on an imaginary journey through metamorphoses of the body and definitions of the human (2022, n. p.).

Alemaní emphasises that "metamorphoses of the body" contains a utopian outlook. The inevitable transformation between the human and the nonhuman, as she suggests, redefines what is a human being. This idiom illuminates a mode of coexistence, in which all the organisms would live in a "relational field" (Muñoz, 2009: 9). In such a field, none of us live in a self-sufficient mode, and all the organisms would be related to one and another, as exemplified in the circulation between flowers and queer desire.

In Venice Biennale Arte 2022, Alemani suggested that the recent pressures, such as climate disasters, humanitarian crises, and the ongoing shadow of COVID-19, remind us of the vulnerability of the human body (2022: n. p.). This situation reveals the fact that "we are neither invincible nor self-sufficient, but rather part of a symbolic web of interdependencies that bind us to each other, to other species, and to the planet as a whole" (ibid). This study was also carried out during the time of COVID-19. I consider this thesis as my own response to

the pandemic and I also see this project as my personal reflection of the humanitarian tragedies that happened in the quarantine. The traumas stemming from the virus itself seem to overthrow the ideology of bodily autonomy that insists on the idea of which “my body is mine”. As Judith Butler writes in *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, “we’re undone by each other” (2006: 23). There seems no remedy if we cannot make more effort to be “outside ourselves and for one another” (Butler, 2006: 27). To concern the bodies of others and the bodies in other forms (for example, the bodies living with the virus) becomes an urgent task. In this rather dystopian situation, I will remark on those floral bodies that illuminate utopian potential, futurity, and hope.



Figure 1 Gluck, *The Devils Altar*, 1932.
Oil on canvas, 135.8 × 74.9 cm. Given by Gluck to Brighton
Museum. The Royal Pavilion, Art Gallery and Museums, Brighton.



Figure 2 Gluck, *Lords and Ladies*, 1936.
Oil on canvas, 75 × 75 cm. Private collection.



Figure 3 Illustrations of *Les fleurs du mal*, 1857, 1890, 1900.

Upper left: Félix Bracquemond, Frontispiece for *Les fleurs du mal*, 1857. Etching, drypoint, 26.4 × 18 cm. The Elisha Whittelsey Collection, The Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 1962.

Upper right: Odilon Redon, Illustration for *Les fleurs du mal*, 1890. Etching, 32.2 × 25.4 cm. The Museum of Modern Art, gift of the Ian Woodner Family Collection.

Bottom: Carlos Schwabe, Illustration for *Les fleurs du mal*, 1900. 22.8 × 22 cm. Die Imposante Galerie.



Figure 4 Aubrey Beardsley, *The Climax*, 1893-4.
Print, 34.2 × 27.2 cm. Private Collection.



Figure 5 Andy Warhol, *In the Bottom of My Garden*, 1956.
Print, 21.9 × 27.9 cm. The complete set of 21 offset lithographs (including the cover), 16 with hand-coloring, on wove paper, the full sheets bound in paper-covered boards (as issued).



Figure 6 Andy Warhol, *Boy with Flowers*, 1955-7.
Ink on paper, 42.5 × 35.1 cm. © 2020 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc.



Figure 7 Duane Michals, *A Dream of Flowers*, 1986.
Gelatin silver prints, 12.5 × 20.3 cm. each of four. The Allan Chasanoff Photographic Collection

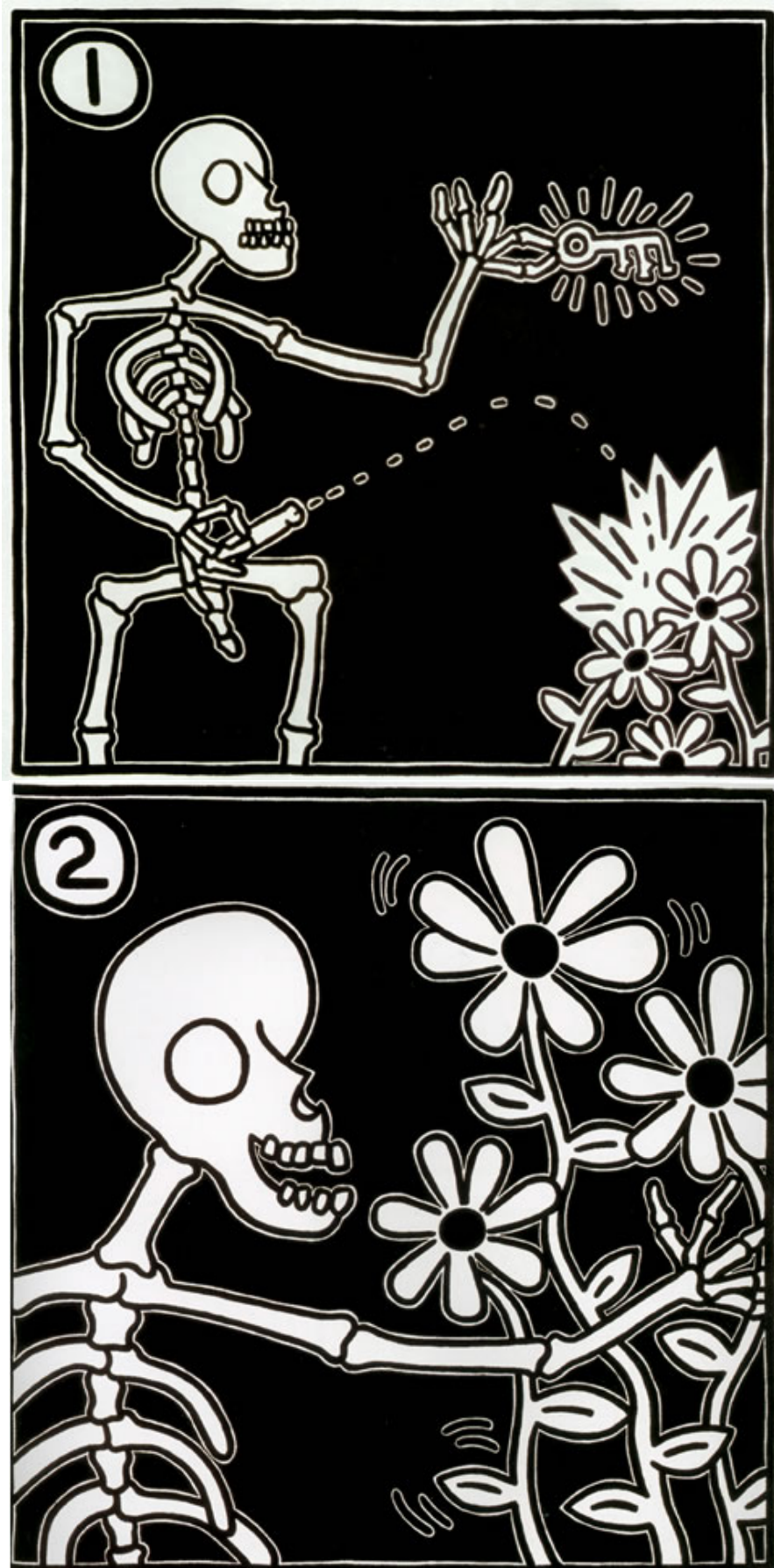


Figure 8 Keith Haring, *Untitled (for James Ensor)*, 1989.
Acrylic on canvas, two parts, each 92 × 93 cm. Private collection.

Chapter 1 Literature Review

This Literature Review will discuss scholarship on ecofeminism, queer utopianism, queer ecology, transcorporeality, wildness, queer temporality, and mourning. I look at these scholarly areas with reference to the case studies that I shall discuss in the following chapters. Before we move on to specific discussions, I should briefly summarise how these theoretical frameworks are relevant to my thesis. Queer utopianism is the main theory that offers me a practical tool to conduct theoretical methodology; the theory of queer ecology, transcorporeality, and wildness illustrates that the floral-body connection can be pragmatic; queer temporality and the theory of mourning show how queer memories and desires are cited and saved, giving a political and revolutionary dynamic to the queer art of flowers.

Ecofeminist theory is the first theoretical framework that I will assess. In ‘From Jook Joints to Sisterspace: The Role of Nature in Lesbian Alternative Environments in the United States’, Nancy C. Unger asserts that “at its core, ecofeminism unites environmentalism and feminism, and holds that there is a relationship between the oppression of women and the degradation of nature” (2010: 179). Women and nature share the same destiny, and in order to change this situation, they must be together with natural environments. Unger claims that “women are the ones who are ‘closest to the earth’” (ibid). Yet, I suggest that we can understand ecofeminism from an alternative perspective that less focuses on the resemblances between women and nature. As I will argue, the value of ecofeminist theory is that it stresses the importance of *connection*. Therefore I insist that ecofeminism is able to deconstruct the essentialist entanglement between women (the natural being) and a womanised “mother nature”. Moreover, ecofeminism challenges the idea of “bodily autonomy” and “corporeal integrity” that the feminists have claimed (Lloyd, 2007: 140). As Lloyd argues, “bodily autonomy” and “corporal integrity” suggest that “a woman cannot be free to live her own life if someone else controls her body. Since her body is her own (she ‘owns’ it), then she ought to be allowed to determine what happens to it” (ibid). This attitude of course strengthens the activism of feminists. However, according to Judith Butler, our bodies are not only ours, and human beings are “physically vulnerable” and “physically dependent” (2006: 26 – 27; Lloyd, 2007: 140). Our wellbeing not only depends on other human beings but also on the nonhuman, and indeed this dependency (which is a form of connection) is a core principle of thesis. I use the concept of ecofeminism not because it reflects “a relationship between the oppression of women and the degradation of nature” (Unger, 2010: 179), but because it illuminates possibilities of women’s survival – how did they depend on their sisters and nature and how this dependency helped them create and live. In Chapter 2, I will analyse this theme

of ecofeminism by looking at O’Keeffe’s floral paintings and her relationships with other women artists, her fans, and nature. I consider ecofeminism as a starting point to approach queer analysis because both concepts highlight connections between the human and the nonhuman. Compared with ecofeminism, queer theory functions as a further step for deconstructing identification, subjectivity, and bodily autonomy. By considering O’Keeffe’s floral paintings, the first section of this chapter will review traditional interpretations, the feminist, and ecofeminist critiques. Secondly, in the discussion of “Queerness, Flower, and Women”, I will consider some critiques that potentially *queered* O’Keeffe’s works. These specific interpretations of O’Keeffe’s floral pictures provide an outlook beyond essentialist femininity.

Next, in the section “Queerness, Utopianism, Flowers”, I will clarify the concept of ‘queer utopianism’. I will show how queer utopianism connects to the representations of flowers. The third notion that I will introduce is queer ecology, which is a theory that considers the relationship between nature and sexuality. However, I suggest that the key purpose of queer ecology is not merely to spot queer qualities in the natural world, nor to identify with these queer organisms in order to prove that queerness is “natural” and guiltless. Like ecofeminism, queer ecology also focuses on the connection between the human and the nonhuman, yet it goes beyond the politics of identity. A queer ecosystem essentially suggests the *wildness* of nature (Halberstam, 2020), rather than simply the sexuality of nature. Instead of providing an identification, a wild ecosystem offers a form of education. Queer ecology can negate the imagery that considered nature as an idyllic, consolation, feminine, or maternal shelter. As I shall discuss, Jack Halberstam’s (2020) theory of wildness adds new dynamics to queer ecology. Halberstam argues that wildness “is an invitation to step outside of the ordinary and into a world shared with animals, oriented to predation and networked with nonhuman codes of interaction, flight, and resistance” (2020: 77). A wild ecosystem, as we shall see in Jarman’s garden, educates queer individuals with its chaos, darkness, scars, and grimness. I will combine queer ecology with Halberstam’s theory of wildness, and apply both theories to this thesis. Finally, in this review, I will look at the critical areas of queer temporality, memory, AIDS/HIV, and the politics of mourning, in which I also review the literature of Jarman’s garden and Mapplethorpe’s floral photography.

1.1 Flowers, Femininity, Ecofeminism

From the late 1910s, O’Keeffe’s works were largely read from the essentialist perspective that interpreted her floral pictures as representations of female sexuality. In the 1970s, some

feminist art historians read O’Keeffe’s art as the celebration and bold expression of femininity. By reviewing these critiques of O’Keeffe’s flowers, we can approach an critical context at the time. This section will consider both perspectives and then highlight the value as well as the limitations of the feminist interpretation. In addition, I will consider how ecofeminist and queer theories can expand the significance of O’Keeffe’s flowers. The entanglement between O’Keeffe and feminism is an intriguing subject that is full of paradoxes. Feminists interpreted O’Keeffe’s floral imagery as a celebration of femininity and female sexual desire. O’Keeffe did not label herself as a feminist, or a *woman* artist, but as an artist. Yet she has been inevitably considered as a feminist heroine. Such a fact compels us to assess the issue of feminism and O’Keeffe’s art. I argue that O’Keeffe practiced an ecofeminist life that went beyond essentialist feminism, yet simultaneously echoed feminist’s political dynamics. I consider O’Keeffe’s art as feminist works because, as I will show in Chapter 2, her art and life style encouraged many women to imagine alternative way of being. It was her life with nature and her intellectual exploration of art that inspired women, which was less relevant to the celebration of female desire and sexuality. Therefore, I argue that O’Keeffe was both beyond and with feminism.

1.1.1 The Traditional Interpretation

In *Encounters in the Visual Feminist Museum: Time, Space and the Archive*, Griselda Pollock writes that:

the analogies between women and flowers have a long history in sexist ideology where both women and flowers are considered faithless, superficial, and inducive of melancholy because they appear beautiful in youth but are destined to fade and die. Thus transience links femininity and the flower to both alluring appearance but ultimately death (2007: 106).

Pollock’s argument suggests that both nature and the flower were traditionally understood as symbols of femininity, representing a fragile and passive form of beauty. The case of O’Keeffe illustrates how reading floral imagery from a symbolic perspective could trigger essentialist interpretation. Therefore, this research will not stop at exploring the symbolic connotations of floral imagery. Before the 1970s, O’Keeffe’s canvases, especially her flowers, were often interpreted from this traditional perspective. Early critics, both male and female, such as Helen Appleton Read, Paul Rosenfeld, and Henry Tyrrell, argued that O’Keeffe’s paintings represented women as natural, unnurtured, and organic beings. In 1922, Rosenfeld, one of the members of the Stieglitz Circle, wrote that:

It is female, this art, only as is the person of a woman when dense, quivering, endless life is felt through her body, when long tresses exhale the aromatic warmth of unknown primaeval submarine forests, and the dawn and the planets glint in the space between cheeks and brows (1922: 112).

Rosenfeld claimed that O’Keeffe “painted from, or with, her body” (Burke, 2019: 126). This biological interpretation was based on the ideology that the works of female artists likely express essential femininity (Parker & Pollock, 1981: 26). In the discussion of O’Keeffe’s flowers, I instead use ecofeminist and queer theories to deconstruct the gendered and sexualised body in Rosenfeld’s account.

My argument also challenges Freudian understandings of bodies and sexuality, which once dominated the critique of O’Keeffe’s flowers. Art critic Helen Appleton Read wrote that O’Keeffe’s abstract work is “a clear case of Freudian suppressed desires” (1923: n. p.; Burke, 2019: 126). Pollock writes that in the early 20th century:

The enthusiasm of some of the advanced critics for O’Keeffe’s work as symptom of this paradoxical notion of woman’s unconsciously, almost naturally sexual nature – hence the floral association – was additionally shaped by then-current American involvement with Freud’s radical theories of sexuality, disseminated following his lectures in the U.S. in 1909 (2016: 106).

Freud “had equated sexuality with the life-force, which developed the artistic idea of avant-gardists” (Haskell, 1987: 57). Yet in this study, his theory is not the main focus. I argue that Freud’s psychoanalysis can only offer a form of scientific explanation to artistic creation, which potentially narrowed and simplified a piece of artwork. It might bring art back to the inward and domestic cause – she painted this way because she was a woman and she expressed her female desires that were repressed by a patriarchal system. Thus, art could not be expanded to wider social, intellectual, and metaphysical interpretations. In such critical context, O’Keeffe’s work was hardly interpreted in another way. In a sense, although Freudian theory stressed the importance of desire, it potentially enhanced the essentialist understanding of women-nature-flowers combination.

The function of desire is important for a queer study. However, I argue that queer desire is not something that was unconscious or repressed. I contend that queer artists created floral art not because they were eager to liberate oppressed desires, and not entirely because those

androgynous flowers resembled their queer sexualities. I argue that they created the art of flowers because, in part, they needed to find a way to survive. As I shall discuss in the following chapters, this way can be ecological. Indeed, there are many forms of impulses stimulating art-making. This thesis stresses the importance of desire, arguing that queer desire is a productive force of creation that contains revolutionary dynamics. This understanding of desire can be found in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's anti-Freudian theory. Appropriating Deleuze and Guattari's "post-Freudian" study on desire, Anna Hickey-Moody and Mary Lou Rasmussen argue that "desire, like power, is everything. It's everywhere: it is positive, productive and generative and is not only formed in relation to lack or sexuality" (2009: 46). Similarly, as Verena Andermatt Conley argues in "Thirty-six Thousand Forms of Love: The Queering of Deleuze and Guattari", Deleuze and Guattari also negate "a psychoanalysis normalised the subject by reducing everything to an Oedipal scenario" (2009: 26). "As an institution", Conley suggests, "psychoanalysis normalises desire and excludes difference. By doing so, it limits creativity" (ibid). In *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze and Guattari argue that "desire is revolutionary in its essence ... desire does not threaten a society because it is a desire to sleep with the mother, but because it is revolutionary" (1983: 116). Deleuze and Guattari's argument explains the position of queer desire in my study.

1.1.2 Interpretations of O'Keeffe's Flowers in the Framework of Feminism

Among the complex theorisations of feminism in the 1970s, a strand of thought that focused on female sexuality, sexual difference, and body autonomy influenced how critics interpreted O'Keeffe's floral pictures. Revisiting O'Keeffe's floral pictures, some feminist critics argued that these works functioned as positive demonstrations of female sexual desire to resist patriarchal hegemony that sees women as passive sexual objects. Pollock writes, in the 1970s:

Some American feminist readings embraced both the artist's gender and her work's heady associations with a female sexual body, notably via the floral analogue, as the key to O'Keeffe's feminist relevance (2016: 106).

She argues that they championed O'Keeffe's work as "a totally new grammar for imaging the female sexual body and its sexual sensibility" (2016: 107). Similarly, in *Carr, O'Keeffe, Kahlo: Place of Their Own*, Sharyn Rohlfson Udall argues:

In the 1970s the study of women in the visual arts concentrated on the rediscovery of forgotten women artists, who were then introduced into the established canon. Historians

sought to define the “female experience,” as distinct from the “male.” Such efforts to condense and generalize female experience resulted first in claims of a feminine “essence,” described in terms of – and ultimately reducible to – biology (2000: vii).

For some feminist critics and artists in the 1970s, O’Keeffe’s enormous flowers represented the female body “as a site of active pleasure or autonomous sexuality” (Pollock, 2016: 107). This strand of feminist criticism interpreted O’Keeffe’s floral images from a biological and anatomical perspective. Linda Nochlin, for example, argued that O’Keeffe’s *Black Iris III* is “a hallucinatingly accurate image of a plant form at the same time that it constitutes a striking natural symbol of the female genitalia or reproductive organs” (2015: 81).

However, other feminist art historians of the 1970s resisted this perspective of overemphasising the connection between female sexuality and their artworks. This can be found in the interpretation of the American feminist artist Judy Chicago’s sculptural installation *The Dinner Party* (1974 – 1979). Firstly, Chicago’s work seemed to be a representation of exclusive femininity. Composed by 39 pieces of hand-made ceramic plates, each plate, which was shaped into mysterious vulva pattern, dedicated to a great historical woman figure. In the piece dedicated to O’Keeffe, the floral sculpture recalls O’Keeffe’s *Black Iris* or *Blue Flower* (1918). Chicago said, “I used the flower as the symbol of femininity as O’Keeffe had done” (quoted in Mitchell, 1978: 685).

However, Chicago’s work was used creatively by the feminist artists Mary Beth Edelson, Ana Mendieta, and Suzanne Lacy, who extended the piece out from essentialist feminism and Symbolism. As Amy Tobin writes in *Women Artists Together: Art in the Age of Women’s Liberation*, *The Dinner Party* inspired Lacy to create *International Dinner Party* in 1979 (Tobin, 2023: 127). Edelson and Mendieta joined this project, and “sent notice via telegram to Lacy and her team, who marked the location of each dinner party on a world map hung in the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, where Chicago’s work debuted” (Tobin, 2023: 128). Through the recreation of Chicago’s work, these feminist artists created a “feminist relationality” that was based on “the dynamics of correspondence” (Tobin, 2023: 129). *International Dinner Party*, as Tobin argues, “was not a constative, static description of woman-centred feminism, but an active, changing thing” (2023: 133). In this way, Chicago’s work – “the ‘cunt’ iconography” (Tobin: 2023: 129) – was transformed into a foundation to build a feminist network. Edelson, Mendieta, and Lacy did not interpret Chicago’s installation from a essentialist perspective; rather, they considered *The Dinner Party* as the base of creating connective dynamics.

In their 1981 essay “Critical Stereotypes: The ‘Essential Feminine’ or How Essential is Femininity?”, Parker and Pollock also challenge the trend of critiques that interpreted women’s art from a biological perspective. Parker and Pollock argue that women’s art does not necessarily embody “essential femininity”, but shows how these artists, as women, “have fully participated in and altered dominant forms of art practice” (1981: 25). This means that it is important to stress women’s gender and sexuality to show their distinct position in the art world. Yet it is also important to not interpret women’s art merely based on biological sex. Citing Mary Ellmann, Parker and Pollock argue that to attach sexual difference overly is to stereotype women’s art (1981: 8). However:

any argument that proposes ‘art has no sex’ ignores the difference of men’s and women’s experience of the social structures of class and the sexual divisions within our society, and its historically varied effects on the art men and women produce (Parker & Pollock, 1981: 48).

Parker and Pollock’s theory can help us to read O’Keeffe’s floral paintings without overemphasising sexual difference and without overlooking her position as a woman artist and as a feminist. Moreover, O’Keeffe’s words can justify this way of interpretation. Pollock describes O’Keeffe as “a lifelong feminist” (2016: 106). The artist herself said that:

I am interested in the oppression of women of all classes ... I am trying with all of my skill to do painting that is all of a woman, as well as all of me ... I have no hesitation in contending that my painting of a flower may be just as much a product of this age as a cartoon about the freedom of women – or the working class – or anything else (Moore, 2011: 168).

The artist also said that:

What the men can’t – what I want written – I do not know – I have no define idea of what it should be – but a woman who has lived many things and who sees lines and colours as an expression of living – might say something that a man can’t – I feel there is something unexplored about women that only a woman can explore – the men have done all they can do about it (quoted in Hiller, [1993] 2016: 230).

The artist's words show that both positions – being a woman and a feminist – are crucial. In the following, I will introduce some alternative feminist readings of O'Keeffe's pictures, and these critiques resonate with Parker and Pollock's arguments.

In terms of O'Keeffe's floral pictures, some other feminist critics, including Bram Dijkstra, Linda M. Grasso, and Susan Hiller, argue that her manner of painting flowers in fact negated the femininity that was fabricated by patriarchy. The American literary critic Dijkstra's interpretation shows a queer potential because instead of reading O'Keeffe's floral imagery as an embodiment of femininity, he considers these canvases challenged a stereotype of femininity that flourished since the late 19th century. O'Keeffe's paintings of flowers, as Dijkstra argues, resisted "her notoriety as a 'gender-specific' artist" (1998: 222). Firstly, in *Georgia O'Keeffe and the Eros of Place*, Dijkstra (1998) offers another reason why O'Keeffe's flowers were understood as a symbol of femininity. In a chapter titled "Flowers and the Politics of Gender", Dijkstra suggests that European literature, the French in particular, influenced American avant-gardists in the 1920s (1998: 223). Beginning with Baudelaire's *The Flowers of Evil*, the flower-woman imagery "soon began to outpace the pervasive sentimental nineteenth-century theme that cast 'Woman' as a passive, receptive, virtuous flower" (ibid). Dijkstra argues that O'Keeffe probably noticed this tendency, and attempted to paint flowers candidly in order to resist this Baudelairean aesthetics. Dijkstra argues that "to paint flowers as flowers and nothing else, close-up, for their own sake, would thus, in itself, become for her an act of defiance, a radical gesture of dissociation from the antihumanist values of the prevailing social order (1998: 227). This argument evokes the political dynamics behind O'Keeffe's floral still-lives. Namely, O'Keeffe created "accurate image of a plant" (Nochlin, 2015: 81) not to express essential femininity but to challenge a stereotype that saw a woman as "a passive, receptive, virtuous flower" (Dijkstra, 1998: 223). O'Keeffe painted flowers so large that expressed her defiance of the male-dominated canon of art-making where flowers were often painted smaller and together with women. As I will illustrate in Chapter 2, furthermore, her artistic technique and way of looking show a serious care for the nonhuman, in which we can perceive queer dynamics.

Linda M. Grasso's book *Equal under the Sky: Georgia O'Keeffe and Twentieth-Century Feminism* (2019) investigates the relationship between O'Keeffe and feminism. Grasso suggests that although "O'Keeffe sustained a relationship to feminism that was long, complicated, and ambivalent", "feminism", she argues, "is akin to a canvas upon which O'Keeffe, her contemporaries, and her commentators created art and opinions" (2019: 1 – 2). As mentioned, O'Keeffe supported the feminist movement in the early 20th century, yet in "the

feminist seventies” (Kaloski, 2003), she instead negated the label of “feminist artist”. Her negation somehow offers a space for an anti-essentialist and queer reading. As argued, in this thesis, floral bodies are dependently in contact with the nonhuman dynamics. For anti-essentialist feminist critics (Dijkstra and Grasso were among them), O’Keeffe’s flowers have vast connotations that go beyond gender, identification, and sexualisation. As Hiller (1993) argues in “O’Keeffe as I See Her”, “as Gertrude Stein insisted, ‘A rose is a rose is a rose’, and it is not part of a woman’s body, nor is a woman a flower” (1993: 24 – 26). The theme of queerness, ecofeminism, and O’Keeffe’s flowers is based on these anti-essentialist feminist interpretations.

Pollock’s anti-essentialist critique proposes O’Keeffe’s floral imagery a vast meaning. She argues that O’Keeffe’s art articulates a way of life and a form of knowledge (Pollock, 2017). Pollock notes that one of feminist scholars, Anna Chave, argued that it was not problematic to interpret O’Keeffe’s paintings from a sexual and bodily perspective (2017: 107). The problem is that “her art was described not as the vision of someone with real, deeply felt desires, but as the vision of that depersonalized, essentialized Woman who obligingly stands for Nature and Truth” (quoted in *ibid*). Hence, in “Seeing O’Keeffe Seeing”, Pollock argues that O’Keeffe’s manner is an artistic respond to the “specific Euro-American modernist turn towards the non-objective”, and “O’Keeffe was engaged in finding forms for sensations that remain unknown without *formulation*” (2016: 106). Pollock concludes her essay by arguing that O’Keeffe’s art is “a desire for knowledge” (2017: 114). In the discussion of O’Keeffe, I will pay more attention to Pollock’s interpretation, and expand it by using a queer perspective. This knowledge, I will argue, refers to the way of looking at nature, understanding nature, and sharing the body with nature. It was this knowledge, rather than sexuality, that made O’Keeffe’s art feminist and inspiring for other women. In this regard, the body, which is registered by flowers and influenced by nature, is no longer integrated and gendered; rather, the body becomes an organism in a wild ecosystem that actually does not care about human beings. This is the point that O’Keeffe’s work touches on ecofeminism.

1.1.3 Ecofeminism

As discussed, I use the concept of ecofeminism because it illuminates possibilities of women’s survival, and according to Alaimo, “nature has been and continues to be a place of feminist possibility” (2000: 2). Natural environments offer an alternative space for women, allowing them to practice a life that is outside of the patriarchal social system. This statement conveys that the connection between nature and women is not only biological but also political. As

Unger suggests, for ecofeminists, “living in the country was considered superior to living in cities created and dominated by men because in urban centers both lesbian sexuality and efforts to transform society were constantly oppressed and diverted” (2010: 181). Living with nature, for ecofeminists, is a political action of resistance, and this dynamic can also be found in queer gardening. In these queer uses of nature, the traditional pastoral ideal disappeared. Queer people often discover the wild force of nature that functions as an education rather than protection or consolation. This disposition can be found in O’Keeffe’s residence in the desert or Jarman’s garden in the desolate Dungeness. Unger further argues that “nature should not be anthropomorphized into a mother to be protected but instead be respected as a nonhuman, nongendered partner in the web of life” (2010: 180). Unger’s statement is a direct critique of the essentialist idea of “mother nature”, and it also refuses the idea of seeing nature as a maternal shelter. Based on this argument, I argue that the idea of ecofeminism brings O’Keeffe’s flowers out of a sexual stereotype, allowing us to envisage a richer syncretical image of women, desert, flowers, and same-sex intimacy. Furthermore, understanding nature as a “nongendered partner” also opens a space for queer analysis.

1.1.4 Queerness, Flowers, Women

As discussed, Dijkstra and Grasso’s anti-essentialist account already revealed the possibility of queering O’Keeffe. To locate O’Keeffe in the discourse of queerness is not entirely a new approach. There are also important critiques on women and flowers that indicate queer dynamics, which support my aim of queering O’Keeffe. I will introduce these theories here and examine them in Chapter 2. Art historians such as Susan Fillin-Yeh, Lisa L. Moore, Anne Middleton Wagner, and Elisa Kay Sparks reveal queer qualities in O’Keeffe’s art and lifestyle. Fillin-Yeh reads O’Keeffe as a dandy and crossdresser, stressing O’Keeffe’s androgynous figure in relation to her art (1995: 33 – 44). She argues that O’Keeffe’s pictures of “plant and organic life” reflect her dandyism, and her pictures are “sexually charged, but without a fixed gender” (Fillin-Yeh, 1995: 39). In *Sister Arts*, Moore (2011) explores the floral collages and garden design of the British artist Mary Delany, examining how the romantic friendship between women inspired Delany. In the discussion of O’Keeffe’s floral imagery, Moore argues that O’Keeffe’s art is “in a sister arts tradition” (2011: 169). Moore considers O’Keeffe as a bisexual artist, and claims that “Dodge Luhan and O’Keeffe were briefly lovers” (2011: 170). She argues that the triangle between O’Keeffe, Mabel Dodge Luhan, and Rebecca Strand in Taos Art Colony links to O’Keeffe’s flower paintings. Moore’s research immediately includes O’Keeffe in the framework of queerness. Anne Middleton Wagner’s book *Three Artists (Three Women): Modernism and the Art of Hesse, Krasner, and O’Keeffe* explores how the identities of the

artists influenced their “general cultural identities as women” (1996: 10). At the end of the chapter on O’Keeffe, Wagner discovers the body in general with gender fluidity, rather than with femininity. She argues that:

Hers is a form of representation that aims to show the unshowable: the body in its absence, and without gender; the interior of the body, when no gender can be determined; the symbols of the body, when they they can be made to differ and conflict ... We must concede the many ways in which her imagery engenders odd hybrids ... This is, I think, the imagery of the phallic woman (1996: 102).

Similarly, in “Twists of the Lily: Floral Ambivalence in the Work of Virginia Woolf and Georgia O’Keeffe”, Elisa Kay Sparks suggests that the floral imagery in Virginia Woolf and O’Keeffe’s work refuses gender conventions (2018: 36). These nonbinary interpretations on O’Keeffe’s flowers offer the possibility of fitting O’Keeffe in the framework of queer art.

1.2 Queerness, Utopianism, Flowers

The ecofeminist and anti-essentialist interpretations of O’Keeffe’s flowers already illuminate a utopian potential because the flower-body connection expects non-normative ways of being. Therefore, a crucial function of these two frameworks is that they lead to the principal theory that I will use, which is Muñoz’s concept of queer utopianism. Firstly, as discussed in Introduction, I attempt to construct a structure to synthesise these queer floral artworks and to show these artistic practices as a collective unit. In this respect, the constructive thought in Muñoz’s theorisation is particularly effective for my methodology. Muñoz develops his queer utopian thought in *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (2009). In using the German Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch’s theory of hope, utopianism, and the anticipatory potential of art, Muñoz *constructs* a queer critical framework incorporating visual art, drag performance, dancing, and poetry, and invoking a utopian potential within these queer art practices. Secondly, Muñoz’s methodology illustrates the feasibility of using philosophical theories of utopianism (which are not necessarily queer) to analyse queer art. As he argues:

attempting to imagine a convergence between artistic production and critical praxis is ... a utopian act in relation to the alienation that often separates theory from practice, a sort of cultural division of labor (2009: 101).

Muñoz's methodology offers me the legitimacy to theorise queer desires in floral art, which means that a study of queer floral art does not have to stop at the level of Symbolism. In this thesis, therefore, I am less interested in how flowers symbolise queer sexuality due to their hermaphroditic biology. Thirdly, Muñoz's theory widens the concept of queerness, which resonates with my understanding. In the Introduction, I suggest that queerness can be a form of identity yet can surpass the politics of identity. Likewise, in Muñoz's book, queerness is not only a way of having sex but also a utopian political proposal. More importantly, he illustrates queerness as a political hypothesis that generates from queer desires and bodies. Considering this combination of queer desires and utopian politics, I use an analytical methodology to examine the political dynamics in the queer art of flowers with reference to Muñoz's theory. While Muñoz's *Cruising Utopia* discusses different forms of queer art, this thesis offers in-depth research on queer flowers in particular by combining queer utopianism with floral imagery. Next, I will review the notion of queer utopianism and remark on its applicability to flowers.

1.2.1 Queer Utopianism

First of all, queer utopianism is a form of political hypothesis that is built on the framework of queerness. It imagines a utopian world in the future that will be "queerness's domain" (Muñoz, 2009: 1). In *Cruising Utopia*, Muñoz argues that queerness is "the rejection of normal love that keeps a repressive social order in place" (2009: 134). In an ideal condition, a queer way of life contains an ideal paradigm that is helpful for establishing a better society. Muñoz calls this ideal paradigm queer utopianism. Therefore, queerness is more than an alternative way of having sex; it is considered as the foundation of a better social system. In *Cruising Utopia*, Muñoz (2009) borrows Bloch's theories in *The Principle of Hope* (1954), arguing that queerness is a form of the "not-yet-conscious" (2009: 1 – 3). This means that queerness is something we can imagine and anticipate. As he writes, "queerness is not yet here. Queerness is an ideality. Put another way, we are not yet queer. We may never touch queerness, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality" (Muñoz, 2009: 1). Queerness is something we can *feel* in art.

In *The Principle of Hope*, Bloch ([1954] 1986) explored the utopian potential residing in medicine, music, literature, architecture, theatre, interior design, technology, visual art, and many other fields. I will apply Bloch's exploration of the utopian potential of medicine to the discussion of Jarman's use and writing of botanical drugs. By using a poetic writing style, Bloch aimed to describe *sensibilities* and to share experiences with the readers. Utopias, based on

Bloch's philosophy, become something we can *feel* rather than something we can cognise.

Bloch's method shows that tracing utopias in art is feasible. As Muñoz writes:

A Blochian approach to aesthetic theory is invested in describing the anticipatory illumination of art, which can be characterized as the process of identifying certain properties that can be detected in representational practice helping us to see the not-yet-conscious. This not-yet-conscious is knowable, to some extent, as a utopian feeling. When Bloch describes the anticipatory illumination of art, one can understand this illumination as a surplus of both affect and meaning within the aesthetic (2009: 3).

The argument of this thesis is built on Muñoz's queer utopianism, yet Muñoz is not the only critic who considers queerness beyond the framework of sexual identity. As early as 1908, the British utopian socialist, poet, and gay activist Edward Carpenter noted that "same-sex desire, because of its outsider status, could help facilitate solutions for social problems" (Bronski, 2011: 80). In *The Intermediate Sex: A Study of Some Transitional Types of Men and Women*, Carpenter (1908) remarks that there is a utopian system residing in homosexual desire, where citizens could enjoy more equality and democracy. Carpenter suggests that Eros is a great leveller. Perhaps the true Democracy rests, more firmly than anywhere else, on a sentiment which easily passes the bounds of class and caste, and unites in the closet affection the most estranged ranks of society" (1908: 114 – 115). Although Carpenter did not name his theory queer utopianism, he explicitly pointed out that queer desire (Eros) can be the foundation of democracy and a technique of communication. In the discussion of Mapplethorpe's floral photography, I will explore how the dynamic of Eros functioned in his technique of photographing, and in this regard, Carpenter's account is crucial. I will suggest that Mapplethorpe's floral imagery can be read as a leveller, as Christopher Looby argues in "Flowers of Manhood: Race, Sex and Floriculture from Thomas Wentworth Higginson to Robert Mapplethorpe", floral images are able to represent the historical structure of a perverse desire that shuttles between races, sexualities, and gender (1995: 142, 148). The theory of Eros brings Mapplethorpe's floral pictures into the area of queer politics.

1.2.2 Floral Queer Utopianism

In *Cruising Utopia*, Muñoz briefly discusses the relationship between flowers and queer utopianism, which offers inspiration for my research. In the Introduction of his book, Muñoz mentions Warhol's drawing of a rose in a coke bottle, arguing that Warhol's combination of a natural creature and a mass-produced product illuminates a utopia in the quotidian (2009: 9).

Muñoz reads the American poet Frank O'Hara's *Having a Coke with You* along with Warhol's work of coke bottle, suggesting that both artists celebrated the beauty of the everyday and the "anticipatory illumination of certain objects" (Muñoz, 2009: 7). Muñoz argues that the combination of a rose and a commercial product shows a refusal of alienation. Although the discussion is brief, it stimulates a theoretical bond between flowers, queerness, and utopianism. In Chapter Eight titled "Just Like Heaven", Muñoz writes that "... painted flowers are passports allowing us entry to a utopian path, a route that should lead us to heaven or, better yet, to something just like it" (2009: 146). The flower, in Muñoz's study, is transformed into an embodiment of political imagination.

Muñoz notes that applying Bloch's theory to a queer project is a "risky move" because "it has been rumoured that Bloch did not hold very progressive opinions on issues of gender and sexuality" (2009: 2). Yet in *Principle of Hope Volume Two*, Bloch did connect a utopian expectation to erotic longing ([1954] 1986: 797). On the French Rococo painter Jean-Antoine Watteau's piece *Embarkation for Cythera*, Bloch argued that the picture was a utopian work (ibid). The lovers anticipated traveling to the island of love, and their expectation, longing, and desire illuminated a utopian emotion and a better world ahead, and importantly, this anticipation was founded upon eroticism. Bloch wrote, "when painted this longing is departure, romantic journey; thus every portrayal of erotic distance already expresses seduction" (ibid). Bloch argued that this form of landscape painting depicted "a wishful landscape", as he wrote:

Young men and ladies are waiting for the barque which will bring them to the island of love. The way of passing the time in those days was the reason why Watteau's picture, that of an excellent but not exactly first-rate painter, is able to give such a sexually striking delineation of wishful landscape (ibid).

From Bloch's perspective, this painting creates a distance – a distance from the departure to the destination and a distance from longing to the potential accomplishment. For the lovers of *Embarkation for Cythera*, the island of love is a promised utopia, and it is the erotic dynamic that drives them to depart.

Muñoz did not discuss the role of flowers in Watteau's picture and in Bloch's theory, and here, I will emphasize this aspect. In *Embarkation for Cythera*, Watteau painted a statue of Venus on the right side of the canvas. The goddess of love stands under the shadow of the woods, and the vine of roses creeps on her body. Roses are clearly symbolic in this picture, indicating the

blazing yet fugitive desires. Later in the chapter “Wishful Landscape in Painting, Opera, Literature”, Bloch offers a precious study on the motif of flowers (1986: 804). He explores Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meung’s *Roman de la Rose*, one of the significant Medieval literatures of 13th century France. The roses, in this antique text, were desired objects. The roses were the exact incarnation of eroticism and were “the most cheerful pornographic materialism” (ibid). In this story, the poet pursued the roses with “a whole army of love” (ibid), and eventually triumphed. Focused on one line of the long poem, “Rose / where the art of love is all enclosed”, Bloch argued that “the vaginal allegory of the rose forms the ground of utopian pleasure in the Gothic Cythera” (1986: 805). Both Muñoz and Bloch have offered a springboard for the subject of flowers and utopianism, whilst this thesis will offer an in-depth study on this subject matter.

1.3 Queer Ecology, Transcorporeality, Wildness

The discussions above represent a more abstract theoretical analysis, yet a flower-body connection, I will argue, is also physical and pragmatic. To clarify this aspect, I will use Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickon’s theory of queer ecology, Alaimo’s theory of transcorporeality, and Halberstam’s notion of wildness. I will engage with the concepts of queer ecology, transcorporeality, and wildness through my methodological nexus of visual analysis and theoretical analysis. Queer ecology and transcorporeality are especially relevant analysing the floral-body connection. As I will show in the following, they provide a structure that ranges from an ecological macro view to a transcorporeal molecular level. I locate the analysis of the floral-body connection in this dimension. The discussion of transcorporeality will show that floral-body connection is concrete rather than ultimately metaphysical. I will further examine how it is related to queer sensibilities. In this thesis, I argue that queer artists did not create floral art because they needed to identify with these natural organisms to justify their desires are “natural”. Here, I look at a more radical perspective to surpass the ethical narrative of queer ecology. This is where Halberstam’s theory of wildness comes into this project. She argues that “Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickon lay out a clearly ethical project. But as is the way with so much in the orbit of the erotic, the ethical is not always of paramount concern” (2020: 81). The theory of wildness critiques the ethical attention of queer ecology and deconstructs the binary of natural and unnatural. In my discussions, I use the concept of wildness to illustrate that the floral-body connection is erotic, queer, and wild.

In this section, firstly, I will offer an introduction to these theories in sequence. Secondly, I will pay specific attention to the connection between queer gardening and queer ecology. To do

this, I will review the legacy of lesbian gardening and its resemblances with Jarman's gardening. I stress the tendency of eroticisation in queer gardening, which reflects one of the aims of queer ecology. Moreover, the eroticism in queer gardens contains political dynamics, and this is where I cast the politics of mourning and remembrance.

As discussed, I insist that the aim of queer ecology is not to detect queer qualities in nature and then to identify with these queer organisms. Also, to claim that queerness is "natural", and thus guiltless is not the primary purpose of queer ecology. Queer ecology focuses on the connection between the human and the nonhuman, and to highlight the significance of this connection, I will consider the theories of transcorporeality and wildness. In "Eluding Capture: The Science, Culture, and Pleasure of 'Queer' Animals", Alaimo argues that "much queer theory has bracketed, expelled, or distanced the volatile categories of nature and the natural, situating queer desire within an entirely social, and very human, habitat" (2010: 51). According to Alaimo, queer studies must include nonhuman dynamics. In *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*, Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson give an in-depth study on the connection of queerness and nature, which also illustrates a similar consideration. The authors offer a definition of queer ecology, as they write:

The critical analysis of these locations and co-productions is what we mean by "queer ecology": there is an ongoing relationship between sex and nature that exists institutionally, discursively, scientifically, spatially, politically, poetically, and ethically, and it is our task to interrogate that relationship in order to arrive at a more nuanced and effective sexual and environmental understanding. Specifically, the task of a queer ecology is to probe the intersections of sex and nature with an eye to developing a sexual politics that more clearly includes *considerations of the natural world* [emphasis added] and its biosocial constitution, and an environmental politics that demonstrates an understanding of the ways in which sexual relations organize and influence both the material world of nature and our perceptions, and constitutions of that world (2011: 5).

Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson's idea is potentially utopian because it considers a formulation of coexistence, which resonates with Morton's proposal of "planetary" solidarity (2019: 1). Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson's definition opens up a macro prospect, whereas this grand outlook can also be articulated in a specific micro location, which is the floral-body connection. To do this, it is necessary to consider the theory of transcorporeality.

For this study, queer ecology allows me to explore how bodies, flowers, and natural environments intersect on both physical and psychic levels. There are some notable theories

specifically focusing on the possibility of physical transformations between bodies and natural materials. For example, in “Guest Column: Queer Ecology”, Morton argues that:

I propose that life-forms constitute a *mesh*, a nontotalizable, open-ended concatenation of interrelations that blur and confound boundaries at practically any level: between species, between the living and the non-living, between organism and environment (2010: 275 – 276).

Morton’s notion of the *mesh* – that resonates with Sedgwick’s definition of queerness – contains the ethos of transcorporeality as the metaphor conveys a physical connection. The concept of transcorporeality makes a floral body, or a botanical body, possible. As Alaimo argues in *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*, transcorporeality “traces the material interchanges across human bodies, animal bodies, and then wider material world” (2012: 476). In another book *Exposed*, Alaimo writes, transcorporeality “suggests that humans are interconnected not only with one another but also with the material interchanges between body, substance, and place” (2016: 77). This theory illustrates that the connection between human bodies and nature is not an abstract hypothesis but a concrete, corporeal, and molecular mechanism. This pragmatic mechanism can be found in Jarman’s use of flowers and herbs, which I will discuss in Chapter 4.

Regarding Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson definition of queer ecology, in her latest book *Wild Things: The Disorder of Desire* (2020), Halberstam develops a more radical theory of transformative bodies and sexualities, which will play an important role in this thesis. As she argues in *Wild Things*, “Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson lay out a clearly ethical project. But as is the way with so much in the orbit of the erotic, the ethical is not always of paramount concern” (2020: 81). Halberstam points out the limitation of queer ecological studies. By exploring queer ecology, the critics seem to examine erotic dynamics in relation to nature for establishing alternative humanist and ethical values. However, eroticism appears to be the opposite of humanism, and queer desire is sometimes more analogous to the chaotic power of the nonhuman. Therefore, Halberstam creates a theory of wildness in order to deconstruct humanist values. The notion of wildness is used for describing all forms of deviant, eccentric, and non-normative relationships, desires, loves, and untamed natural dynamics that also cannot be colonised. Halberstam’s formulation signifies a “nonhuman exchange” that would take place between human beings and the world of animals, objects, the “narrative of vegetal growth” and “viral multiplication” (Halberstam, 2020: 7). Wildness describes a state when one tries to (but often fail to) identify with nonhuman charisma that is opposite to human moral,

normativity, order, and the capital. Halberstam argues that wildness “is an invitation to step outside of the ordinary and into a world shared with animals, oriented to predation and networked with nonhuman codes of interaction, flight, and resistance” (2020: 77).

Halberstam’s theory of wildness also goes beyond the binary of natural and the unnatural. Therefore, according to Halberstam, queer desire does not belong to this category. Queer desire neither natural nor unnatural, but wild.

Halberstam argues that queer sexual desire is wild, and it often attaches to the nonhuman, meaning that it will go beyond the ethical and human emotions. In this respect, Halberstam takes the relationship between human beings and wild birds as an example, articulating a wild sensibility that is feral and unethical. The wild is not an idyllic shelter that could take care of people – on the contrary, it educates human beings through its cruelty, disorder, and chaotic power. The wild does not need human beings, whereas human beings often want to perceive the wild but fail to do so. Halberstam reveals a way of *becoming* wild. In “The Epistemology of the Ferox: Sex, Death, and Falconry”, Halberstam explores J. A. Baker’s classic *The Peregrine* (1967), arguing that “in *The Peregrine*, Baker does not simply share in the desires of the birds he follows; he experiences a kind of love for the birds and an identification with them that causes him to deeply desire to become hawk” (2020: 82). This is an impossible desire that reveals the wild is not “a place you can go, a site you can visit” (Halberstam, 2020: xii). In this book, Baker expressed his hatred of human beings, and “places himself alongside the hawk” (Halberstam, 2020: 83). Halberstam suggests that this wild and queer emotion, including the erotic desire for a bird and the hatred of mankind, can be read as “a deep critique of the human”. As such, Halberstam’s notion of wildness transforms the ideology of queer ecology, arriving at a queerer terrain. This wild nature could not console queer individuals, but it educates them to get lost, to be wild, and to look for alternative ways of living. As I will discuss in Chapter 2, this chaotic disposition may reach a climax in Marsden Hartley’s wild *Eight Bells Folly (for Hart Crane)*. This disposition of wildness also can be found in Jarman’s garden in the desolate Dungeness.

In conclusion, I will use the theories of queer ecology, transcorporeality, and wildness to illustrate a flower-body connection. Queer ecology offers a legitimacy to my argument of floral bodies. It is a macro concept that will lead the discussion accessing to wider natural environments (such as gardens, the sea, or the desert). Alaimo’s transcorporeality will work in a micro level for examining a material transformation between flowers and bodies. Finally, Halberstam’s theory of wildness goes beyond the ethical queer ecology and offers a radical

perspective. According to Halberstam's idea of becoming the wild, I would explore the possibility of becoming flowers.

1.3.1 Gardens, Erotism, Queer Ecology

As discussed, Alaimo suggests that queer studies should not be limited to social and human habitats. Following Alaimo's instruction, this thesis will include the exploration of queer gardening. As I argued in the Introduction, the subjects of gardens, parks, and natural environments are variations of the theme of flowers. I argue that locations like gardens and urban parks are important places for queer activities like public sex and cruising. In this Literature Review, it is necessary to highlight the connection between queer sexual culture, gardens, and public parks. Before we approach the world of queer gardens, we will look at how queer dynamics influenced public parks.

Many parks were not built for queer communities, yet queer dynamics disrupted the heterosexual morality, and familial normativity of these spaces. Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson point out that "parks were places for the public cultivation of morally upstanding citizens; they were thus advocated as sites of regulated sexual contact" (2010: 18). However, in many cases, queer communities subverted the morality of these public green spaces. For example, as George Chauncey argues, Central Park played an important role in urban queer life because of "its location, vast stretches of unsupervised, wooded land, and heavy patronage" (1994: 182). Parks "provided a useful cover for men wandering in search of others" (ibid). From the 1930s, Chauncey suggests, while many gay bars were shut down by the city council, "hundreds of gay men gathered at the band concerts offered at the Central Park Mall on summer nights, meeting friends, socializing, and cruising" (1994: 182). Christopher Park in New York City was turned into the frontline of the Stonewall uprising. George Segal's sculpture *The Gay Liberation Monument* (1980), a piece that represents the queer sexual culture, desire, and politics all together, registers the significance of the park and successfully queered the space.

The queering of parks was not only an American phenomenon. In post-war London, Russell Square became popular cruising space for queer people. Also in London, since the 18th century, queer cruising occurred in public green spaces such as Hampstead Heath, St. James Park, and the Rose Garden in Hyde Park. Dating back to that period, Vauxhall Pleasure Garden in London was a notorious public urban park for queer pleasure and other taboo desires, and, as Joe Crowdy suggests in "Queer Undergrowth: Weeds and Sexuality in the Architecture of the Garden", these activities usually happened in thick "flowering shrubbery and garden

monuments” (2017: 427). The screen of enormous elms in Vauxhall Pleasure Garden protected queer people from heterosexual surveillance. Crowdy writes how “overhanging branches and dense canopies create close, intimate islands of privacy where bodies can be probed and shared in vegetal company” (2017: 429). Vauxhall Pleasure Garden was “the earliest precursor of Disneyland”, indicating a utopian daydreaming-like perspective, which pursues pure human pleasure and love that “had nothing to do with marriage, children or family” (Brown, 1999: 39 – 40).

Public parks can be considered an archive of historical queer protests, cruising, and public sex. Trees and bushes can shelter queer lovers yet this connection to the “vegetal company” is ephemeral. In this thesis, I aim to find a concrete, molecular, and transcorporeal connection between queer bodies, desires, and nature. In comparison, the practice of gardening creates a more intimate relationship between human beings and plants, showing the dynamics of transcorporeality and erotization. The British queer painter and gardener Cedric Morris, for example, cultivated his irises by hand-pollination (Clair, 2023: 143), and this image indicates the intimacy between a queer gardener and his flowers. As I will discuss in Chapter 4, Jarman’s garden is such a space where queer sensibilities connect to botanical dynamics, and interestingly, we also can find this mode of gardening in a lesbian culture of gardens. In this section, I aim to give a brief review of the connection between queerness and gardening, and categorise both Jarman and lesbian gardening within a larger queer framework. I focus on how queer gardeners represented erotic dynamics through gardening. To queer and eroticise gardens is not to identify with these small ecosystems. For these queer people, gardening is a way of life that can help them to go through crisis. The eroticism of gardening, in these cases, is a way of documenting queer sensibilities, desire, and love, and this documentary illuminates the politics of mourning and remembrance, which I will discuss in the next section.

Moreover, one of the differences between public parks and gardens is that queer gardens are close to domesticity, and gardening can be an important part of queer domestic life. Importantly, queer gardens challenge the meaning of home with their wild dynamics, and build a connection between domesticity and natural environments. For the American novelist Fannie Hurst, traditional domesticity is associated with heteronormativity, as she “equated traditional marriage with an old house” (Walker, 2023: 161). Home, for the American artist and poet Wayne Koestenbaum, often functions as a straight space. As he writes in *The Queen’s Throat: Opera, Homosexuality, and the Mystery of Desire*:

Home has grim meanings for the gay kid or the kid on the verge of claiming that ambiguous identity. Home is the boot camp for gender; at home, we are supposed to learn how to be straight (1993: 47).

Koestenbaum argues that, by playing records, queer listeners invite opera to domestic space, resisting the straightness of homes. This form of connection-making can be read as a queer act of “coming out”, which transforms homes into open spaces. This also means that homes, families, and domesticities can illuminate alternative significance for queer people, and they can be queered. As Heather Love argues in “The Last Extremists?”, following Maggie Nelson’s critique, the image of family is not monolithically heterosexual (2017: 213). Likewise, some queer gardeners often invite those “wild things” to their homes to disturb the heteronormativity and the stability of domesticity and identity. Through gardening and erotising the garden, some queer gardeners transform their homes into open spaces – the spaces for exploring queer desires and the vulnerability of bodies. For example, as I will discuss in Chapter 4, in *Dungeness*, Jarman invited a wild natural force to his home, reflecting what bodies go through and how desires circulate between his body and the garden. Jarman lived with his garden in an open landscape where the coastal climate often destroyed his flowers; he was “being corporeally vulnerable in a specifically damaged landscape” (Mortimer-Sandilands, 2010: 343).

Furthermore, the wild temperament of queer gardens shows that such places cannot be utterly governed or conquered. This means that queer gardening decolonises the garden culture. The garden does not care about human struggle, and the plants reproduce no matter what the gardener goes through. The British lesbian gardener Alys Fowler’s garden is a case in point. In the period of emotional turbulence, struggle, and grief (as she ended her marriage and came out at age 38), the chaos, vitality, and productivity of the garden are profoundly associated with her personal crisis and desires. She writes:

The good thing about the garden is that it doesn’t give a fig for my existential crises – it just gets on with being ... It speaks its truth very plainly: “You’re not tending to this place, so we grew you some wild strawberries.” That’s pretty honest.

Here’s another truth: last year I came out. I fell in love with a woman ... Everything shifted, everything changed, yet the world stayed the same. The garden grew more wild strawberries.

...

It took me a long time to come right back to the garden, to tend to all those wild strawberries. There have been moments when I've looked out on the garden and its wild, seemingly chaotic state felt like a metaphor for the inside of my head ... A plant I was quite sure I'd killed a number years ago was not only flourishing, but in flower. A vine I was convinced would never do well was now upwardly marching and declaring its health (2016: n. p.).

Fowler's writing shows how the garden influenced her domestic life, which had been built on heterosexual marriage. When the gardener was distressed, her garden was no longer under cultivation but started to demonstrate its own vitality. As I will discuss next, the collaboration between queer gardeners and gardens can be read as an act of decolonisation.

Like public parks, the garden itself is not a necessarily queer space, and it is filled with multiple cultural and symbolic meanings. Gardens can be leisure spaces for the imperial household and upper class, or can be healthy green spaces for families. To cite Mortimer-Sandilands, gardens "speak of a sanitized, Masterpiece Theater-esque nostalgia for class privilege brought to the service of ongoing paternalism" (2010: 350). Moreover, as the Antiguan-American novelist Jamaica Kincaid suggests, gardening include the politics of naming and possession (1999: 114 – 124). The scientific names of the plants show the colonial past they carried. The dahlia, for example, was called *cocoxochitl* in Aztec before it was renamed by the Swedish botanist Andreas Dahl (Kincaid: 1999: 118 – 119). Gardening was deeply influenced by the exchange of plants in the colonial period (Kincaid, 1999: 114 – 124).

"Colonisation" is derived from the Latin word *colere*, which means to cultivate. This root suggests an image of a romantic virgin land waiting to be tamed by civilisation. As Kincaid wrote, "when the Spanish marauder Hernando Cortez and his army invaded Mexico, they met 'floating gardens ... teeming with flowers and vegetables, and moving like rafts over the waters" (1999: 117). For the conqueror, Mexico was like a paradisaical garden – a romantic image. In *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*, Leo Marx argued that early colonists saw America as a primitive garden. He wrote:

... we find the picture of America as paradise regained. According to his account of a voyage to Virginia in 1584, Captain Arthur Barlowe was not yet in of the coast when he got a vivid impression that a lovely garden lay ahead (1964: 36 – 37).

This colonial image of the garden is closely related to essential femininity. Like flowers, gardens once represented virginity and maternal protection. In the discussion of women and

floral art, I have mentioned Stott's exploration of "floral-female" genre in which many floral-female pictures depicted women in gardens. By examining Robert Reid's painting *Fleur-de-Lys*, Stott suggests that this scene of women in gardens:

clearly reveals that the feminine woman was expected to assume such a passive, ornamental social role. She was legally and economically dependent on a father or other male relation until marriage transferred those responsibilities to her husband ... painters of floral femininity borrowed the enclosed flowers garden motif to signify one of the most highly regarded traits of femininity for the nineteenth century America – innocence. In the context of the floral-female painting, the *hortus conclusus* referred not only to virginity but also to intellectual innocence (1992: 62 – 63).

Stott's interpretation reflects:

the consolidation of bourgeois society and its ideologies of femininity – the natural essence of womanhood sustained and reproduced through the location of women in the home and identification of women with domesticity (Parker & Pollock, 1981: 37 -38).

It can be found that, canonically, not only flowers, but also gardens were considered the symbol of femininity and virginity. Since the space of the garden is space for rest, they also symbolised maternal protection and care. In addition, the garden was "a possible setting for a pastoral retreat" where people could escape from stressful and civilised social intercourse (Marx, 1964: 36). However, queer gardeners deconstruct the maternal image of gardens that are associated with coloniality. A queer garden can be "the home-space" opens to possibilities as well as violence – Jarman's garden was often savaged by storm, and this condition of the garden resonates with gay life in the AIDS era. The American lesbian poet Adrienne Rich uses the garden as a metaphor to show both the garden and women are under the threat of violence. As she wrote in Poem 21: "the garden lies open to vandals" (1986, 103). In "The Place, Promised, That Has Not Yet Been: The Nature of Dislocation and Desire in Adrienne Rich's *Your Native Land/Your Life* and Minnie Pratt's *Crime Against Nature*", Rachel Stein argues that Rich's poem shows that, even as a part of home – a place that is supposed to be safe, gardens "are also subject to invasion: garden and women are still under external threat in Poem 21" (2011: 295). Rich's poem is a direct resistance to the maternal image of the garden. The garden, in this poem, represents an in-between space of negotiation, which means that the garden is not an enclosed fortress of queerness. Queer gardens negotiate with and resist heteronormative and patriarchal violence, showing their activist dynamics. In the following section, I will introduce the history of lesbian gardening with a focus on erotization.

In her book *The Pursuit of Paradise: A Social History of Gardens and Gardening*, Brown notes that gardening itself is erotic (1999: 133). In a chapter on the subject of gardens, eroticism, and lesbian relationships, she argues that “a garden is perhaps more demanding than a mistress, constantly demanding sweated exertions and a tender touch, constantly offering sensual arousal, virtually pornographic fantasy pictures (explicit in the paintings of Georgia O’Keeffe) and attentions at all hours” (ibid). I consider this as a rather queer interpretation of gardens and gardening. From a queer perspective, gardens and gardening have different meanings and functions. Gardens are not incipiently queer, but they sometimes function as queer spaces. Jarman’s garden was such a space, and moreover, lesbian gardeners also queered gardens. In *Sister Arts*, Moore (2011) explores a wide range of female artists and their art of flowers, gardens, and other organic pieces, and the British artist Mary Delany is among them. Moore devotes a considerable space discussing the floral collages and garden design of Delany. Her art, according to Moore, was influenced by same-sex relationships – by a form of romantic friendship that cannot be categorised as homosexuality. She argues that, firstly, Delany’s design of the garden reflected the 18th century tradition of erotic garden, and she created “three-dimensional spaces for female eroticism and intimacy in her garden” (Moore, 2011: 24). Secondly, Moore stresses that Delany’s masterpiece of floral collages titled the *Flora Delanica*, considered “the heterogeneous and sometimes ‘homosexual’ life of plants as analogous to and expressive of human sexuality and sexual variation” (ibid). The important aspect of Moore’s research is that she concerns both gardens and flowers, which means that the studies of gardens, flowers, and floral imagery can be a dynamic combination.

In *The Pursuit of Paradise*, Brown narrates the story of two Irish upper-class women, Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby, as known as The Ladies of Llangollen. Regardless of their families’ obstruction, in 1778, the couple:

fled from their unhappy homes in Ireland to Plas Newydd near Llangollen where they were lucky enough to spend the following fifty years in blissful enjoyment of their “delicious solitude” making the romantic garden that reflected their relationship (1999: 113).

This Gothic garden embraced the “picturesque” lifestyle of the Ladies. Brown understands the garden was the place for them practicing a new life, as she writes, “The Ladies, who were rather highly prized by society, exhibited the idea that the garden should represent a particular lifestyle, which lasted well into nineteenth century” (1999: 113).

In her lecture “Lesbian Arcadia: Desire and Design in the fin-de-siecle Garden”, Kate Thomas introduces the story of Villa Gamberaia in Florence, Italy (2021, n. p.). In 1896, the estate and the garden were owned by a lesbian couple, Catherine Jeanne Ghyka, a sculptor and Romanian princess, and her American lover, painter, Florence Blood. Thomas suggests that the two women “brought the garden back to full glory”, and more importantly, “the estate became a destination for both garden lovers and what several commentators referred to as a cult of women. The villa and its gardens furnished a lesbian salon life famed for its theatrical and sexy parties” (ibid). The flowering of the garden goes along with the flowering of lesbian desire. Thus, Thomas argues that “we can read these two women’s loving embrace of the villa and their dedication to an identification with a garden as itself a lesbian formation” (ibid).

The British novelist Vita Sackville-West (1892 – 1962), who had romantic relationships with several women, most famously Virginia Woolf, cannot be ignored in this story of lesbian gardening. In her home Long Barn, Sevenoaks, Kent, Sackville-West and her husband Harold Nicolson grew an experimental garden. In 1930, the family moved to Sissinghurst Castle, Kent, and the couple designed the famous Sissinghurst Castle Gardens. Although the creation of the garden was a husband-wife collaboration, in her essay “Frida and Vita: A Tale of Two Gardens”, Emily L. Quint Freeman argues that “to my knowledge, there’s only one internationally famous garden that was created by a married couple with secret gay lives (2022, n. p.). That would be the Sissinghurst Castle Gardens of Vita Sackville-West and Sir Harold Nicolson”. In *Sister Arts*, Moore also argues that, “given the famous openness of Sackville-West’s marriage to Harold Nicolson – after 1930 their sexual relations were exclusively extramarital and homosexual – it is nonetheless queer for that” (2011: 166). Furthermore, Moore points out that in Sackville-West’s 1927 poem *The Land*, she expressed an eroticism that “is rendered indirectly through garden imagery” (2011: 166 – 167). Notably, Moore notes that the poem itself was a queer work because it was dedicated to “her lover, the poet Dorothy Wellesley” (2011: 166). In this way, queerness touched the art of gardening and flowers.

According to these literary materials on lesbian gardening, we can see that one of the essential characteristics of queer gardening is the tendency towards eroticisation, as many queer gardeners did. Thus, through reviewing these stories of gardening, the relationship between queer gardens and ecology becomes clearer. By eroticising gardens, queer gardening reflects the connection between sexuality and nature. Because of eroticisation, these queer gardens contain a rich sensibility of Eros, and can be read as a botanical archives of queer desires. As I hope to articulate in Chapter 4, similar stories can be found in Jarman’s garden and his journal *Modern Nature*.

Since Jarman's garden was a creation responding to AIDS/HIV and to a conservative political atmosphere, it illustrated something urgent and contemporary that cannot be found in historical lesbian gardening. Mourning and remembrance are crucial themes of Jarman's garden. In "Melancholy Natures, Queer Ecologies", Mortimer-Sandilands's discusses two ecological texts that link to AIDS/HIV, which are Jan Zita Grover's *North Enough* and Jarman's *Modern Nature*. She argues that both texts are melancholic, which portray "the fact of being corporeally vulnerable in a specifically damaged landscape – *wounded* in a world of wounds" (2011: 343). The notion of melancholia, in Mortimer-Sandilands essay, means a "holding-on" "to the dead for whom they grieve" (ibid). They mourned the dead, and simultaneously infused melancholia as well as hope into a wounded natural world. Mortimer-Sandilands argues that:

Jarman's garden is both an embodiment of this sexual trajectory – as his own body turns towards a more immediate dying, as his friends die, and as his generation's abundant sexual culture withers in a homophobic Britain, his hardy rosemary, sages, and marigolds survive and flourish despite all odds – and also a testament to the survival of the erotic-ecologic possibilities that, for Jarman, were integral to the gay male culture of his generation, including especially his own friends and lovers (2010: 350).

Mortimer-Sandilands's interpretation reveals that Jarman's artistic practices contain rich philosophical, cultural, botanical, and political dynamics. The diligent gardener *planted* those queer lives that cannot be mourned and grew "the erotic-ecologic possibilities". Therefore, we can perceive the past and the future in his garden. Jarman's garden therefore can be understood as a location of memories and an "archive of trauma" (Mortimer-Sandilands, 2010: 342). When it comes to mourning and memorialisation, temporality is a key concept. In this eco dynamic, I search for a queer mode of future that illuminates a nonlinear and messianic temporality.

1.4 Queer Temporality, Memory, AIDS/HIV, and Mourning

According to Muñoz, the concept of queer utopianism is closely concerned with temporality. Muñoz stresses that the notion of queerness performs both dynamics of the past and futurity. In *Cruising Utopia*, Muñoz looks back on Martin Heidegger's theory of temporality, arguing that "in Heidegger's version of historicity, historical existence in the past allowed for subjects to act with a mind toward 'future possibilities'" (2009: 16). Taking on Heidegger's mode of

temporality, Muñoz argues that queerness is “a temporal arrangement in which the past is a field of possibility in which subjects can act in the present in the service of a new futurity” (ibid). Muñoz argues that the past of queerness is a performative force that contains what Bloch called “the no-longer-conscious” (2009: 19 – 21). This means that the past of queerness illuminates the sign of utopian dreams that we have not yet achieved. The past therefore can be a critique of a present to reveal “this world is not enough” (Muñoz, 2009: 1). Thus, this critique of the present allows us to imagine utopian futurity. In this thesis, I use Muñoz’s mode of queer temporality to analyse the queer art of flowers. In practical analysis, I contend that queer memory of desires in floral images contains the no-longer-conscious that builds a critique of the present and stimulates our imagination for a better future. Queer temporality is an important subject in Chapters 3, 4, and 5.

Moreover, the temporal model that Heather Love proposes instructs my analysis. In her book *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (2009), Love argues that, instead of “dreaming of a better life for queer people”, we need to acknowledge the “dark side” of the past, examining how it performatively haunts our present. This mode allows me to explore a utopian queer futurity (looking forward) that resides in the past (feeling backward). Yet Love’s argument seems to negate futurity, and I will offer more details in the following section.

I will firstly explain what is a queer temporality and its relationship with the futurity. In *Queer Theory Now: From Foundations to Futures*, Hannah McCann and Whitney Monaghan suggest that “a temporal turn” directs queer theory to “intersections between sex, gender, sexuality, history, power and time” (2022: 213 – 214). If heteronormative temporality progresses from marriage to reproduction, parenthood, retirement, and death (McCann & Monaghan, 2022: 216), “queer uses of time and space develop, at least in part, in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction” (Halberstam, 2005: 1). Queer temporality is “about the potentiality of a life unscripted by the conventions of family, inheritance, and child rearing” (Halberstam, 2005: 2). It is necessary to clarify that these two discourses are not absolute. Thus, not all heterosexual lives conform heteronormative temporality. Likewise, Halberstam suggests that:

not all gay, lesbian, and transgender people live their lives in radically different ways from their heterosexual counterparts, but part of what had made queerness compelling as a form of self-description in the past decade or so has to do with the way it has the potential to open up new life narratives and alternative relations to time and space” (2005: 1).

This thesis is future-oriented research, yet queer temporality seems to negate the concept of the future because, as McCann and Monaghan argue, “a future firmly rooted in the stability and safety of the heterosexual nuclear unit” (2022: 220). In the following, I will firstly give a brief review of the critiques of futurity, and secondly, introduce Muñoz’s concept of queer futurity. Another crucial notion for my discussion is Benjamin’s messianic time, and I will discuss its relationship with queer temporality by reviewing the literature of Jarman’s gardening. Finally, I will discuss the politics of mourning and remembrance, with reference to studies on Mapplethorpe’s floral photography.

Some queer critics negate the notion of futurity. For Leo Bersani, homosexuality or queer desire cannot unite people (2009). On the contrary, it isolates the individual from societies, families, and capitalist power systems. In the AIDS era, as Bersani argues in “Is the Rectum a Grave?”, homosexual sex was essentially connected to death and “a shattering of the psychic structures themselves” rather than to relationality, idealism, or futurity (2009: 24). If so, Bersani argues, queer people should embrace this negative emotion and use it to fight homophobia, heterosexual hegemony, and capitalism (2009: 29). This “anti-social” and antirelational thesis severs the connection between queerness and the future. As James Bliss suggests in “Hope Against Hope: Queer Negativity, Black Feminist Theorizing, and Reproduction without Futurity”, Bersani’s theory “has shifted from a critique of the sanitization of sexuality into a position against the reproduction of society – futurity – itself” (2015: 84). In *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, Lee Edelman, who was influenced by Bersani, argues that:

we do not intend a new politics, a better society, a brighter tomorrow, since all of these fantasies reproduce the past through displacement, in the form of the future ... so what is queerest about us, queerest within us, and queerest despite us is this willingness to insist intransitively – to insist that the future stop here (2004: 31).

In *Feeling Backward*, Love also questions a form of “ongoing violence” and queer optimism by stressing the negative feelings that queer communities experienced in the past (2009: 3). She argues that:

although many queer critics take exception to the idea of a linear, triumphalist view of history, we are in practice deeply committed to the notion of a better life for queer people. Such utopian desires are at the heart of the collective project of queer studies and integral to the history of gay and lesbian identity (ibid).

Yet Love does not follow Edelman “in calling for the voiding of the future” (2009: 22). As McCann and Monaghan summarise:

Love asserts that the contemporary queer experience is that of “looking forward” while “feeling backward” because we are bound to memorialise the losses of our past while also being “deeply committed to the notion of progress” ... to navigate this contradictory experiences of “looking forward” while “feeling backward” Love calls for a criticism that pays particular attention to “feelings tied to the experience of social inclusion and to the historical ‘impossibility’ of same-sex desire” (2007, 4) such as shame, despair, nostalgia, loneliness and regret (2022:227).

Love’s argument is crucial for this thesis because she points out the possibility of “feeling backward” while “looking forward”. This formula illustrates that acknowledging the past is as important as imagining the future. In this study, I will stress this backwardness in some discussions because, as I shall argue, this backward sensibility is an acknowledgement of the past. Yet I stress “feeling backward” not only for acknowledging queer negative emotions but also for tracing queer ideality, vitality, futurity, and utopian ghosts that existed in the past. In this thesis, I am more interested in the optimistic and hedonic dynamics in queer culture. For Foucault, to “prefer what is positive and multiple” is a form of “art of living” (1983: xiii). As Christopher Castiglia and Christopher Reed argue in *If Memory Serves: Gay Men, AIDS, and the Promise of the Queer Past*:

Queers are not lacking; queers are productively abundant. Queers do not experience only shame, guilt, or grief; we also experience exuberance, defiance, pride, pleasure, giddiness, enthusiastic innocence, outrageous optimism, loyalty, and love. We are, in short, as wonderfully and complexly queer as were those in our social and rhetorical pasts (2012: 148).

This thesis does not attempt to investigate the anti-social thesis because I am more convinced of utopian potentiality, relationality, and futurity. I argue that these optimistic queer critiques contend nihilism and can create a richer present by dragging utopian images from the past to here and now. Queer optimist emotions and desires “withdraw allegiance from the old categories of the Negative (law, limit, castration, lack, lacuna)” (Foucault, 1983: xiii). Yet queer optimism is not a negation of negativity, and as Love argues, we need to feel backward while looking forward. In this thesis, therefore, I will examine queer negative emotions, trauma, and the struggle of queer beings. It is because these negative emotions can be shared beyond the

boundaries of linear time. For example, according to Love, queer people are in contact with “feelings tied ... to the historical ‘impossibility’ of same-sex desire” (2007: 4). In the discussion of Cy Twombly’s painting *Coronation of Sesostris* (2000), I suggest that the fragmental poem of the Greek poet Sappho tells a collective struggle that existed since ancient times. Twombly cited these lyrics in his painting, which can be read as a way of looking backward. When a queer individual struggles in here and now, he/she/they is also in contact with this ancient archive of queer emotions. In the lesbian poet Renée Vivien’s translation of Sappho’s “Someone will remember us”, according to Love, the translator enriched “the themes of tormented desire, isolation, and lost love in the originals and amplify the historical resonances on them” (2009: 35). This form of “cross-historical contacts” potentially creates a connection, a collectivity, rather than antirelationality. Therefore, I insist that queer desires can be something that always have a future.

“Antirelational approaches to queer theory”, as Muñoz concludes, “are romances of the negative, wishful thinking, and investments in deferring various dreams of difference” (2009: 11). The counterpart of the anti-social thesis that I will consider is Muñoz’s queer utopianism, and this theoretical framework is what I will insist in this thesis. In *Cruising Utopia*, Muñoz asks “can the future stop being a fantasy of heterosexual reproduction?”, and his answer is that it is possible to discuss futurity without confining it to heteronormative temporality. Futurity appears to be the most performative potential of queerness, as Muñoz argues, “queerness is primarily about futurity and hope”, and queerness is “a doing for and toward the future” (2009: 11). In this thesis, I will argue that queer futurity resides in nonlinear time and in the act of mourning and remembrance. Therefore, when Jarman grew a garden for his dead friends and lovers, he was paradoxically making a queer futurity during this process of looking backward.

In Chapter 4, I argue that Jarman’s garden cited queer lives, sensibilities, desires, and love. This function of citability links to Walter Benjamin’s messianic time. There are some studies exploring the theme of garden and temporality, such as Mortimer-Sandilands’s “Melancholy Natures, Queer Ecologies” (2010), Robert Mills’s *Derek Jarman’s Medieval Modern* (2010), and Daniel O’Quinn’s “Gardening, History, and the Escape from Time: Derek Jarman’s ‘Modern Nature’” (1999). Mortimer-Sandilands remarks on the composition of eccentric temporality in Jarman’s method of writing, arguing that ‘his journals are a true pastiche of fragments, loosely collected into an almanac of occasionally clashing elements without movement toward resolution or ending; the journals disrupt the unity of the very idea of the garden as an element in progressivist history’ (2010: 351). In *Derek Jarman’s Medieval Modern*, Robert Mills

argues that Jarman was a “ruin-fancier” (2018: 92). In his art, Jarman acknowledged, rendered, and queered Medieval aesthetics, which illustrates a temporal drag. Mills argues that, in Jarman’s garden, “sculptures fashioned from rested metal and driftwood, or arrangement of pebbles in shapes and patterns – were designed, first and foremost, as memorials: reminders of departed friends, experiences and sensations” (2018: 126). Mills offers a close look at the sculptures and bibelots in Jarman’s garden, indicating that they were objects that were created by time. In “Gardening, History, and the Escape from Time: Derek Jarman’s ‘Modern Nature’”, O’Quinn (1999) argues that Jarman loved to cite the ancient stories of flowers, inviting the past to the present. The present, for Jarman, was critical; Jarman was undergoing acute symptoms of HIV, whilst England was under the shadow of conservatism and Section-28. O’Quinn cites Benjamin’s “Theses on the Philosophy of History”, arguing that “the articulation of Jarman’s personal history with a fragmented history of gardening does not attempt to recognize the past ‘as it really was’; rather it “seizes hold of a memory as it flashed up at a moment of danger” (1999: 116). O’Quinn’s essay inspires my discussion of Jarman’s gardening and writing in relation to Benjamin’s messianic time. I will consider these critiques in Chapter 4, arguing that messianic time is not only a form of nonlinear temporality but a form of aesthetics, and more importantly, a form of political dynamic.

Like nonlinear queer temporality, messianic time is “a simultaneity of past and future in an instantaneous present” (Anderson, 1991: 24). messianic time, as Andy McLaverty-Robinson summarises, is “qualitative”, “fully immediate”, “emotionally intense”, “ruptural”, and “specific”, which is different from “homogenous empty time” (2013: n. p.). A messianic time is a voluminous, multiple, and emotional moment that can bring ecstasies to the individual who experiences or creates it. This rapturous factor of messianic time resonates with queer temporality because, according to Muñoz, queer temporality “is the time of ecstasy” (2009: 186). He argues that “knowing ecstasy is having a sense of timeliness’s motion, comprehending a temporal unity, which includes the past (having-been), the future (the not-yet), and the present (the making-present)” (Muñoz, 2009: 186). In “Theses on the Philosophy of History”, Benjamin argued that “the present, which, as a model of messianic time, comprises the entire history of mankind in an enormous abridgment, coincides exactly with the stature which history of mankind had in the universe” ([1940] 1968: 263). In Muñoz’s account, the moment of fullness is “a temporal unity” (2009: 186). Benjamin’s argument suggests that the present cannot be understood as an episode of linear progress that is homogenous and empty. One needs to create a rich present that contains the past and, as I will argue, illuminates a utopian futurity. This mode of the present works like a Messiah who is able to redeem the critical present and terminate the historical progress. I combine messianic time with queer

temporality because I will emphasise the function of citability that Benjamin argued. Furthermore, queer temporality can add dynamics of futurity to messianic time. As I will show in Chapter 4, Jarman's gardening, writing, and filmmaking exactly practiced this paradigm. McLaverty-Robinson's statement of redemptive dynamic also links to Jarman's aesthetics, as he argues:

the messianic moment also ruptures things from their particular locations in an order of things. Objects, ruins, ideas and language become articulatable, or can be 'redeemed' ... An old factory is 'redeemed' as a squat, a commodity is 'redeemed' as meaningful to a collector, a word is 'redeemed' by being used allegorically. A date such as Mayday, or November 17th in Greece, can capture a range of historical precedents and 'redeem' them in present revolt, ignoring the time-lapses inbetween (2013: n. p.).

This interpretation remarks on the political and revolutionary potentiality of messianic time. As McLaverty-Robinson suggests, "a revolutionary moment is a moment when messianic time enters and explodes homogenous empty time. In such a moment, the whole of time is experienced as monad. It is as if all life is reconciled and compressed into a single moment" (2013: n. p.). In his journal, Jarman frequently created such revolutionary moments, where queer culture, eroticism, and the ancient stories of flowers illuminated together.

The final framework that I will review is the politics of mourning and remembrance. The texts I will introduce are Douglas Crimp's "Mourning and Militancy" (1989) and the arguments on the politics of memory in Castiglia and Reed's *If Memory Serves: Gay Men, AIDS, and the Promise of the Queer Past* (2012). Benjamin negates the progressive temporality that is written by the victors and the hegemony of progress. Instead, he emphasises the significance of memory and the past, and attempts to recollect the dead that were buried during linear progress. As Love (2009) illustrates in *Feeling Backward*, the ideology of queer temporality also emphasises the significance of memories and the past. This form of backward temporality registers that memories and mourning are crucial for queer communities. Queer memory contains traumas, melancholy, loss, and grief, yet it also contains pleasure, happiness, vitality, and nobility. As some queer critics, including Muñoz, Crimp, Castiglia, and Reed, argue, the works of mourning and memorialisation should include not only negative feelings but also all these optimistic emotions. In "Mourning and Militancy", Crimp stresses the significance of mourning, arguing that mourning is as important as militancy (2004: 130 – 149). When we mourn, we not only acknowledge the death of our loved ones but also recall a particular form of culture, a way of life, and an ideality. In using Freud's theory of mourning, Crimp argues that:

Freud tells us that mourning is the reaction not only to the death of a loved person, but also ‘to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as fatherland, liberty, an ideal ...’ Can we be allowed to include, in this ‘civilized’ list, the ideal of perverse sexual pleasure itself rather than one stemming from its sublimation? Alongside the dismal toll of death, what many of us have lost is a culture of sexual possibility: back rooms, tea rooms, bookstores, movie houses, and baths; the trucks, the pier, the ramble, the dunes. Sex was everywhere for us, and everything we wanted to venture ... Now our untamed impulses are either proscribed once again or shielded from us by latex (2004: 140).

Crimp’s argument shows that it is important to remember a sexual culture endured the AIDS pandemic, and that this culture represents a form of ideality that contains both trauma and pleasure. I would examine queer ideality by looking at Mapplethorpe’s floral photographs, in which the artist created a dialectics of morbidity and vitality through his perfectionist manner. This form of imagery, as I shall argue, represent queer ideality and utopianism.

There are some important scholarly discussions of Mapplethorpe. The common tendency in these literary resources is that the critics consider Mapplethorpe’s photography of flowers as political demonstrations, rather than just aesthetic creations. Based on this tendency, I also consider Mapplethorpe’s flowers from a queer political perspective. *Mapplethorpe and the Flower: Radical Sexuality and the Limits of Control* is the first book length research on Mapplethorpe’s flowers, in which Derek Conrad Murray understands Mapplethorpe’s floral photographs as historical pictures. Murray argues that Mapplethorpe’s flowers represent “radical sexuality and queer subcultural life”, and thus, they are not “innocuous” (2018: 3). Murray argues that “the flower as a signifier is loaded with historical meaning – and as a result of its semiotic porousness it has simultaneously found its place within both literature and philosophical inquiry” (2018: 159). In *Playing with the Edge: The Photographic Achievement of Robert Mapplethorpe*, Arthur C. Danto (1992) also stresses the depth of Mapplethorpe’s pictures. He writes that “one could not think about his art without touching on the largest questions of expression, democracy, freedom, censorship, the right to see, the right to make art” (1996: 2). This means that there are historical and political dynamics within Mapplethorpe’s flowers, and I would call it queer utopianism – a form of ideality that springs out of Mapplethorpe’s perfectionism and the dialectics of morbidity and vitality.

I choose Mapplethorpe’s photography firstly because his flowers show a striking sign of disease, which can be related to the *fin-de-siècle* culture. Alison Syme’s *A Touch of Blossom: John Singer Sargent and the Queer Flora of Fin-de-Siècle Art* (2010) uses John Singer Sargent’s

floral art as a case study, exploring the connectedness between flowers, sexuality, disease, the late 19th century literature, and visual art. Syme points out that, in the *fin-de-siècle* period, floral metaphors had been used for illustrating venereal disease in the medical field (2010: 19). In this thesis, I will explore what it means to connect floral imagery to disease. As I discussed in the Introduction, locating Mapplethorpe's flowers in the *fin-de-siècle* floral culture is one of my efforts to reinvent the meaning of his floral pictures. In doing so, I aim to add some historical and imaginative interpretations to Mapplethorpe's photography. Mapplethorpe himself never said that he was inspired by the *fin-de-siècle* aesthetics, but there are some critiques discussing this interesting bond. As Dominic Janes argues in *Freak To Chic: "Gay" Men In and Out of Fashion after Oscar Wilde*, flowers "played a queer role in art and literature from Wilde to Proust through to the photography of Robert Mapplethorpe and beyond" (2023: 155). As I will discuss in Chapter 5, Patti Smith read Mapplethorpe's flowers along with Charles Baudelaire. And in Murray's study, Mapplethorpe's Black nudes with flowers "allude to French writer Charles Baudelaire's volume of poetry entitled *Les Fleurs du Mal* (The Flowers of Evil)" (2020: 43). I read this connectedness as another opportunity to create an imaginative and phantasmatic interpretation.

Secondly, Mapplethorpe's perfect flowers stimulate an imaginative way of remembering and mourning. According to the critiques that I will discussing in Chapter 5, we need a form of imagery that does not necessarily replicate history (like the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt) but is able to deliver sensibilities, desires, and loves in a more abstract and tantalising way. This way of mourning and remembrance functions based on a desire-shared mechanism. To cite Love, this is a form of "cross-historical contacts" that potentially creates connections (2009: 35).

An imaginative way of memorialisation can be a way of making the past performative. As Susan Herrington argues, "to cultivate memory, you must have an imagination" (2009: 10). Castiglia and Reed argue that our memory is "not transparent recovery but imaginative ideality" (2012: 177). In this way, the memory will "serve(s)" for the present and the future. Castiglia and Reed stress the function of fantasy in the structure of memory, arguing that "loss implies experience, while fantasy implies the absence of that experience" (2012: 176). Yet the absence can be positive, and it is the sense of the absence that creates fantasies and ideality. In order to explain this mechanism, Castiglia and Reed apply the case of Patrick Moore (2012: 177). The authors note that Moore considered the 1970s as an ideal period because she "didn't live through the sexual utopia of the 1970s" (ibid). Moore said that "my fascination with the sexual culture of the 1970s, derives largely from the fact that I did not experience it

directly” (quoted in Castiglia and Reed, 2012: 177). As Castiglia and Reed argue, one could build “inventive memory” (2012: 177). This way of remembering helps future generations perceive that revolutionary culture, and more importantly, share a queer archive of feeling and cultivate a collective memory.

In conclusion, the critical areas of ecofeminism, queer theory, utopianism, queer ecology, temporality, mourning, and remembrance generate a more imaginative way of interpretation. I apply these theories to the exploration of the queer art of flowers aiming to surpass the symbolic reading of flowers. In doing so, I aim to enlarge the emotional and political span of floral images.

Chapter 2 Floral Bodies: Georgia O’Keeffe, Charles Demuth, and Marsden Hartley

Flowers were a beloved subject for Georgia O’Keeffe, Charles Demuth, and Marsden Hartley. The three artists developed a friendship in the avant-gardist circle that was led by Alfred Stieglitz, and flowers played an important role in their relationships. As I shall be discussing, Demuth depicted Hartley as a calla lily – a flower with a sensual stamen that frequently appeared in Hartley’s canvases (fig. 24; 25; 26). O’Keeffe’s representation of flowers fascinated Demuth, as he wrote after watching her floral paintings, “flowers and flames. And color. Color, not as volume, or light – only as color” (Farnham, 1971: 163). Both Demuth and O’Keeffe planned to collaborate on a floral painting. O’Keeffe reminisced, “Demuth and I always talked about doing a big picture together, all flowers. I was going to do the tall things up high, he was going to do the little things below” (Seiberling, 1968: 52). Unfortunately, their project never happened because of Demuth’s premature death. This thesis arranges them in one chapter because these three artists were pioneers who deliberately represented bodies, sexuality, and queerness in a botanical manner. As I hope to illustrate, O’Keeffe, Demuth, and Hartley were interested in exploring and representing bodies by using natural forms. They built a connection between the human and the nonhuman, which goes beyond the framework of gender and sexuality. Their aesthetics are overlapping and share an inward coherence, which means that it would be incomplete to only concern one without the other.

There is little research addressing these three artists as a trio. Nevertheless, there are some studies discussing them in pairs. Jonathan Weinberg’s book *Speaking for Vice: Homosexuality in the Art of Charles Demuth, Marsden Hartley, and the First American Avant-Garde* (1993) shows that both Demuth and Hartley implied their gay identity secretly. Weinberg stresses the possibilities that they put forward. Heather Hole’s *Marsden Hartley and the West: The Search for an American Modernism* (2007) discusses O’Keeffe and Hartley’s landscape paintings of New Mexico. In *Art and Homosexuality: A History of Ideas* (2011), Christopher Reed discusses Demuth and Hartley in the chapter “Secrets and Subcultures, 1900 – 1940”. In this chapter, I consider that their passion for the botanical can represent a concerted thematic bond. As I hope to show, Demuth’s botanical portraits for O’Keeffe and Hartley addresses this connection.

This chapter begins with an examination of O’Keeffe’s paintings, in which I apply a queer reading to her images of flowers. I argue that O’Keeffe’s art and way of life went beyond the

gender stereotype and the boundary between the human and the nonhuman. This chapter will bring O’Keeffe’s floral works out of essentialism and traditional feminist interpretation, rethinking the connection between women and nature, and looking at her art from an ecofeminist and queer perspective. O’Keeffe was one of the most significant American artists in the 20th century, and has been considered “the mother of American modernism”. Indeed, O’Keeffe’s successful debut benefited from Stieglitz’s support and his skilful promotion. Yet his involvement led to the sexualisation of O’Keeffe’s flowers, which was widely accepted by critics of the 1920s. In this discussion, I will challenge this critique by using ecofeminism and queer theory.

As I shall discuss, many feminist artists and critics have considered O’Keeffe as a feminist heroine, and have interpreted her flowers as bold representations of femininity and the celebration of female sexual desire. This argument reflected the ideology of Radical Feminism, which insisted that “women’s sexual desires are oppressed by men: women are seen as passive to men’s active sexuality, and women’s pleasure and sexual interested is secondary” (McCann & Monaghan, 2022: 61). Therefore, for some feminists, O’Keeffe’s flowers became crucial motifs that demonstrated the priority and the independency of female desire, and thus, affirmed the bodily autonomy and integrity. However, together with her successful career, O’Keeffe experienced difficulties and failures and also suffered from a nervous breakdown (because of a marital crisis and her inability to complete a mural in Radio City Music Hall). Thus, I am more interested in O’Keeffe’s struggle or even her failure to fit into a metropolitan and familial life. The struggle for life, I argue, inspired the artist to seek same-sex support and to embrace natural phenomena such as flowers, trees, winds, deserts, mountains, and sun-bleached animal skulls. In this chapter, I will stress the significance of relationships and connections that appeared in O’Keeffe’s life. Therefore, the theory of ecofeminism is crucial for my discussion. The use of ecofeminism will open up a space for queer theory because, as I discussed in Literature Review, both discourses tend to deconstruct subjectivity and the politics of identity. Both theories stress the importance of connection and relationality. However, I will not entirely negate feminist interpretations because O’Keeffe’s art and lifestyle did reflect a feminist dynamic. Her art inspired the female audience not because it was a bold representation of female desire, but because it illuminated the possibilities of a woman’s life. By using the theory of ecofeminism, I argue that O’Keeffe worked *beyond* and simultaneously *with* feminism.

In the second section, I argue that both Demuth and Hartley’s floral imagery illustrate a coded queer aesthetic. The two were closeted artists who created a large number of floral pictures

that imply queer sensibilities. As many art historians, such as Christopher Reed, Jonathan Weinberg, and Mathias Ussing Seeberg, have pointed out, Demuth and Hartley created coded motifs to indicate personality and sexuality. These floral pictures have been discussed in some excellent studies, but they have not featured as the primary focus of analysis. What is more, the queer dynamics within these floral pictures have not been widely explored. I argue that Demuth's *Calla Lilies (Bert Savoy)*, floral watercolours, and Hartley's floral still-lives and *Eight Bells Folly (for Hart Crane)* represent bodies, personality, and sexuality by using coded and nonfigurative forms. Demuth and Hartley's contributions to abstract portraiture registers what Reed suggests in *Art and Homosexuality*, that "the development of abstraction is tightly bound to the history of homosexuality" (2010: 126 – 127). By examining these delicate representations, this section traces a coded queer culture in the first half of the 20th century.

Furthermore, the works of Demuth and Hartley are rich in content. Compared with O'Keeffe, who usually focused on "American things", Demuth and Hartley's works registered a dialogue between visual art, Euro-American literature, cross-Atlantic culture, and the gay subculture of the early 20th century. As an aesthete, Demuth admired queer characters such as Aubrey Beardsley, Oscar Wilde, Marcel Proust, and Joris-Karl Huysmans (Reed, 2011: 129). His adaption of the *fin-de-siècle* aesthetic gave his pictures a delicate and a "feminine" sensibility. By contrast, Hartley's paintings were more masculine, and he praised the manhood and comradeship that Walt Whitman had initiated. At the time, Whitman's "desire to infuse his art with his sexual attraction to men" inspired the first generation of American avant-gardists (Bohan, 2006: 144). Hartley, with his potent brushstroke, "was deeply influenced by Whitman and idolized him together with other equally devoted 'Whitmanics'" (Seeberg, 2019: 7). The literary disposition in Demuth and Hartley's works opens up a intertextual dimension, allowing us to look at visual art through literature.

Throughout the discussion, another crucial aspect that I will point out is that, for all these three artists, the act of painting flowers was more like a strategy of living and a remedy for the self. The desire for self-care emerged from their artistic activities. One means of self-care was to locate oneself in a wider world of nature and to connect oneself to a nonhuman force. By this I do not mean that their floral images are representations of the unconscious libido or of repressed sexual desire: I am arguing against the application of Freudian theory. Rather, painting flowers or living outside of urban centres and traditional communities can be a method to resolve the struggle, in which the artists would build a connection to the nonhuman and search for an alternative form of communities.

2.1 Georgia O'Keeffe: Beyond Femininity

On her floral paintings, O'Keeffe said:

I made you take time to look at what I saw and when you took time to really notice my flower, you hung all your associations with flowers on my flower and you write about my flower as if I think and see what you think and see – and I don't (quoted in Fillin-Yeh, 1995: 39).

O'Keeffe created over 200 floral canvases throughout her career, and as I mentioned, these pictures were often interpreted and continue to be symbols of femininity and female sexual desire. In a sense, this interpretation is not false but limited because it is simply based on a morphological likeness. It is also clear that her pictures of flowers are more than symbols of female genitalia. Beyond femininity, what significance might we perceive by looking at O'Keeffe's flowers? First, according to Griselda Pollock's argument in "Seeing O'Keeffe Seeing" (2017), I suggest that O'Keeffe's floral pictures are intellectual investigations; namely, they are examinations of nature that can also reflect a lifestyle of being with nature. This connection, as I have pointed out in Literature Review, is beyond the resemblance between women and nature. I propose that these pictures show an ungendered body – a body of a human being – as a site of connections, communications and interactions with other people, objects, organisms, and the nonhuman environments. In her essay, Pollock has offered a novel view, arguing that O'Keeffe's art is a form of knowledge and a way of life. She writes that:

By refusing the earlier model of self-expression, and by reminding ourselves that making any art is a negotiation with a range of conventions, I suggest we arrive at the proposition of art-making as a desire for knowledge: a desire to see by means of making, not paintings of things in the world, but painting as a way to be in the world, a world constantly pressing its formal challenges, which cannot be disentangled from our deeply subjective investments and fantasies. Between the two points of critical reception that have bound O'Keeffe to her body and its imagined sex or gender, lies the woman who drove cars vast distances alone across the central U.S. and settled far away from urban centres, walking the canyons of New Mexico and fashioning a way of living expressed in every detail of her home, dress, collection and way of life ... It is time to try and see what O'Keeffe was herself trying to see in such a diversity of things of the world (2017: 114).

O’Keeffe studied nature itself, and approached the wild through an ungendered body, and explored new ways of living and art-making. To cite the artist’s words, she explored “the wideness and wonder of the world” as she “live(s) in it” (Larson, 1998: 13).

Pollock argues that O’Keeffe’s art is more than “self-expression”, which implies that her art is not sentimental or self-indulgent (2017: 114). Based on this argument, I insist that O’Keeffe’s paintings are clean, sober, conscious, and unsentimental, as Nochlin argued, her floral imagery was “accurate image of a plant form” (2015: 81). We might have to withdraw the cliché of sexual interpretations in order to look at O’Keeffe’s floral still-lives in this way. I suggest that O’Keeffe worked like a researcher who was studying the structure of flowers, and offered her results of observation to the audience. Considering her floral images like *Jimson Weed / White Flowers No.1* (1932, fig. 9) and the calla lily series, I suggest that O’Keeffe’s flowers look analytical, objective, clear-lined, controlled, and scientific – she painted a flower as it was. In *Equal under the Sky: Georgia O’Keeffe and Twentieth-Century Feminism*, Grasso also cites Ishbel Ross’s 1931 essay, which suggested that “O’Keeffe paints her subjects, including flowers and bones, because they are intellectual and formal challenges that she finds fascinating” (2017: 124). The forms of nature fascinated the artist, and this “was the artist trying to see” (Pollock, 2016: 103). In O’Keeffe’s own words, to study the forms was “the desire to make the unknown known” (Robinson, 1991: 267). O’Keeffe’s pictures of bones, for example, are “clear from photographs, are faithful to optical truth”, and these bones “undoubtedly conform to observed reality” (Udall, 2000: 186). Therefore, these images were filled with the knowledge and desire of a professional painter. O’Keeffe invited the audience to see what she saw rather than trying to stimulate them by evoking female eroticism.

In addition, O’Keeffe’s way of observing has a philosophical significance that also goes beyond sexualisation. On O’Keeffe’s *White Flower* (1930), William M. Milliken argued that:

A flower, a landscape, sky-scrapers, a horse’s skull blanched white beneath a New Mexican sun, are not things seen purely for themselves, although that is significant, but as symbols which relate to larger philosophies (1937: 52).

The visual effect of O’Keeffe’s flowers could evoke a sense of temporality and space. As O’Keeffe said:

everyone has many associations with a flower Still – in a way – nobody sees a flower – really – it is so small – we haven’t time So I said to myself – I’ll paint what I see – what

the flower is to me but I'll paint it big and they will be surprised into taking time to look at it (quoted in Messinger, 2001: 70).

In one interview, O'Keeffe expressed a similar idea, saying that "most people in the city rush around so, they have no time to look at a flower. I want them to see it whether they want to or not" (quoted in Wong: 2015, n. p.). In *The Tears of Things: Melancholy and Physical Objects*, Peter Schwenger (2006: 41) argues that O'Keeffe's large flowers create a "forceful, intrusive visuality", which "is perhaps the real subject of O'Keeffe's flower paintings". This interpretation also surpasses femininity and sexuality, approaching a philosophical vista. O'Keeffe attempted to make people take time to look, and this act of looking is supposed to be an ecstatic move from the real world to a flower. To be ecstatic means "to be outside of oneself", and as Muñoz argues, "the term has meant a mode of contemplation or conscious that is not self-enclosed" (2009: 186). To be ecstatic, therefore, can be a way of approaching another time and space, as "we encounter a version of being outside of oneself in time" (ibid). Namely, to be ecstatic is a way of stepping out of oneself and linear temporality. "To see takes time", as O'Keeffe wrote, and thus, her flowers may prolong, stop, enrich, or deepen time. For the audience, this will be an opportunity to perceive a nonlinear temporality. O'Keeffe's 1927 *Abstraction White Rose* (fig. 10), for example, resembles a nebulous swirl that tries to seduce people into its centre, which stimulates a meditative sensibility. The dreaming swirl could transmit the experience to another place that has not yet existed. At this point, whether the picture represents female sexual desire is irrelevant. In *Flowers and Towers: Politics of Identity in the Art of the American "New Woman"*, Nira Tessler argues that *Abstraction White Rose* is "an extension ... to break free from 'vulgar' symbolism, and to examine various approaches to representing nature ... Represent a dematerialization and an escape from psychologism and immediate association with any particular reference to reality" (2015: 90 – 91). What O'Keeffe wanted us to see is nature, the form, and a connection between the human and the nonhuman. To understand O'Keeffe's flowers as an embodiment of femininity fails to explain "how it is what it is" (Sontag, 1964: 10).

From the discussion above, I have illustrated the possibility of looking at O'Keeffe's art beyond essential femininity. In the following, I will interpret O'Keeffe's works from an ecofeminist and queer perspective. In the discussion of ecofeminism, firstly, I will examine the dynamic interaction between O'Keeffe and her audience, using a fan's letter to illustrate the ways that O'Keeffe's art has influenced women viewers. I understand this particular influence as a feminist dynamic. Secondly, I pay attention to the relationship between O'Keeffe and other female artists, discussing how these women artists establish a sorority bound by the

consideration of natural environments and flowers. O’Keeffe’s way of life and her pursuit of knowledge inspired many women, and therefore, I shall explore the ways that O’Keeffe’s flowers influenced women in a manner that is not necessarily sexual but intellectual, philosophical, ecological, and political.

2.1.1 O’Keeffe’s Ecofeminism

The entanglement between O’Keeffe and feminism is an intriguing subject that is full of paradoxes. When Peggy Guggenheim and the selection committee invited O’Keeffe to participate in the 1943 exhibition “31 Women”, she declined, “declaring that she didn’t want to be shown as a ‘woman artist’” (Higgin, 2021: 118). Her refusal, according to Pollock, reflects “resistance to the post-1968 feminist re-engagement with gender and sexuality difference as a factor in art and life, while proclaiming their utter belief in art as freedom from such social ironies” (2022: 41). While O’Keeffe refused gender politics that was based on biology, she supported the feminism that committed to women’s right and gender equality. However, O’Keeffe did not label herself a feminist, or a *female* artist, but an artist. She was also a solitary in the desert, and a dandy who would dress herself in mannish outfits. She has been inevitably considered a feminist heroine. Such a fact obliges us have to encounter the relationship between feminism and O’Keeffe’s art. I would argue that O’Keeffe actually practiced an ecofeminist life that went beyond essential femininity, yet simultaneously echoed feminism’s political dynamics.

In her essay “You are no stranger to me”, Grasso examines “fan mail sent to O’Keeffe between the 1950s and 1980s” (2013: 25). These letters show that O’Keeffe was considered as a role model for many women art lovers, art students, mothers, and housewives. Some women fans were deeply touched by O’Keeffe’s art. For them, these pictures suggested that, as a woman, it is possible to live alone in the wilderness and to paint for a living. Thus, O’Keeffe’s flowers represented a form of hope, and these women “saw in O’Keeffe and her paintings life-guiding values and inspiration”(Grasso, 2013: 25 – 26). O’Keeffe’s artistic investigation registered a mode of living that stayed close to nature – a nature that was wild and rugged. It was this connection between nature and women, rather than a celebration of female sexuality, that inspired her audience. I will illustrate this argument in the following by considering O’Keeffe’s relationship with her fans.

O’Keeffe’s art inspired and encouraged many women. (Although the subject of race is not my key focus, it is important to note here that “O’Keeffe appeals especially to white women as

model, validation, and imaginative possibility”) (Grasso, 2013: 26). Grasso points out that housewives would cut out O’Keeffe’s floral pictures from magazines, pinning them to the wall of their bedrooms and kitchens, so they could look at these artworks while doing chores (2013: 24). We can imagine that, for the suburban housewives of the 1950s, for example, this form of aesthetic activity could become a significant moment that emancipated these women from domestic burdens. In the 1950s, as Eric Foner writes, “prominent psychologists insisted that the unhappiness of individual women or even the desire to work for wages stemmed from a failure to accept the ‘maternal instinct’” (2005: 817). In *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan argued that “over and over women heard in voices of tradition and of Freudian sophistication that they could desire no greater destiny than to glory in their own femininity” (1963: 15). As I have discussed, O’Keeffe negated this “maternal instinct”, or the “nature” of women. Her negation of essentialist femininity and “Freudian sophistication” seems to be received by her fans. I argue that O’Keeffe’s fans were fascinated by the intellectual and political potential rather than by the sexual demonstration of her floral images. Housewives appreciated art in their kitchen, and were encouraged by the possibility that these images illuminated, and this aesthetic activity itself challenged a rigid familial system because these pictures could bring them out of domesticity. Housewives read O’Keeffe’s art “as the vision of someone with real, deeply felt desires”, rather than “as the vision of that depersonalized, essentialized Woman who obligingly stands for Nature and Truth” (Chave, 1992: 38). These stories are crucial because the female audience created an alternative interpretation for O’Keeffe’s works, which is essentially different from the Freudian, the essentialist, and some of the feminist interpretations that focused on femininity, female bodies, and sexuality. These women who were inspired by O’Keeffe’s art seemed to understand her very well. More importantly, they created a space of fandom where O’Keeffe’s floral pictures can be actively transformed. This phenomenon shows the importance of fandom in art history. Housewives gave O’Keeffe’s flowers a new meaning by inviting the pictures to their everyday life, which is also a process of recreation. In doing so, art participates in fan’s life practically, and as Catherine Grant argues in “Fans of Feminism: Re-writing Histories of Second-wave Feminism in Contemporary Art”, informs fan’s identity (2011: 271). “Hanging the pinups in bedrooms and kitchens”, as Grasso suggests, “they integrate aesthetic appreciation into their domestic identities and derive pleasure from making choices as curators of their own galleries” (2013: 26 – 27).

Some anecdotes show that there was good chemistry between the artist and the audience. Enthusiastic fans also impressed O’Keeffe, as she wrote to Stieglitz, “I am always surprised because they usually seem to know about me ... and I always go about with the feeling that no one knows me – One woman yesterday told me she has gone to all my shows for years”

(quoted in Grasso, 2019: 119). American writer Joan Didion documents a story in her collection *The White Album* (1979), in which she dedicates an essay to O’Keeffe. She writes:

I recall an August afternoon in Chicago in 1973 when I took my daughter, then seven, to see what Georgia O’Keeffe had done with where she had been. One of the vast O’Keeffe “Sky Above Clouds” canvases floated over the back stairs in the Chicago Art Institute that day, dominating what seemed to be several stories of empty light, and my daughter looked at it once, ran to the landing, and kept on looking. “Who drew it,” she whispered after a while. I told her. “I need to talk to her,” she said finally (1979: 126).

Didion’s story shows that O’Keeffe’s audiences were passionate and committed; equally, O’Keeffe responded warmly to fan enthusiasm. Indeed, for many audience members, O’Keeffe was like an old friend, and this can be registered in the fan mail letters in the Alfred Stieglitz / Georgia O’Keeffe Archive (Grasso, 2017: 149 – 164). These testimonies convey that the core of O’Keeffe’s art is a form of hope, which illuminates the possibility of practicing a creative life. First of all, the fan’s interpretation contains feminist dynamics yet goes beyond the traditional feminism that celebrates female body and sexuality. Grasso (2013) looks into various of letters from female fans of O’Keeffe. Regarding those pictures in the kitchens, she points out that “O’Keeffe’s pinup is her art, not her body, and she is knowable because she and her work are familiar and full of hope” (2013: 24). Hope is vividly represented in O’Keeffe’s flowers. Grasso shows a heart-warming fan letter in 1968, in which the woman wrote:

Dear Miss O’Keefe [sic] –

I have wanted to tell you how much enjoyment I have gotten from a magazine reproduction of your painting “Bindweed” which appeared in a womans publication some time in the 1930’s. I framed it and hung it at the foot of my bed, so that it is the first thing I see when I open my eyes every morning I have been half-blind since the age of 10, and can’t even find my glasses without my glasses, but your lovely flower, so full of faith and tenacity and hope and courage – this I can see (July 1968) (quoted in Grasso, 2013: 149).

In this letter, there are no discussions of femininity, female bodies, or sexuality. The woman did not identify with O’Keeffe’s flowers but saw illuminations of life. The feminist dynamics in this particular letter refer to an imagined sorority that includes the connection between the audience, the artist, nature, human bodies, flowers, art, and life. Thus, the picture created a vital protection for the half-blind woman. At this moment, therefore, art becomes vitally necessary and urgent: art became hope itself. This letter recalls Bloch’s account, as he argued, pictures function as a train to “travel into a better world ... into an outdoors as escape from

daily toil” (1986: 813). In O’Keeffe’s large-scale flowers, a compulsive looking that she thrust upon us makes this travel possible. In this fan’s letter, the woman clearly felt hope by looking at the white flowers every morning, although she was losing her sight. To cite Grasso, O’Keeffe “signifies hope, the potential for change, and art’s emotive power”, and this is probably the most charismatic ethos for her women fans (2013: 35). Again, this aesthetic experience suggests that it was above all O’Keeffe’s life with nature and her representation of nature that inspired the female audience.

The letter shows that one’s well-being is relevant to nature and its representation because the floral picture gave the woman hope and courage. This interaction between women and nature contains ecofeminist dynamics, where women establish friendships in natural environments. In this regard, their friendships were not anthropocentric because the wild interposed. Next, I will examine the subject of ecofeminism by looking at the artistic dialogue between O’Keeffe, Frida Kahlo, Maria Chabot, and Rebecca Salsbury. To do so, I will also explore a queer dynamics within their relationships.

2.1.1.1 In the Dialogue: O’Keeffe’s Relationship with Other Women Artists and its Queer Potentiality

Natural environments and flowers were important to the relationship between O’Keeffe and other women artists, in which an ecofeminist and queer potential emerged. In 1930, the Mexican artist Frida Kahlo saw O’Keeffe at the opening reception of Diego Rivera’s (Kahlo’s husband) exhibition in New York City. Kahlo admired O’Keeffe’s distinguish manner and appearance, and soon, the two women became friends. Like O’Keeffe, Kahlo was passionate about depicting vegetal bodies, and, as further indicated by her vibrant floral headwear, Kahlo saw the flower as a “provocative language” that can “teach us things that are hidden” (Mainville, 2020, n. p.). This perspective echoes O’Keeffe’s understanding of flowers, as she said, “flowers, as microcosms of the organic world, embrace explainable truths, if only we could look at them properly, and thereby grasp what they mean” (Tessler, 2015: 43; Foshay, 1990: 24; O’Keeffe, 1976, n. p.). The feminist, communist, and bisexual Kahlo explored flowers in paintings, fashion, and in her home garden at the Casa Azul (Blue House), practicing a forceful dynamic of decolonised ecofeminism. In 1933, O’Keeffe was hospitalised due to a nervous breakdown, and Kahlo wrote a “floral letter” to cheer her up. She wrote, “If you [*sic*] still in the Hospital when I come back I will bring you flowers, but it is so difficult to find the ones I would like for you” (Udall, 2000: 286 – 287). O’Keeffe probably could not respond to Kahlo as her mental health had not yet improved.

In *Frida Kahlo in America*, Stahr (2020) offers us new materials about their relationship (that I will interpret as a queer connection). On Kahlo's drawing *The Dream*, Stahr argues that the profile in this piece is a variant of O'Keeffe's appearance that was based upon Miguel Covarrubias's illustration of O'Keeffe titled *Our Lady of the Lily* (1929) (2020: 187 – 188). A flower, "vulva-like shapes", and O'Keeffe's profile emerged in Kahlo's dream, which "express the complexity of Frida's desires" (Stahr, 2020: 188). Whether these two women had a sexual relationship is unknown, yet Kahlo was clearly impressed by O'Keeffe's androgynous and unusual manner. Stahr writes:

Georgia always stood out in a crowd. If she wasn't recognized as that "lady painter" who created sexualized flowers, she was noticed for her androgynous, black and white outfits, sometimes embellished with a bowler hat. Frida noticed her hands, strong and elegant, as well as the color of her eyes. With her long, dark hair pulled back tightly in a bun, Georgia's flashing eyes, defined facial features, and sly smile conveyed both strength and an impish quality (2020: 177).

Kahlo wrote another affectionate love letter to O'Keeffe after met her in New York (Udall, 2000: 286 – 287). She wrote, "I thought of you a lot and never forget your wonderful hands and the color of your eyes. I will see you soon ... I like you very much Georgia" (Stahr, 2020: 169). In Kahlo's letter to Rivera's assistant Clifford Wight, she wrote regretfully, "she didn't make love to me that time ... I think on account of her weakness. Too bad" (Stahr, 2020: 179). Although "make love" did not indicate sexual behaviour until 1950 (Moore, 2011: ix), the intimate and the loving tone were clear. O'Keeffe modestly accepted Kahlo's flirtation, as Stahr writes:

For O'Keeffe, whose inner chaos was churning at top speed, Frida's overtures might well have been a needed reprieve. Georgia's reaction to such flirtations is known only from Frida's perspective. But according to some O'Keeffe biographers, it would not have been the first or the last time that Georgia sought comfort and stability via an intimate or sexual relationship with a woman under complicated circumstances (2020: 180).

These gossipy anecdotes are not trivial, as through them we can find how these two women searched for support and love in a same-sex relationship that connected to nature and organisms. O'Keeffe did not reject Kahlo's loving words, and there is no evidence showing any hint of unhappiness. A similar situation happened in her relationship with Maria Chabot, who was a writer and an enthusiastic advocate of the indigenous American culture. The two women met in 1940 when Chabot directed the restoration of an adobe hacienda. Later, the building

became O’Keeffe’s home and studio. The two met each other daily when they lived in Taos, and wrote each other when they were separated (a collection of their circa 700 letters was published in 2004). In many letters, Chabot expressed her passionate love to O’Keeffe, and O’Keeffe had no objection to young Chabot’s fervent desire. Both of them enjoyed each other’s company, and again, a love for nature was involved in their friendship. As Barbara Buhler Lynes writes, “the letters describe two completely independent spirits – initially brought together by circumstance – whose continuing relationship was based fundamentally on a mutual love of the natural world” (2003: XXV).

There are not too many photos showing O’Keeffe in a relaxed and unguarded posture. In this fraction of portrait photos, Chabot’s photographs of O’Keeffe stand out. She captured an artist in her everyday life in the desert, which contrasts with Stieglitz’s depictions. Through Chabot’s passionate yet equal gaze, we can see O’Keeffe sun-bathing, cooking, eating, resting, camping, brushing her hair, playing with kids and cats. While O’Keeffe usually adopted a forbidding look in front of Stieglitz’s lens, she seemed willing to give her smile and playfulness to Chabot. These pictures show O’Keeffe as a happier artist rather than as someone’s muse. O’Keeffe and Chabot sometimes appeared in the same frame, too. One photo of O’Keeffe and Chabot makes an interesting dialogue with Gluck’s Brugmansia flowers that I mentioned at the beginning of the Introduction (fig. 1; 11). The photo shows O’Keeffe and Chabot chatting in the porch of her home. Chabot looks at a cluster of Brugmansia flowers at her side, suggesting their conversation might concern the flowers. O’Keeffe appears relaxed, sitting against the wooden pillar. The plants in her garden are flourishing; the mesa shows its top behind the house, and another conspicuous object is the cow’s skull fixed in the girder of the roof. This picture, I would argue, reflects the same-sex dynamic in relation to natural environments. The desert, Brugmansia flowers, the cow’s skull, and the garden participated in the relationship between O’Keeffe and Chabot. This imagery reveals a form of sisterhood that contains not only human beings but also nature. The story of O’Keeffe and Chabot brings us to “O’Keeffe’s country” – New Mexico.

2.1.1.2 “A Striking Pair” in Taos

In 1929, with her steadfast decision to leave New York City and her husband, O’Keeffe travelled to Taos, New Mexico by train with her friend Rebecca Salsbury for the second time. In Taos, the two lived in the El Gallo’s Pink House at Mabel Dodge Luhan’s art colony, which founded in 1917. O’Keeffe travelled between Taos and New York during the 1930s, and after she suffered from a nervous breakdown, she returned to Taos for a self-cure. O’Keeffe’s trip to

Taos was clearly an action of self-care. The unforgiving landscape and climate of the desert gave the artist courage and inspiration, and she regained confidence and picked up her brushes and oils after quitting them for years. The desert and friends in Taos formed an ecofeminist dynamic and refreshed the artist, and thus, Taos can be seen as a feminist space, allowing O’Keeffe and Salsbury to practice a nonfamilial “feminist possibility” (Alaimo, 2000: 2). O’Keeffe’s recovery conveys the connection between nature and human bodies, As Salsbury wrote to Stieglitz with her caring tone:

Red cheeks, round face and ready for anything – with no bad after effects – eats everything – sleeps long and laughs a lot. I wish you could be here to see the visible proof – I am afraid I am going to be a terrible disbeliever, when, in the future, I hear you say she is frail – here she seems as tough as a hickory root, and it’s not the false toughness of excitement and newness, but a strength that has come from finding what she knew she needed (quoted in Udall, 2006: 20).

In Salsbury’s letter, she also used botanical metaphor to describe O’Keeffe’s happiness and health. From a woman’s eyes, O’Keeffe looked like a plant in the desert, and this ecofeminist metaphor further shows “being otherwise and becoming-other” (Neimanis, 2017: 5).

Although O’Keeffe was not a lesbian artist, sometimes she was close to queer environments and individuals, especially when she lived in Taos where “was full of artists, writers, and eccentrics” (Robinson, 1990: 328). Taos was “noted for its colorful history, art museum, high altitude, and bohemianism, it was a mecca for tourists, health seekers, artists, and escapees from bourgeois American” (Lisle, 1980: 216). Lisle’s description suggests that Taos could offer another way of life to some people who negated city life and American capitalism. Taos was a bohemian place resisting capitalist normativity, and this political dynamic can be read as a queer sensibility, if we see queerness as a political force. For unconventional women artists, Taos was also a “place of feminist possibility”. As Robinson writes, Taos was a place for “unusual women” and bohemian artists and writers. She argues that:

the area was remarkable for the number of strong and independent women who had chosen to lead their lives there. Many of these were single, or much married, and largely indifferent to eastern mores. (Some of these women were lesbian; one aspect of Taos’s unconventionality was an early tolerance of homosexuals, both male and female.) (1990: 329 – 330).

In 1917, the avant-garde promoter and artist Mabel Dodge Luhan founded Taos art colony, which attracted many unconventional women artists and other marginal individuals. Luhan considered Taos as “a garden of Eden” and a “utopian myth of the Southwest”, where “the climate, terrain, and indigenous peoples offered a neurotic, mechanized, and deracinated Anglo civilization a model for its aesthetic and spiritual renewal” (Rudnick, 1983: 205). Again, Luhan’s account registers the queer potential and political dynamics of Taos. Luhan’s art colony itself can be seen as an epitome of feminist possibility.

The atmosphere of Taos allowed O’Keeffe and Salsbury to conduct their unconventional lifestyle, and the two quickly became Georgia and Beck (as Salsbury nicknamed them). The iconic couple in the village “made a striking pair” (Lisle, 1980: 216, fig. 12). Carolyn Burke’s (2019) book *Foursome: Alfred Stieglitz, Georgia O’Keeffe, Paul Strand, Rebecca Salsbury* revisits the partnership of the two women in Taos. Burke writes that Georgia and Beck “behaved like best friends, giggling over private jokes, escaping the other guests to go on jaunts, and, after Mabel’s departure, spending most of their time together” (2019: 198). Salsbury taught O’Keeffe to drive, and they danced, drank whisky, smoking, slept under the stars, and sunbathed nude (Burke, 2019: 198). As Salsbury said, “G & I get into our skins and out of our clothes right after breakfast – put down a blanket and lie in the warm healing sun” (2020: 198; Robinson, 1990: 330). Salsbury’s statement reveals a connection between nature, female bodies, and same-sex relationship, and this scenario is filled with ecofeminist dynamics with a touch of queer eroticism. How can we interpret this kind of same-sex relationship, and why should we read this relationship as containing queer dynamics? In *Sister Arts*, Moore offers a possible answer. In this book, Moore (2011) offers an ecofeminist and queer approach to lesbian painters, sculptors, illustrators, designers, gardeners, and other feminist figures such as O’Keeffe. *Sister Arts* considers how the friendships of women influenced their arts, and concerns same-sex relationships as creative affair rather than simply “sexual practice” (Moore, 2011: X). Likewise, Salsbury and O’Keeffe were not exactly a couple, yet their intimacy, for Moore, was filled with queer sensibilities. Moore sees O’Keeffe as a bisexual artist, and more boldly, she claims that O’Keeffe, Salsbury, and Luhan were actually lovers (2011: 169 – 170). This form of same-sex relationship brings us an intriguing ambiguity. Firstly, their friendship was already outside of “the classical friendship tradition emblemized by Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero in the classical era” (Moore, 2011: 13). For lesbian and feminist artists, friendship “could be said to be homosocial” (Moore, 2011: 29).

We can never know what happened exactly between O’Keeffe, Salsbury, and Luhan, yet it is evident that Salsbury was unable to bear her separation from O’Keeffe (Burke, 2019: 202; Moore, 2011: 170). In one letter, Salsbury wrote:

We have had a beautiful relationship together and feel the need of nobody else ... I think she is fond of me and I know I am of her. Nobody can ever take this experience and mutual sharing away from us, no matter what happens – even if the relationship itself changes. I think she is perfectly happy with me for she speaks all the time of getting a large car next Spring and our going off together again in it. We also have in mind trying to find a little house somewhere near New York that we can retire to when we feel like it (Burke, 2019: 202).

These are the words from a close friend, but to a great extent, it is also appropriate to consider it a love letter.

The same-sex friendship between women artists, as Moore (2011) argues, was not only compassionate but also creative. “Both Beck and Georgia had come to New Mexico to paint”, as Robinson writes, and during their stay in Taos they explored the artistic possibility of artificial flowers (1990: 331). Moore argues that “O’Keeffe’s flower paintings of the early 1930s clearly carried forward a sister arts tradition, a heady mix of feminism, same-sex eroticism, socialism, crafts, and artisanal rather than high-art practice” (2011: 170). O’Keeffe’s *White Calico Flower* (1931, fig. 13), as Moore argues, “emerged from a sister arts practice of decorative craftwork and also from a fecund period of lesbian passion” (2011: 172). O’Keeffe’s works at the time, including *Horse’s Skull with Pink Rose* (fig. 14) and *Cow’s Skull with Calico Roses*, show a playful arrangement of artificial flowers and skulls. It is notable that it was Salsbury who discovered the artistic potentiality of the artificial flowers. Robinson comments that “Georgia encouraged Beck to begin work, but it was Beck who recognised as subjects some of the things for which Georgia would become famous ... Georgia began painting the artificial white flowers later that summer, and continued to use them for years thereafter” (1990: 332). O’Keeffe’s compositions, for Moore, are “the work of friendship” (2011: 29).

O’Keeffe and Salsbury “worked separately but peacefully, giving each other encouragement, companionship, and ideas” (Robinson, 1990: 331). During her stay in Taos, Salsbury practiced an antique technique of folk art – to reverse oil painting on glass (Burke, 2019: 197). Salsbury’s exploration was “the works of hand” (Moore, 2011: 9), which can be read as an effort to blur the boundaries of the high-brow modern art and craftsmanship. Salsbury also discovered these artificial flowers that had been used by local women in religious ceremonies (Moore, 2011:

171). These seemingly trivial flowers registered the relationship between O’Keeffe, Salsbury, and Luhan, as Moore writes:

One day Strand (*Beck*) found in a local market some small fabric flowers that the townswomen used as votive offerings at the feet of the *santos*, the half-indigenous, half-Catholic figures of the Virgin and the saints that Mabel Dodge Luhan had introduced as ‘primitive’ inspiration to the New York art world (*ibid*).

In 1929, both Salsbury and O’Keeffe studied fabric calico roses, and then in 1931, O’Keeffe created *The White Calico Flower*. Her close-up shows the layers, the texture, and the delicate centre of the flower, which creates a mutual gaze between the artist and the flower. Accordingly, I would suggest that she reveals the dignity of a trivial, mundane, and perhaps kitsch object.

Many works of women artists show an appreciation of everyday objects. For example, food was vital in Virginia Woolf’s masterpieces, in which she refused the patriarchal convention of looking down on materiality. In her 1929 text “A Room of One’s Own”, Woolf wrote, in patriarchal writing, “it is part of the novelist’s convention not to mention soup and salmon and ducklings, as if soup and salmon and ducklings were of no importance whatsoever, as if nobody ever smoked a cigar or drank a glass of wine” (1992: 12 – 13). Both O’Keeffe and Salsbury were quite sure that the men would dismiss artificial flowers, as Salsbury wrote to her husband, the American photographer Paul Strand, “I know that artificial flowers sound horrible to you, but they really are quite beautiful” (Burke, 2019: 198). These fake and cheap flowers were often considered ornamental and feminine objects. In *Appearance and Identity: Fashioning the Body in Postmodernity*, Llewellyn Negrin points out that:

during the period of modernism, ornament was much maligned as inessential, superficial, deceptive, and irrational ... coupled with the denigration of ornament was its association with the feminine ... ornament was considered an intrinsically feminine domain. Thus, the devaluation of ornament meant, at the same time, a dismissal of the feminine as inferior (2008: 117).

Negrin also marks the political dynamic of ornament, arguing that “ornament, with its freedom from practical necessity, invokes the pleasures of the senses, disrupting the dominance of the instrumental rationality of modern society, which submits everything to a calculating logic” (*ibid*). Negrin’s account of pleasure registers a queer utopian potentiality within ornamental objects. It is not hard to find “the pleasures of the senses” in O’Keeffe’s *Horse’s Skull with Pink*

Roses, in which the artist herself was amused while painting this picture. In both *Cow's Skull with Calico Roses* and *Horse's Skull with Pink Roses*, the painter composed the fake flowers with skulls in a humorous manner. These pictures are not simple works of still-life, but reflect a collective blooming of all connections – O'Keeffe's collection of skulls, Salsbury's idea of artificial flowers, sisterhood, women's place, the bodies under the sun, glorious times, and laughter.

In Taos, as well spending much of their time together, Georgia and Beck also dressed alike (fig. 12). Salsbury "had intense sapphire-blue eyes and prematurely white hair", and both of them "had strong-boned faces and a mannish mode of dressing" (ibid.). Interestingly, through Strand's camera, we can see a handsome and androgenous Salsbury. In "Documenting an 'Age-Long Struggle': Paul Strand's Time in the American Southwest", Barnaby Haran offers an interpretation beyond gender binary. He argues that in Strand's *Rebecca, New Mexico* (1930), Salsbury "resembles a statue or a canyon rock tower" (2020: 131). Their handsome faces and androgynous outfits now appear to be queer, and I argue that the way they dressing can be read as more than merely a fashion choice. In "Dandies, Marginality and Modernism: Georgia O'Keeffe, Marcel Duchamp and Other Cross-Dressers", Fillin-Yeh argues that, from the early 20th century, the manly wardrobe became an act of "breaking with convention". For women artists like O'Keeffe, cross-dressing functioned as a demonstration that challenged conventional female beauty (1995: 35). O'Keeffe also extended her taste of dandyism to her art. Fillin-Yeh considers O'Keeffe as a dandy and a cross-dresser and remarks on O'Keeffe's androgynous figure in relation to her art (1995: 33 – 44). She argues that O'Keeffe's pictures of "plant and organic life" reflect her dandyism as her pictures are "sexually charged, but without a fixed gender" (Fillin-Yeh, 1995: 39). She writes further that:

There are paintings of unmistakable but indefinable sexual content, whose sexual valences are impossible to pin down. Even if one were to apply the Freudian biologically-based theories of gender often resorted to in avant-garde circles in the 1910s, the shapes in such paintings are simultaneously phallic and womblike (ibid).

I will suggest that O'Keeffe's dandyism revealed her romantic friendship with Salsbury, and also reflected the fashion tendency at the time. As Pollock argues, "modern art was intimately connected with fashion as the locus of desire, commodities, and eroticism" (2022: 73 – 74). The culture of dandyism, which flourished in Baudelairian and *fin-de-siècle* aesthetics, was appropriated by New York avant-gardists, including Demuth and Hartley.

2.1.2 Conclusion

The story of Georgia and Beck in Taos illuminates an alternative form of being, in which bodies were fused into the desert, sun bleached bones, and flowers. In *Carr, O’Keeffe, Kahlo: Places of Their Own*, Udall argues that “however quietly, the body speaks in O’Keeffe’s paintings ... it is a body that takes many forms, fragmented like pool eye-shapes or suggestive of a whole, like the contours of landscape” (2000: 111). Udall looks at O’Keeffe’s landscape paintings as “an extension of her own body”, suggesting that her abstract form of landscape imitated the form of human bodies (2000: 120). The body-centred idea, according to Udall, was derived from the ethos of Walt Whitman, a queer influence that “lingered in the Stieglitz circle” (2000: 111). The aesthetic of Whitman, as I shall discuss, illuminates the quality of queer ecologies. This disposition influenced queer artists such as Hartley, and this theme will be examined in the following discussion.

2.2 Playing with the Code: Charles Demuth and Marsden Hartley

Hartley once suggested that “the artist himself should become an extension of the land” (Dickey, 2012: 193). From the evidence of Hartley’s landscape paintings, he surely practised this motto on his canvases. As I shall discuss, bodily representations can also be found in Demuth’s pictures of flowers and city landscapes. O’Keeffe therefore was not the only artist to understand bodies as an extension of nature. Her two contemporaries and friends in the Stieglitz circle, Demuth and Hartley, also explored alternative methods of representing bodies. However, these two important queer artists were often underrated. In the Stieglitz circle, Demuth and Hartley were probably overshadowed by O’Keeffe, who was the star at the time. Hartley “often felt that Stieglitz neglected him” (Seeberg, 2019: 8). According to Weinberg’s argument in *Speaking for Vice: Homosexuality in the Art of Charles Demuth, Marsden Hartley, and the First American Avant-Garde*, the member and critics in Stieglitz circle “never fully accepted Demuth’s works ... until after his death” (1993: 53). Yet when consider queer art in the first half of the 20th century, there is no doubt that both Demuth and Hartley were important artists.

2.2.1 Charles Marsden in Eugene O’Neill’s *Strange Interlude*: Desiring Roses

Demuth and Hartley met in Paris in 1914 at the apartment of Gertrude Stein at 27 rue de Fleurus, and the two artists subsequently became lifelong friends. They stayed together in

Paris, Berlin, and New York, and “shared a house in Provincetown and travelled together to Bermuda” in 1917 (Weinberg, 1993: 114). As discussed, it is not uncommon for art historians to juxtapose the pair. In his chapter “Strategies of Coding: Abstraction and Symbols”, Reed points out that Eugene O’Neill’s 1926 play *Strange Interlude* “pejoratively portrayed” Demuth and Hartley as the character Charles Marsden, who was “a stereotype of the repressed homosexual marked by an ‘indefinable feminine quality’” (2010: 126 – 132). However, the critic Robert F. Gross uses the word “queer” to describe the character because “Marsden’s sexuality evades precise categorisation” like gay or homosexual (1997: 17). Gross points out that Marsden “is more strongly defined by his lack of any strong sexual impulse whatsoever” (ibid). In this play, Marsden is not interested in human sexuality, yet he yearns to the nonhuman.

Marsden has a strong passion for flowers. The character says:

My life gathers roses, coolly crimson, in sheltered gardens, on late afternoon in love with evening ... roses heavy with after-blooming of the long day, desiring evening ... my life is an evening ... Nina is a rose, my rose, exhausted by the long, hot day, leaning wearily toward peace

(He kisses one of the roses with a simple sentimental smile – then still smiling, makes a gesture toward the two lovers.) (O’Neill, [1926] 1991: 161)

It seems that a rose is sufficient for Marsden’s desire; it fulfils him with its vast sensuality. The scene, which is surrounded by a sweet rosy aroma, shows how queer sensibilities are brought out by the rose.

Marsden’s yearning for roses matches the true story, that is to say, both Demuth and Hartley were flower lovers and the masters of floral still-lives. As an artist who was deeply influenced by the *fin-de-siècle* culture, Demuth’s works, including his flowers and cityscapes, illuminate a sense of unnatural, which resonates with his own “unnatural” homosexuality. In the case of Demuth, I will firstly discuss his unnatural aesthetic in relation to the *fin-de-siècle* culture. Secondly, I focus on one of his most well-known pictures *Calla Lilies (Bert Savoy)*, in which Demuth created an unnatural creature by depicting natural organisms. Unlike his friend, Hartley was searching for inspiration and vitality from nature. Hartley’s case will also begin with his love of the calla lily. As with the calla lilies of O’Keeffe and Gluck, I read Hartley’s flower as a queer image. Before I move on to Hartley’s abstract and wild portrait for the gay poet Hart Crane, I will examine his floral still-lives with seascape, exploring his connection to

nature, and to the oceanic environment in particular. During this process, I will explore how a Whitmanic aesthetic influenced Hartley.

2.2.2 The Unnatural Aesthetic and Queer Sensibilities in Demuth's Floral Watercolours

Demuth's unnatural aesthetic was nurtured by an antinatural tendency in the early 20th century. This aesthetic sensibility was inherited from the "nineteenth-century patterns" that took shape in the French *fin-de-siècle* culture and the British Aesthetic Movement (Reed: 2011, 106). As Halberstam argues in *Wild Things: The Disorder of Desire*, this aesthetic tendency of expression against nature emerged in the late 19th century (2020: 17). To cite Wilde, "the more we study art, the less we care for nature" (quoted in Sontag, [1964] 2018: 7). Halberstam argues that "to the extent that the newly formed regime of heterosexuality staked its claim to dominance on the bedrock of the natural, the homosexual must invest in all available antinatural terrain" (2020: 16 – 17). She further writes that "if earlier sexual dissidents had feared to find themselves on the wrong side of nature, now they situated themselves against it" (2020: 17). The *fin-de-siècle* author Joris-Karl Huysmans, who was Demuth's favourite writer, expressed his refusal of nature and celebrated the beauty of artifice. The British Aestheticist Aubrey Beardsley, another artist that Demuth admired, depicted his flowers in a highly decorative style. The roses in his *The Mysterious Rose Garden* (1895), for example, are ornamental and full of erotic sensibility. Beardsley's work was criticised because it was "unhealthy" and detached from reality and nature (West, 1994: 30). In Beardsley's time, the Arts and Crafts Movement was springing up in England and North America, and leading members such as William Morris and John Ruskin praised handmade, decorative, symbolist, and romantic aesthetics. Another case in point is Oscar Wilde's green carnation, whereby the artist indicated his queer sensibilities with an artificially dyed rather than natural flower.

Demuth's formative art-making developed in an analogous European artistic environment. He spent more than two years in Europe, and visited Paris several times from 1907. The early 20th century Paris was one of the cultural centres in Europe, and the city was famous for its queer sensibilities. In "Remembrances of Gay Paris", Robert Aldrich suggest that "the homosexual subculture was extraordinarily dense in Paris in the last decades of the 1800s and the early 1900s. The Champs-Élysées was not only the city's great boulevard, it was a popular place for men to make pickups" (2007: 150). Paris was also a city of lesbianism. As early as the 1820s, "the libertine atmosphere" prevailed Paris as "Sapphic love or love between women" germinated from a bohemian soil (Whitbread, 1992: 41). There were a number of public spaces for women and for "the cult of Lesbos" (Albert, 2016: 66) in the city. As Julie Abraham

argues, in literature, lesbian figures appear in the works of Charles Baudelaire, Émile Zola, and Honoré de Balzac (2009: 4 – 5). Demuth enjoyed the Parisian life, as he said, Paris “was to walk about, go to the galleries, and make friends among the artists” (Farnham, 1971: 62). Wandering amidst the Parisian bohemian art world, it was very likely that Demuth embraced this atmosphere of queerness.

In Paris, Demuth also embraced the *fin-de-siècle* culture, Aestheticist art, literature, as well as European avant-garde genre such as Fauvism, Futurism, and Cubism (Champa, 1974: 54). He visited Stein’s apartment in 1912, where he met Hartley and other European avant-gardists. This seemed to be an important event to Demuth’s encrypted manner because “the visual art produced in Stein’s circle also deals with codes” (Reed, 2011: 127). In *Flowers and Towers*, Tessler suggests that Stein was one of the pioneers who explored the abstraction of the body, and her essay “Word Portraits” (1908 – 1913) was “a primary source of influence and inspiration for many artists” (2015: 67). Tessler writes:

Stein wrote her “word portraits” by stringing together unrelated words in an insistent, repetitive style that was meant to capture the psychological essence of her subjects rather than their physiognomic visible “truths.” This proved to be highly influential in the Modernist rejection of traditional assumptions that portraits must provide a physical likeness of the subject (ibid).

In Stein’s place, Demuth was fascinated by Picasso’s use of symbols and “coded references”, and this encounter directly inspired him to create his poster portraits series (Reed, 2011: 127). In the 1920s, Demuth created a series of portraits for Stein, William Carlos Williams, John Marin, Charles Duncan, Arthur G. Dove, Eugene O’Neills, O’Keeffe (fig. 17), and Hartley (fig. 18). None of these pictures are traditional “portraits”. Demuth used symbols and codes to represent personalities, wherein he explored the alternative forms of human figures, and many of pictures contains flowers and green plants. In the one for O’Keeffe (fig. 17), for instance, Demuth depicted O’Keeffe as a potted sansevieria plant. Some pears appeared around the plant in a surface, and the letters of “O’Keeffe” was spelled disorderly in a form of cipher. “These ‘portraits’”, Reed points out, represent “the idea of coding identity in symbols that separate appearance from meaning” (2011: 130).

Demuth created a number of floral watercolours throughout his career, and I suggest that these pictures, which seem to be innocuous, also reflect antinatural, coded, and queer

aesthetics. Demuth's watercolours were coolly received by some art critics, as Barbara Haskell argues in the exhibition catalogue *Charles Demuth*:

although no one ever questioned the consummate artistry and sumptuous elegance of his flower and still-life watercolors, some critics relegated them to secondary status, believing that oil was the only medium of ambition and substance. Others were so awed by the delicate beauty of these watercolors that they failed to recognize their formal and psychological strength (1987: 211).

In *Speaking for Vice*, Weinberg argues that Demuth's floral watercolours are "about being with rather than 'against nature'" (1993: 51). Therefore, he argues that these natural images are not sexually charged. However, some of Demuth's floral watercolours are actually as unnatural as his cityscapes. It seems like there is an obvious difference between Demuth's floral watercolour and his Precisionist canvases, yet "Demuth's flowers gave the artist a better chance to reveal his keen sense of visual order than his industrial works" (Fahlman, 1983: 61). When he depicted flowers, the painter did not totally obey natural rules. In many of his floral watercolours – *Poppies* (1926, fig. 15), for example – the background recalls what he did in his cityscapes, wherein he ultimately artificialized the sunlight. Demuth used clear lines to shatter the image, creating an effect of cellophane. In *Poppies*, the flowers are out of the natural environment as they are not grouped with woods, sky, or soil but against a grey, geometric background composed of well-designed lines, like the artificial sunlight in his Precisionist cityscapes. As James E. Breslin argues, Demuth abstracts his flowers "from any background, he floats and isolates them in empty space – at once permitting him to define their contours with sharp, distinct lines" (1977: 251). Breslin further points out Demuth's disposition as an aesthete, suggesting that these floral images:

remind us that these objects are abstracted, lifted from any context, for heightened aesthetic contemplation; the space they dwell in is an artistic space ... Demuth's watercolours gently remind us that what we are looking at is not a 'real' object, but an artistic representation, a painting (ibid).

I read Demuth's floral works as a grotesque scene and an "imaginative dimension", to cite Breslin. This aesthetic can be found in his portraits for the female impersonator Bert Savoy, *Calla Lilies (Bert Savoy)* (fig. 16). In this painting, Demuth created an impossible yet Sapphic and oceanic combination – calla lilies springing out of a seashell. This wild organism cannot be found in any natural environment. Regarding the importance of *Calla Lilies (Bert Savoy)* in the early 20th century queer culture, I will discuss this case separately in this section.

As mentioned above, Demuth's antinatural manner is evident in both his cityscapes and floral still-lives. This discussion will be incomplete without consideration of Demuth's Precisionist cityscapes as they show the signature style of the artist. In fact, Demuth's Precisionist cityscapes contain a queer potential that challenged heteronormative and patriarchal interpretations of the city. Moreover, some critiques connect Demuth's cityscapes to his queerness and impotent physical condition. As I will discuss in the following pages, Demuth's poor health, solitude, and queerness were also associated with his floral watercolours. Therefore, Demuth's works of the city and flowers share similar emotions. The term Precisionism, as Andrew Hemingway argues, was actually used by art historians after the 1960 exhibition *The Precisionist View in American Art* "to describe the work of artists such as Charles Demuth, Preston Dickinson, Charles Sheeler, and Niles Spencer" (2013: 1). The group was known as the "New Classics" or the "Immaculate School" in the 1920s. Demuth created a number of cityscapes of his hometown, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in a clean Precisionist style. It is not difficult to find that these pictures did not illustrate the city as it was; they were Demuth's Lancaster. The manner of the paintings is thus inevitably relevant to Demuth's mental and physical condition when he was away from the avant-garde circles and metropolitan life. Demuth painted the town through his own eyes, and more importantly, he touched the cityscape with a corporeal dynamic.

Demuth's cityscapes, like O'Keeffe's New York skyscrapers, reflect the relationship between gender and the city. Some critics argue that both Demuth and O'Keeffe contested gender normativity in these canvases. Vivian Green Fryd argues that "society at that time saw the city as a masculine domain that was created, built, managed, photographed, and painted by men" (2000: 280). Skyscrapers, thanks to their phallic shapes, were often considered as symbols of masculinity. When O'Keeffe started her project of New York skyscrapers, she "was told that it was an impossible idea" (O'Keeffe, 1976: n. p.). She recalled that "when I wanted to paint New York, the men thought I'd lost my mind. But I did it anyway" (ibid). O'Keeffe challenged the gender binary with her feminist engagement, whilst Demuth potentially disrupted the masculinity of the city with his queer dynamics. Although there were phallic chimneys in Demuth's cityscapes, his style was usually considered as feminine because of his delicate brushwork (Reed: 2010, 132). Demuth's refinement gave his city series a lightened, flat, and vitreous disposition. In *Another Country: Queer Anti-Urbanism*, Scott Herring argues that Demuth's *My Egypt* (1927), a depiction of a grain elevator in Lancaster, shows a sensibility of "queer invalidism" (2010: 43). Demuth had suffered from hip infirmity since age 4, and then in 1912, developed a chronic disease that would cause a "bad leg". The disease later was

recognised as diabetes (Farnham, 1971: 123). Based on this fact, Herring connects *My Egypt* to Demuth's physical condition (ibid). He argues that *My Egypt* is "the first – perhaps the only – modernist self-portrait of type 2 diabetes", and it represents "queer invalidism" (ibid). The painting is "an empty, depopulated scene. There are no men in this static scenario. There's no same-sex cruising. There's no mobility. And there's really no there there" (Herring, 2010: 49). Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* (1917) was used as an intertext material in Herring's essay, as he argues:

We can then read *My Egypt* as a cross-identification with Proust's Parisian invalidism, a hymn to high modernist metronormativity, and a bittersweet takedown of Lancaster as a Podunk town far removed from the queer metropolis of Sodom ... it begs that we reconsider Lancaster as a provincial prison, an invalid's exile, or, at the very least, a personal headache (2010: 44 – 46).

Demuth's Lancaster, in Herring's account, was a location of exile and a place for an ill queer man. *My Egypt* is not an erect or a masculine motif, rather, it challenges the heterosexual and metronormative imagery of the forever erect city. Some queer studies stress the importance of the metropolis of the development of LGBTQ+ culture, such as George Chauncey's *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890 – 1949* (1994) and Julie Abraham's *Metropolitan Lovers: The Homosexuality of Cities* (2009). Herring negates to overemphasise the importance of the city. He argues that, considering Demuth's aesthetics, we can rethink the role the city played in queer culture because this metropolitan chic often excluded some queer people who are "non-urban-identified" (Herring, 2010: 4). It is important to note that both Demuth and Hartley cast away the avant-garde circles and metropolitan life, and one possible reason is that they did not feel that they belonged in those environments. Invalidism also refers to the fact that "Demuth felt frustrated at his incapacity to engage with cosmo-urbanism in the late twenties and lashed out against the mobility of his middle-class Anglophilic peers" (Herring, 2010: 48). Although the avant-gardists in Paris, Berlin, and New York had formed a level of friendly environments in certain social circles, the renunciation of Demuth and Hartley shows that the metropolis and its queer environments are not necessarily able to fulfil one's desire for belonging. Their action challenges the universality of a supposed metropolitan queer culture, and obligates a consideration of those who felt a sense of "having missed out" and "being left out" (Herring, 2010: 1). This unbelonging sensibility probably coincides Bersani's (2009) antirelational thesis, in which he argues that homosexuality isolates the individual from societies and relations. However, Demuth found his "vegetal company" (Crowdy, 2017: 429).

In the latter years of Demuth's life, type II diabetes left him "from the intellectual ferment of Paris and the sexual-esthetic comradeship in New York" (Herring, 2010: 44). An acute illness stopped Demuth from travelling, yet it brought him close to his beloved flowers. His floral watercolours seem to be light-hearted pieces, yet they also suggested his deteriorating health. Demuth's ill health confined him to his home and studio at 120 East King Street, Lancaster, a house he shared with his mother. The lavish Victorian garden at the back yard became Demuth's inspiration, supporting the artist's life. Demuth loved flowers and gardens, as well as Hartley, who painted flowers from gardens since he was thirteen (McCausland, 1952: 10). Flowers were clearly a lifelong subject to Demuth, as critic Andrew Carnduff Ritchie writes:

Flowers provided a continuing source of inspiration for Demuth, from the late teens until the end of his career. Part of their attraction had to do with the pleasure he found in working in his family's garden, which flourished at the back of his house in Lancaster, beneath his studio window ... flower endlessly fascinated him. They were in the family, as it were. His mother kept a luxuriant Victorian garden which is still the glory of the Demuth house in Lancaster (1950: 6 – 7).

Demuth was working when he became ill, which is not rare in the stories of art. Yet the tension between the weakness of the body and the vitality of creativity illustrates a form of intimacy between the condition of life and the artist's subject. Painting is a physical job, and therefore the eruption of creativity from an ill body speaks a dialectics of being ill and being alive. The flowers in Demuth's garden were organisms outside of his body, but by using artistic techniques, he transformed them into a vital element that were internalised by the body. The watercolour, which is light, simple, translucent, and moisture, somehow illuminated a therapeutic dynamic to the weak artist. His attention was diverted to somewhere else, to a nonhuman world where he could feel a sense of belonging. *Amaryllis* (1923, fig. 19), for example, was one of several floral watercolours that he painted during recovering. In her biography of Demuth, Farnham pointed out the connection between Demuth's illness, validity, queerness, and the *fin-de-siècle* floral sensibility, as she wrote:

About the year 1920 the outline of another demon, the artist's most fearsome and destructive, became clear – that of the demon diabetes ... he who bore the multiple cross of being homosexual, halt, consumptive, and diabetic, and whose brief life spanned a period of world of conflict, disillusionment, and despair, came eventually to express himself in an art marked by two-dimensionality and immobility; an art not of sweet, perfumed flowers, but of *fleurs du mal* (1971: 122 – 123).

Behind these delightful watercolours, the story of Demuth is melancholic, and the contrast between the artist's life and the artworks is an intriguing chapter in art history. Looking at these pictures alongside the story, we could perceive Demuth's struggle that is less relevant to oppressed sexual desires.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's essay "The Weather in Proust" shows that a queer attachment to nature goes beyond a theory of libido and sexual repression (2011: 1 – 42). In this essay, Sedgwick argues that, in Proust's masterpiece *In Search of Lost Time* (1914), the weather (the natural) was depicted as a force to drive resurrection (2011: 8 – 10). The narrator in Proust's novel engaged in the change of the weather with his internal "little barometric mannikin". Proust wrote:

Conversely, I dare say that in my last agony, when all my other "selves" are dead, if a ray of sunshine steals into the room while I am drawing my last breath, the little barometric mannikin will feel a great relief, and will throw back his hood to sing: "Ah, fine weather at last!" (quoted in Sedgwick, 2011: 9).

In this way, the weather resurrects a small part of the self. The narrator yearns for the weather and for the air, and this yearning is not stimulated by libido, but by a very basic struggle to breathe. Proust, who suffered from asthma throughout his life, understood this dynamic connection to the weather and the air. As Sedgwick argues:

An asthmatic crisis both feels and in fact is life threatening. Evidently the mannikin is not a direct proxy for the narrator's asthma, since the same pressure drop that delights one exacerbates the other. Still what might be called the mannikin's aesthetic response, and access to happiness, is intimately linked with the narrator's simplest drive, the drive to breathe, and the threat to its satisfaction (2011: 10).

The function of the weather in Proust's narrative is comparable with the role flowers and nature played in both Demuth and Hartley's art. All these artists appear to share a similar queer aesthetic, and this is the reason for citing Sedgwick's text in this discussion of Demuth, who was influenced by a Proustian sensibility. The natural imagery in these artists' aesthetics is fundamentally associated with strategies of survival. Therefore, these floral watercolours are not simply pretty pictures. Next, I will examine how these pictures of flowers embody queer relationships, desires, and sensibilities. This investigation of desire supports my argument because, as I suggested in Literature Review, I will examine the dynamics of queer desire in a

non-Freudian way. I argue that queer desire is not something that was unconscious or repressed. In terms of Deleuze and Guattari's "post-Freudian" study on desire, Hickey-Moody and Rasmussen argue, "desire, like power, is everything. It's everywhere: it is positive, productive and generative and is not only formed in relation to lack or sexuality" (2009: 46).

In *Speaking for Vice*, Weinberg also argues that Demuth's floral watercolours have no sexual suggestions (1993: 51). Indeed, sexual dynamics are hard to detect in some of Demuth's watercolours. However, in this case, I will read Demuth's watercolours of sailors, bathhouses, and flowers as a sequence. Demuth's watercolours of sailors and bathhouses are explicitly queer images that he never exhibited to the public. Thus, it is possible that some of the floral watercolours are not totally free from sexuality. Firstly, they occasionally indicate a queer quality or at least hint at a same-sex friendship. Demuth's close friend, the American poet William Carlos Williams, who was portrayed as a "figure 5 in gold" by the painter, collected a number of the floral watercolours. He said:

in my painting of orchids which Charlie did – the one called *Pink Lady Slippers* [1918] – he was interested in the similarity between the forms of the flowers and the phallic symbol, the male genitals. Charlie was like that (Farnham, 1971: 3).

Williams "perceived Demuth's post-1917 flower subjects as creating an explicitly sexual analogy between flowers and male genitals" (Haskell, 1987: 53). Williams clearly revealed the queer eroticism of Demuth's floral watercolours, and this characteristic fascinated the poet. Williams displayed Demuth's floral paintings at his apartment at 9 Ridge Road, and portrayed his friend as "The Pot of Flowers", a poem dedicated to Demuth. In his 1936 long elegy for Demuth titled "The Crimson Cyclamen", again, Williams used flowers as the embodiment of the painter. At the end of the poem, Williams wrote, "The day passes / in a horizon of colors / all meeting / less severe in loveliness / the petals fallen now well back / till flower touches flower / all around / at the petal tips / merging into one flower" (235 – 243).

And we can also find lines like this:

"Such are the leaves / freakish, of the air / as though is, of roots / dark, complex from / subterranean revolutions" (63 – 67).

"Upward to / the light! The light! / all around - / Five petals / as one / to flare, inverted / a full flower / each petal tortured / eccentrically / the while, wrapped edge / jostling / half-turned edge" (144 – 155).

Considering these lines in “The Erotics of Close Reading: Williams, Demuth, and ‘The Crimson Cyclamen’”, Daniel Morris (2007) suggests that Williams’s poem was charged with queer sensibilities. Morris points out that “the queer thing is that the Crimson Cyclamen (associated in the title with the memory of Demuth) is ambiguously gendered” (2007: 64). For example, looking at the lines 63 – 67, Morris writes that “the ‘freakish’ leaves are both masculine (‘of the air’) and feminine (‘of roots’)” (ibid). Therefore, the cyclamen flowers, in Williams’s verses, were “both erect and receptive” (Morris, 2007: 66). Underneath this symbolic significance, there are also deeper sensibilities. Williams used the flower to embody and mourn Demuth not only because the cyclamen is biologically queer, but also because the flower was a part of Demuth’s life, and it also registered their friendship.

Morris’s account also reflects the disposition of queer invalidism. In some verses, as Morris argues, Williams captured Demuth’s vulnerable health, paralleling “illness, violence, and deformity” with the beauty of flowers (2007: 66). In the lines 144 – 155, as I quoted above, the image of tortured pedals strikingly resonates with Demuth’s invalidity. And the word “inverted”, according to Morris, probably refers to his homosexuality and “unnatural” desire (ibid). Finally, Morris offers a conclusive question, which is interesting and crucial for this case study. As he writes, “is not the flower in bloom – frail, sexually ambiguous, ill, and yet the producer of aesthetic pleasure – a figure for Demuth in Williams’s imagination, a figure that Williams is both attracted to and repulsed by?” (Morris, 2007: 66 – 67). This question reflects that a queer floral representation contains ambivalent sensibilities.

In Williams’s literary portraits and interpretation of Demuth’s floral watercolour, a Whitmanic brotherhood and comradeship stands out with the participation of flowers. Weinberg uses Demuth’s *Calla Lilies (Bert Savoy)* as an example, suggesting that if Demuth wanted to express homosexuality and eroticism, he would say it straightforwardly as he did in *Calla Lilies (Bert Savoy)* (1993: 51). While Demuth’s floral watercolours show no direct evidence of sexuality, I argue that the watercolour itself is an art that illuminates queer potential. Firstly, as Reed argues, “Demuth’s paintings were described as ‘overdelicate’ and ‘perverse’, while his exhibited watercolours were reviewed as ‘limited by an almost feminine refinement” (2010: 132). Taking it positively, such a comment proves a sexual fluidity in Demuth’s floral watercolours. Secondly, the form of watercolour itself has some historical connection with queer sensibilities. As Colin Cruise argues in *Queer British Art 1861 – 1967*, watercolour was “the favoured medium” for the Pre-Raphaelite artists, who “abandoned the conventions of history and genre painting” (2017: 25). Considering the critiques from the *Pall Mall Gazette*

newspaper in 1865, Cruise suggests that, the emergence of the Pre-Raphaelite stimulated “a more urgent fear of homosexuality” (ibid). In 1865, a group of English young artists founded the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and later influenced American artists at the time and urged the emergence of American Pre-Raphaelites. Their aesthetics are considered as a form of Campy taste in Susan Sontag’s “Notes on ‘Camp’” (2018: 8). Therefore, the Pre-Raphaelites were a queer group that created many queer works by using watercolour. In Simeon Solomon’s *Sappho and Erinna in a Garden at Mytilene* (1864), for example, the watercolour enriches a nostalgic queer aura. Its romantic and erotic effect would probably not as tantalising had the artist chosen oil paint. Moreover, oil painting was considered “the only medium of ambition and substance”, as Haskell points out in her discussion of Demuth’s watercolours (1987: 211). The choice of medium thus has a political potentiality (as in O’Keeffe and Salsbury’s choice of artificial flowers). The oil-dominated Realist and Impressionist movements seem to be challenged by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Compared with oil paint, which is able to make a solid, realistic, and masculine effect, as in Jacques-Louis David paintings, watercolour is able to automatically permeate and blend, creating ambiguous forms. The fluid, translucent, and decorative watercolour medium is more suitable for depicting unfixed sexuality, fluidity, and the fugitivity of desire.

The quality of watercolour catered to Demuth’s aesthetic ideas. Demuth’s early floral watercolours, according to Haskell, were corporeal and sensual as the artist used floral forms to portray human bodies (1987: 51 – 52). These pictures include a series of floral watercolours that created from 1915 to 1916, such as *Zinnias* (1915), *Leaves and Berries* (1915), *Pansies* (1915), *Wild Flowers* (1916), and so forth. Haskell argues that “these floral images simultaneously evoke figure and landscape forms” (1987: 51). On *Three Figures in a Landscape* (1915, fig. 20), Haskell suggests that “Demuth treated outlined female bodies and body parts as if they were flowers or plants submerged in a landscape” (ibid). Demuth’s aesthetics of “anthropomorphizing of flowers” came from his passion for the *fin-de-siècle* literature and Aesthetic ideas, and his 1915 *Zinnias*, as Haskell argues:

A precedent for the anthropomorphizing of flowers was to be found in the fin-de-siècle literature Demuth admired ... Demuth’s appropriation of literary sensibilities did not cease with anthropomorphic transformation of flowers. In his 1915 floral studies with near-black backgrounds, he pictorially approximated the sinister and melancholic mood that permeated Baudelaire’s *Les Fleur du mal* (1987: 52).

Among these aesthetes and the *fin-de-siècle* artists and writers, Demuth had a particular obsession for Huysmans and his 1884 novel *À Rebours* (translated into ‘against nature’ or ‘against the grain’). Halberstam suggests that *À Rebours* is an important queer text, and the novel “has established ... the terms of an antinatural discourse that is associated with modern homosexuality” (2020: 17). Halberstam argues, “to the extent that the newly formed regime of heterosexuality staked its claim to dominance on the bed rock of the natural, the homosexual must invent in all available antinatural terrain” (2020: 16 – 17). In this novel, the protagonist, Des Esseintes, retreats from his bourgeois life and settles down in a remote village in the Parisian suburb. In his mansion, Des Esseintes practices a pure aesthetic life, immersing himself in the world of art, flowers, philosophy, dandyism, decoration, and interior design. The whole story is filled with details about how Des Esseintes conducts his life in a luxury indoor area. Demuth loved the book, and the intertextuality between Demuth’s pictures and *À Rebours* is also an intriguing subject. As Kermit Champa argues:

Huysmans’s book is one of the comparatively few things which Demuth is known to have read with enthusiasm and which he recommended to friends. Reading *À Rebours* with Demuth in mind is an even more revealing exercise than one might suspect (1974: 55).

Champa writes further, “nearly everything which Demuth wanted to paint was preerotized by Huysmans” (ibid). Huysmans novel inspired Demuth in many different ways, and one crucial influence is the aesthetic of dandyism. In Demuth’s well-known painting *Calla Lilies (Bert Savoy)*, the painter depicted Savoy’s gender fluidity by emphasising his fancy cross-dressing, in which he used calla lilies and a seashell to represent Savoy’s dandyism. Although Demuth depicted natural organisms, he also created a fantastic and unnatural combination. The picture, which I shall be decoding in the following discussion, offers us an opportunity to trace a historical connection between the calla lily and queerness.

2.2.3 Decoding *Calla Lilies (Bert Savoy)*

2.2.3.1 Dandyism

In the discussion of O’Keeffe, I have suggested that dandyism was reflected in her art, and revealed her romantic friendship with Salsbury. Moreover, I argue that O’Keeffe’s way of dressing reflected the fashion tendency at the time. Cross-dressing and dandyism played an important role in the early modern queer subculture, and both Demuth and Hartley shared a dandy sensibility. Man Ray’s 1926 photo portrait of Hartley shows that the artist carried a

cane, and wore a gentleman's hat and a coat with a luxurious fur collar. His collar recalls another photograph portrait that Ray created for a dandy, which was Marcel Duchamp in cross-dress. In the 1910s, Demuth met Duchamp in Greenwich Village, and Duchamp's artistic experiments with sexuality influenced Demuth (Haskell, 1987: 58 – 59). In Ray's picture, Duchamp used the feminine pseudonym Rose Sélavy, which was the pun of the French phrase "eros c'est la vie" (eros is life) (Reed, 2010: 141). Duchamp's dandyism and word play illustrate the connection between eroticism and fashion.

Demuth's friends, as well as critics and biographers, often described him as a dandy. In the collection of Demuth's letters, Bruce Kellner described the artist as "a homosexual dandy with a whinnying laugh, a high-pitched voice, black hair like patent leather that he slicked back after spitting on his hands, a reddish moustache, and a sweetly malicious wit" (2019: xvii – xviii). His friend Hartley reminisced that:

Charles always dressed in the right degree of good taste – English taste of course – carrying his cane elegantly and for service ... Because of a hip infirmity, he had invented a special sort of ambling walk that was so expressive for him (1936: 554 – 555).

Beyond a way of dressing, Demuth's dandyism spoke to his interest in symbolism, and this particular aesthetic suggests that "dress is powerfully symbolic" (Wilson, 2017: 154). The outfit can be an extension of the body and a code of sexuality. It is often able to express multiple layers of one's identity beyond biological sex. "To be a homosexual in American before World War II", Weinberg argues, Demuth "was to be intensely aware of different modes of presenting the self", and it is possible that dandyism was one of these modes (1993: 55). *À Rebours* once again functioned as Demuth's handbook of dandyism. Huysmans's character Des Esseintes is an obsessive dandy and a flower-lover. In *Wild Things*, Halberstam argues that "the style of clothes he wears and the way he furnished his home are part of the unfolding narrative of a man *against* nature" (2020: 18). As an admirer of Huysmans, Demuth might share the meaning of dandyism with the character in *À Rebours* because he "read and reread" the book, and "to learn what unnatural sensations might be had and how one might have them" (Champa, 1974: 55). *À Rebours*, as Champa argues, "established the sexual coding – whether elaborated or not – of his flowers, his acrobats, and later his machines" (1974: 55). That is to say, *À Rebours* might offer Demuth a vision of representing queerness and bodies by using other agencies such as calla lilies and seashells in the portrait of Bert Savoy. Both calla lilies and seashell are natural organisms, yet Demuth invented a creature that was against nature. This unnatural creation also connects to the aesthetic of dandyism.

Between 1926 and 1927, Demuth created this botanic portrait in memory of Savoy, who was introduced to Demuth backstage by his friend Robert Locher (Davidson, 1969: 54). Firstly, the anecdote behind *Calla Lilies (Bert Savoy)* illustrates a tragic and powerful queer dynamic. In the summer of 1923, the American drag queen Bert Savoy walked on a Long Island beach with his friends. At the seaside, the thunder was thrilling, and the heat was “cut up” by a coming storm. Enjoying the cool breeze, Savoy happened to say, “Mercy, ain’t Miss God cutting up something awful?” As soon as he stopped, Savoy was struck dead by a lightning bolt. The wildness of nature, just as Halberstam argues, is dark, deadly, careless, and cruel. Savoy’s tragic and dramatic death illuminates a connection between a queer being, the sea, and the wild force. Demuth seemed to be very conscious of this scenario of queer death, and somehow, he did not portray it as a regretful event. Demuth portrayed Savoy by creating a scenario that was sensual, unnatural, and dandy, perhaps with a slightly vulgar tone.

Now we can see how he depicted it in *Calla Lilies (Bert Savoy)*. In his book *Freak to Chic*, Janes argues that:

Demuth expressed Savoy’s indeterminacy of gender and sexuality by painting the beautiful, if “unnatural,” emergence of a phallic flower from a vulval seashell. The consecration of such a “low” vaudeville act via the medium of high art spoke to the rise to fashionability of queer performance (2023: 154).

The picture shows three calla lilies growing from a large seashell with a seductive and erotic gesture. The motif is placed against a navy background, and at the bottom of the frame, the shell rests on a shape that resembles the sea and the waves. The gesture of the calla lilies recalls Savoy’s fashion and brilliance in his “low” drag performance; as such, Savoy’s cross-dressing becomes clear visually in this canvas, symbolised by both the feminine shell and phallic blossoms. In *Calla Lilies (Bert Savoy)*, Demuth did not portray Savoy according to the physical likeness, but transformed him into a delicate, pure, and perfect-formed seashell and gorgeous white flowers. The calla lilies and shell are integrated biologically and sensually, illustrating Savoy’s queer body in a botanical form. Furthermore, this image suggests that a drag performer would pay special attention to dressing, which resonates with the taste of dandyism.

Dandyism is also reflected in Hartley’s imaginative piece titled *Portrait of a German Officer* (1914, fig. 21), which is similarly a representation of death and queer eroticism without

depicting physical likeness. Hartley dedicated the picture to his German friend and lover Karl von Freyburg, “the handsome officer” he met in Paris (Robertson, 1995: 37). Hartley was not passionate about Paris; what “he was really looking for was German art and Germany” (Robertson, 1995: 37). In 1913, Hartley arrived at Berlin, another homosexual capital at the time (Reed, 2010: 110 – 111). In 1919, as David James Prickett suggests, “the premiere of the film *Anders als die Andern (Different from the Others)*, produced by Richard Oswald and Magnus Hirschfeld” (the German sexologist and ‘a prominent pro-homosexual political activist’) became one of the events that “brought respectable male homosexuals a step closer to the mainstream” (2005: 136). Reed notes that “Germany by the 1920s fascinated the world with increasingly open expressions of homosexuality” (2010: 137). Hartley felt “warm” in home-like Berlin (Robertson, 1995: 49). The artist shared a profound friendship with the city and German expatriates, including the artist Arnold Ronnebeck and his handsome cousin Freyburg, who was killed in World War I. Hartley was deeply in grief over Freyburg’s death, and later he dreamed of Freyburg appearing in his uniform. Hartley, therefore, “began obsessively working the elements of Freyburg’s uniform into paintings, creating a series of moving, turbulent laments” (Robertson, 1995: 56). Instead of depicting the full-blooded figure, Hartley used the symbols of Freyburg’s uniform to construct his torso. Army flags, ribbons, badges, and military rank are concentrated, composing the stout and masculine body of a soldier. The composition, which shows an affluent decoration of a full-dress uniform, can be read as a type of military dandyism. These German paintings “were misinterpreted as being pro-war and pro-German”, as John Perreault, “it nearly wrecked Hartley’s career, but what they were really about was his German lover who died in the war. No one really knew that until recently (*the 1980s*)” (1980: 74).

Interestingly, in *Portrait of a German Officer*, Hartley’s dandy composition connected to the natural. There are motifs in the portrait of Freyburg resembling flowers, and the compact composition recalls Hartley’s paintings of bouquets. Robertson argues that “the distance between the still-lives and the German Officer paintings was smaller than one might think” (1995: 106). In terms of the colour, Hartley’s friend, art critic Charles Caffin argues that the use of white “stands for ‘flower-like purity’” (Robertson, 1995: 58). In this memorial series, some round badges resemble Hartley’s particular floral forms, as in *Flowers (Roses from Hispania)* (1936, fig. 22). Hartley was conducting a “summoning of his gay experience” in his compositions (Robertson, 1995: 58). In *Portrait of a German Officer*, Hartley’s queer emotions are represented by nothing but one’s outfits. Hartley’s *Painting No. 47* is another portrait of Freyburg. Reflecting on this painting, Weinberg (1993) also emphasises the importance of the outfit. He writes that “the torso within has disappeared, leaving only the uniform. Hartley

represents homosexual desire only to diffuse it through the multiple masks of literary obfuscation, abstract style, encoding, and death” (1993: 162). In *Calla Lilies (Bert Savoy)*, the torso disappeared as well, and likewise, Demuth encoded death into this antinatural creature. What is more, we could decode a queer lineage of seashells and calla lilies through this particular picture.

2.2.3.2 The Calla Lily as a Queer Motif

As I have mentioned in the Introduction, Andy Warhol’s homoerotic drawings juxtaposed seashells and flowers with male bodies (2020: 234 – 235). Moreover, in the introduction, I also discussed Gluck’s passion for lilies and the queer anecdote behind her painting. Gluck’s lover, the florist Constance Spry inspired the artist with her flower arrangements, and among them was the design of flowers and shells. In a rare painting titled *Pomegranates* (1936), which was arranged by Spry’s friend Jean Henson, Gluck depicted an arrangement composed of a large conch, pomegranate fruit, and flowers. A pink scallop shell also appeared in her 1972 painting *Still Life with a Scallop Shell and Blossom*. Likewise, Hartley cherished the shells that he collected, and kept these objects with him while travelling. His 1928 still life *Two Shells*, for example, depicted shells “that Hartley had brought over from Paris to Maine” (Seeberg, 2019: 13). A similar seashell appears in both Demuth and O’Keeffe’s paintings. The shell in *Calla Lilies (Bert Savoy)* was one of O’Keeffe’s shell collections (Davidson, 1978: 54). The perfect-shaped shell in this picture also appeared in O’Keeffe’s *Music, Pink and Blue No. 1* (1919). Moore suggests that seashells had been used by some lesbian artists in their shellworks to express the same-sex intimacy. In her book *Sister Arts*, Moore explores the shellwork of British illustrator Mary Delany (2011: 38). She documents that Delany made erotic shellwork for the Duchess of Portland and many other close female friends. Moore includes seashells into the framework of lesbian art, exploring “the erotic and feminine connotations of shells, with their salty smell, vaginal shape, and association with Aphrodite rising out of the seafoam”. This oceanic scenario replayed in Demuth’s picture, yet his Aphrodite is a couple of calla lilies springing out from the shell that is carried by a deep blue wave.

There was a queer story behind the orchestration of shells and calla lilies, and through Demuth’s picture, we can take this opportunity to review the queer use of the calla lily. People now often appreciate the calla lily because of its elegant shape and untainted colour, yet the American art critic Henry McBride once argued that the calla lily “was considered vulgar” largely because of its queer looking (Janes, 2023: 154; Fahlman, 1983: 61). Janes suggests that the calla lily was given this notorious reputation after Wilde’s “high estimation” (2023: 154).

Wilde's appreciation of the calla lily also shows a transcontinental dynamic as he once used calla lilies to diminish the masculine and heterosexual stereotype of New York City. Janes argues that Wilde "had suggested in January 1882, during his visit to the United States, that the 'dreadful marshes' close by New York might be beautiful with 'great fields of callas'" (ibid). Wilde's lily reverie made the flower become a particular queer motif. For Derek Jarman and Robert Mapplethorpe, the subjects of Chapters Four and Five, the calla lily suggested queer eroticism, ideality, and the nobility of desire. In one of his journal entries, Jarman considered the calla lily as an embodiment that could negate patriarchal aesthetics (2018: 28). Jarman once received arum lilies from "a wayward girl" (probably his neighbour), and he wrote:

Her last gift to me was a bunch of arum lilies, which I brought home – to my father's visible embarrassment. I worshipped these arums, a symbol of my obsession with flowers: glossy, exotic, *fin de siècle*. Dad, I know, would have preferred a brace of pistols (2018: 28).

In *Calla Lilies (Bert Savoy)*, Demuth's flowers are also "glossy, exotic, *fin de siècle*" (ibid).

When it comes to the calla lily, Pollock proposes a question in her book *Visual Feminist Museum: Time, Space and the Archive*, wherein she examines the imagery of calla lilies made by women artists such as O'Keeffe, Imogen Cunningham, and Gluck. She asks, "could the flower (the calla lily), so often seen as an analogy for feminine interiority, become a signifier for same-sex feminine desire?" (2007: 106). Pollock writes:

Let me take a favoured flower in art at this moment: the Calla Lily. The morphology of this waxy white flower seems perfectly matched to a sexualised perception with its so obviously phallic stamen jutting out from the flower's cup: erection and interiority, a sexual morphology within one object (2007: 116).

Pollock points out that the calla lily is not a feminine but a queer flower, though the flower is sometimes considered feminine. The calla lily was a beloved theme for Hartley, yet interestingly, he refused to paint it after O'Keeffe made it popular (Robertson, 1995: 71). While O'Keeffe refused the sexual interpretation, this label of femininity remained obstinate. I consider that, perhaps, it was the feminine interpretation that made Hartley avoid this theme. We do not know if Hartley considered the calla lily as a queer organism, yet his *Atlantic Window in a New England Character* (1917, fig. 26) has been considered as "an abstract self-portrait" (Robertson, 1995: 75). The picture shows a classic composition of Hartley, consisting of a bird-like calla lily and the seascape outside the window. If we see calla lilies as a vital

component of queer imagery in the early 20th century, both Hartley and Demuth's calla lilies are integral to this archive.

2.2.4 Conclusion

This section explores Demuth's unnatural aesthetic and dandyism that were influenced by the European avant-garde and the *fin-de-siècle* culture. His delicate floral watercolours contain a queer dynamic and show a tension between illness, invalidism, death, and vitality. Therefore, beyond symbolism, I argued that Demuth's floral pictures contain a strategy that helped the artist to go through the darkness. In the discussion of Demuth's *Calla Lilies (Bert Savoy)*, I argued that the painter created a wild image that reflects his dandyism and unnatural aesthetic. The image allows us to approach a queer archive of the combination of calla lilies and seashells. The painting also registers a tragic and dramatic queer death, in which the energy of the wildness interacts with queer sensibilities, and Hartley also infused this dynamic in his floral canvases and *Eight Bells Folly (Hart Crane)*.

2.2.5 Marsden Hartley's Floral Still-Lives and *Eight Bells Folly (for Hart Crane)*

Demuth definitely considered Hartley as a calla lily. The calla lily is the protagonist in Demuth's unfinished poster portrait for Hartley (1924, fig. 18). In the draft of this painting, Demuth located Hartley's name on the left side, and the red phallic anthurium flower (a cousin of the calla lily) was designed as seductive as it was in Savoy's portrait. The exaggerated stamen looks like a snake's tongue or a sea eel, recalling Hartley's painting *Still-Life with an Eel* (1917). Demuth composed the potted flower in front of the window. The flower, according to the artist's notes on this draft, would contrast against the "quite blue" sky with a "white cloud", and the landscape outside will be "snow" and "winter". The flamboyant, sensual flower and the cold blue wintery background create a strong contrast, producing a tension between life and death. This, in turn, can be related to Demuth's own ill health at the time. On this unfinished piece, Weinberg argues that:

The suggestive quality of the anthurium seems to invite a sexual reading of the image. Yet that sexuality is seen against a bleak winter landscape that speaks of death and within a broken tree that speaks, perhaps, of impotence ... Demuth suggested that what I think is one of the central characteristics of Hartley's art: his habitual presentation of desire in a context that included death (1993: 120).

Demuth and Hartley seemed to share the common sense of “impotence” and queer invalidism. Given the fact that Hartley also spent his last years in solitude and illness, both experienced the vulnerability of life, and they were not unfamiliar with the threat of death. As I will discuss, Hartley examined wildness through death.

The previous section revealed Demuth’s antinatural aesthetic, whereas his friend Hartley found inspiration in nature. However, based on Hartley’s artistic style, I suggest that his understanding of nature was far from “the natural” or “the normal”. In many of his paintings, such as *Three Masted Boat* (1936), *After the Hurricane* (1938), *Storm Down Pine Point Way*, and *Old Orchard Beach* (1941 – 1943), we can see a raw dynamic of chaos by looking closely at his brushwork. He seemed to attach his deviant desire to the disorder of nature. I argue that Hartley’s aesthetic illustrates what Halberstam calls wildness, wherein nature is no longer referring to a certain normativity, identity, or order. Nature is also no longer referring to “the natural” but becomes a system of disorder and queerness where all kinds of wild forces and desires collide. As Halberstam argues in *Wild Things*, “wildness names simultaneously a chaotic force of nature, the outside of categorization, unrestrained forms of embodiment, the refusal to submit to social regulation, loss of control, the unpredictable” (2020: 3). This wild nature not only console queer individuals but also educates them to get lost, to be wild, and to look for alternative ways of living and belonging. This chaotic disposition may reach a climax in Hartley’s wild *Eight Bells Folly (for Hart Crane)* and in his late floral still-lives.

2.2.5.1 A Whitmanic Naturalist

The antinatural aesthetic was not the only tendency in the first half of the 20th century avant-garde circle: some artists (both queer and heterosexual) were deeply in contact with nature, and Hartley was among them. In his later years, the lonely artist became increasingly passionate about naturalism. The critic Hudson D. Walker suggested that one of Hartley’s significant late paintings, *Evening Storm, Schoodick, Maine* (1942), “signifies the artist’s complete return to naturalism” (1947: 259). In this painting, the wave resembles a monument, and the vigorous and dignified darkness of the picture shows a wild, rather than idyllic, nature. In addition, such naturalism had a literary origin because Hartley’s understanding of sexuality and nature was influenced by Whitman. Through Whitman’s poetry, Hartley established his own language that could not only express his queerness but could also save his life. The yearning for nature means one has to attach themselves to something “necessary to sustain individual life” (Sedgwick, 2011: 11). As I argued, this attachment can be vital, beyond the Freudian libido-oriented paradigm.

Freud's psychoanalysis influenced "Demuth's crowd" because his theory "provided a scientific defence of free love" (1987: 57). Haskell writes:

More significant in establishing the atmosphere of sexual leniency in Demuth's crowd were the articles Max Eastman and Floyd Dell wrote on Freud and the interpretations advanced by Dr. A. A. Brill, the English translator of Freud's clinical reports and book on dream analysis. Brill, who delivered the first American lecture on psychoanalysis at Mabel Dodge's salon, felt that Freud had equated sexuality with the life-force. Following Brill, Village radicals quickly appropriated the notion that inhibitions were unhealthy and that social freedom and sexual permissiveness were prerequisites of personal liberation. Freud's concept of repression, they believed, had provided a scientific defence of free love. As one Village denizen noted, "we all had a rationale about sex – we had discovered Freud – and we considered being libidinous a kind of sacred duty (ibid).

For some gay artists at the time, these theories may explain the mechanism of sexual deviance, yet they might fail to offer a consideration about how to survive as a queer individual in a homophobic environment. The artists in the early 20th century "may have taken far longer to use the new language of homosexuality to describe who they are" (Halberstam, 2020: 107). Hartley found his language in Whitman's poetry. In *Marsden Hartley*, Bruce Robertson writes:

Whitman's poetry assured Hartley, as it did many Americans at the turn of the century, that it was possible to find love in the company of men ... Whitman reaffirmed Emerson's transcendentalism for Hartley and proved that the love of nature could be combined with the love of man ... Whitman enabled Hartley to realize that man and nature could coexist at the core of his heart, and thence his art, as he was shortly to discover (1995: 16 – 17).

Robertson's analysis reveals a dynamic of queer ecology in Hartley's art. From Whitman's verses, Hartley seemed to absorb a way of encoding queerness into nature. Whitman loved to use botanical motifs to praise manhood and comradeship. For example, in "These I Singing in Spring", Whitman used a special water plant, calamus, to embody comradeship and brotherhood (Ryan, 2019: 24). I will offer more detail of the story of calamus in the next section on Hartley's flowers with seascapes. Whitman established a queer ecology that registered brotherhood and comradeship, and both dynamics can be found in Hartley's pictures. In their works, the imagery of men and the sea frequently appears. Hartley's paintings of men on the beach, for example, can be read in relation to Whitman's lines in

“Song of Myself”, in which the poet wrote, “Twenty-eight young men bathe by the shore / Twenty-eight young men and all so friendly” (93, 94). Men-with-the-sea is an intelligent gay code that is able to represent same-sex eroticism. This watery aesthetics can also be found in the American painter Thomas Eakins’s *The Swimming Hole* (1884 – 1885). In this case, the location is significant, and the location itself became a cipher, as in Demuth’s watercolour titled *On “That” Street* (1932). “That Street” referred to the “dangerous erotic playground” in Sands Street, Brooklyn, which “was so synonymous with the gay sex trade” (Ryan, 2019: 139). By citing a specific location, the homosexual desire was signified and simultaneously unsaid, and this is what Hartley did in the piece of Whitman’s house. Although this painting seems nothing to do with nature and flowers, it is necessary to mention because it shows the mechanism of Hartley’s coded manner.

In “Introduction of Marsden Hartley’s Life and Work”, Mathias Ussing Seeberg writes:

in Hartley’s copy of Whitman’s magnum opus, *Leaves of Grass* (1885), he even marked a number of passages hinting at forbidden passions. Whitman provided Hartley with a model for incorporating his gay identity into his painting without making it plain (2019: 7).

This was what a queer reader would do when they read a tacit text. A queer reader detects the traces of queerness, and I argue that this habit of reading is fundamentally an act of finding hope in life. It is because, for some queer readers living in a homophobic society, every representation of queer sensibilities in books – a character or a metaphor, might function as testimonies of their desire and existence. Hartley understood Whitman, and they shared this secretive and poetic way of expression. Taking Hartley’s 1905 painting *Walt Whitman’s House* as an example, Seeberg argues that “the house has an unapproachable air, as if harbouring secrets that are barred to us” (2019: 7). On the one hand, *Walt Whitman’s House* functions as a code of queerness “without making it plain”. Seeberg writes further:

Subject matter is displayed and presented, but remains secretive. There is a double movement of revealing and concealing. We receive only coded or oblique references to Hartley’s gay identity – the doors and windows of the house are kept shut” (ibid).

On the other hand, what is really thrilling in this painting is the erotic potentiality that Hartley managed to imply, and this tantalising erotic suggestion could stimulate our imagination and detectivity. If we apply a queer reading to the picture, the silent and dull house somehow feels like a secret gathering spot for gay people. What could happen behind that wall and closed windows? The painting therefore indicates the dynamic of forbidden love, anxiety, struggle,

and the shame of being gay. It is not difficult to picture a scene of romantic gay sex behind closed curtains. The picture, therefore, is simultaneously concealing and revealing, illustrating a struggle of sexuality that Hartley himself was experiencing. It was this struggle and anxiety, rather than the lack of sexual life, that forced the painter to approach the wildness.

Hartley found a path to wildness by being with nature and by considering his sexuality through the force of the nonhuman. Elizabeth McCausland (1952) depicts Hartley's life with nature in his biography. As she writes:

Only at the end of his life, when he had long been driven by ill health and economic anxieties, did he back to nature. He had scorned the lonely, desolate land of his birth. In it at last he found not only peace and human company but the fulfilment of his need to be himself (1952: 3).

We could perceive Hartley's emotion in his later works such as *Evening Storm, Schoodick, Maine*. "To be himself" was to be true to his queerness, whilst the wild nature, including its deadly energy, participated in this process of self-discovery. In this image, sexuality and nature are integrated.

Did that deadly energy of nature remind Hartley of his own death? During his solitude, meditation on death became the central task. The dialogue between death and nature is a particular queer philosophy. As such, I will return to the theme of death alongside Halberstam's notion of wildness. To cite Halberstam again, "we meet wild things and others who journey to where the wild things are; we explore desires for disorder, chaos, and death" (2020: 35). In Hartley's paintings, we can find quite a few wild objects in relation to death, including sea horses, dead birds, fish, and discarded seashells. These wild objects, according to Robertson, represent "Hartley's passionate identification of these objects with men" (1995: 106). This "passionate identification" registers a connection between the human and the nonhuman, which surpasses the scopes of gender and sexuality. The picture of dead seagulls, for example, is a picture of animality, death, and the wild oceanic climate. Perhaps, the artist saw himself in that dead bird, experiencing the wildness and animality of nature. The emotions evoked by the image can be read as nonhuman and wild, which drifted outside of the metropolitan avant-garde circles. In Hartley's biography, McCausland continues:

In the companionship of drowned fishermen, eroded shells, sea birds dead on the beach after the hurricane, he found that sense of persisting and meaningful life he had not found in art coterie and salons. Still a lonely man, he was less lonely because he learned to

share the loneliness of the elements. So he grew to know the meaning of the sea's incessant beating on rock and sand, of strong-winged gulls breasting the storm, of simple fisherfolk whose daily round encompassed the death of their beloved sons. Fleeting from the Maine hillsides and valleys he had known as a boy and a youth, returning to the Maine rivers, bays, and mountains he knew as an aging, discouraged, ailing man, Hartley completed the circle of his life (1952: 3).

"Solitude" clearly became the key experience in Hartley's late years. Seeberg also notes that:

In his paintings, we sense discreet attempts at revealing his identity and expressing himself about himself across the various genres he mastered. At times, the results were plainly homosexually loaded. Other times, the artist dealt with the body and sexuality of feelings like longing, loneliness and alienation that are universally valid but can also be tied to a homosexual identity at the time (2019: 6).

Solitude can be a form of queer sensibility. Both Seeberg and McCausland's descriptions recall what Marianne Moore wrote, "the cure for loneliness is solitude" (quoted in Halberstam, 2020: 91). Emancipating himself from the loneliness that he experienced in the cities, Hartley located himself in solitude. About four decades later, this form of queer solitude seemed to be inherited by Derek Jarman, who grew a garden in the desolate and wild shingle beach. In Halberstam's account, being solitude is a state of being wild, and in Hartley's case, he "learned to share the loneliness of the elements" rather than trying to find a companionship in cities and the avant-garde circles. Thus, his solitude turned into an opportunity to communicate with the nonhuman.

At this point, we can return to Whitman because he also appreciated a nonhuman force in poetry. In his famous "Song of Myself", Whitman wrote:

"I think I could turn and live with animals, / they are so placid and self-contain'd, / I stand and look at them long and long. / They do not sweat and whine about their condition, / They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins, / They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God ..." (684 – 688).

In this poem, Whitman seemed to negate human civilisation and to locate himself in solitude. Whitman focused on the vitality of animals, whereas Hartley noted the depth of vulnerability in the dead animals, both expressions can be read as an approach to wildness. Moreover, it is evident that Whitman used botanical metaphor in many of his poems. As I mentioned above,

he depicted calamus, a common water plant in New York City, to celebrate manhood and comradeship. In the following section, I will explore Whitman's metaphor of calamus together with Hartley's natural paintings including his still-lives and seascapes.

2.2.5.2 Queer Sensibility in Flowers and Seascapes

In Hartley's works, flowers often appeared with the sea. In order to trace the story of queerness and the sea, Seeberg connects the oceanic environment of Cape Cod and Bermuda to Hartley's flowers. He brings Demuth's watercolours of sailors into the topic too because both artists were interested in the oceanic and waterfront culture and the figure of sailors. Seeberg argues:

We need to consider the role of harbour environments in gay culture at the time as places of sexual encounters between sailors and other men. The many photographs of sailors in Hartley's archives only confirm this notion. In his abstractions of ships, the artist may have been experimenting with a new, understated way of expressing his homosexuality by referring to another hyper-masculine milieu known for sexual relations between men (ibid).

This aesthetic signifies a connection between queerness and the sea, which flourished in Hartley's time and is even more active today. This archive of queer oceanic culture also contains the British painter Henry Scott Tuke's (1858 – 1929) achievement on the subject of youngsters and the sea. Moreover, in Hartley's generation, the British artist Duncan Grant (1885 – 1978), a member of the Bloomsbury Group, shocked the public by depicting men bathers. His 1911 decorative painting *Bathing* suggests a gay culture in relation to water, public space, and sexual possibilities (Jones, 2017: 98 – 99). In addition, I also want to offer a note here in order to briefly review this queer oceanic legacy from the 20th century till today. Some studies have registered that queer culture is related to the waterfront and the seaside. For example, Luce Irigaray's *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche* (1991) and Astrida Neimanis's *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology* (2017) have offered rich research on this subject matter. Riccardo Agostini's (2021) video essay illustrates the relationship between water and queer cinema, in which he examines gender fluidity that is registered by the nature of water. Regarding Agostini's exploration, we can then find that many queer directors often film their queer love stories by the sea or colour their works with some aquatic tone – as I shall discuss in Chapter 4, Jarman was among them. In the case of Twombly (Chapter 3), water and the sea played an important role. This aquatic dynamic opens up an Acadian landscape and deepens the duration of a nonlinear time. Moreover, in 2022, the queer scientist Sabrina

Imbler published her book, *My Life in Sea Creature*, which “explores 10 sea or aquatic creatures and how, among other things, they related to their identity as a queer, mixed-race person” (Braidwood, 2023: n. p.). Imbler says, “I’ve always had a very strong connection to the sea” (quoted in Braidwood, 2023: n. p.). In the introduction of her new book *Lesbian Loves Story: A Queer History of Sapphic Romance*, Amelia Possanza (2023) initiates her narrative with a watery dynamic. She writes: “I have lucky enough in my life to fall in love three times: first with water, then with stories, and, finally, with lesbians” (2023: 1). As such, Possanza juxtaposes water, history, and queerness, indicating how these factors and sensibilities are entangled in a queer person’s life. This subject also contains a wild potentiality because water, as a natural force, can both sustain and submerge lives.

Of course, Whitman is one of the most important figures in the archive of queer oceanic culture. The oceanic theme frequently emerges in Whitman’s poetry, and it is possible that Hartley inherited this Whitmanic aesthetic. Hugh Ryan’s book *When Brooklyn Was Queer* unfolds the relationship between Whitman and the waterfront gay culture. Ryan writes, in Whitman’s time, Brooklyn’s waterfront:

offered the density, privacy, diversity, and economic possibility that would allow queer people to find one another in ever-increasing numbers ... by the time Walt Whitman published *Leaves of Grass*, the areas that offered the most support to the earliest queer communities in Brooklyn were already established neighborhoods drawing new residents from around the world” (2019: 19).

The sea and waterfront are common imagery in Whitman’s verses, in “These I Singing in Spring”, one of the poems in the *Calamus* series, Whitman used a special water plant, the calamus, to embody comradeship and brotherhood (Ryan, 2019: 24). The calamus is a phallic-shaped water plant with elegant long leaves and herbal scent, which, in Whitman’s time, grew wildly in Brooklyn’s waterfront. The rhizome of the plant, which mobilises the calamus to spread, recalls Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of rhizome (1987). In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze and Guattari use this concept to challenge the traditional arborescent mode of thinking. The rhizome, as I will argue, provides a diagram of queer relationality. Here, I adapt the concept of the rhizome to depict a queer way of existence that can be found in Whitman’s use of calamus. Deleuze and Guattari argue that a rhizome:

is composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (*milieu*) from which it grows and which it

overspills ... What is at question in the rhizome is a relation to sexuality – but also to the animal, the vegetal, the world, politics, the book, things natural and artificial – that is totally different from the arborescent relation: all manner of “becomings” (1987: 21).

This description reflects the dynamic growth of a rhizome. Moreover, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) suggest that the biological instinct of the rhizome symbolises a way of creating connections. Rhizomatic connections contain queer dynamics not only because it comprises “a relation to sexuality” but also “to the animal, the vegetal, the world, politics, the book, things natural and artificial” (1987: 21). This argument resonates with my understanding of queerness – queerness largely refers to a *connection* that registers a vast relationality that connects the human to the nonhuman. As Deleuze and Guattari argue, “the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 25). The alliance of the rhizome reflects a queer way of existence within which a body can be “a rhizomatic body” that yearns *to become* and *to connect* (Kemp, 2009: 163). Furthermore, the alliance of the rhizome can be understood as a metaphor for queer comradeship, relationality, and collectivity. Thus, we can parallel the communities of workers and sailors with the imagery of the calamus. The poet wrote, “And this, O this shall henceforth be the token of comrades – this calamus-root shall, / Interchange it, youths, with each other! / Let none render it back!” (20, 21).

Whitman considered the calamus as “his gift” to the young men that he saw at the waterfront (Ryan, 2019: 25). Here, we can see how Whitman connected queer sensibilities to eco-dynamics, thus exemplifying the essence of queer ecology. A rhizomatic dynamic was transmitted from the calamus to Whitman’s young men. Furthermore, we certainly can assume that Whitman was aware of the erotic and masculine shape of the calamus. However, I argue that Whitman hardly valued the plant because of its phallic shape. Namely, Whitman’s appreciation of the calamus is based on the sensibilities that he perceived rather than on what the plant looks like. Although the shape of the plant made it a symbol of homosexuality, in his poem, Whitman’s calamus registered queer emotions, sensibilities, and the ideality of manhood. This manner made the calamus a carrier of communities, emotions, and life, which went beyond the morphological suggestion.

I suggest that Hartley’s practices are in contact with the queer oceanic and watery dynamics that Whitman praised. As Robertson suggests, “although comparing the stony land with the people in his writing, in his paintings he focused first on water, as if to acknowledge the forces of time and chaos which wear down both men and mountains” (1995: 119). Robertson’s statement illustrates the wild spirit of Hartley’s seascapes that are filled with “the forces of

time and chaos” (ibid). The mutation and decay of nature recall the condition of human beings, and this metaphor is especially corporeal. One’s body will change and decay like the sea and mountains, and this connection is almost irrelevant to gender and sexuality but more profoundly associated with life itself. Again, Robertson’s argument shows Hartley’s yearning for nature was more of a strategy for survival. The oceanic theme became important during his last years in Maine. In his homeland, the artist accomplished several masterpieces of waves, and as I mentioned above, some show a monumental and wild character, and also register the horror and violence of the sea.

Compared with his stormy sea, the pictures of “sea windows” appear more placid and secretive (Robertson, 1995: 112). In 1916, Hartley was in Cape Cod with Demuth and O’Neill, and in 1917, he visited Bermuda. Hartley’s floral still-lives of this period were “clearly sexualized” (Seeberg, 2019: 10), and were often in contact with the sea. *Still Life with Eel* (1917, fig. 24), which was adapted by Demuth to portray Hartley’s personality, displays “phallic symbols” of the blossom (Seeberg, 2019: 10). In *A Bermuda Window in a Semi-Tropic Character* (1917), the erotic indication was encoded in the pears, a banana, two plums, and the flower in a phallic-shaped vase. Hartley’s 1920s still-lives show queerness more tantalisingly. In *Lilies in a Vase* (1920, fig. 25), he depicted three incarnadine blossoms with their phallic stamens. On Hartley’s still-lives in the 1920s, in *Marsden Hartley and the West: The Search for an American Modernism*, Heather Hole suggests that:

These still-lives are highly yet secretly referential, coded with different symbolic meaning much as Hartley’s German Officer series was five and six earlier. The secret language of objects, most often represented in still life, attracted Hartley throughout his career. This secret language was also informed by the experience of being a semi-closeted gay man in the early twentieth century, and it is in still life that he expresses that experience most poignantly (2007: 86 – 88).

Hole emphasises Hartley’s cipher in his still-lives. Importantly, she argues that “it is in still life that he expresses that experience most poignantly”. As a closeted artist, Hartley encoded his desire and emotion in flowers, and thus, these pictures document the experience of being gay in a homophobic environment. Indeed, we can interpret these paintings from a symbolist perspective, understanding them based on a morphological resemblance. However, considering the artist’s experience and that special poignant emotion, I suggest that these still-lives deliver a high level of solitude. In *A Bermuda Window in a Semi-Tropic Character*, the half-closed curtain and the contrast between a secretive interior and a vast exterior seem to imply the perspective from a frightened and anxious man. He peeks at the sea, the sky, and the men

on the beach through a flower and a cluster of fruit, and thus the still-lives became his barricade. Outside, the lone cloud appears to sense the solitude of the artist and scud over to greet him.

The yellow curtain in this picture suggests a secretive tone, and it seems to show the movement of peeping, offering a glimpse of the Atlantic seascape outside, where both Hartley and Whitman's fellows usually bathed. In Whitman's poetry, both locations of Atlantic and New England appeared in "Starting from Paumanok". In this long verse, Whitman wildly chanted "manly love" and "comradeship" with his particular exclamation marks. These pictures of bathing men are not irrelevant to Hartley's floral still-lives. Paul Rosenfeld wrote that these pictures:

Referred the universe to human and felt the human body in the object present to the senses. As men have done in all baroque ages ... Hartley too, in his, stresses in what he shapes the sexual interests of the mind ... via the large cucumbers, bananas, pears, goblets, lilies, and rubber-plants in his compositions (1924: 95).

Rosenfeld points out that Hartley "felt the human body in the object present to the senses" (ibid), and this interpretation is also very true to Hartley's last painting. In this unfinished piece, Hartley painted a bunch of roses against the sky (1943, fig. 27). The canvas was on his easel on the day he died. Of course, as the rosy scenario in O'Neill's *Strange Interlude* implies, roses played an important role in Hartley's queer life, yet his last rose is much more than a sexual suggestion. This picture brings us back to the theme of death, solitude, and nature. The painting, with its wild brushwork, is unfinished, and all the forms are abstract and loose, which exposes Hartley's vulnerable physical condition. Hartley yearned for nature not because he lacked sexual encounters but because he yearned for a life that would be carried by nature.

In Hartley's paintings, the pattern of flowers, waves, and abiotic objects sometimes shared an obvious likeness. On Hartley's last masterpiece of the stormy sea, Robertson also notes this factor, suggesting that "the mountainous wave unfolds a flower-like form of water vapor" (1995: 119). With a blue sky and clouds, the pink roses are inset in a dark, leaf-like shape, whilst the shape of the whiteness recalls the one in Hartley's memorial painting for the American queer poet Hart Crane. In this memorial image, Hartley shows us a full picture of wildness.

In 1932, on the way of returning to the United States, Crane threw himself from the boat into the wild sea of the Gulf of Mexico. It is said that the tragedy happened after he flirted with a

sailor and was beaten up. As he jumped, the drunken poet shouted, “Goodbye, everybody!”. Crane’s body disappeared in the water and was never found, presumably eaten by a shark. Hartley imaginatively restored this traumatic event in *Eight Bells Folly (for Hart Crane)* (fig. 28), and created an ultimate wild scene. In this picture, the white floral form is in the front of the ship, which is perhaps a representation of Crane’s ghost. The shark has a distorted monstrous shape; the moon and the sun exist at the same moment together with a mysterious form, illuminating a sense of disorder. As the bell tolls, the wild world is independent from human control, reminding us that attempts to recover Crane’s body were unsuccessful. Regarding this fact, Crane actually achieved a wild finale through death. Hartley’s *Eight Bells Folly (for Hart Crane)* is what Weinberg calls a “habitual presentation of desire in a context that included death” (1993: 120).

Crane’s death hit Hartley as it triggered his own despair and loneliness at being a queer painter who was also beset by financial and health crises. Weinberg writes:

When Hart Crane died, Hartley was frustrated with his own career. At the age of fifty-five, he was virtually broke and continued to suffer from bouts of loneliness and depression. Suicide was the one terrible solution to the money problems, loss of inspiration, and sexual unhappiness that the two artists shared (1993: 167).

Hartley approached wildness through Crane’s tragic death – an act with which deeply sympathised. For Halberstam, death is one of the avenues to wildness (2020: 89). She writes that “wildness is not the lack of inscription; it is inscription that seeks not to read or be read, but to leave a mark as evidence of absence, loss, and death” (2020: 50). In addition, Crane’s death was as dramatic as Savoy’s. The drunken queer poet failed to find love and chose to vanish in the wild ocean in a dramatic way. The imagery of the shark – which may have finally consumed Crane – is a combination of animality and queer desire. The distorted shark in the frame recalls Crane’s oceanic poem “Cutty Sark” (Weinberg, 1993: 168). The opening line of the poem says that: “I met a man in South Street, tall - / a nervous shark tooth swung on his chain” (1986: 71). The shark tooth becomes a metaphor of queer desire and wild animality. For Halberstam, this form of queer death drive belongs to a system of wildness that does not guarantee safety, order, and comfort but brings one into another system of disorder and bewilderment. The opening of the verse suggests a sexual cruising, and for Crane, this activity approached death itself and thus approached wildness. In *Cruising the Dead River: David Wojnarowicz and New York’s Ruined Waterfront*, Fiona Anderson argues that Crane “found in

the anonymity of cruising a model for a poetic practice that fostered an active identification with the dead” (2019: 118).

2.2.5.3 Thoreau

There was another writer influenced Hartley with a wild dynamic, which was Henry David Thoreau (1817 – 1862), the American writer, Transcendentalist, naturalist, and philosopher. The mind of Hartley and Thoreau met in Mount Katahdin, the highest mountain in Maine that Thoreau used to climb in 1846. Hartley painted the mountain several times. As Seeberg suggests, “Thoreau’s connection with the mountain was undoubtedly important to Hartley’s interest in the subject” (2019: 135). Facing the wildness of Mount Katahdin, Thoreau exclaimed:

I stand in awe of my body, this matter to which I am bound has become so strange to me. I fear not spirits, ghosts, of which I am one, - that my body might, - but I fear bodies, I tremble to meet them. What is this Titan that has possession of me? Talk of mysteries! – Think of our life in nature, - daily to be shown matter, to come contact with it, - rocks, trees, wind on our cheeks! The solid earth! The *actual* world! The *common sense*! *Contact!* *Contact!* *Who* are we? *Where* are we? (quoted in Robertson, 1995: 119).

“Hartley”, Robertson argues, “had known these very words, these same fears, and these questions all his life” (ibid). Thoreau’s exclamation reflects a desire to approach wild things, such as ghosts, rocks, trees, and the wind. Even his own body, as he said, was possessed by a wild force of nature, which was Titan. This spirit of Thoreau – the fear of the human body and the will to contact wild things – is well explained by Halberstam. She writes that Thoreau:

attempt (s) to approach, inhabit, and even participate in a nonhuman natural world ... inaugurates a mode of nature writing that departs from both the romantic project invested in sublimity and the scientific project invested in the normal. Thoreau gives us, indeed, a queer language and method for approaching the weirdness of nature (2020: 90).

Hartley’s *Eight Bells Folly (for Hart Crane)*, I would argue, can be read as an imagery of “the weirdness of nature”. The oceanic scenario in this picture is obviously not sublimely romantic, whilst the motifs look unreasonable, mysterious, and weird-looking. This can be read as Hartley and Crane’s “queer language and method for approaching the weirdness of nature” (ibid).

Halberstam also notes that Thoreau believed that a transformation was “available through grief and suggestive of encounters with bewilderment found in the wild” (ibid). As mentioned above, in *Eight Bells Folly (for Hart Crane)*, Crane’s ghost was transformed into a floral form that is technically Hartley’s style. After the memorial painting for Crane, Hartley created a number of floral still-lives, and some of these late pictures are a delightful and hopeful scene to watch. His beautiful *Summer Clouds and Flowers* (1942, fig. 29) is widely open unimpeded by the curtain or the window bar, and the picture is filled with the salty smell of the sea. However, some late flowers are still mournful. Flowers, the roses in particular, were a memorial subject for Hartley, and the blossom was also his path to a wild world. This sensibility brings us back to the story of Charles Marsden in O’Neill’s play *Strange Interlude*. Some late floral canvases show that Hartley was not mourning for himself or any human beings, but for nature itself. His 1936 painting *Roses for Seagulls that Lost Their Way* (fig. 30) was his tribute to the seabirds that died on the beach, which was also a subject that he painted many times during his later years. The whiteness of the banquet recalls the whiteness in the German officer series, and a ribbon is a homogeneous form of a seagull. With this painting, the wildest factor is that Hartley really created a wild sea creature. All of the blossoms are crowded together, sticking on the leaves that also grow in one piece. This highly concentrated form can be found in many late floral pieces, and of course, in the German officer series. In Hartley’s *Night and Some Flowers* (1935 – 1936, fig. 23), for example, one could see the starfish and the seaweed in the vase. Hartley’s late composition is perhaps an ultimate meditation on the possibility of wildness.

2.3 Conclusion

Halberstam writes, “for Thoreau, queerness situates human desire within a wild world of other desires and pleasures”; “for Huysmans, queerness attends to a machinic eroticism, an antinatural force of motion” (2020: 20). This dual argument corresponds to Hartley and Demuth’s cases respectively. As closeted artists, both Demuth and Hartley found their ways to represent queer desire, in which they extended human bodies to another world and system. This queer aesthetic is not irrelevant to O’Keeffe’s ecofeminist aesthetic, something that also illuminates a *connection* between the human and the nonhuman. While O’Keeffe’s works enable us to access the framework of ecofeminism, Demuth and Hartley’s explorations allow us to take a step further for perceiving a queer subculture intertextually. The subjects that this chapter has covered – ecofeminism, queer ecology, and the notion of wildness – constitute important cultural phenomena of the modernist time. These subjects are overlapping and share an inward coherence, which means that it would be incomplete to only concern one

without the other. In her 1997 essay “Toward a Queer Ecofeminism”, Greta Gaard has proposed that it is essential to combine queer theory and ecofeminist ideologies because:

A queer ecofeminist perspective would argue that liberating the erotic requires reconceptualizing humans as equal participants in culture and in nature, able to explore the eroticism of reason and the unique rationality of the erotic. Ecofeminists must be concerned with queer liberation, just as queers must be concerned with the liberation of women and of nature; our parallel oppressions have stemmed from our perceived associations (1997: 132).

Together with this theoretical connection, the works of O’Keeffe, Demuth, and Hartley share some comparable features as well. All these artistic representations that this chapter have discussed attempt to examine an interaction, a connection, and an intimacy between human beings and nature. Their works are the early explorations of the possibility of ungendered bodies and sexualities, and all of them aim to go beyond the limits of human bodies that are prisoned, gendered, and alienated by capitalist hegemony and heteronormativity. In addition, these art practices documented a sexual culture of the early modern period, which, according to Halberstam, can be considered as the sensibility of wildness.

The coded manner was actually continued in the 1950s. At the time, organisations of gay and lesbian rights started to form in America (Sullivan, 2003: 22). Yet under the influence of McCarthyism, wider society was still shadowed by a homophobic atmosphere. The 1950s thus was a historical time when queer communities were becoming visible yet at the same time were oppressed (Bronski, 2011: 176). A number of queer artists were obliged to indicate their sexuality using a secretive manner. The 1950s is an interesting period; the macho Abstract Expressionism and queer Pop art emerged simultaneously and, as I shall be discussing in the next chapter, created an ambiguous dynamic of masculinity and homosexuality. Queer sensibilities became subtle and quiet in the works of Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, and Cy Twombly. Pictures like *Calla Lilies (Bert Savoy)* and *Eight Bells Folly (for Hart Crane)*, in contrast with some queer art from the 1950s, were bold and loud. Regarding a queer oceanic-floral culture in Demuth and Hartley’s works, there are more stories worth exploring. In the next chapter, I will look at another queer sea-lover and the expert of flowers: Cy Twombly.



Figure 9 Georgia O'Keeffe, *Jimson Weed/White Flower No. 1*, 1932.
Oil paint on canvas, 121.9 × 101.6 cm. Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art,
Bentonville, Arkansas.



Figure 10 Georgia O'Keeffe, *Abstraction White Rose*, 1927.
Oil paint on canvas, 91.4 × 76.2 cm. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe.



Figure 11 John Candelario, Georgia O'Keeffe and Maria Chabot, 1949.
Georgia O'Keeffe residence, Ghost Ranch, near Abiquiu, New Mexico, 1949. Gelatin silver print,
40.64 × 50.8 cm. Courtesy of the Palace of the Governors Photo Archives (NMHM/DCA), 165668.



Figure 12 Cady Wells, *Rebecca Strand and Georgia O'Keeffe*, Taos, New Mexico, 1929. Gelatin silver print, 7.62 × 8.89 cm. The Nate Salsbury Trust.



Figure 13 Georgia O'Keeffe, *White Calico Flower*, 1931.
Oil paint on canvas, 76.7 × 91.9 cm. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.



Figure 14 Georgia O'Keeffe, *Horse's Skull with Pink Rose*, 1931.
Oil paint on canvas, 101.6 × 76.2 cm. Los Angeles County Museum of Art.



Figure 15 Charles Demuth, *Poppies*, 1926.
Watercolour on cardboard, 49.5 × 34.6 cm. SBMA, Gift of Wright S. Ludington.



Figure 16 Charles Demuth, *Calla Lilies (Bert Savoy)*, 1926.
Oil on board, 107 × 121.9 cm. The Carl Van Vechten Gallery of Fine Arts at Fisk University,
Nashville; From the Alfred Stieglitz Collection, Gift of Georgia O'Keeffe.



Figure 17 Charles Demuth, *Poster Portrait: Georgia O'Keeffe*, 1923-24. Poster paint on panel, 50.8 × 40.6 cm. Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven.



Figure 18 Charles Demuth, *Study for Poster Portrait: Marsden Hartley*, 1924. Watercolour and pencil on paper, 25.4 × 20.3 cm. Santa Fe East Gallery, New Mexico.



Figure 19 Charles Demuth, *Amaryllis*, 1923.
Watercolour on paper, 45.7 × 30.5 cm. Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, OH. The
Athenaem.



Figure 20 Charles Demuth, *Three Figures in a Landscape*, 1915.
Watercolour on paper, 46 × 29.8 cm. Private Collection.



Figure 21 Marsden Hartley, *Portrait of a German Officer*, 1914.
Oil on canvas, 173 × 105 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1949.



Figure 22 Marsden Hartley, *Flowers from a Lonely Child – for Mary of the Volcanoes*, 1935-36.

Oil on canvasboard, 50.8 × 40.6 cm. Private Collection.



Figure 23 Marsden Hartley, *Night and Some Flowers*, 1935-36. Oil on canvas board, 60 × 45 cm. Max & Eleanor Family Trust.



Figure 24 Marsden Hartley, *Still Life with Eel*, c. 1917.
Oil on beaverboard, 73 × 61 cm. Courtesy of the Ogunquit Museum of American Art.



Figure 25 Marsden Hartley, *Lilies in a Vase*, c. 1920.
Oil on board, 68.5 × 48.5 cm. Columbus Museum of Art.



Figure 26 Marsden Hartley, *Atlantic Window in the New England Character*, 1917. Oil on board, 80.3 × 63.5 cm. The Jan T. and Marica Vilcek Collection, Promised gift to The Vilcek Foundation.



Figure 27 Marsden Hartley, *Roses*, 1943.
Oil on canvas, 102 × 76 cm. Collection Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. Gift of Lone and Hudson D. Walker.



Figure 28 Marsden Hartley, *Eight Bells Folly: Memorial to Hart Crane*, 1933.
Oil on canvas, 78 × 100 cm. Weisman Art Museum, Minneapolis, Bequest of Hudson D. Walker
from lone and Hudson D. Walker Collection.



Figure 29 Marsden Hartley, *Summer Clouds and Flowers*, 1942.
Oil on fabricated board, 56 × 71 cm. Brooklyn Museum. Bequest of Edith and Milton Lowenthal, 1992.



Figure 30 Marsden Hartley, *Roses for Seagulls That Lost Their Way*, 1935-36.
Oil on canvas, 40.64 × 30.48 cm. Courtesy Bernard Goldberg Fine Arts, LLC., New York.

Chapter 3 Cy Twombly's Blossom: Queer Memory and Temporality

This chapter explores queer sensibilities and memories in the American artist Cy Twombly's paintings of flowers. I argue that in his paintings, Twombly created a form of nonlinear temporality by depicting bodies and desires, and that Eros wanders in his canvases. In his flowery *Coronation of Sesostris* (2000, fig. 31), as I will discuss in the following, Twombly scribbled Sappho's fragment: "Eros bringer of pain". Yet Eros also brought ecstasy and Dionysian Hedonism to his late works, in which the artist created a vital and queer aesthetic that can negotiate death. This aesthetic can be found in his late canvases of roses. Also, I suggest that Twombly's paint streams, especially in his late roses, are traces of time. The dripping shows his watery aesthetic that is probably associated with his queer memories in the 1950s. I suggest that in Twombly's queer stories, water and the sea played an important role. This aquatic dynamic opens up an Acadian landscape and deepens the duration of a nonlinear time.

As I will show in this chapter, there are some important discussions we need to address that explore Twombly's queerness. Yet in most cases Twombly's sexuality and affairs were often overlooked and even erased after his death. Twombly's long-time partner, now the founder of the Cy Twombly Foundation, Nicola Del Roscio also keeps Twombly's private life confidential. In *Art and Homosexuality*, Christopher Reed discusses gay artists such as Robert Rauschenberg (who was Twombly's lover and lifelong friend) and Jasper Johns in the chapter on the art in the 1950s (2010: 159). Yet surprisingly, Reed does not mention Twombly throughout the chapter. Reed (ibid) argues that "the gay-coded art of Johns and Rauschenberg became, by the end of the 1950s, the well-publicized artistic expression of a social class defined by its commitment to secrecy". This secretive manner also can be found in Twombly's art, although his code is sometimes difficult to decode. As Mary Jacobus argues in *Reading Cy Twombly: Poetry in Paint*, his "cipher resists the decipher" (2016: 82). Based on Jacobus argument, this chapter will focus on exploring sensibilities, rather than meanings, that emit from Twombly's art. In other words, by decoding, I mean to examine memories, anecdotes, gossip, and desire underneath Twombly's pictures. Twombly's youthful queer stories in the 1950s, as I will content, left traces and residues in his canvases especially in his late roses in which he created a queer aesthetic (I will use "late style" to describe Twombly's late works, yet it is important to note that his late style also contains aesthetics of early works.) As Jonathan Jones argues in his article "Lust, heartbreak and suggestive sculpture: was this art's greatest love triangle?", "the last five decades of Twombly's life, painting evocations of myth and lost love among the ruins of Rome,

might be seen as a recapturing of a day with Rauschenberg on the Capitoline in 1952” (2021: n. p.).

To detect Twombly’s sexuality is necessary because as Reed argues, to undermine sexuality leads to “a failure of historical imagination” (2011: 2). “Historical imagination” links to the methodology that I will apply in this chapter, which is the use of gossip and anecdotes. In this chapter, I argue that the memories of the 1950s seemed to keep reappearing in Twombly’s later canvases. Even in his later works circa 2000, the memories of the 1950s still linger and we will utilise Moore’s methodology of gossip to explore this. As reviewed in the Introduction, this method allows us to create an imaginative way of interpretation. This imaginative interpretation is inseparable from a consideration of the artist’s private emotions. As discussed in the Introduction, to rediscover the queerness of the closeted artists is to believe in gaydar because the official archive often fails to document those mysterious queer sensibilities (Moore: 2011, XI). This interpretation allows us to read Twombly’s art departing from the convention of historical research that is mainly based upon archival facts and first-hand recourses.

Before I move on to the case study, it is necessary to introduce the atmosphere of the 1950s America because the secretive manner of the artists was largely influenced by this social milieu. As Reed argues, “the daily experience of homosexuals in the 1950s honed skills of coding” (2011: 157). Rauschenberg once noted that the 1950s “were a particularly hostile and prudish time” (quoted in Greenhalgh, 2022, n. p.). The 1950s saw the beginning of LGBT resistance, yet the propaganda produced the anxiety over homosexuality, which spread among the public. In 1950s America, queer artists were living under the “red scare”, the panic about Communism, and the “lavender scare”, the panic about homosexuality. In *A Queer History of the United States*, Bronski writes that “the ‘Red Scare’ of McCarthyism led directly to the ‘Lavender Scare,’ a conflation of communism with homosexuality” (2011: 180). “At the height of so-called Lavender Scare”, as Jonathan D. Katz suggests, “more homosexuals than Communists lost their jobs and endured public excoriation and judicial persecution” (2009: 177). Under such a political pressure, “the secretive art” became central (Reed, 2010: 158). Artists such as Agnes Martin also encoded her lesbianism in her meditative grids and stripes that seemed irrelevant to sexuality. Like Twombly, Martin never expressed her sexuality to the public. Katz argues that she did imply her queerness occasionally in her canvases yet these indications were often overlooked by the critics (2009: 175). This situation is strikingly similar to Twombly’s, which shows that, for queer artists who worked through in the 1950s, including Martin, it was not uncommon to encode queer sensibilities into their art.

Some artists choose to encode yet others deny. One of Jackson Pollock's photographs illustrated the tension between the secretive queer desire and the homophobic milieu of the 1950s. In *Art and Homosexuality*, Reed remarks on the iconic portrait of Pollock, which was photographed for *Life* magazine in 1949, suggesting that, on the one hand:

In the accompanying photograph, Pollock posed against his twenty-two-foot-long dripped and spattered painting *Summertime*. Dressed in the paint-spattered, rough clothes of a manual laborer with a cigarette dangling from his lips, he defied any imputation of femininity (2011: 154).

As Griselda Pollock argues, Pollock was "the high art version" of masculinity (2022: 45). On the other hand, Reed argues that Pollock's hyper-macho appearance may imply his anxiety about his own homosexuality. Reviewing the suicidal car crash that killed the artist, Reed comments that:

some biographers link Pollock's self-destructive behavior to his repression of erotic attraction to – and perhaps sexual experiences with – other men ... Long celebrated as the paradigmatic Abstract Expressionism, Pollock can also be seen as a paradigm of the costs of homophobic repression (2011: 155).

Pollock's hyper-macho appearance, in a sense, became a defensive suggestion, which was not uncommon in the 1950s. Rauschenberg also denied his homosexuality and any queer reading of his art. Yet Reed argues that, paradoxically, Rauschenberg's secretiveness and rejection of homosexuality is "the clearest expression of homosexual identity in the art of the postwar decades" (2011: 158). The case of Pollock shows it is possible to investigate queer sensibilities in these art practices that appear to be innocuous and asexual.

A photo portrait of Twombly shows an intriguing contrast with Pollock's hyper-masculine persona, and this can be a starting point for approaching his queer aesthetics. In 1966, Horst P. Horst shot a sequence of pictures for *Vogue* magazine, which presented Twombly, Tatiana Franchetti, and their son Alessandro at home, a 17th-century palazzo in Via Monserrato, near the Palazzo Farnese and Campo de' Fiori in Rome. Twombly was presented as a "decadent alcoholic" (as he called himself), and the aesthetic tone of the photos is "a praise of camp and decadence" (Rivkin, 2018: 355). Twombly wears a white suit, showing his style of dandyism. In another photo of this series, Twombly sits at the end of an empty room with a black cape,

looking into the camera very privately. Rivkin argues that Twombly's figure on the magazine challenged the imagery of heteronormativity, as he writes:

The charge that Twombly was an empty and pretentious decorator, a criticism tied up in homophobia and ideas about what a masculine "straight" artist should look and live like, goes all the way back to the first reactions of that 1966 *Vogue* shoot, those decadent rooms of antiques and his own art (ibid).

The well-designed rooms are hardly a domestic space. Contemporary artworks (some of them were Pop art), antiques, marble busts, and Rococo chairs with the leg of cattle hoof and lion paw, are elaborately placed here and there. This was Franchetti's design, and she was a connoisseur and a painter herself. In some pictures, Horst captured Twombly's *Triumph of Galatea* (1961) leaning on the wall in one of the rooms, a picture that is so sensual and even disturbing that it violates the familial warmth. The enormous canvas is filled with the scribbles of pink, beige, brown, blood red, and a touch of blue and black. The canvas looks like a major explosion, playing with the smears of fingertips and the ambiguous shape of phallus, breasts, and testicles, which resemble fragments of bodies. The picture is simply visceral and gory. Actually, browsing Twombly's pictures, there were many canvases suitable for a home, yet the couple chose a picture that could disturb their domestic comfort. Under the window, Franchetti's rococo chairs line up. The chairs are ostentatious with their golden colour winged lion armrest and lion legs. In some photos, there are leopard tapestries, cushions, and a storage box. The whole design illuminates a camp sensibility. In Twombly's photos, decoration is important, and every detail is a refinement, whereas Pollock's paint-stained working jacket performs a macho roughness. I will return to the subject of decoration later in this chapter.

Fortunately, the *Vogue* shoot and its queer quality have now been acknowledged in a 2022 – 2023 exhibition in the Getty Center and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, titled "Cy Twombly: Making the Past Present". In his blog, the American author William Poundstone highlights the queerness of both Twombly and the photographer Horst, and interestingly, his comment also considers Twombly and Pollock together. He writes:

Horst was gay, and Twombly was bisexual at least (notwithstanding the wife, relegated to a room in the distance). Twombly had a well-known affair with Robert Rauschenberg in the early 1950s. Art historian Nicolas Cullinan has argued that the coded gay sensibility of the *Vogue* images challenged the "macho model established from Picasso to Pollock" and damaged Twombly's American Market. It's worth recalling that some had seen Twombly,

with his signature chalkboard scribble paintings, as a potential heir to Pollock (Poundstone, 2022: n. p.).

The *Vogue* shoot, as Poundstone argues, “outed Cy Twombly” (ibid). In the later parts of this chapter, I will trace these queer residues, anecdotes, and gossip in Twombly’s sensual canvases, floral sketches, botanical images, and his late works of roses. Setting the past and the present in the same frame, Twombly’s pictures reflect a temporal duration that is deepened and activated by Eros.

3.1 Encoding a Queer Desire: Twombly’s Representations of the Body, Desire, and Temporalities

Some articles have discussed Twombly’s queerness, such as Dale Boyer’s book review “Does Cy Twombly’s Sexuality Matter?” (2019), Jones “Lust, heartbreak and suggestive sculpture: was this art’s greatest love triangle?” (2021), and Tom Delavan’s “How an Eight-Month Trip Shifted the Course of Art History” (2018). Twombly’s queerness became central in Joshua Rivkin’s biography *Chalk: The Art and Erasure of Cy Twombly* (2018), offering crucial materials to my discussion. Considering queer sensibilities in Twombly’s use of poems, Rivkin argues that:

it’s hard to miss the same-sex desire in the texts and writers Twombly borrows. Gay writers, some open and others closeted, but all writing of desire, its pleasure and complications, its consequences, its longings, its loves, its losses. The erotic life as it appears in these poems, lines that Twombly kept in mind or notebook, is decidedly queer (2018: 291).

Rivkin suggests that Twombly’s queerness was indeed actual, yet he notes that, however, in both major exhibitions, *Cycles and Seasons* at the Tate (2008) and the retrospective at the Centre Pompidou (2016-2017), curators used vague statements to imply the artist’s emotional life, and both exhibitions were shying away from the queer-related subjects. In the catalogue of the Pompidou Centre retrospective, Twombly’s lover Rauschenberg was only described as his companion (Rivkin, 2018: 399). Likewise, in terms of their trip to Rome, the catalogue of *Cycles and Seasons* “at no time did the text allude to the sexual nature of the friendship or the romantic statues of the trip” (Petry, 2010: 161; Rivkin, 2018: 399).

Erasing Twombly’s queerness, as Rivkin argues, “would not be simply an omission; it would be a lie” (2018: 402). Richard Smith states in his essay “Let’s Not Assign Gay Artists to the

Obituary Closet”, that being queer “clearly does have an effect (2008: n. p.). Just as it’s impossible to divorce any artist from their time and their place – these things cannot help but shape us”. On Rauschenberg’s death, Smith argues that gay artists’ obituaries usually omitted the fact that the artist was gay, as if this factor was trivial. These obituaries therefore “pushed back in the closet following their death”. He writes, “ignoring Rauschenberg’s homosexuality seems as daft and offensive as writing an obituary of James Brown and not mentioning he was black”. The American writer and cultural critic Lee Siegel argues that “you cannot fully understand Twombly’s art unless you know that he is gay” (2005: 3). Siegel’s argument might be black and white, yet it points out the importance of sexuality in an artist’s body of work, meaning that sexuality can be a factor that is worth examining. In this section, firstly, I will show how Twombly represented bodies and erotics in his canvases, and how these sensualities are related to temporality. The discussion of Twombly’s sensual canvases will be helpful for understanding a fuller picture of his queer aesthetics which, I will argue, can also be found in his flowers.

Looking at Twombly’s 1960s canvases, his representations of the body are filled with violent energy. Some of his canvases often tell the dynamics of sex, desire, jouissance, and the destructive vigour of flesh and blood. As I will be discussing in the conclusive section of this chapter, these representations of shattered bodies had already been in contact with some of the themes of AIDS-related art. This down-to-earth, bold, and visceral style was unique during the 1960s, as if it previewed the trauma, loss, grief, anger, ecstasy, revolution, and death in the upcoming future.

In the early 1960s, Twombly created a series of canvases in a similar style, including *Ferragosto* (1961, fig. 34), *Empire of Flora* (1961, fig. 35), *Untitled (Rome)* (1961) *Triumph of Galatea* (1961), *Vengeance of Achilles* (1962), *The Birth of Venus* (1962, 1963), and so forth. The dynamics of sexual desire became his subject matter. These pictures were composed of broken body parts with carnal colour that was as vivid as real flesh, blood, and more radically and disturbingly, excrement, illuminating a kinship to the earth, the dirt, and the soil. Encountering Twombly’s maniac corporeal pictures at Tate Modern, the art critic Adrian Searle remarks on Twombly’s quirky combination of pea-pods and body fragments (2008: n. p.). Searle suggests that Twombly’s composition could arouse a turbulent aesthetic experience in the audience. He writes, “your eyes get lost in all this, among the love hearts, the nipples and cocks and pea-pods that might be vaginas, the jagged seismic judders, the tremors that have gone off the dial” (ibid). The bodies in these pictures were wildly deconstructed into pieces – the bodies were falling apart.

Twombly's representations of bodies are not heterosexual or masculine. These bodies are different from, for example, Pollock's representations, in which the macho artist constructed an armour of self-assurance, subjectivity, and individualism. Regarding pictures such as *Ferragosto* and *Empire of Flora*, some may find there is a similarity between Twombly and the mannerisms of Abstract Expressionism, particularly with Pollock's "action painting". Yet I instead insist that Twombly's work can be read as a counterpart of Pollock. As Jones argues in "Cy Twombly review – blood-soaked coronation for a misunderstood master", since the 1950s, Twombly, as a gay man, "delights in reducing the lofty seriousness of the abstract expressionist painters who dominated New York art at the time to something scabrous, base, dirty and depraved" (2016: n. p.). Their difference is firstly registered by physical gestures during the process of painting. Returning to the photograph of Pollock that I have mentioned earlier, the picture shows his hyper masculinity that was intensified by his cigarette, worker's outfit, and violent yet charismatic canvas. In Twombly's photo portraits, this masculine and self-confident character is hard to find – he was much quieter, slower, and softer. While Pollock often splashed fast and violently, Twombly painted carefully with the consideration of literature, botany, and probably with his secrets, too. In Twombly's pictures, self-assurance and masculinity were deconstructed by his ambiguous smearing, as if nothing can be confirmed and settled in these wild gardens.

It is imaginable that some viewers will see these pictures as messy as childish unskilled doodles, yet this childish manner links to queerness. Considering Twombly's scribbles and smears, in "Cy Twombly's Speaking Body", Richard Leeman argues that this technique is emancipated Twombly's representations from the Father in Lacanian psychoanalysis (2016: 128). Leeman suggests that "his scribbles and his suspect splashes of paint are a 'body event,' the 'speaking body'" (ibid). By citing Jacques Lacan's psychoanalysis, Leeman argues that Twombly's child-like manner reflected the Real where the power of the Father and the Law are no longer in charge. Leeman argues further:

To the two bodies described in his early teaching – the imaginary body, the mirror-image, and the symbolic body, one that is "arranged in a series of signifiers" – Lacan adds a third: the speaking body, the body that "feels itself," is aware of itself, escaping from imaginary and symbolic formalizations. This is what appears on Twombly's canvases: his speaking body. This is the body that has escaped from the Name-of-the-Father, from the Law, and in this it represents what would be unthinkable in the creative world of America (2016: 129).

Roland Barthes's analysis can further explain why Twombly's art was special in American art world (1982: 23 – 40). By using his childish technique of scribble and maybe by returning to the state of children, Twombly created a vagrant "personal narrative", and this resonates with Barthes's analysis of Twombly's works. "The speaking body", as Barthes suggests, performs a gesture that reaches nowhere (1982: 40). Barthes interpreted Twombly's act of painting as a gesture of writing, yet as John Bernard Myers argues, it was "a gesture that cannot be transformed into words" (1982: 50). He argued that Twombly's paintings were a gesture rather than an action because an action always has its intention to produce meaning or a certain result. Twombly's canvases instead were a pure gesture of writing that has no intention to produce certain meanings or answers, and this idiom freed Twombly's art from the grand narrative into "the story of the artist's life". Barthes detected a unique lightness of Twombly's pictures, without the heaviness of meaning-making. He wrote:

Twombly's art ... does not want to take anything; it hangs together, it floats, it drifts between desire, which subtly animates the hand, and politeness, which is the discreet rejection of any desire to capture. If we wanted to situate this ethic, we could only go looking for it very far away, outside painting, outside the West, outside the historical period, at the very limit of meaning; we would have to say, with the Tao Tê Ching: He produces without taking from himself, / He acts without expectation, / His work done, he is not attached to it, / His work will remain (1982: 40).

The queer factor in Barthes's concept is that he brought Twombly out of "the West" and "the historical period" into another time and space that could be non-normative and nonlinear. To sum up, based on Leeman and Barthes's interpretation, Twombly's pictures can be read as an escape from the Father, the Law, the West, and the History. This disposition of queer temporality resides in his sensual brushworks.

Twombly's representations of the body are queer because, as I will be analysing, depicting the shattered bodies can be read as a form of queer aesthetic. The impossible queer desire can unite and also destroy and isolate the body. To use Leo Bersani's (1987) anti-social theory, this queer Eros will bring loneliness, isolation, and self-shattering impulses. Following Twombly's manner of combining poems with paintings, here I import a piece of queer literature that can render Twombly's sensual canvases. In *The Lesbian Body* (1975), Monique Wittig portrays a landscape of flowers, the sea, Sapphism, Hellenistic dynamics, and the island of the Amazons in a sensual, erotic, and visceral manner, which resonates with Twombly's corporeal canvases. As she writes:

The lesbian body the juice the spittle the saliva the snot the sweat the tears the wax the urine the faces the excrements the blood the lymph the jelly the water ... the juices the acids the fluids the fluxes the foam the sulphur the urea the milk the albumen the oxygen the flatulence the pouches the parietes the membranes the peritoneum, the omentum, the pleura the vagina the veins the arteries the vessels the nerves (1975: 28).

Both Twombly and Wittig deconstructed bodies yet these fragments are not totally isolated. The bodies seem to be unrolled horizontally on the earth. They connect to other organisms in nature and connect to the past, and are also concerned with the future. Reading Twombly and Wittig together, we can find an intriguing privity between the writer and the painter. Both of them seemed to invite the audience to look immediately and to sense bodies and desires directly without being imprisoned by aesthetic knowledge and logic. This corporeal and sensual aesthetic feeling is often associated with flowers and water.

Like Wittig, who created an oceanic dynamic in her lesbian love poem, Twombly's paintings often contain a similar aquatic erotic. As always, this watery power can bring us back to the ancient world. On Twombly's *The Birth of Venus* (1963), Myers argues that:

in the themes that deal with Eros, the feeling of sexuality is never absent. An overt projection of Twombly's essential realism is well-defined in *The Birth of Venus* 1963, which is replete with shapes like swollen genitals and breasts, rising to the surface of the sea (1982: n. p.).

Twombly's Venus series is floral and oceanic, as Rivkin wrote, "in one version of *The Birth of Venus*, his variations on the iconic, half-naked goddess on a scallop rising from the sea, he layers a hundred breasts like petals of blooming flower, a bouquet" (2018: 119). Twombly also created a picture of Venus in 1975, in which he used a red crayon to write down the word "VENUS", and stuck a small piece of paper depicting a red flower under the cursive handwriting.

According to Myer, Eros was always wandering in Twombly's paintings. Twombly was passionate about lesbian Eros, which was the Archaic Greek lesbian poet Sappho. In a 1976 picture *Untitled (To Sappho)*, he paid homage to the poet by using a purple floral stain and pencil scribble (Jacobus, 2016: 171). Along with the purple stain, Twombly cited one of Sappho's surviving fragments that depicts the mythology of Hyacinth. Sappho wrote, "O my mountain hyacinth / What shepherds trod upon you / With clumsy, rustic foot? / Now you are a broke seal: / A scarlet stain upon the earth" (Fragment 105c).

We are back to an archaic queer story that depicts a dynamic of desire and flowers. Importantly, it illustrates brokenness. The flowers are smashed their bodies on the earth. The hyacinth flowers grow from the blood of Hyacinthus, who is beloved by Apollo. The purple flowers spread across the field every spring like Eros walks through. The desire grows and then is smashed, and all we can see is that purple stain – the residue of queer desire. In his later painting titled *Coronation of Sesostris* (2000, fig. 31), Twombly scribbled Sappho's fragment: "Eros bringer of pain". The picture is clearly flowery – a cluster of flowers seems to grow from a ship-like form, and on the right side, Twombly composed a group of blooming flowers in blood red, which illuminates a paradoxical queer sensibility including both pain and pleasure. Also, a hollowness in these pictures recalls that Sappho disappeared in the ocean.

Temporality in Twombly's paintings is queer because these images reflect the difference between queer and heteronormative temporalities by bringing us back to an antique *desire* and *sensibility*. This queer desire itself cannot "be traced via linear path from past to present" (McCann & Monaghan, 2022: 215). Eros can bring pain, and this experience is not unfamiliar to queer people in the 1950s, the 1980s, and even in our time. Queer people seem to keep returning to the trauma and desire of the past, and so a nonlinear temporality is created. As Heather Love argues, queer people are in contact with "feelings tied ... to the historical 'impossibility' of same-sex desire" (2007: 4). In *Coronation of Sesostris*, the fragmental poem of Sappho tells a shared struggle that existed since ancient times. When a queer individual struggles in here and now, he/she is also in contact with this ancient archive of queer emotions. A queer sensibility is shared beyond a linear temporality, and it is shared through nothing but Eros. As such, a linear timeline is disrupted by this particular erotic experience. Twombly's recollections of ancient desire can be understood, to cite Carolyn Dinshaw, as "affective relations across time" (1999: 138).

The past, the present, and sometimes the future set in one frame, as if we could always flash back to the origin of queer desire in Twombly's universe. In "Between Roses and Shadows" Cullinan cites T. S. Eliot's poem "Little Gidding" in *Four Quartets* (1943), exploring Twombly's depiction of temporality in his late works (2008: 229). In *Four Quartets*, Eliot wrote, "what we call the beginning is often the end / And to make an end is to make a beginning. / The end is where we start from" (1968: 54).

Cullinan uses this verse to portray the sense of nonlinear temporality in Twombly's large-scale frames, in which time was perceived as a duration. The past and the present will intertwine,

and time is not always moving forward. Some queer people live in a temporality “in which interruptions, bendings, and overlaps alternate with returns” (Bernini, 2021: 145). Based on this paradigm of queer temporality, in the following pages, I will explore Twombly’s queer memories that were encoded in his botanical images, floral sketches, and his late blooms. Twombly’s pictures of trees contain a relationship with his partner Nicola del Roscio; the floral sketches, including drawings of roses and Nicola’s irises, suggest his relationship with Roscio and Rauschenberg; finally, his large-scale floral canvases recall what happened in Black Mountain College in the 1950s. Time seems to shuttle back and forth, and it shuttles through Twombly’s consideration of bodies, desire, and eroticism.

3.2 Queer Stories in Botanical/Floral Imagery

3.2.1 A Botanical Artist

Eros and memories also can be found in Twombly’s botanical images which play a role in articulating his aesthetic. Twombly did not depict flowers in these works, yet they are worth exploring because these images offer a larger botanical perspective that helps to understand his flowers and sensual canvases of the 1960s. In other words, we can capture Twombly’s aesthetic through his botanical exploration. Throughout his career, Twombly investigated a vast nonhuman world. He not only depicted flowers but also created a number of pieces of mushrooms, peapods, leaves, trees, water, waves, and the sea. Some of these pieces illustrate a connection between nature and queerness. Leeman points out Twombly’s enthusiasm for botany, as he argues, Twombly “was pursuing his investigations into a humanist culture that includes natural history” (2005: 214). This interpretation registers Twombly’s effort of combining the natural with the unnatural, and the human with the nonhuman. In “Cy Twombly and the Art of Hunting Mushrooms”, Alissa A. Walls argues that the American queer poet Frank O’Hara was the first critic who highlighted the ecological dynamics of Twombly’s art (2014: 51). When O’Hara encountered Twombly’s canvases, he interpreted one of these pictures as “a bird seems to have passed through the impasto with cream-colored screams and bitter claw-marks” (O’Hara, 1955: 46). In this respect, the two queer artists came to an agreement. Moreover, Twombly’s own words explained why botany is crucial, as he said:

A lot of people have no knowledge of plants trees, botany and things. I knew a poet who was totally ignorant about botany. And I said: you can’t be a poet without knowing and botany or plants and things like that; it’s impossible, that’s the first thing you should know (Twombly & Sylvester, 2001: 173)

Between 1974 and 1976, Twombly created two sets of collages called “Natural History”, a title borrowed from the Roman author Pliny the Elder’s treatise *Natural History*. In *Natural History Part II: Some Trees of Italy* (1975/76, fig. 32), Twombly fashioned his botanical catalogue in a scrawled manner, and clearly, he did not imitate nature. The first page shows the formal botanical illustrations of seven different kinds of Italian trees, and in the following seven pages, Twombly recreated or deconstructed these serious botanical illustrations by in a loose manner. The work resembles a children’s notebook that is filled with curiosity. In 2019, BASTIAN exhibited this series, and the press release writes, “considered amongst the most significant and influential series’ in the artist’s trajectory, the works explore the relationship between natural and human history, and out relentless desire to classify, label and categorize the unknown”. This comment shows how much Twombly care about botany, but how is this piece relevant to queerness? Why was he so interested in these Italian trees? Firstly, as I shall be discussing in “Sketching Flowers”, trees are the protagonist in his garden in Gaeta. At first glance, *Natural History Part II: Some Trees of Italy* might be irrelevant to queer sensibilities, and the piece certainly does not *mean* queerness. However, the Italian trees, particularly in Twombly’s story, were already a queer metaphor, which was witnessed by an anecdote documented in Rivkin’s account. In Piazza Navona, Rome, Twombly and his partner Nicola del Roscio used to take care of a tree. Rivkin writes, “together, they would clean away the accumulated plastic bags and trash then use water from one of the fountains to keep it alive” (2018: 241). As a curious author who is interested in anecdotes, Rivkin was looking for that particular tree in Piazza Navona; as he writes, “I looked for that tree but never found it”. There is an absence in Rivkin’s field trip – a memory that has already been lost yet we could feel its residue probably in the water of the fountain. This description makes a grand and queer picture – two men watered a tree using the water from Fontana dei Quattro Fiumi (Fountain of the Four Rivers) in a Roman plaza. Indeed, *Natural History Part II: Some Trees of Italy* might not be a typically queer picture, yet such an anecdote gives the picture a queer quality that is not necessarily associated with hardcore expressions but with a botanical dynamic.

Also, Twombly was interested in exploring mushrooms, and like John Cage, he was also a mushroom hunter. In “Cy Twombly and the Art of Hunting Mushrooms”, Walls juxtaposes John Cage’s *A Mycological Foray: Variations on Mushrooms* (1975) with Twombly’s collage work of mushrooms in *Natural History Part I, Mushrooms* (1974, suite of ten collages, fig. 33), stressing the connection between mushrooms and sexuality in Twombly’s works (2014: 51). In the winter of 1934, “drawn by the hope of finding work during the Great Depression”, Cage moved to the coastal village of Carmel-by-the-Sea, Monterey Peninsula, Northern California (Smith,

1975: 26). At the time of the Great Depression, like many other people in the United States, Cage lived in hunger. Therefore he “decided to forage for edible flora’, and for “wild mushrooms grew in abundance all around” his Carmel shack (ibid). Cage’s mushroom hunting shows how human beings are dependent on nature, revealing the limits of human beings and the possibility of living that mushrooms could create. Once again, this story shows that an individual’s desire for nature is not only a sexual-derived act but also a vital necessity for survival. While some mushrooms are edible, some of them are deadly toxic, and there are certain kinds leading to hallucinations. For queer artists like Twombly and Cage, mushrooms therefore embodied possibility and hope, as well as invulnerability and uncertainty. In *Mushroom at the End of the World*, Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing documents her “travels with mushrooms to explore indeterminacy and the conditions of precarity”, unfolding “life without the promise of stability” (2015: 2).

Wall’s queer ecological account shows that mushrooms can offer us a sex education of queerness as they recall “the very human anxiety surrounding sexual interactions” (2014: 66). Walls points out that mushrooms:

represent the multiple possible outcomes of copulation. Sex can be pleasurable, but it can also be dangerous and deadly. Selecting a partner and hunting mushrooms can be equally euphoric and perilous; both endeavors present us with situations and experiences that are never completely knowable. Twombly’s anthropomorphic fungi, then, expose not only the very human anxiety surrounding sexual interactions but, more importantly, through the art of hunting mushrooms, our awareness of the deficiencies of visual perception in our attempts to order our world (2014: 66).

Wall’s interpretation conveys that Twombly’s botanical art did entangle with queerness. Her analysis of mushrooms thus provides an indication for queering Twombly’s flowers. Additionally, corporeal dynamics were illustrated vividly in Twombly’s visceral pictures in the 1960s (which also predicted queer experiences in the AIDS epidemic). By looking at Twombly’s doodles of trees and mushrooms, we may perceive something novel about his corporeal canvases – are they an image of a broken human body or a wild world of mushrooms, or both? If we review his *Untitled* (1961), the dirt and all kinds of disorder smears and scribbles remind us of a wild and dark world of mushrooms, a world that cannot be known and categorised. In this way, Twombly unrolled bodies in nature, and these bodies fell apart in the world of the wildness.

3.2.2 Sketching Flowers

This chapter not only focuses on Twombly's epic canvases but also on his small works. These small pieces, though seemingly unimportant, contain Twombly's private queer memories. Twombly's 2002 exhibition in Inverleith House, Royal Botanical Gardens, Edinburgh exhibited "works-based botanical subjects and natural forms, interpretation of flowers and gardens and landscapes" (*Studio International*, 2013: n. p.). In his essay "Remember you're a Twombly", Charles Darwent comments on this exhibition:

Roughly speaking, Twombly is concerned with the place where personal memory and public history collide ... Look at the pictures in Edinburgh and you see all kinds of histories and memories at work: scrawled dates suggesting some kind of personal narrative; the history of flower painting, and of the making of the individual works in the show; the story of the artist's life (2002: 9).

One comment writes that "the first impression of Twombly's Edinburgh exhibition is of messy, childlike piece of art" (*Studio International*, 2013: n. p.). It is interesting to note that the exhibition focused on Twombly's small pieces of flowers, rather than the epic canvases. As Darwent argues, these small works witnessed personal narrative and memories. The following discussion will examine Twombly's own universe by looking at a series titled *Nicola's Iris* (1990, fig. 37). The series includes eight acrylic works on paper under the title *Nicola's Iris*, which was exhibited in Inverleith House.

The story behind *Nicola's Iris* allows us to approach Twombly's private time and space. This was a specific universe that was not links to the waves of activism of the 1990s but to a bypast Mediterranean Arcadian culture. Given that Twombly was always "two steps out of the world" and was "being apart from the motion around us", he was living without engaging political demonstrations in person (Rivkin, 2018: 64). Works like *Nicola's Iris* illuminate a form of dissociation. A man was quietly meditating and sketching his partner's irises in the garden – he was separated from communities and revolutions yet was getting close to the past, the garden, and the sea. This subtle emotion again shows Twombly's private time and space that was outside of historical progress, yet was filled with queer sensibilities that nod to the past. In 1990, when the activist organisation Queer Nation was founded in New York City, Twombly was sketching the blooming irises in his garden at Gaeta. These small sketches were more like studies full of gestural energy and the dynamic of the Mediterranean air. Twombly's crayon and acrylic were wildly and rapidly moving; green, purple, and red show a brilliant effect. The

glorious colour and the furious brushwork are a burst of vitality. Also, the irises are diagonal, illustrating the summer breeze or a sense of speed, as if the painter had an urgent desire of recording. Twombly's irises are the souvenir of the summers of Gaeta, the garden, and the partnership of two men. The sensibilities behind the irises evoke a nostalgic manhood that belongs to a homoerotic heritage and speaks to Mediterranean Arcadian gay culture.

In his review, Jonathan Jones describes Twombly as an Arcadian painter. Twombly's taste for queer Arcadian culture is also witnessed by his 1958 picture *Arcadia* (2011, n. p.). Twombly used pencil and crayon to scratch the thick surface made of white house paint; the picture is a work of erasure and traces. In this painting, Twombly referred to the Arcadia region in the Peloponnese, the homeland of Pan and a utopian land of shepherds (Spathoni, 2020: 373). Rivkin documents that when Twombly lived and worked in Bassano, he expressed "the world of a pastoral dream" (2018: 205). Twombly said, "when I used to spend time in Bassano, you could still see shepherds tending flocks of goats. Once I actually saw one throw himself down under a tree and play a flute" (ibid; Kazanjian, 1994: 617). One photo of Twombly and his former lover, Rauschenberg, can reflect this pastoral vibe. The picture shows two men laying down on the grass, and both of them wear white tops, blue jeans, and boots. Twombly wears a fedora hat, upper body on his elbow and smoking; Rauschenberg lies on his back eyes closed, and enjoys the sun. There is a comfortable silence between them, whilst nature seems to witness their relationship. On the subject of gay Arcadian eroticism, Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson argue that "male homoeroticism" is "a central facet of the pastoral depiction" in gay tradition (2010: 23). This gay heritage also can be found in the German photographer Wilhelm von Gloeden's work. From the late 19th century, Gloeden's pictures of Sicilian young men inspired many "American and European men who identified as lovers of men" (Bronski, 2011: 75 – 76). While whether Twombly was influenced by von Gloeden is unclear, nonetheless the Mediterranean queer dynamics of his work and gardening still can be included in this category.

Twombly was a skilful gardener, and so was Roscio. In 1957, Twombly settled in Rome, and later set up his studio in Gaeta, a Roman military town stretching towards the Gulf Gaeta. Their garden at Gaeta is made of trees and ornamented by flowers, its glamorous shades of green against the blue of the Tyrrhenian Sea make an iconic Mediterranean Arcadian scene. Twombly's later partner, Del Roscio, is a passionate botanist, and his gardens "are what Twombly once called *stanze segrete*, 'secret rooms,' and each *stanze* is defined by different trees and flowers: lindens, laurels, irises, orchids, lemon and orange trees, and the like" (Delistraty, 2018: n. p.). The lavish trees of the garden reflect their story in Piazza Navona, when the two men took care of a tree by using the water of the fountain.

The series of *Nicola's Iris* was created during the spring-summer in *stanze segrete*, and they documented the secretive memory that belonged to two men, who were gardening, working, and watching the sea in their *stanze segrete*. The imagery of manhood and the garden can be considered as a part of queer culture. For example, there is one garden scenario resonating with Twombly's *stanze segrete* in Willa Cather's novel *The Professor's House* (1925). The French garden was a comfort for Professor St. Peter, the protagonist of the story who refused to move into the new house with his wife. In his old house, St. Peter enjoyed "months when he was a bachelor again" (Cather, 1981: 15). He lived in memory of his beloved student, Tom Outland, who was killed in World War I. The intimate memory between the two men was embraced by the garden, as Cather wrote:

In those months when he was a bachelor again, he brought down his books and papers and worked in a deck chair under the linden-trees; breakfasted and lunched and has his tea in the garden. And it was there he and Tom Outland used to sit and talk half through the warm, soft nights (1981: 15).

For St. Peter the garden also functions as *stanze segrete*. Cather's fiction indicates how a garden can be transformed into a queer space where memories and erotics thrive. The British writer Beverley Nichols's book *Down the Garden Path* (1932) also exemplifies this secretive manhood that sheltered by gardens (Janes, 2023: 148). As Janes (ibid) suggests, "Nichols graced his new country cottage with the queer spirit of Bloomsbury by installing a statue of Antinous (male lover of the emperor Hadrian)". These literary recourses show a historical heritage of *stanze segrete*.

For Twombly, these sketches of flowers probably embodied the old times and his private sensibilities. Del Roscio and Twombly's garden in Gaeta was a "garden of trees", yet Twombly's studio "was filled with flowers, or at least the images of them" (Rivkin, 2018: 354). It is interesting that Twombly was not interested in real flowers, which further illustrates that, in the making of floral imagery, he probably attempted to encode private emotions that cannot be encoded in real flowers. He transformed the natural organisms into an archival material. On the floral images in Twombly's studio, Rivkin asks:

are these a reminder of the flowers of his early years, little pictures of bouquets and blossoms drawn as personal gifts: *Some Flowers for Suzanne* 1982; *Tulips* 1980; *Some Flowers for Bob* 1982; *Some Flowers for Debbie* 1982; *Some Lotus for Tatiana* 1978; *Untitled (BETTY WITH 3 SONS)* 1978; *Nicolas Irises* 1990 (2018: 354)?

In the pieces that Rivkin discussed, Twombly returned to a schoolboy state, drawing on a small piece of paper with pencils and crayons. In Rivkin's list, one piece evidently suggests a queer story "of his early years", which is Twombly's floral drawing for Rauschenberg in 1982 (fig. 36). Twombly created several drawings in a similar style, which have been collected in the Cy Twombly Foundation under the catalogue "memorabilia". The archival category, "memorabilia", already shows the dynamics of temporality within these small sketches. In 1970, Twombly also drew a cluster of roses for Rauschenberg as a birthday gift, and he inscribed, "Happy birthday dear heart ... a rose just budding". The story of roses and manhood recalls O'Neill's *Strange Interlude*, which I have discussed in Chapter 2. Regardless of Twombly's masterful doodling, this piece is an innocent work made by the simplest graphite and crayon, and is full of laughter and child-like joy. Considering the inscription of this picture, Twombly's boyish tone is even more interesting – what kind of relationship was there between a budding rose and his "dear heart"? "A rose just budding" seems like a coded language, revealing, hiding stories that we will never know. And the ellipsis, too, perhaps implies the secret words between them, maybe something about their youth and the days in Black Mountain, Morocco, and Italy. Rivkin documents that Rauschenberg collected more than fifty works by Twombly, and many of the collections are drawings of bouquets (2018: 227). In *Selections from the Private Collection of Robert Rauschenberg*, critic and curator Robert Storr (2012) looks into the floral drawings that Twombly dedicated to Rauschenberg as a Valentine's gift (1972). He looks at these floral drawings, saying that "it is tantamount to reading someone's love letters". Both Rivkin and Storr remark that the drawing "contains a list of those 'inside jokes and secret codes'" (2018: 228; 2012). A queer memory is contained in these playful drawings, recalling the love of the two young artists. As Rivkin writes, these flowers tell and "their youthful affair evolved into a decades-long adult friendship; this is Twombly at his most open, a period of closeness and collaboration and, why not, love" (2018: 228).

Once again, as Leeman suggests, Twombly's child-like manner deviated from the power of the Father and the Law. By creating these small works, Twombly wandered "outside the historical period" (Barthes, 1982: 40). When he encoded queer memories in these sketches, he seemed to return to a childlike state. In these drawings, Twombly abandoned professional frames, oil paint, and brushes, and instead picked up amateur and childish tools like pencils and crayons. Instead of heroic and epic canvases, these small drawings allow us to glimpse history from the private and gossip, and this is an opportunity to get out of the canon when approaching queer art history. Following the drawings of roses and the affair of Twombly and Rauschenberg, the next discussion will examine how queer anecdotes of the past continued to influence

Twombly's later work. We will consider how he returned to the past again and again, and in doing so created a nonlinear temporality.

3.3 A Watery Queer Anecdote and *The Rose*

In the previous discussion, I understand Twombly's inscription, "a rose just budding", as a coded language belonging to him and Rauschenberg. The rose became an important subject matter in Twombly's later years. While we cannot know what was in the artist's mind when he painted these exuberant flowers, as I will discuss, we could perceive Twombly's queer memories in his late floral imagery. Here, we might need to apply the method of "historical imagination" (Reed, 2011: 2) to these canvases. There are reasons to believe that, in these large-scale pictures, Twombly seemed to revisit his youth, and thus, acknowledge his queer memories. Citing Edward Said's *On Late Style* (2006), Cullinan writes, "Lateness, as Edward Said wrote in his last work *On Late Style* ... 'is being at the end, fully conscious, full of memory, and also very aware of the present.' This heightened sensitivity to all that has been and gone" (2008: 229). The story that "has been gone" happened in Black Mountain in the 1950s.

3.3.1 Lake Eden: A Queer Anecdote

Twombly's story occurred at Lake Eden, the artificial lake in front of the main building of Black Mountain College. Hills and mountains around the college gave it a tone of Arcadian utopia. The place was like a wild garden among the conventional system of universities in the 1950s America. Black Mountain College was an experimental art school founded in 1933, and it provided a new space for those who wanted to live an unconventional life. During the 1950s and the 1960s, "the university was still imagined as a moral extension of the family, and Black Mountain College, during the same period, defied that role in many ways" (Ezell, n.d.). Although the experimental college was not a technically queer place, it contained some non-normative dynamics. The unconventional nature of the college attracted many non-mainstream and gender-queer students. The college "accepted promising students who were poor (Duberman, 2009: 83), and accepted those who "couldn't make it in any other school" (Duberman, 1972: 85; Albers, 1956). In his book *Black Mountain Days: A Memoir*, Michael Rumaker writes that Black Mountain College was a "hot-bed of communists and homosexuals" (Rumaker, 2003: 3). Rivkin also writes, "beyond its artistic or creative freedom, Black Mountain offered 'these sexually marginal girls & boys' something even rarer in 1950s America" (2018: 22).

In the summer of 1951, Twombly enrolled in the school following Rauschenberg, and the two later became lovers. In his essay “How an Eight-Month Trip Shifted the Course of Art History”, Delavan writes:

When Robert Rauschenberg and Cy Twombly met in New York at the Art Students League in the spring of 1951, the two had an instant kinship ... when Rauschenberg returned to school (*Black Mountain College*) in the summer of 1951, it was with Twombly, not Weil (*Rauschenberg's wife*). A few weeks later, his wife came to visit with their newborn child only to discover that he was having an affair with Twombly (2018: n. p.).

The queer story of Twombly and Rauschenberg is not easy to trace because, as Delavan suggests, “neither man ever talked much about their time together in the intervening years, though they remained friends” (ibid). Delavan continues, “were it not for their work, one can almost imagine their relationship had never happened” (ibid). To explain the story, Delavan retrieves Twombly and Rauschenberg’s trip to Italy and Morocco and explores their works during this period. I instead will trace an event that occurred in Lake Eden, and detect the residue of this youthful and watery queer memory in his canvases.

Twombly and Rauschenberg’s “extraordinary” anecdote occurred at Lake Eden, and it was called the “tale of the lake & the boy” (quoted in Rivkin, 2018: xii). The story was documented by Olson in his letter to Black Mountain poet Robert Creeley. In a snowy January, Twombly and Rauschenberg played music at the lakeside dining hall. Rauschenberg walked outside barefoot to the lake and then dived into the ice-cold water, and then, he was near-drowning and lost in the darkness. At this moment, the fellow students searched for Rauschenberg with a flashlight, and they saw Rauschenberg’s head in the middle of the lake. The man shouted that “I can’t catch my breath” (quoted in Rivkin, 2018: xi). Twombly “wades out in the cold water and calls him back to dry land”, and when Rauschenberg finally managed to turn back, Twombly called him, “this way Bob, this way” (quoted in Rivkin, 2018: xiv). Rivkin imagines Twombly’s voice as “warmth and affection in the southern drawl”, guiding his lover back to his arm. “He continues to speak his friend’s name: Bob, this way. They find each other in the water... Cy guides Bob as they move through and out of the lake, black water, slick mud” (quoted in Rivkin, 2018: xii). As the fellow students held up Rauschenberg inside, people were not surprised by his behaviour. Twombly was the only one who brought a radiator near him. After a while, “the other students, artists and writers, continue their conversations as if nothing extraordinary has just happened” (ibid).

Both Twombly and Rauschenberg did not tell the story to the public, yet still we can trace it by looking at their works from a queer perspective. As Delavan argues, their works enable us to understand the affair that certainly happened. For example, one of Rauschenberg's early works represented the night of Black Mountain with a floral indication. In 1951, when Rauschenberg fell in love with Twombly, he created a series of monochromatic canvases including three pictures titled *Untitled (Night Blooming)*. The asphaltic darkness dominates the canvases with a new moon on the top of the frames. The dark pictures resemble the landscape of Lake Eden in the night. Rauschenberg put asphaltum on the canvas, and pressed the wet canvases into the dirt. The paintings became a documentary of a flowery nocturnal sensibility of Black Mountain. In her essay "Before Bed", Helen Molesworth writes, "large canvases six by eight feet that Rauschenberg took outside, saturated with wet oil paint, and pressed into the ground, where they picked up the heavy gravel from the road. Night blooming in North Carolina ... jasmine, honeysuckle, sweet gardenia" (1993: 74). After executing these black canvases, Rauschenberg and Twombly left Black Mountain and headed to Rome. The city "offered freedoms that couldn't be found elsewhere" (Rivkin, 2018: 22).

After 1957, Twombly settled in Rome permanently. The location interests Jones; in "Lust, heartbreak and suggestive sculpture: was this art's greatest love triangle?", he writes:

Rome was the location of some of his most intense times with Rauschenberg: was he wallowing in memory? That is what his art feels like – one long hot bath in remembered love. As the years went by his canvases only got bigger, more perfumed and Proustian (2021: n. p.)

Jones's interpretation reads like a piece of testimony, which confirms that Twombly recollected the story of Lake Eden in his late canvases. However, as Jones argues later in this article, whether Twombly referred to his memories is uncertain because the painter never told the story publicly (ibid). Yet, perhaps, the memories were wandering in his mind when he was painting. We can find some testimonies in the words of the artist. Twombly said:

I've found when you get old you must return to certain things in the beginning, or things you have a sentiment for or something. Because your life closes up in so many ways or doesn't become as flexible or exciting or whatever you want to call it. You tend to be nostalgic (Rivkin, 2018: 250).

To quote Said again, the late style "is being at the end, fully conscious, full of memory, and also very aware of the present" (2006: 14). We can never know what "certain things in the

beginning” were in the artist’s mind, but the event of Lake Eden might reside in Twombly’s personal archive. The traces and testimonies could be found in some of Twombly’s canvases where “the lake will never vanish”, this includes his floral pictures and other works in relation to water (Rivkin, 2018: 195). One thing that needs to be stressed is that the subjects of water and flower were often intertwined in Twombly’s art. In 1988, Twombly created a series titled *Untitled (A Painting in Nine Parts)*, also nicknamed *Green Paintings* (1985-1986). The series includes nine panels, and what Twombly called his “ponds” (Leeman, 2005: 260, 268). As Rivkin suggests, *Green Paintings* “evoke water, and drowning” (2018: 254); he writes, “the paintings of this time return, at least for me, to that night decades before – what Olson called the ‘tale of the lake & the boy’” (quoted in Rivkin, 2018: 250).

Twombly did love to depict drowning, and Rauschenberg’s drowning was transformed into different variations. He recollected the drowning of Sappho, as well as Hero and Leandro, the lovers who died in the water. In 1985, Twombly created *Hero and Leander (to Christopher Marlowe)*. The picture depicts the Greek myth of “the doomed lovers”, in which Leandro swims across the sea to see his lover Hero who guides Leandro with the light (Rivkin, 2018: 361). During a stormy winter’s night, Leandro drowns as Hero’s light is blown out. Hero, like Sappho, with a broken heart, throws herself into the ocean. The water, for Twombly, seems to be always a deadly power, for it almost devoured his lover. In addition, the splash of blood red and the silver water resembles a murder scene that is washed by the rain. The scene was a remembrance of the Elizabethan writer Christopher Marlowe, who wrote the poem *Hero and Leander* and who was killed by the river in 1593. On *Hero and Leander (to Christopher Marlowe)*, Jones comments that:

when you discover that, it is easy to see that Twombly’s apparently abstract painting is a brilliant response to the tragic essence of these doomed lovers’ watery fate: it is an evocation of death at sea, and its smoky ambiguities suggest a heady cocktail of death and desire (2011: n. p.).

The story of Lake Eden therefore offers a perspective to explore Twombly’s queer sensibilities. In *Green Paintings* and *Hero and Leander (to Christopher Marlowe)*, the watery dynamic refers to tragedy, death, and desire, yet in his late roses, it became more meditative, poetic, and finally, ecstatic.

In 2008, Twombly created one of his most well-known pieces, *The Rose* (fig. 38), in his studio at Gaeta. *The Rose* consists of five sets of canvases, and each set includes four panels. The roses

seem to be arranged chronologically and they absorb the lights, changing their hue from bright orange-yellow, red-purple, to a monumental darkness. In each set of panels, Twombly painted roses in the first three frames, and “drew” poems on the last. The poems were extracted from the German poet Rainer Maria Rilke’s (1875 – 1926) 1926 French poetry titled *Les Roses*. Twombly used the English version translated by A. Poulin, Jr. As Jones suggests in his introduction of Twombly’s 2009 exhibition *The Rose*, the brushstroke of *The Rose* resembles water circles, which stimulates a dynamic of “roiling water” (2009: n. p.).

Some may argue that words and images function oppositely, such as Georgia O’Keeffe, who said that “the meaning of a word – to me – is not as exact as the meaning of a color. Colors and shapes make a more definite statement than words” (1976). Yet Twombly’s art exemplifies how images and literature cooperate. Rilke’s verses enrich the sensibilities of the temporality of these roses. In the first set of the series, the verse goes, “Rose, so cherished by our customs, / dedicated to our dearest memories, / become almost imagery / for being so linked to our dreams” (1979: 61). The “dearest memories”, for Twombly, were probably watery, and they flow towards the third set, in which we can see the roses of yellow-purple. In *The Rose III*, the verse goes, “Overflowing with your dream, / flower with so many others deep inside, wet as one who weeps / you lean against the dawn” (1979: 27).

Rilke’s lines illuminate a dreaming nostalgia, as if the memories are encapsulated by the layers of rose petals, and inside which water overflows. This aesthetic of overflow is reflected in Twombly’s paint streaming that was becoming increasingly radical in his late blossoms. Thanks to acrylic paint, a water-friendly material, the paintings are overflowing in a practical way. It is crucial to note that the word “overflow” indicates the possibility of “drowning”, and thus, in the last set of panels, a touch of green, the colour of water, emerges from the centres of the black roses, recalling that dark wintery night and the “tale of the lake & the boy” (Rivkin. 2018: 250).

There are other late floral pictures – like *Blooming* (2001 – 2007, fig. 39), a piece spanning seven years – which are also a record and a work of time. In another beautiful piece *Untitled (Peony Blossom)* (2007), the white, loose, and dripping flowers accompany Twombly’s scribble. He writes Japanese poet Masaoka Tsunenori’s (1644 – 1694) Haiku about a peony. The poem goes, The white peony / At the moon / One evening / Crumpled / And / Fell / The peony falls / Spilling out / Yesterday’s / Rain / From the heart / Of the peony / A drunken bee / The peony / Quivers (quoted in Jacobus, 2016: 218).

In the convention of Haiku writing, the factors of seasons, botany, and animal must be included. Basho's poem depicts delicate movements of a flower and illuminates a deepened temporality. Importantly, the poet emphasises a Zenic instant – "The peony falls / Spilling out / Yesterday's / Rain" – that matches with Twombly's watery flowers. As Jacobus (2016) argues, Twombly's flowers illustrate the power of gravity that is registered by the liquidity of the paint. This argument witnesses Twombly's ecological consideration, wherein a piece of artwork and the natural force interacted. Gravity was working downwards when Twombly was painting the flower. Jacobus suggests that "the defining theme of Twombly's peony painting is 'falling things' – not only the fall of peonies, spilling their moisture like clouds, but the paint that spills from each peony in liquid runnels of green overlaid with white" (2016: 218 – 219). She argues further that:

In the other flaming peony panel, where red and gold define each blossom as the flower of summer sunlight, the liquid gush is sexualized with a haiku by the eighteenth-century Tan Taigi (1709 – 71): "The pistil / of the Peony / Gushes / out / into the noonday / Sunlight." Drunk as a bee or a painter-poet, the blossom displays its lavish arousal by the sun (2016: 219).

In her interpretation, Jacobus points out the sexual dynamics in Twombly's flowers - an erotic communication occurs between flowers and the sun. The blossom becomes "a bee or painter-poet", drinking and enjoying the sunlight with an ecstatic *jouissance* and a wild image appears. Again, the Haiku that Twombly cited enriches the eroticism of the picture. Jacobus also points out that the sexual dynamic is related to "the liquid gush" of the flowers, which registers the connection between water and sexuality.

Moreover, in Twombly's late roses, the ambiguity and the watery quality challenge the conventional gender binary. Jones argues that Twombly's late flowers make a contrast to the Tudor rose. As he writes:

The Tudor rose is extraordinary dense and solid: it has compact strength; it is the symbol of monarchical power and unified nationhood. But as Twombly's serial depictions moulder and unravel from panel to panel, the masculine regal rose is unmanned. It becomes a romantic rose, and then a decadent rose – and finally, in the two darkest-hued works (IV and V), a rose of blood and wine (2009: n. p.).

“A rose of blood and wine” articulates Twombly’s queer aesthetic that became more intense in his late blossoms. Twombly’s representation of blood and wine will sing the last Dionysian hymn of jubilation.

3.3.2 Late Blossoms: A Queer Aesthetic

In his 2008 *Untitled (Roses)*, Twombly used bold yellow and pink, which is a combination that frequently appears in Andy Warhol’s silk screens. The paint streams show as if the flowers had been washed or erased, and we only can see these flowers through the watery screen. These roses resemble a pond, water circles, or clouds that brim with water. The watery acrylic paint works with gravity and streams downward, depicting the force of nature and the duration of time.

Are these paint streams also a sign of being slightly out of control? I consider Twombly’s late works as a queer aesthetic because they register an upbeat sensibility that is produced by a vulnerable body that could not manage to hold his heavy brush. When we encounter Twombly’s epic scale canvases of flowers, we might involuntarily imagine how much physical effort these canvases require. To paint large-scale pictures is a physical labour, and these brushworks and drippings can be understood as traces of the artist’s body movements. In Twombly’s late roses, the bright colours, the dripping, and the gigantic size of the flowers speak to excessiveness and hedonism. Some critics argued that Twombly’s late canvases are simply joyful and decorative without being “allegorical or intellectually demanding” (Mahoney, 2002: n. p.). Critics claimed that Twombly’s late flowers are sentimental and self-indulgent (Rivkin, 2018: 354 – 355). Rivkin offers an interesting interpretation on Twombly’s large-scale floral canvases (2018: 367). He argues that “do we see blooms in his late work not as flowers but cells? Or, do we see in the loose, wild streams of paint down the canvases of *Camino Real* and *Untitled (Camino Real) 2011*, the rapid spread of illness through his body?” Rivkin stresses that these late canvases “were done by a man suffering” (ibid). He writes:

Working through the pain, Twombly struggled for breath, an act of physical endurance to keep going, to hold that tension. I think of that inner compulsion which, even more than that ticking clock, sharpens the mind and moves the hand. “Will I ever reach the aim that I’ve so long pursued and searched for?” Paul Cezanne wrote in a letter in September 1906, a month before his death. “I am still working from nature and feel I am making a little progress” (2018: 368).

Although it is hard to prove whether Twombly expressed his deteriorating health condition in his late works, I argue that Rivkin's sentient analysis is relevant as he remarks on the complexity of late style. There are spaces for imagination, and this imagination will bring art closer to our life, and thus, make art become a form of aid.

The late work of an artist is often usually not straightforward. Said illustrates this point in *On Late Style: Music and Literature Against Grain*, arguing that the act of making is "the bases of history" (the artificial), whereas our physical condition belongs "to the order of nature" (2006: 3). Therefore, the late style becomes a place where history and nature collide as the natural circle of life tries to terminate the act of making (ibid). During this collision, an artist's late style creates a tension between art-making and pending death, and sometimes it does not conform to the artist's bodily condition. Many artists have created their most vigorous pieces during the darkest times of their lives. To use Said's words, a late style is "a new idiom" (2006: 6). The "last effort" of an artist also registers a will of creating and living that emanates from a vulnerable body (Rivkin, 2018: 367). Twombly's late flowers are vehement, decorative, and full of ecstatic joy, showing that there is something vital in his late aesthetic. It seems that he returned to Nietzschean jubilation that is represented by Dionysus, as in his 2008 *Bacchus* series. The liquidity of the paint resembles two elements of life, which are blood and wine. As I shall be discussing, this form of joyous vitality that comes from pending death can be read as a queer aesthetic. Next, I will answer in what ways Twombly's late style is a queer aesthetic by discussing the subject of decoration.

At the beginning of this chapter, I discussed the photo portraits of Pollock and Twombly. The different appearance shows divergences between heterosexual and queer aesthetics. Considering the *Vogue* shoot, I suggested that decoration is important in Twombly's aesthetic system. Some critics argued that in Horst's photographs "simply put Twombly had taken on a role deemed acceptable for a gay but distasteful for a serious artist; he had come out as a decorator" (De Looz, 2011: n. p.). As Jacobus argues, "Twombly's late work reengages the long twentieth-century debate about the relation of decorative art to abstraction" (2016: 212). Decoration, or ornament, as I have discussed in the case of O'Keeffe and Salsbury, was considered as a feminine aesthetic that "represents an antidote to the puritanical asceticism of modernism" (Negrin, 2008: 118). For the modern architect Le Corbusier, decoration and ornament were kitsch objects that "sell cheaply to shop-girls" (Negrin, 2008: 126).

Yet from a queer utopian perspective, "the ornamental in art represents a certain surplus that allow the viewer a rare and important passage that is more than an escape" (Muñoz, 2009:

128). “Surplus” is an accurate word for describing Twombly’s overflowed canvases of roses, as I have pointed out, they represent an effect of excessiveness. The paint streams, representing blood and wine, can be read as an ornamental surplus of the paintings. The significance of the paint streams allows the viewers to approach a form of primitive force that is governed by a Nietzschean child. As Nietzsche wrote in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, “The child is innocence and forgetfulness, a new beginning, a sport, a self-propelling wheel, a first motion, a sacred Yes” (1969: 55). Twombly’s flowers, at this point, not only deviate from the Father and the Law, but also invoke “the potentiality of ecstasis sheltered by the child consciousness” (Gosetti-Frencei, 2007: 207).

In his late years, Twombly said “a sacred Yes” to this decorative style, and he returned to the consciousness of the child. He was eager for expressing ecstasy exclusively, and his late works created a “new beginning”, although they were criticised. “I got all kinds of wonderful effects that I never achieved *before*”, Twombly said, “I don’t know what excited me with the Blossoms” (quoted in Jacobus, 2016: 214). He said, “I felt uplifted. This is what art should do – make people feel more alive” (quoted in *ibid*). Here Twombly offered a form of definition of art and revealed the core of art-making, which is fundamentally associated with life itself. In *Cruising Utopia*, Muñoz understands this emotion of uplifting as “a mode of utopian feeling” and as “hope’s methodology”, which leads to “astonished contemplation” (2009: 5). Regarding Bloch’s philosophy of hope, this “astonishment contemplation” is an effect that would be aroused by a piece of artwork, and it is “a kind of transport or a reprieve from ... ‘darkness of the lived instant’” (*ibid*). It is therefore possible that Twombly painted these ecstatic roses for transporting himself from the shadow of pending death. His will therefore was vital, and art-making, at this moment, became an aid.

Art critic Harold Rosenberg also queers Twombly by connecting his joyful decorative late style to a queer aesthetics. Rosenberg says, “is there a homosexual art? And I think the answer is unmistakable. Yes, there is. It has to do with decoration, and pleasure, and having a good time” (quoted in Folland, 2010: 362). In his essay “Cy Twombly, The Content Painter”, Jackson Arn furthermore argues, “in the struggles that he stages between pleasure and pain, pleasure rarely wins by knockout, but it wins” (2023: n. p.). This ecstatic sensibility of optimism in Twombly’s last paintings, including *Untitled (Bacchus)*, can be read along with Muñoz’s account of “upbeat reveries” that locates in many queer aesthetic creations (Muñoz, 2009: 25). In this respect, I consider that the late canvases are perhaps the queerest pieces by Twombly.

3.4 Conclusion: Flowers in the 1980s and AIDS/HIV

When the AIDS epidemic hit queer communities of his homeland, Twombly was far away in Italy, and “as always, Twombly kept his distance” (Rivkin, 2018: 259). The artist kept silent about the epidemic, and none of his paintings explicitly represent the trauma. However, as Jones argues, Twombly “is truly, and unforgivingly, our contemporary” because he often responded to the current affair by using an ambiguous manner (2016: n. p.). There is another reason why Twombly’s art can be considered alongside the AIDS epidemic. Rivkin argues that Twombly’s works show “a sign of danger” (2018: 260). Rivkin suggests that Twombly’s art has “a connection between sex and death, violence and desire, loss and repetition. The myths and stories Twombly loved are of individuals, pairs of lovers in which one or both dies” (2018: 261). Rivkin writes further:

The body is often in danger in Twombly’s art, at risk of disappearing. In the phrase Twombly has written on the collage up for auction – *In his despair he drew the colors from his own heart* – the heart, metaphorical to be sure, a phrase of loss and trouble, still names the body, a body in pain (2018: 260).

All of these elements - the fragmental bodies, blood, excrement, dirt, and liquid – could be imagined as a body that is devastated by the virus. The vitality of Eros, however, grows out of this destructive landscape. As Jones argues, “Twombly’s art is about sex, death and longing” (2016: n. p.) – three themes of AIDS-related art. Therefore, was Twombly talking about AIDS/HIV all the time, although he had never spoken about it?

As I argued in the discussion of Twombly’s visceral pictures, he predicted the themes of AIDS-related art in his canvases of the 1960s. One of his 1960s paintings even portrays mourning with the motif of flowers. On his 1962 painting *Achilles Mourning the Death of Patroclus*, Jones comments that “two gory flowers of pain are connected by a slender umbilical cord of blood. Achilles cannot let go of Patroclus: their bond is mightier than death. The ghostly rose that was Patroclus is tied forever to the pulsing heart that is Achilles” (2016: n. p.). The painting, therefore, could be an AIDS-related work.

Moreover, regarding Twombly’s floral pictures from the late 1980s, it is hard not to connect these works to AIDS/HIV. At the 1988 Sotheby auction, Twombly donated *Untitled (To Leopardi)* (1984, fig. 40) to support the Supportive Care Programs of St. Vincent’s Hospital and Medical Center of New York. At that time, both institutions were concentrating on improving

the living quality of HIV-positive patients. We might detect that Twombly subtly referred to the epidemic in *Untitled (To Leopardi)*. Between the ripple-like smear of green and red, Twombly inscribed Leopardi's line in blood red: "In his despair he drew the colors from his own heart" – a line that matched the situations of HIV-positive patients. If we read Twombly's *Untitled (To Leopardi)* along with a 1990 documentary photograph of Chinese-Australian photographer William Yang, we can perceive in what ways Twombly's picture can be an AIDS-related work. In his photograph, Yang documents an HIV-positive patient sitting on a hospital bed and eating his meal. The smile on his face and his playful fashion reveal not only a yearning for life, but also a resistance to illness, pity, and homophobia. Yang used a similar manner to Twombly and wrote a description of the picture that says: "He tried. He tried really hard to keep up his spirits. Each time he went back he'd bring decoration, he brought colours into those drab hospital rooms ..." Firstly, Yang's picture and words illustrate an extreme situation where decoration functions as a surplus for transmitting oneself from the darkness. Secondly, this piece vividly reflects how "he drew the colors from his own heart" "in his despair".

Twombly used the same line in *Analysis of the Rose as Sentimental Despair Part I* (1985, fig. 41). Rivkin understands that the patterns in *Untitled (To Leopardi)* resemble the shape of blood cells, and this organic imitation is more evident in *Analysis of the Rose as Sentimental Despair Part I* (2018: 260). In this picture of the rose, green, red, and the colour of dirt violently contrasted against one another. The picture is also watery, recalling people's weeping, and the rose is completely collapsed and is transformed into "sentimental despair". The picture can be read as a body that is invaded by viruses, which has been fully smashed, yet it still drew the colours from his/her own heart, depicting beauty and a will to live.

Nevertheless, by keeping a distance from the political movements and the public, Twombly seemed to live a rather placid life. In his studio in Gaeta, Twombly's house is below Roscio's at the bottom of the hill. The house invites the view of the Tyrrhenian Sea. Twombly and Roscio could see each other from the windows. "Nicola sees it from above", Twombly said, "but I have the sea in every window" (quoted in Rivkin, 2018: 252). Twombly usually watched the sea from the garden - their *stanze segrete*. Roscio writes that gardens and the sea gave the artist "unlimited opportunities for observing the ever-changing colors and movements of waves". In "'White, white, white': Cy Twombly's Sea", the author Edmund de Waal visited Twombly's studio in Gaeta. He documents an Acadian scene, in which we can capture queer sensibilities that linger through a garden and the sea:

I visited Gaeta for the first time in February. The sunlight was thin. There was mist over the sea when I arrived. I stayed in Nicola Del Roscio's guesthouse, high up in the gardens he has spent forty years creating above Twombly's house. The paths meander amongst palms and citrus, with glimpses of the town and water (2017: 237).

Reviewing Twombly's retrospective in Centre Pompidou, Jones also concludes his essay by depicting a scenario of the garden, and importantly, Jones understands Twombly's garden as a significant space of ecstasy (2016: n. p.). In addition, Jones remarks on Twombly's Acadian sensibility, arguing that he transformed an antique culture into a "modern nature". Jones writes, "the passion of Twombly, that can paint the Trojan war and make it sexily of our time, touchingly climaxes here in his garden. Some of his gorgeous and perfect late paintings of flowers are included. They rank with Warhol and Monet as modern pastorals" (ibid). This is the point of departure for an analysis of gardens, the sea, flowers, and queerness. A synthesis of the sea, garden, flowers, sexuality, and AIDS/HIV is represented in multiple forms of queer art, and prominent among them is Derek Jarman's "modern nature" that bloomed in his garden, as we will now turn to in the next chapter.



Figure 31 Cy Twombly, *Coronation of Sesostris (Part V)*, 2000.
Acrylic, wax crayon, and lead pencil on canvas, 206 × 156.5 cm. © Cy Twombly Foundation.

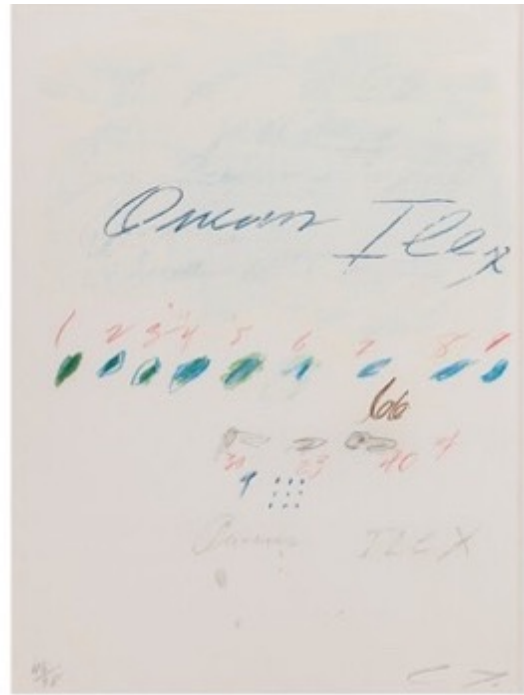


Figure 32 Cy Twombly, *Natural History Part II: Some Trees of Italy*, 1975-76. Lithographs in colours, on Fabriano Bütten paper. 75.9 × 56.2 cm. © Cy Twombly Foundation.

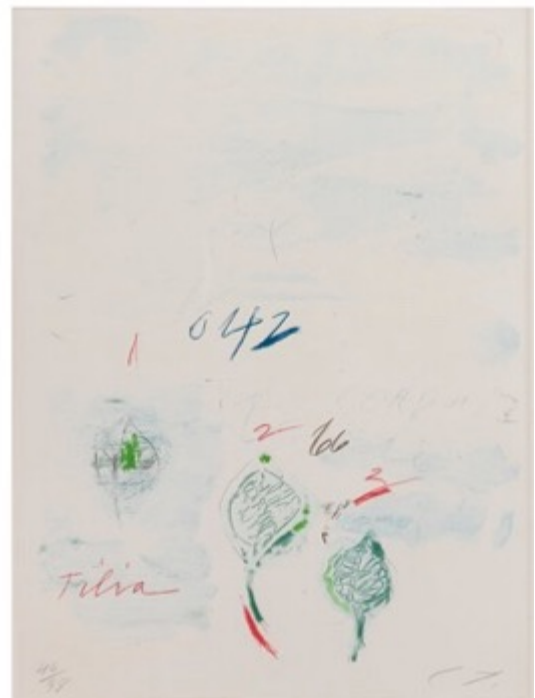
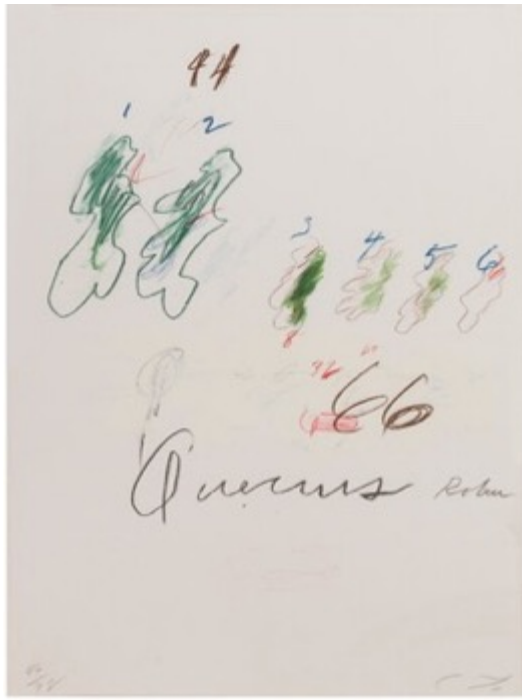




Figure 33 Cy Twombly, *Natural History Part I: Mushrooms Portfolio*, 1974. Lithographs with collotype print in colours, with collage and touched of hand-colouring, 75 × 55.9 cm. © Cy Twombly Foundation.





Figure 34 Cy Twombly, *Ferragosto IV (Rome)*, 1961.
Oil paint, wax crayon, lead pencil on canvas, 165.735 × 200.343cm. © Cy Twombly Foundation.



Figure 35 Cy Twombly, *Empire of Flora*, 1961.
Oil, wax crayon, graphite, and coloured pencil on canvas, 200 × 242 cm. Staatliche Museum zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie, Marx Collection, Berlin.



Figure 36 Twombly's drawing of flowers for Rauschenberg.

Upper left: Cy Twombly, *Some Flowers for Bob*, 1982.

Oil pastel on paper, 75.6 × 55.9 cm. © The Private Collection of Robert Rauschenberg.

Upper right: Cy Twombly, *Untitled (Birthday Flowers)*, 1970. Graphite and crayon on paper, 34.3 × 24 cm. © Cy Twombly Foundation.

Bottom left: Cy Twombly, *Portrait of Robert Rauschenberg*, c. 1950s (printed 1999). Dry-print photography, 27.9 × 21.6 cm. Edition 2/6. © The Private Collection of Robert Rauschenberg.

Bottom right: Cy Twombly, *Flowers for Bob*, 1970. Graphite and crayon on paper, 17.8 × 9.5 cm. Inscribed: Happy birthday dear heart ... a rose just budding. © The Private Collection of Robert Rauschenberg.



Figure 37 Cy Twombly, *Nicola's Iris, Gaeta*, 1990. Exhibition poster, lithograph, paper. Published by The Edinburgh International Festival in association with Gagosian Gallery, printed in the United Kingdom, 2002 in an unnumbered limited edition on the occasion of the exhibition at The Inverleith House, Royal Botanical Garden Edinburgh.



Figure 38 Cy Twombly, *The Roses (I – V)*, 2008.
 252 x 740 cm (each panel). Acrylic on plywood. © Cy Twombly Foundation



Figure 39 Cy Twombly, *Blooming*, 2001-08.

Acrylic and crayon on ten wood panels, 250 × 500 cm. Private Collection © Cy Twombly Foundation.



Figure 40 Cy Twombly, *Untitled (to Leopardi)*, 1984.
Oil, crayon, and graphite on paper, 99.7 × 69.9 cm. Gift of the Artist. © Menil Foundation, Inc..



Figure 41 Cy Twombly, *Analysis of the Rose as Sentimental Despair Part I*, 1985.
Oil, house paint, acrylic, and crayon on plywood, 162.56 × 116.84 cm. © Menil Foundation, Inc.

Chapter 4 Derek Jarman at His Garden: Messianic Time, Futurity, Mourning, and Transcorporeality

This chapter focuses on the British filmmaker, artist, activist, and gardener, Derek Jarman's gardening (fig. 42) and his garden journal that was published under the title *Modern Nature*. In "Melancholy Nature, Queer Ecologies", Mortimer-Sandilands suggests that in Jarman's garden and writing, there were "homages to the friends and colleagues Jarman lost to AIDS, in addition to painful descriptions of Jarman's own experiences as he begins to experience some of the acute illness related to his HIV infection" (2010: 349). According to Mortimer-Sandilands, Jarman's garden serves as a commemorative space deeply connected to bodies, queer emotions, desires, politics, and sexual culture. In this chapter, I argue that his art can connect to multiple aesthetic and philosophical connotations, including the theory of messianic time, futurity, mourning, and the concept of transcorporeality. This chapter focuses on these theoretical areas, offering detailed research on Jarman's garden and his other works. In the Introduction, I explained the reasons for including a British artist in an American study. In brief: firstly, I select the case of Jarman's gardening to establish a transcontinental dialogue. Secondly, I choose Jarman's garden as a case study because his practices are unique. He saw gardening as a form of political protest that could negate patriarchy, heteronormativity, conservatism, homophobia, and the AIDS epidemic. More importantly, as an HIV-positive queer artist, Jarman physically grew a garden, registering the dynamics of transcorporeality. As I shall discuss, Jarman's way of life reveals how a queer individual negotiated homophobia, illness, and pending death. Jarman connected himself to organisms and natural environments, and thus, both the garden and the flower became a part of Jarman's body (Delvaux, 2001: 137). After he was diagnosed as HIV positive, Jarman returned to the remote coast of Dungeness, Kent, and grew a shingle garden around his residence, Prospect Cottage. Over time, Jarman's health was deteriorating, whereas his garden was flourishing. Various species of flowers and herbs, against the gale and the storm, were growing out of the barren shingle beach. The struggles of the vegetation and the everchanging coastal climate sympathized with Jarman's physical experience. As Brown argues, Dungeness is "the most unlikely place for a garden" (Brown, 1999: 135). The peculiar location of the garden suggests that Jarman's action was not an idyllic escape but a political protest that opened to hostility. He was gardening to fight against AIDS/HIV and homophobia. He fought for himself, for his generation, and for the preservation of queer culture and legacy.

In this chapter, I will consider the following subjects: firstly, I will argue that Jarman created not only queer but also messianic temporality by gardening and writing. Messianic time is an important notion in Walter Benjamin's philosophy, which appeared in his last major work "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (1940). Messianic time is "a simultaneity of past and future in an instantaneous present" (Anderson, 1991: 24). Namely, messianic time can be a moment that consists of the past, which could flash up in a critical present and could be "short-lived" (Ferris, 2008: 132). Benjamin argued that "the present, which, as a model of messianic time, comprises the entire history of mankind in an enormous abridgment, coincides exactly with the stature which history of mankind had in the universe" ([1940] 1968: 263). Benjamin suggested that the present cannot be understood as an episode of linear progress, or as a transition from the past to the future; rather, the present should be a suspension (*einsteht*) that is able to activate the fragmentary past. In order to explain the significance of messianic time, the famous metaphor that Benjamin used was Paul Klee's monoprint *Angelus Novus* (*New Angel*, 1920). In "Theses on the Philosophy of History", Benjamin interpreted Klee's angel as the angel of history, as he argued:

A Klee painting named 'Angelus Novus' shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress ([1940] 1968: 249).

As such, Benjamin urges us to "awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed". In other words, Benjamin tries to grieve the "ungrievable" (Butler, 2006: 20) by recollecting "the pile of debris" that was destroyed by the victor. To do this, Benjamin argued for creating a messianic time. Jarman's gardening and writing are rich in messianic temporality, whereby the dead, desires, sensibilities, and queer sexual culture acquire grievability.

In addition, the issue of futurity cannot be avoided in the discussion of messianic time. In the Literature Review, I have discussed the divergency in queer theory about the notion of futurity. In this chapter, I will use the gentrification of the High Line Park in New York City to illustrate how an ideology of progress wiped out the negativity of queer past, and replaced a wild past with a normative image. In comparison, Jarman's garden cited traumatic emotions and simultaneously functions as a rich site for queer futurity. Secondly, I examine Jarman's manner

of citing the dead, memories, desires, loves, and queer sexual culture, arguing that Jarman's artistic practices contain redemptive dynamics. Furthermore, I will pay attention to Jarman's garden sculptures made of pebbles, scrap iron, and other forms of coastal debris. I will discuss how Jarman's garden sculptures reflect the consideration of trivial debris and ruins, and how these broken pieces recalled a body that was savaged by viruses. Finally, in the discussion of transcorporeality, I will explore Jarman's pragmatic use of flowers and herbs, which has not been explored thoroughly. For creating thematic dialogues, in this discussion, I will also read Jarman's gardening along with the works of other artists and groups, including the case of the High Line Park, New York community gardens, lesbian gardening, and queer filmmaking.

Before we proceed any further, I wish to introduce the historical context at the time Jarman grew his shingle garden. In 1986, Jarman announced to the public that he was diagnosed as HIV positive. To cope with this condition, Jarman's resistance was gardening. This act was a powerful response to the social context in 1980s England as well as to the situation of queer communities at an international level. Conservative speech targeted gay men when the AIDS epidemic savaged gay communities in North America. In 1987, the activist Larry Kramer founded the international direct-action advocacy group the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power in New York City, as known as ACT UP (Bishops Gate Institute, 2022). In the United Kingdom, in 1988, Section 28 was initiated by Margaret Thatcher's government. The law prohibited local institutions from publishing, teaching, and promoting materials that included homosexual content. In "To the Future", Pascale Aebischer suggests that 1986 was the year:

in which Jarman completed his bleak state-of-the-nation film *The Last of England* (1987), met and fell in love with Keith Collins, his partner for the rest of his life, and was diagnosed as HIV positive. This is also the year in which Conservative Peer Lord Halsbury first tabled the bill that was to become entrenched in Law in 1988 as Section 28 of the Local Government Act, the Margaret Thatcher-supported legislation prohibiting local authorities from 'promoting homosexuality by teaching or by publishing material' ('Section 28') (2014: 431).

Jarman was at an intense condition of intersection where political pressure, illness, desire, and love congregated. In such a context, his own protest was gardening, which was a way of returning to himself and simultaneously dealing with the crisis.

Unlike Twombly, Jarman's aesthetic was vigorously political, and his rage was candid. On Section 28, Jarman wrote in his journal, "one journalist had not heard of Section 28. This is how this government works, on ignorance. 'We had no idea this was happening.' Really, the

English are a dozy supine lot, and spineless” (2018: 75). In the afternoon on 24 June 1989, Jarman joined in the Gay Pride march in London (2018: 101). The 1989 Pride was a 20 years celebration dedicated to the origin of queer liberation – the Stonewall riots (In the early morning, of June 28, 1969, police arrested the staff in the Stonewall Inn during the raid. The pub, which is located in Greenwich Village, New York, was a gathering spot for queer communities. The raid led to a large-scale protest and conflict between police, LGBT citizens, and their supporters). In his diary, Jarman also compared this grand event with Stonewall, as he wrote:

For the 20,000 gay men and lesbians who marched this afternoon from Hyde Park to Kennington 20 years and as many thousands after Stonewall, the Pride march is the most joyous day in the calendar. Nothing can compare with the elation as the street becomes ‘ours’ for a few short hours, the whistle blowing, cheering, waving and songs – She’ll be coming with a woman when she comes (2018: 100 – 101).

People were gathering at Kennington Park for the biggest Pride carnival. Looking at the attendees who were “the handsomest both in mind and body”, Jarman stated that “Clause 28 is clarion call to unity, and has given us new purpose, Next year there will be 21,000 on this march”. Jarman’s upbeat statement offers me a reason for examining queer futurity in his artistic practices. I argue that Jarman’s construction of temporality illuminates queer futurity that resides in the darkness of the past. As Olivia Laing argues in the introduction of *Modern Nature*, the garden “was a stake in the future, and it also led him deep into remembrance of the past” (2018: ix). In a chapter titled “Flowers, Boys, and Childhood Memories”, Sarah Brophy discusses temporality and futurity in Jarman’s journal. She argues that:

Constructed as curious, and acknowledged as anxious, readers of *Modern Nature* become Jarman’s students, impertinent scholars of his ‘fragments of memory.’ We are urged to consider a new future for sex and for education, even though that hope for the future, as Jarman’s rage, pain, and doubt insist, exists only as torn and improvisatory (2004: 78).

Brophy confirms that Jarman displayed queer futurity for us, yet this future cannot be found in a linear progression; rather, it “exists only as torn and improvisatory” (ibid). Following this argument, queer futurity can be sensed in the sensibilities of “rage, pain, and doubt” (ibid).

Jarman’s garden was a complex of queer emotions, temporalities, and political engagements. To document queer emotions by gardening was a political manifesto, as he wrote, “we must fight the fears that threaten our garden, for make no mistake ours is the garden of the poets of

Will Shakespeare's sonnets, of Marlowe, Catullus, of Plato and Wilde, all those who have worked and suffered to keep it watered" (quoted in Aebischer, 2014: 431). The garden was no longer a feminine, idyllic, and maternal shelter, but a political demonstration and an act of retrieving queer archives (that include the works of Shakespeare, Marlowe, Catullus, Plato, and Wilde). The garden "is simultaneously the compromised landscape of Dungeness, the political climate in England, Jarman's compromised immune system, and his frustrated artistic ambitions" (Ellis, 2009: 189). In the statement that I quoted above, Jarman already demonstrated a historical bond that queer gardening contained. Based on this I will firstly explore his composition of temporality.

4.1 Queer Temporality and the Memory of Flowers

4.1.1 Creating Messianic Time in the Garden

I will start with a journal entry that shows Jarman's unique way of merging temporalities. On 22 March 1989, Jarman wrote:

The violet held a secret. Along the hedgerow that ran down to the cliffs at Hardle deep purple violets grew – perhaps no more than a dozen plants. I stumbled across them late one sunny March afternoon as I came up the cliff path from the sea. They were hidden in a small recess. I stood for some moments dazzled by them.

Day after day I returned from the dull regimental existence of an English boarding school to my secret garden – the first of many that blossomed in my dreams. It was here I brought him, sworn to secrecy, and then watched him slip out of his grey flannel suit and lie naked in the spring sunlight. Here our hands first touched; then I pulled down my trousers and lay beside him. Bliss that he turned and lay naked on his stomach, laughing as my hand ran down his back and disappeared into the warm darkness between his thighs. He called it 'the lovely feeling' and returned the next day, inviting me into his bed that night.

Obsessive violets drawing the evening shadows to themselves, our fingers touching in the purple.

Term ended. I bought myself violets from the florist's and put them by my bedside (2018: 37 – 38).

Jarman, probably sat in his cottage, traced “some moments dazzled” by the violet. This was a moment that contained queer experience, desires, and floral dynamics. When he looked at the flowers, the memory flashed up. At that moment, he suspended time; he was dreaming the past in the present, and wrote down this queer story in his journal. The moment of writing was enriched and intensified by the drag of temporalities, whilst the present, the past, and the future constituted a constellation that would shine collectively and synchronously. The moment of writing was a chance of reviving queer desire and the sensibilities. The romantic beauty in this scenario – the love-making between the two young men, the bodies that were sheltered by the violet, and the spring sunlight – illuminates an ideality. This scenario was a highly ideal image that embodied an ideality of queer sexual culture that existed in one’s life. Yet simultaneously, the image rehearsed what a queer future should be – queer people can love each other freely in a flowery field.

Jarman’s story was personal, yet it belongs also to an archive of queer emotion. The violet itself is already a historical motif of queerness. It was a metaphor for lesbian love, which appeared in Sappho’s fragments. In fragment 94, Sappho wrote:

“... and honestly I wish I were dead. She was leaving me with many tears and said this: ‘Oh what bad luck has been ours, Sappho; truly I leave you against my will.’ I replied to her thus: ‘Go and fare well and remember me, for you know how we eared for you. If not, why then I want to remind you ... and the good times we had. You put on many wreaths of violets and roses and (crocuses?) together by my side, and round your tender neck you put many woven garlands made from flowers and ... with much flowery perfume, fit for a queen, you anointed yourself ... and on soft beds ... you would satisfy your longing (for?) tender ...” (Sappho, fragment 94).

Sappho’s violet finds a historical resonance in Jarman’s story. In both artists’ descriptions, the violet represents memories of queer erotics and love. In Jarman’s journal, as I will show in the rest of the chapter, similar stories can be found in many different places. In the passage above, queer desire circulated through the violet and surpassed a linear temporality; the present, the past, and the future synchronised in Jarman’s meditation. This mode of temporality is evidently queer, and also *messianic*.

Jarman’s garden is a space of remembrance; those departed queer lives, cultures, desires, and sensibilities became citable in his botanical paradise. Every time Jarman redeemed the past illuminated “the messianic arrest” that contains “a revolutionary chance” (Ferris, 2008: 132). It was revolutionary because queer desires were cited and acknowledged, and this can be read

as a political strategy to resist homophobia, conservatism, and “ongoing violence” (Love, 2009: 3). By dragging the past into a critical present, Jarman’s present was enriched, and thus these moments resisted “the homogenous empty time” (Benjamin, [1940] 1968: 261). I will argue that Jarman’s unique style of writing complemented Benjamin’s concept of messianic time. Both temporary modes emphasised on the importance of the past and memories and on how these departed moments flashed up quickly in here and now. Both modes of remembrance are “a counterforce to official history, giving voice to what has been forgotten or repressed in the success stories of history” (Castiglia & Reed: 2012: 238). Therefore, as mentioned, Benjamin argued that instead of moving forward, it was more urgent to create a new concept of the present. Here, Benjamin seemed to be indicating his negation of the futurity, which is necessary to respond.

4.1.1.1 Finding Queer Futurity

Futurity, as argued in the Literature Review (1.4 Queer Temporality, Memory, AIDS/HIV, and Mourning), is the central standing point of this thesis. Futurity appears to be the most performative potential of queerness, as Muñoz argues, “queerness is primarily about futurity and hope” (2009: 11). However, the concept of futurity itself is problematic in queer critiques as it links to a heteronormative lifestyle. Firstly, heteronormative futurity operates in heteronormative temporality that progresses from marriage to reproduction, parenthood, retirement, and death (McCann & Monaghan, 2022: 216). While not all heterosexuals adhere to this timeline, it is a chosen lifestyle for the majority. As Muñoz suggests, “heterosexual culture depends on a notion of the future” (2009: 49). In this process of moving on, reproduction plays an important role because children are the carriers of the future and hope. However, considerable queer communities live a nonreproductive and nonfamilial life, and they are “a people without children” (Muñoz, 2009: 98), perhaps also without nations, communities, homes, or healthy bodies. Secondly, the notion of futurity, as a progressive mode, erases the marginalised. For some queer critics, such as Leo Bersani, Lee Edelman, Lauren Berlant, and Heather Love, the ideology of futurity indicates a made-up fantasy by the account of “ongoing violence” and “triumphalist view of history” (Love, 2007: 3). This ideology therefore tends to “write off the most vulnerable, the least presentable, and all the dead” (Love, 2007: 30). Since this chapter focuses on queer gardening, I will use the gentrification of the High Line Park to illustrate how an “ongoing violence” (Love: 2007: 3) purified a formal wild and queer space. It was this ideology of progressive futurity that weakened the revolutionary dynamics of queerness.

The High Line was an urban railway that was abandoned in the 1980s, and this postindustrial ruin was refurbished and gentrified in the early 21st century. Before gentrification, the abandoned High Line was a queer world right in the city where the homeless, drug users, sex workers, cruising lovers, urban animals, and untamed vegetations coexisted wildly (fig. 44). There was a cooperation, an agreement between the marginalised people and the untended vegetations. Thick flora sheltered queer lovers and cruisers who just met up in clubs and bars in Tenth Avenue. Joshua David, the designer of the High Line, recalls that:

It was about thirty feet tall, and you couldn't see what was on top of it, but the spaces underneath were very dramatic; they had a dark, gritty, industrial quality, and a lofty, church-like quality as well. In the heat of summer, it was shadowy and cool underneath My friend John told me it was a sex spot There was sex to be had up on top, too, and there were parties up there, raves, along with some homeless encampments (2011: 6).

Nowadays, the High Line is one of the most popular attractions of New York City. There is no doubt that gentrification created a beautiful view, yet it was still a construction cooperating with, rather than resisting, the capital. In "Parks for Profit: The High Line, Growth Machines, and the Uneven Development of Urban Public Spaces", Kevin Loughran argues that the High Line "represents an effort by city governments and elite private interests to leverage parks for profit" (2014: 49). Furthermore, together with economical purpose, gentrification reinforced homonormativity that tends to exclude the poor and people of colour. In "Of Success and Succession: A Queer Urban Ecology of the High Line", Darren J. Patrick also argues that the design and the idea of the High Line represent white, urban "high-powered" gay and lesbian communities (2017: 145).

The multiplicity of queer culture was replaced by neoliberal homonormativity. As Sarah Schulman argues, "key to the gentrification mentality is the replacement of complex realities with simplistic ones. Mixed neighborhoods become homogenous"(2012: 36). The old High Line was a paradise for wild flora and urban animals, and these unwanted lives disappeared together with those queer people. Patrick suggests that the ruined High Line:

was the "home to a successional, weedy ecosystem inhabited by more than seventy-five plant species (New York City Department of City Planning, 2005, app. C), a bevy of urban animals (Foster, 2010), and a range of human uses, including queer sex and cruising, artistic production, encampment/squatting, and drug use" (2017: 141).

The wild flora and rusty industrial charisma made the High Line “another world” that did not belong to the capitalist reality. Robert Hammond describes that “you walked out, and you were on train tracks that were covered in wildflowers The wildflowers and plants had taken over. We had to wade through waist-high Queen Anne’s lace. It was another world, right in the middle of Manhattan” (2011: 12). This image of the past comprises queer utopias that once existed. Futurity often resides in this old image of the High Line where queer beings interacted and cohabited, as we can see in Jarman’s garden.

In 2020, the Art Fund with Creative Folkstone successfully saved Jarman’s Prospect Cottage and its garden. The residue of queer sexual culture in the AIDS era was still sensible in Jarman’s garden as it survives the gentrification. Perhaps Jarman grew his garden in the desolated Dungeness to resist the bourgeois taste of gentrified coastal locations. In Jarman’s garden, broken and rusted garden tools, wrecks of ships, driftwood, stones, and other debris from the coast composed a landscape of ruins. In *Derek Jarman’s Medieval Modern*, Robert Mills explores Jarman as a “ruin-fancier” (2018: 92). He argues that Jarman’s “sculptures fashioned from rested metal and driftwood, or arrangement of pebbles in shapes and patterns – were designed, first and foremost, as memorials: reminders of departed friends, experiences and sensations” (2018: 126). As I have argued in the Literature Review, queer “experiences and sensations” can be something that always have a future. The following discussion will consider in detail the way that Jarman cited the past.

4.1.2 Redemption in the Garden

As Mortimer-Sandilands argues, Jarman’s journal *Modern Nature* was “a particular kind of textual-botanical memorial to the queer past, to his generation, and indeed to himself” (2011: 354). His remembrance can be read as a way of citation that contains a form of redemptive dynamics. In Benjamin’s biography, Howard Eiland and Michel W. Jennings argue, “the present moment of remembrance is the ‘gateway’ of redemption, the revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed (or suppressed) past” (2016: 661). In this case, redemption does not signify its religious significance but rather refers to citability, recollection, and remembrance. As Eiland and Jennings suggest, “citability is the condition necessary for a living tradition” (2016: 660). For Benjamin, this redemptive dynamic is related to happiness. In terms of the significance of redemption, Benjamin argued that:

The kind of happiness that could arouse envy in us exists only in the air we have breathed, among people we could have talked to, women who could have given themselves to us. In

other words, our image of happiness is indissolubly bound up with the image of redemption. The same applies to our view of the past, which is the concern of history. The past carries with it a temporal index by which it is referred to redemption. There is a secret agreement between past generations and the present one. Our coming was expected on earth. Like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a weak Messianic power, a power to which the past has a claim ([1940] 1968: 254).

Jarman created a messianic temporality that contains the present and the past, which, from Benjamin's perspective, can be considered an act of redemption. Redemption closely links to life itself, and through this perspective, Jarman's gardening and writing can be read as a strategy for survival. In this section, I will reveal the redemptive potential of Jarman's garden and writing from four aspects – his diary entries about the daffodil, the myth of floral healing power, the concept of "modern nature", and temporality. Firstly, I will examine how this redemptive dynamic is performed in Jarman's reflections on the daffodil and nature.

4.1.2.1 The Daffodil

In Jarman's perspective, the daffodils, one of the most common flowers in Europe, were not only the messenger of spring but also queer organisms of healing. The daffodil held special significance for Jarman. In a journal entry on 7 February 1989, he recorded a historical story of the flower. In his garden, Jarman spotted his daffodils were about to bloom, as he wrote:

I counted well over 50 buds on the daffodils I planted last year. None are open yet, but if this warm weather continues they should be out within the week.

These are an early variety. The King Alfreds I put in early last September are hardly breaking through the ground (2018: 12).

This was an instant moment when Jarman was observing the flowers in a certain time and space. Following this moment, Jarman started to dream about the flowers and shuttled back to history, as he did in the meditation of the violet. He reviewed the Elizabethan botanist John Gerard's text of the daffodil in *The Herball (or Generall Histories of Plantes, 1597)*, bringing us from his flower beds in Dungeness to the meadows of Lady Europa and the nymphs. He quoted Gerard:

Theocritus affirmeth the daffodils to grow in meadows ... he writeth that the fair lady Europa, entering with her nymphs into the meadows, did gather the sweet smelling daffodils, in these verses which we may English thus:

But when the girles here come into,
The meadowes flouring all in sight,
That wench with these, this wench with those,
Trim floures, themselves did all delight;
She with the Narcisse good in scent,
And she with Hyacynths content (ibid).

Following this antique image, Jarman explored the medical value of the daffodil, which can also be found in *The Herball*. During the era of the Roman Empire, the physician Galen stated that the daffodil was used for healing wounds and gashes, with soldiers carrying the bulbs as a common medicine (ibid). The healing power of plants was symbolic as if these flowers could cure Jarman's own illness and save his generation from the collective crisis. Daniel O'Quinn's (1999) essay "Gardening, History, and the Escape from Time: Derek Jarman's 'Modern Nature'" points out that the healing power of the daffodil indicated Jarman's desire to heal the wounded history of Europe. In the entry on 13 Monday 1989, as O'Quinn explores, Jarman discovered that his rosemary bushes were destroyed by the gale, whilst his first daffodil opened (1999: 117). The destroyed rosemary and the budded daffodils created a tension of destruction and resurrection, indicating hope and futurity that grew out of a dialectic dynamic. Jarman's daffodils also were growing out of failure because the early species that he grew did not germinate. Therefore, the new flowers embody a resurrection, a return, and a cure. And swiftly, in the entry on 13 Monday 1989, Jarman's stream of thought returned to his childhood and arrived in 1946 when he lived around the Borghese Gardens, Rome. O'Quinn argues that Jarman connected the destroyed rosemary and the healing power of the daffodil to his post-war memories. He argues that Jarman's memorialisation:

to the ruins of postwar Rome effects a historical analogy between the figurative destruction of memory in Jarman's garden and a specific historical moment. Jarman's struggling daffodils prompt a historical consideration of the possibility of 'gluing together the wounds and gashes' that rent the body of Europe (ibid).

"A historical consideration of the possibility of 'gluing together the wounds and gashes'" can be read as an attempt to redeem the past. Furthermore, O'Quinn argues that Jarman's

gardening can be considered as an approach to save the present from the crisis. Similarly, O'Quinn cites Benjamin's essay "These on the Philosophy of History", arguing that:

In *Modern Nature*, gardening is an emergency praxis whose imperative opens onto a motivated consideration of the relationship between time and community. Jarman's journal writings attempt to rupture monumental history with the reconstitution of the sacred. To modify a passage from 'These on the Philosophy of History,' I want to argue that the articulation of Jarman's personal history with a fragmented history of gardening does not attempt to recognize the past 'as it really was'; rather it 'seizes hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger'" (1999: 116).

In the entry on 7 February 1989, following the ancient story of the daffodil, Jarman flashed back to the present, complaining that the seasonal cycle of the daffodil was destroyed by modern horticulturists "who nowadays force them well before Christmas" (2018: 12). He wrote, "one of the joys our technological civilisation has lost is the excitement with which seasonal flowers and fruits were welcomed; the first daffodil, strawberry or cherry are now things of the past, along with the precious moment of their arrival" (ibid). A progressive time forces the fruit to ripen as quickly as possible; Jarman thus understood the time outside his garden as the "rush hours". The time outside of his garden was definite, straight, progressive, and linear, and it was "time with beginning and end, literal time, monotheist time" (Jarman, 2018: 30). However, Jarman's attitude to modernity was not totally negative, and in the next section, I will examine how he negotiated modernity by creating a "modern nature".

When Jarman cultivated his garden in Dungeness, the nuclear power station was still operating, and therefore, Dungeness was not technically a post-industrial derelict. However, the desolate location, barren shingle beach, abandoned fishermen's shelters, driftwoods, and shipwrecks, constituted a landscape of ruins. Jarman's flowers grew wildly in this desolate environment that contained a potential hazard. In this case, it seems that nature had to negotiate dangers, damages, and exploitations – this is what Maggi Hambling called "modern nature" (Jarman, 2018: 8). In his journal, Jarman recalled a chat with Hambling, as he wrote:

I was describing the garden to Maggi Hambling at a gallery opening. And said I intended to write a book about it.

She said: 'Oh, you've finally discovered nature, Derek.'

'I don't think it's really quite like that,' I said, thinking of Constable and Samuel Palmer's Kent.

'Ah, I understand completely. You've discovered modern nature' (ibid).

A modern nature contains conflicts, tensions, and new dynamics. It represents a new image, distinct from the traditional pastoral scenes. Modern nature is far from a safe maternal shelter or idyllic refuge; it contains the ruins of the modern world and is exposed to the “vandals”. As the American lesbian poet Adrienne Rich wrote in “Poem 21: The cat-tails blaze in the corner”, “the safe-house is temporary the garden lies open to vandals this whole valley is one more contradiction” (1986: 103). The concept of “modern nature”, as Jarman, Hambling, and Rich agreed, does not align with the idyllic British countryside depicted in John Constable and Samuel Palmer’s paintings. In both artists’ paintings, the human is central, and nature gains meaning through the artists’ observation and depiction. Jarman’s Kent was far removed from this anthropocentric idyll. Jarman’s modern nature “is a sight of both life and death’ his expressive, abstract landscapes took on a darker tone in the wake of his HIV diagnosis” (Moore, 2020: n. p.).

In Jarman’s garden, the nuclear power station, the flower, and the sea constitute new dynamics. “New ecosystems have emerged”, as Anne-Laure Franchette writes, “incorporating both living and non-living things and standing, alternatively, somewhere between ruins and utopia” (2020: n. p.). I suggest that the nuclear power station probably inspired Jarman to compose a utopia from a dystopia, from the world seems to be unredeemable. The scenario shows a paradoxical and perhaps a sarcastic attitude towards the issue of nuclear power, especially in the 1980s when Anti-nuclear movement was flourishing across Europe and North America. A talk in Jarman’s journal reflects this interesting paradox. On 14 May 1989, a journalist from the Folkestone Herald visited Jarman’s garden and cottage in Dungeness. Jarman remembered:

How you can live in that bleak landscape? Asked the lady from the *Folkestone Herald*.

It’s much more interesting than Folkestone, I said.

A nuclear power station in your backyard?

Yes. But it’s yours as well. North Wales found itself the backyard of Chernobyl. At least I can see it.

It didn’t convince her (2018: 78).

For Jarman, Dungeness was more “interesting” than traditional coastal attractions. Jarman neither rejected nor praised the industrial power, but set his garden within it and examined the nuclear environment aesthetically. Jarman’s garden shows that modern nature must embrace the anxiety and danger caused by industry and technology. In Jarman’s journal, many descriptions of this nuclear landscape are intriguing and vibrant. For example, at the end of the

entry on 14 May 1989, Jarman documented the sunset against the nuclear power station. He wrote, “the sun came out at four casting the longest shadow. I watched the shadow of Prospect Cottage as the sun set behind the nuclear power station until the tip of the chimney touched the sea” (2018: 13). There is a special melancholy beauty in such a description, in which we can perceive the vastness of Dungeness’s landscape. In his film *The Garden*, which was shot in Prospect Cottage, the nuclear power station appeared in the coda. With a hopeful, upbeat, yet slightly uncanny score, Jarman presented a peculiar scene of Dungeness. The scene is composed of layers of images, including the figure of Messiah, gale, waves, flowers, fire, the everchanging sky, and the blood-orange sunset against the station. This mise en scene evokes a sensibility of science fiction mixed with apocalyptic emotions. Messianic time and the sense of redemption are embodied by a messianic character who arrives at his garden. The character wears a white robe; he walks on the deck, and behind him, the overhead power line resembles the gates of the cathedral. In this film, the garden is “a Paradise in earth” (Jarman, 2018: 25).

Jarman’s aesthetic indicates a connection between human beings, nature, and industry. As Elise Lammer suggests, “Prospect Cottage was accommodating all earthly forces – natural and industrial – without hierarchy” (2020: n. p.). For Deleuze and Guattari, who associate desires with machine and production, to combine nature and industry is to consider “nature as a process of production” (1983: 3). In *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze and Guattari illustrate an inseparable connection between human beings, nature, and industry. Industry, as they suggest, is fundamentally “identify with nature as production of man and by man” (1983: 4). They argue that:

It is probable that at a certain level nature and industry are two separate and distinct things ... Even within society, this characteristic man-nature, industry-nature, society-nature relationship is responsible for the distinction of relatively autonomous spheres that are called production, distribution, consumption. But in general this entire level of distinctions ... presupposes (as Marx had demonstrated) not only the existence of capital and the division of labor, but also the false consciousness that the capitalist being necessarily acquires, both of itself and of the supposedly fixed elements within an over-all process (1983: 3 – 4).

Nature can be a form of industry or production, and it is unnecessary to distinguish them. In his garden, Jarman negated distinction and created an “assemblage” and “multiplicities” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 4; 21). The “industry-nature” distinction is a capitalist scheme to enforce alienation because it “presupposes ... the existence of capital and the division of labor”

(ibid). If we appreciate Jarman's garden through the lens of Deleuze and Guattari, the revolutionary and activist temperaments of his gardening become more evident.

Jarman's modern nature illustrates a connection between the garden and the machine. According to this characteristic, I will examine another form of queer modern nature, which is the legacy of community gardens in New York City (fig. 45). Jarman's garden and New York community gardens illustrate similar aesthetics and political dynamics, and they can be understood utopias in a dystopian world. In "Utopian Prospects", Sam Moore argues that "from Derek Jarman's Prospect Cottage in Dungeness to the piers of Christopher Street in Manhattan, utopia has had a specific location" (2020: n. p.). As Moore points out, queer utopias reside in the gardens, and we can trace this legacy back to the 1970s in New York City. Like Jarman's garden, many community gardens in New York responded to collapsed urban buildings. The project of community gardens originated in the 1970s when New York City was undergoing a financial crisis. Many apartment buildings were torn down, and thus, the deconstruction made many ruins and vacant lots. In 1973, an environmental group called the Green Guerillas started to seed in these abandoned lands. Later, many citizens in these neighbourhoods participated in the project, and some of them grew vegetables to alleviate food shortage (which illustrates the fact that gardening was a strategy for survival). Community gardens were growing from these collapsed spaces, and created what Halberstam calls the aesthetics of collapse. Springing from the neighbourhood of the Lower East Side, Hell's Kitchen, and East Harlem, these green spaces, with their untamed style, were particularly beautiful. The movement of community gardens continues today, whilst "community gardens account for more than 100 acres of public open space in the city (NYC Parks, 2023). However, the vibrant ruins vanished.

From the 1970s, the urban ruins were ornamented by these green spaces, showing a collaboration of the natural and the demolished. In the 21st century, community gardens seem to find a new way of accessing the orchestration of technology and nature. Nowadays, in New York City, the connection between nature and technology performs in queer community gardens like Le Petit Versailles (fig. 46). The agreeable green space is located in the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Like Jarman's garden, flowers and trees grow wildly in Le Petit Versailles. The name "the little Versailles" can be understood as a smart refusal towards the imperial imagery of gardens. The garden is charged with political dynamics as it functions as a communal space for local people after 9/11. Jack Waters, one of the founders of Le Petit Versailles, said that "this garden started to take momentum as a public social space after the events of 9/11. There was a need for a community, social space and political interaction"

(quoted in Shearman: 2015, n. p.). Inheriting the ethos of community garden projects since the 1970s, the garden was created in 1996 by a couple of queer artists, activists, and filmmakers, Peter Cramer and Jack Waters (Shearman, 2015: n. p.). The garden is full of lush green plants and vines, roses climbing over the fences and walls, beyond the aesthetic function, it is also a space and a stage for concerts, film festivals, protests, and art exhibitions. In 2018, French artist Benjamin Blaquart's reality installation, *Bouture*, was exhibited in Le Petit Versailles, a display that illustrates the combination of modern technology, bodies, and eco-space. Natural elements and human bodies are the subject matter in Blaquart's installation. Inspired by queer theory, Blaquart "combines the materials and technologies of engineering and organic to hybrid the human, the plant, the machine, the real and virtual" (Morais, n.d.). Using augmented reality technology, Blaquart combines virtual human organs with the ecological environment of the garden. The audience needs to download the application on their phones in order to watch these virtual organs. This artistic manner illustrates a combination of technology, nature, and human bodies. Vibrant activities make Le Petit Versailles a space full of queer memories, and all these movements left traces. The journalist Sarah Shearman writes: "in the mid-afternoon, light trickles through the leaves of the mulberry trees, illuminating the various curios, sculptures and remnants from previous art exhibitions that have become entwined in the shady garden" (2015: n. p.). As Waters says, the garden is "a lived history" (quoted in Shearman, 2015: n. p.). Such a botanical archive of emotions, therefore, "have been endowed with a weak Messianic power, a power to which the past has a claim" (Benjamin, [1940] 1968: 254).

4.1.2.2 Tracing Queer Lovers

History was certainly alive in Jarman's garden as he cited those queer lovers who were erased and cannot be mourned. Mortimer-Sandilands argues that Jarman "demands we speak with his dead friends, lovers, and colleagues because they are here, planted in this queer garden, their fragments literally and figuratively set among the rosemary (herb of remembering) and borage" (2010: 353). Mortimer-Sandilands's account suggests that queer residues and ghosts were lingering in Jarman's garden, which disturbed the present that was prisoned by AIDS/HIV and by the conservative political environment. One of Jarman's poems on 27 April articulated this emotion, demonstrating a queer way of mourning and memorialisation. Jarman wrote:

"I walk in this garden / Holding the hands of dead friends / Old age came quickly for my
frosted generation / Cold, cold, cold they died so silently / Did the forgotten generations
scream? / Or go full of resignation / Quietly protesting innocence / Cold, cold, cold they

died so silently / Linked hands at four AM / Deep under the city you slept on / Never heard the sweet flesh song / Cold, cold, cold they died so silently / I have no words / My shaking hand / Cannot express my fury / Sadness is all I have, / Cold, cold, cold they died so silently / Matthew fucked Mark fucked Luke fucked John / Who lay in the bed that I lie on / Touch fingers again as you sing this song / Cold, cold, cold they died so silently / My gilly flowers, roses, violets blue / Sweet garden of vanished pleasures / Please come back next year / Cold, cold, cold I died so silently / Goodnight boys, / Goodnight Johnny, / Goodnight, / Goodnight" (2018: 69 – 70).

The queer lovers, who died silently, were becoming citable in Jarman's garden. Firstly, he depicted his garden as a mourning space that was not just for himself but for his "dead friends" and his "frosted generation". The word "frosted" symbolises a collective condition of his generation, resembling the appearance of flowers or crops in frost damage. It refers to those queer individuals who could not be mourned because they were excluded by a heteronormative narrative. It also implies the icebound time when the virus and homophobic environment dissolve the future of his generation, frosting them and making them "died so silently". At the end of the poem, however, Jarman gives us hope and futurity – "My gilly flowers, roses, violets blue / Sweet garden of vanished pleasures / Please come back next year" (ibid). His roses and violets were now "vanished pleasures", yet he wished that they would "come back next year". Jarman hoped that the flowers would come back, and the same wish went to those queer friends and lovers.

In this poem, Jarman offers an image that is different from the spectacle of gay pride. In a cold early morning, Jarman was walking in his garden and was connecting to his dead friends with fury and melancholy. The ghostly image contains a set of negative feelings, as he exclaimed, sadness was all he had. As some queer critics, such as Berlant, Love, and Muñoz, have argued, the turn towards queer negativity is particularly important. The theory of queer negativity focuses on a set of dark emotions that queer communities usually experience due to the AIDS epidemic and homophobia. In his entry on 15 April 1989, Jarman wrote, "how could I celebrate my sexuality filled with so much sadness, and frustration for what has been lost?" (1991: 56). Jarman's negative emotions therefore are necessary to be considered today when gay pride is becoming homonormative mainstream. As Muñoz contends, instead of having a pride march, we need to have a "Gay Shame" march (1999: 111). In *Disidentifications: Queers of Colour and the Performance of Politics*, Muñoz argues that:

Although we cannot help but take part in some aspects of pride day, we recoil at its commercialism and hack representations of gay identity. When most of the easily

available and visible gay world is a predominately white and male commercialized zone (the mall of contemporary gay culture), we find little reason to be “proud” (1999: 111).

The living situation of queer people is complicated; not every queer individual could have the condition to be proud. Although the culture of Pride is an effective policy to improve the visibility of LGBTQ+ communities, as Catherine Baker and Michael Howcroft argue, another side of pride is shame (2023: 116). When she remembers the pride parade that she attended in 2017 in Kingston upon Hull, the “marginal city”, Baker felt “a certain shame that, despite its apparent impact, Hull is still not as attractive a place for queer people to move to as many other Northern cities have become” (ibid). Baker’s personal memories suggest the limits of the culture of Pride. This aspect of shame is what Muñoz reminds us to remember. “The politics of the mainstream gay community” could erase those negative experiences of the minority in queer communities (for example, queer people of colour) (Muñoz, 1999: 112). Therefore, when we read Jarman’s documentary in our present queer world of Pride, we actually are given a weak messianic power to cite or to redeem the negative.

The dynamic of redeeming was reflected in Jarman’s adaption of Christian culture. Benjamin used the motif of Messiah yet “the theological import of these late theses cannot be defined in terms of any single religious tradition” (ibid). In other words, Benjamin adapted messianism in order to demonstrate an “active political agenda” (Eiland & Jennings, 2016: 659). Similarly, Jarman’s adaption of Christian culture was not religious but queer. In many of Jarman’s writings and films, he combined a Medieval disposition with queer sensibilities. This manner of queering the Medieval can be read as an imaginative method of *inventing* a queer past. In his poem “I walk in this garden”, Jarman transformed the four Apostles into four lovers with a dynamic queer eroticism. Matthew, Luke, Mark, and John seem to play a foursome sexual game in his garden. Jarman expressed the erotic yearning and expectation that are illustrated by Bloch’s interpretation of Watteau’s *Embarkation for Cythera*. In *The Principle of Hope Volume I*, Bloch argued that the picture was a utopian work that created an erotic longing (1986: 797). *Embarkation for Cythera* depicted eight pairs of lovers – they are flirting, joking, and cuddling, preparing to travel to Cythera – the island of love. And “when painted this longing is departure, romantic journey; thus every portrayal of erotic distance already expresses seduction” (ibid). Bloch argued that “eroticism makes the world vivid and everywhere into Cythera; for eroticism everything beautiful becomes a flight of wishful dreams, of elopements and revelations” (1986: 372). In Jarman’s imagination, the love-making of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John became the entrance of a utopian futurity where men could love each other freely in flowery gardens. Four Gospels were queered, and they could live in “a

relational field where men could love each other outside the institutions of heterosexuality” (Muñoz, 2009: 9). The gospels were given an erotic utopian life in the garden, and simultaneously, they did not need to give up their Christianity. Jarman queered the Christian culture without reviving its hegemony and convention. When he talked about the Garden of Eden, for example, he interpreted Eden as the original place of public sex, saying that “the alfresco fuck is the original fuck. Didn’t the Garden of Eden come before the house which hid our nakedness?” (Jarman, 1991: 83).

Jarman’s adaption, as Mills argues, “has a good deal in common with figures associated with the Medieval Revival such as Horace Walpole or William Morris, who imagined a past that is in some way still with us or capable of being with us – a vibrant, animating force within the present” (2018: 3). Therefore, Jarman created a present that contained fragments of the past, and the “vibrant, animating force” of the past previewed a mode of future that we could have. This queer futurity was based on a force of relationality, as in his story of the four Apostles, Matthew, Luke, Mark, and John created same-sex solidarity through the erotic bond. They were staying with Jarman at that moment and finally arrived at Jarman’s bed. It seems that these queer men, who broke the boundary of linear temporality, cooperated for creating a piece of art. The poem that I quoted above clearly shows collectivity that comprises flowers, queer ghosts, and four Gospels. Jarman’s composition therefore functioned as a critique of individualism and subjectivity. “The individual is the product of power”, as Foucault argues, “what is needed is to ‘de-individualize’ by means of multiplication and displacement, diverse combinations” (1983: xiv). Mills points out that Jarman resisted the modernist individualism that was often praised in art-making (2018: 20). To cite William Morris, Mills argues that Jarman’s manner recalls a “spirit of association” (ibid). Mills writes further:

Jarman rebels against the modernist plot that sees time moving relentlessly forward; rejoices in the modes of being and ways of seeing that such notions of modernity have arguably destroyed; and imaginatively appropriates the past as a site of identification or even longing. This is how Jarman ultimately gets medieval ... The Middle Ages to which he is drawn pull the rug from beneath the feet of modern times (2018: 44).

Mills directly points out that Jarman’s artistic practices negated “the modernist plot that sees time moving relentlessly forward” (ibid). This messianic composition of temporality can be found in most of Jarman’s works. For example, in terms of Jarman’s nonnarrative style of filmmaking, Tracy Biga argues that a nonnarrative way of filming was manifest “the film-

maker's decidedly non-linear approach to history" (1996: 17). This nonlinear temporality, as known as messianic time, formed a specific queer aesthetic.

4.1.3 A Queer Aesthetic of Debris and the Trivial

Benjamin's notion of messianic time is not only a mode of temporality but also in relation to a form of queer aesthetic. It is worth noting that Benjamin's philosophy was an art of debris and the trivial, and this manner was especially reflected in his last work *The Arcades Project*, an unfinished volume full of fragmental materials. Indeed, Benjamin's philosophical universe comprised trivial objects and affairs as he was interested in the quotidian. Benjamin was a great collector who was keen on writing about toys, games, gadgets, gambling, pornography, folk art, and food (Eiland & Jennings, 2014: 1). There were vast dreams within these trivial things, and he linked them in his writings with history, art, temporality, memory, city life, economy, and the capital, and freed them from functional value. This special hobby reflects Benjamin's historical materialism – every ordinary object can be a gateway to "spiritual things" (Benjamin, [1940] 1968: 254).

Benjamin's concept of the present was also encapsulated by small matters and objects. For example, in "The Image of Proust", Benjamin elucidated messianic time perhaps more clearly than he did in "Theses on the Philosophy of History". In this essay, Benjamin explored Marcel Proust's manner that "transforms existence into a preserve of memory" ([1940] 1968: 204). In this essay, Benjamin quoted Max Unold's writing of Proust as the following:

imagine, dear reader, yesterday I was dunking a cookie in my tea when it occurred to me that as a child I spent some time in the country. For this he uses eighty pages, and it is so fascinating that you think you are no longer the listener but the daydreamer himself ([1940] 1968: 204).

"Unold", as Benjamin argued, "has discovered the bridge to the dream" (ibid). In this daydreaming scenario, an everyday tea-time contains a grand perspective that brings the past into the present and thus into the tea and the cookie at Proust's table. Jarman also transformed temporality into materials. The fragmental objects in Jarman's garden were formed over time, and established a temporal aesthetic on the earth. They were driftwood, multiple-shaped rusty metal from the anti-tank fence, wrecked ships, broken garden tools, stones, shells, and all kinds of derelicts that Jarman collected from the coast (fig. 47). Jarman transformed these pieces into sculptures, installing them across his flower beds. These

sculptures collaborated with flowers, some of them functioned as the growing spiral for the vine, and they continued to create a Dungeness winter view after the flowers withered. These broken pieces responded to grief, anger, memorialisation, desire, and more importantly, to the bodies that were attacked by HIV. I argue that, in this way, Jarman created a form of queer aesthetic that was related to messianic temporality.

In a journal entry on 29 April 1989, Jarman recalled that photographer John Vere Brown visited and photographed his garden (Jarman, 2018: 70). Brown told Jarman that the garden “reminds him of a Tibetan temple garden: the sticks and stones are the prayer flags”. This is an accurate cross-cultural allegory because Tibetan Buddhism suggests that every moment when the wind waves the prayer flags is a benediction to the world and the dead. The prayer flags are often assembled in the form of concentric circles. Comparably, Jarman composed his stones in such forms. He wrote that:

the stones, especially the circles, remind me of dolmens, standing stones ... There are three geometric shapes as you approach the front door: the central oblong bed is preceded by a circular bed. It has grey upright flints, an annulus of grey pebbles, a second circle of flints which lie flat, the fine shingle with a pruned-back elder planted at the centre (Jarman, 1995: 24 – 25).

Collecting stones on the beach was Jarman’s daily routine, even during his last year when he was seriously ill. Hannah Arendt wrote in the Introduction of *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, that “collecting is the redemption of things which is to complement the redemption of man” ([1940] 1968: 42). These stones therefore were given redemptive dynamics. Jarman collected “dragon-teethed flints”, “sea-ground bricks”, and other colourful pebbles with special shapes, arranging his stone circles with shells and upright driftwood sticks (ibid). Overseeing the whole picture of the garden, these stone circles seem to resemble a queer relationality. As Jarman put it, in a poem: “the garden is built for dear friends / Howard, Paul, Terence, David, Robert, and Ken / And many others, each stone has a life to tell / I cannot invite you into this house” (2018: 178). Stone circles mark the traces and the remains of queer memories, functioning as the testimony, and “the ghostly presence” (Muñoz, 2009: 42). On 15 April 1989, Jarman wrote that:

My garden is a memorial, each circular bed and dial a true lover’s knot – planted with lavender, helichrysum and santolina.

Santolina, under the domination of Mercury resisteth poison, putrefaction, and heals the bites of venomous beasts. Whilst a sprig of lavender held in hand or placed under the pillow enables you to see ghosts travel to the land of the dead” (2018: 55).

The circular beds of stones and flowers were like “lover’s knot”, which can be understood as a botanical incarnation of queer solidarity. Jarman recalled the history of Santolina when he meditated them in his garden, pointing out that the antitoxin plant could cure a wound. Again, he underscored the healing power of the plant.

As Mills argues, “Jarman’s various gardening projects, especially towards the end of his life, were built out of his responses to the virus. They signalled the lingering presence of a life in ruins” (2018: 126). Jarman’s sculptural material was eroded by the wild climate and time, and I contend that his sculptures of fragments resembled the bodies that were infected by the virus.

4.2 Jarman’s Transcorporeality

As discussed, Jarman’s garden sculptures reflected a connection between bodies, debris, and messianic temporality. This aesthetic already contains a transcorporeal dynamic because Jarman’s sculptures resemble the bodies that were invaded by HIV. Moreover, Jarman lived a transcorporeal life pragmatically because he explored the medical and dietetic value of flowers and herbs. In doing so, organisms participated in Jarman’s incretion system. As I have argued in the Literature Review, this discussion of transcorporeality locates the grand outlook of queer ecology in a specific floral-body connection. The following discussion explores Jarman’s pragmatic use of plants, in which I will revisit a queer tradition of the botanical drug, and more importantly, point out its utopian dynamics.

In *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*, Stacy Alaimo argues that the concept of transcorporeality “traces the material interchanges across the human bodies, animal bodies, and then wider material world” (2012: 476). She argues that “the human is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world”, and “the substances of human is ultimately inseparable from ‘the environment’” (2010: 2). Transcorporeality recommends a way of life that undermines anthropocentrism. Through a transcorporeal process, human bodies will be disintegrated and transformed into other forms as a part of the ecosystem. Jarman practiced a transcorporeal life by exploring, for example, the poppy – a flower of remembrance and dreaming. As a queer gardener, he brought the poppy into a queer world.

Jarman wrote in his journal, “I filmed last year’s poppies with a bee hovering over them and put the shot into *War Requiem*” (2018: 8). In Jarman’s floral universe, the poppy was considered as an incarnation of a same-sex relationship in the frontline. In *War Requiem* (1988), the poppy appears to suggest same-sex intimacy. The scene of pollination is already queer, which recalls what Gluck exclaimed when she painted flowers, “I feel like a bee ... penetrating them for their sweetness” (Martin, 2017: 98). These poppies grew in a queer space rather than the battlefield, which “questions the memorialisation value and impact of different commemorative tropes” (Perret, 2021: n. p.). In *War Requiem*, Jarman challenged the institutional meaning of poppies – the flowers for National Remembrance Day. Jarman instead transformed the flower into a memorial for Wilfred Owen – the protagonist in *War Requiem* based on the story of the British soldier poet Wilfred Owen. The film applied Britten’s *War Requiem* as the theme score, in which Britten added Owen’s verses as the lyrics. Once again, Jarman redeemed a queer individual in his space-time-disordered filmmaking. Owen, who now has recognised as a closed gay poet (Cirigliano, 2017: n. p.), once was put back into the closet. In Owen’s letters and writings, numerous homosexual contents had been edited out by his brother (ibid), and this case registers the difficulty of the archival research in queer studies. Nevertheless, Owen’s homosexuality was recognised by his contemporaries who survived the war (ibid). In Jarman’s film, his homosexuality again was recollected and acknowledged. Jarman described Owen as a queer figure with a sensitive consciousness for his comrades, and juxtaposed the poppy scene with the death of Owen. The mise en scene speaks for those queer soldiers who sacrificed for their homeland but cannot be mourned.

The poppy also played an important role in Jarman’s transcorporeal life. The versatile poppy is closely linked to the human body as it is used in the medical and dietetic fields. The poppy, “flower of sleep and death” (Impelluso, 2004: 112), is called *Papaver somniferum* in Latin, which means hypnosis. The scientific name suggests the flower is able to lead people into a dreaming condition beyond reality, beyond the present time and space. The poppies are the main source of opium, and the extract of the flowers can be used for making painkillers, such as morphine and codeine. Poppies are also popular in gastronomy as their seeds are delicious ingredients for bakery, salad, and meat cooking. Jarman, of course, was familiar with the characters of the poppy. On 3 February 1989, Jarman recalled summer times when his garden was covered by the poppy. The entry showcases his botanical knowledge of the flower, and ends with a poem that expresses the intimacy between bodies and the poppy, as he wrote:

Scarlet Poppies / This is a poppy / A flower of cornfield and wasteland / Bloody red /
Sepals two / Soon falling / Petals four / Stamens many / Stigma rayed / Many seeded / For
sprinkling on bread / The staff of life / Woven in wreaths / In memory of the dead /
Bringer of dreams / And sweet forgetfulness (2018: 8 – 9)

Jarman opened up the whole world of the poppy, showing a form of intimacy between the human body and the flower. The beginning of the poem is a botanical introduction, focusing on the biology of poppies. Jarman stressed that the productive poppies have both stamens and a stigma, which shows the fertility and bisexuality of the flower. The flowers are particularly wild as they grow all over the “wasteland” and “cornfield”. Next to this, he talked about the use of poppy seeds and the way of eating them. Together with this dietetic function, he suggested the connection between poppies and the dead. In Jarman’s poem, as in his other writings of flowers, we can detect a relationship between diet and death. In “Tasteless: Towards a Food-Based Approach to Death”, Val Plumwood (2008) proposes a similar view. In this essay, Plumwood discusses her insight about death and the food chain by recalling her personal experience. Plumwood recalled that she once was attacked by a crocodile, and the accident made her realise that her body could be food for animals. This cognition directly deconstructs “hyper-individualism” (Plumwood, 2008: 324), showing in what ways our bodies are exposed and connected to the wild. When she buried her son in a small country ceremony which she describes as “a refuge for a remarkable botanical community”, Plumwood also learns that the body of her beloved son will become food for vegetation (2008: 326). Plumwood argues that “we are all food, and through death nourish others” (2008: 323). I suggest that Plumwood’s argument about eating and death is one of the most essential aspects of the concept of transcorporeality because she illustrates how nature and human beings interchange and absorb one another practically. A utopian realm of relationality and coexistence emerges in Plumwood’s reminiscence. Jarman’s reflection on the poppy illustrates this dynamic interchange. In his poem, the phrase “staff of life” has multiple meanings. Poppy seeds are “the staff of life” for the flowers themselves as well as for the human bodies because they participate in human life by being a staple food. Jarman further pointed out that the poppies carry the memory of the dead, which shows that the decay of bodies will also take part in the lives of poppies in both metaphysical and material ways.

In addition to poppy seeds, Jarman’s garden produced herbs and edible flowers. In his journal, Jarman recorded that he chopped his dill into potatoes, picking it with rosemary, parsley, and hyssop for salad (2018: 88, 96). He grew the elderflower, pointing out that they were the main ingredient of elderflower wine, cordial, and pudding, and celebrated them with a recipe – “the

flowers deep-fried in batter and sprinkled with sugar are a great delicacy” (Jarman, 1995: 27). What is special in the case of Jarman is that he always addressed the historical context of these edible plants. When he wrote about the samphire, he noted that the plant were once a popular delicacy, and then mentioned that it is also known as Saint Peter’s herb for blessing fishermen (2018: 133). The elderflower, as he wrote in his very last book *Derek Jarman’s Garden*, “keep witches at bay, and any old cottage garden that has not been modernized will have one growing alongside the house” (1995: 27). In his journal, there was an intriguing documentary about dill. Jarman wrote, the dill:

has a strong sweet taste used in pickling and with vegetables. The seeds have a soporific effect and were eaten in church to dull the agony of listening to sermons. The name of the herb is derived from the Anglo-Saxon *dilla*, to lull. Dill sent witches flying (2018: 88).

We can now continue to follow Jarman, approaching to the medical use of flowers. Jarman recorded that the seeds of the dill are drugs for zoning out and for eschewing the boredom of listening to the preach in the church. This is a drug that brings people out of reality, and enables them to daydream and to fly out of the linear time. Daydreaming with flowers can be a therapeutic and an erotic journey. Furthermore, Jarman documented that the pansy (another slang of gay) is a strong aphrodisiac. He wrote that:

The juice of it on sleeping eyelids will make a man or woman dote upon the next live creature they see, if you would have midsummer’s dreams. A strong tea made of the leaves will cure a broken heart; for our pansy is strongly aphrodisiac, its name, *pensée*, / *think of you*. If it leads you astray, don’t worry, the herbal says it cures the clap; for ‘it is a Saturnine plant of a cold slimy viscous nature ... an excellent cure for venereal disorder’ (2018: 29).

Jarman meditated on the symbolic meanings of pansies, yet more importantly, he considered the flower as a form of “drug of love”. He remarked on how these aphrodisiac flowers participated in human life, and stimulated one’s desires. The erotic botanical drug will be digested by the human body, participating in one’s day-dreaming, process of healing, and sexual pleasure. The botanical drug disrupts normal temporality, and leads the user to a messianic-queer time. Queer artists are interested in depicting the intimacy between botanical and human desire. For example, Luca Guadagnino’s Academy Award winning film *Call Me by Your Name* (2017), I would argue, is a film of the objects. The director infused queer desire into a vast world of objects, such as peaches, apricots, soft-boiled eggs, clothes, books, sheet music, and a piece of the fragment of an ancient Greek statue that is excavated from the

water. The love scene of the boy and the peach, I will argue, can be read as an iconic image of queer ecology. In doing so, Guadagnino associates queer love and desire with the natural and Greek heritage of homosexual culture, which locates queer relationships in a wider world and in multilayers of temporalities. Additionally, the French lesbian director Céline Sciamma's *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* (2019) resonates with Jarman's meditation on botanical drugs and his play on temporalities. In both Jarman and Sciamma's descriptions, the botanical drugs are given a special dynamic that can disrupt a linear progressive time, and bring queer lovers to utopian places.

In Sciamma's film, the botanical drug appears in her delicate love scene. The lovers, Marianne (Noémie Merlant) and Héloïse (Adèle Haenel), are in bed; Héloïse rests her head on Marianne's lap, suggesting a position of oral sex without picturing it explicitly. Héloïse shows Marianne a can of greenish ointment, which is a kind of hallucinogenic drug made of plants. She flirts with Marianne, explaining that the drug can make the time longer. Héloïse applies the drug to her own armpit, and then rubs it into Marianne's as Héloïse's blue eyes turn dark because the drug makes her pupil dilated. This scenario clearly refers to the culture of witches. Witches would put hallucinatory drugs on the groin or armpits because the drug would be more easily absorbed in these body parts. This reference enhances the intimacy of bodies and botanical materials. Instead of concentrating on women's nudity, the camera depicts these striking physiological changes, which shows how deep the botanical drug is involved in bodies and lesbian love-making. Acting as both time shuttle and aphrodisiac, the botanical drug, as Wilson argues, stimulates "polymorphous sex" and "all-over body pleasure" (2021: 95). Sciamma recollects a rich queer culture, exploring the possibility of sexual pleasure by filming a temporary dynamic. The story of *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* is set in 1770, and it is uncertain whether Sciamma is inspired by the sapphic drug culture that flourished in late 19th century France. Later in the *fin-de-siècle* period, according to Nicole G. Albert, "sapphic pleasures were inevitably lined to drugs. Since a drug induced dangerous states of intoxication, it diffused a 'taste for the infinite' into the user's veins, just as forbidden caresses did" (2016: 197). The experience "for the infinite" clearly connects lesbian sexual pleasure to temporality. In terms of drugs, temporality, and women, Halberstam argues that drugs can create "the ludic temporality", and "speed itself (the drug as well as the motion) becomes the motor of an alternative history", narrating "female rebellion" (2005: 5). Both Jarman and Sciamma are not interested in depicting history "the way it really was" (Benjamin, [1940] 1968: 255). They reinvent history and reshape temporalities. As "the motor of an alternative history", the botanical drugs in both Jarman and Sciamma's works bring the users to another time and

space. As Benjamin, a drug user, argued in “Crock Notes”, “the opium-smoker or hashish-eater experiences the power of the gaze to suck a hundred sites out of one place” ([1933] 2006: 85).

Jarman’s exploration of herbs and flowers can also serve as another path toward utopias and hope. As discussed, together with aphrodisiac function, in his journal, Jarman stressed the medical value of plants. Blue columbine, for example, was “one of the herbs used against the Black Death in the 14th century” (Jarman, 2018: 87). The daffodils, as I mentioned earlier, were used by Galen for healing gashes wounds (Jarman, 2018: 12); the pansy can heal the clap and venereal disease (Jarman, 2018: 29); the santolina can cure the bites of beasts (Jarman, 2018: 55). For Jarman, the garden itself is “a therapy and a pharmacopoeia” (1995: 179). When he suffered from the symptoms of HIV, he studied the medical use of his plants, wishing to be soothed by flowers and herbs. He wrote, “I plant my herbal garden as a panacea, read up on all the aches and pains that plants will cure – and know they are not going to help yet there is a thrill in watching the plants spring up that gives me hope” (Jarman, 2018: 12; 179). Jarman knew these flowers and herbs were not as efficient as the medicine that the doctor prescribed, yet he still grew his garden as a “panacea”. Hope, in this case, was situated in tension, and it became precarious and unstable. In Bloch’s philosophy, hope itself is indeterminacy. In his 1961 lecture titled “Can Hope Be Disappointed?”, Bloch said: “even a well-founded hope can be disappointed, otherwise it would not be hope” ([1961] 1998: 341). Hope must be considered in a dialectical dynamic, as in Jarman’s herbal garden where hope was illuminated but never came true.

The consideration of food, diet, and medicine, in Foucault’s account, is a form of “techniques of the self”, which can be found in Hellenic, the early Christian, and Medieval cultures ([1983] 2020: 253). In his journal, Jarman introduced an abundant knowledge of flowers as medicine. These explorations show Jarman’s wish for healing himself, not through modern medicine, but through returning to history and through the transcorporeal connection to flowers. This action of healing is also a way of life, or to cite Foucault, a way of taking care of the self ([1982] 2020). In a lecture titled “Technologies of the Self”, Foucault examined Greco-Roman philosophy, arguing that “‘Know thyself’ has obscured ‘Take care of yourself’ because our morality, a morality of asceticism, insists that the self is that which one can reject” ([1982] 2020: 228). Using the methodology of the archaeology of knowledge, he therefore argued that there were also traditions of taking care of the self in Greco-Roman culture. He specifically pointed out the role medical care plays in this process of caring for the self, as he argued, “permanent medical care is one of the central features of the care of the self. One must become the doctor of oneself” ([1982] 2020: 235). In the third volume of *History of Sexuality*, moreover, Foucault

suggests that, in ancient Greece, medicine was more like a liberal art, rather than “a technique of intervention” as it was defined by modern medical science (1986: 99). In Jarman’s writings, the exploration of herbal medicine recalls this antique attitude that considered life as “a medical perception of the world”, and “a medical perception of the space and circumstances in which one lived” (Foucault, 1986: 101). He distanced himself from modern medicine, saying “I will myself to get better without the aid of antibiotics” (Jarman, 2018: 151). He also refused to be treated as an ill man, as he wrote, “I refuse to believe in my mortality, or the statistics which hedge the modern world about like the briar that walled in the sleeping princess. I have conducted my whole life without fitting in, so why should I panic now and fit into statistics?” (2018: 151). Jarman’s attitude to illness shows a witty queer insight, which can be read as another resistance to normativity, institution, and modernism.

For Bloch, the hope of being cured by a magical herb contains what he called “medical utopias” (1986: 454). He argues that “every sick man wishes to get well again in a flash. An honest doctor cannot give him this, but this sudden recovery has always been pictured”. This description means that the wish to get better is a utopian emotion beyond modern institutional medicine. As Bloch argued later, a wish of getting well will become a yearning for the “short cut” (1986: 455). The sick man will wish for “healing potions” and “healing lotions” that only exist in “the medical fairytale” (ibid). The sick man knew that the magic would not happen, yet he yearned for a “not-yet”. Bloch argued that “the belief in magic herbs seems older and sounder as it were; it is shared by the fairytale and folklore alike: this same impatience for a sudden cure also characterizes the hope in medical herbs, the breakthrough which changes everything” (ibid).

Jarman’s botanical medicine might not be helpful, yet the flourishing of the vegetation did offer him a hopeful prospect. In despair, hope was in fact never far away from Jarman. Hope was practiced and perceived through the connection to flowers and herbs. When Jarman was hospitalised in 1990 as his health deteriorated. During those feverish and sleepless nights, Jarman wrote:

my mind keeps floating back to Dungeness – how I would love to be putting the seed in the garden. It shouldn’t be too late if I get it in by April ... I’m feeling much clearer this morning, planting the garden in my mind, sowing fennel and calendula (2018: 258 – 259).

Jarman thought about his flowers and garden when he was ill, showing that the garden was more than a consolation, but a vital hope – a strategy of survival.

4.3 Conclusion

In Jarman's later years, living with AIDS "quickly became a way of life" (Jarman, 2018: 152). In his garden, Jarman acknowledged queer lovers who died silently. He practiced a transcorporeal life, making connections to nature, flowers, industry, and other objects. As Laing suggests in the introduction of *Modern Nature*, during "a near-certain death sentence" (2018: IX), Jarman rediscovered himself as a part of nature, and "chained himself to this landscape" (2018: 77). Jarman's illness pushed him to a radical condition. To Foucault, this form of living condition evokes a desire to surpass subjecthood, and this strategy of survival itself contains beauty. In "Queer Beauty Sexuality and Aesthetics from Winckelmann to Freud and Beyond", Whitney Davis cites Foucault's term, suggesting that "as a mode of living, in fact, a limit experience or living the limit condition might properly be described as a 'happy limbo of nonidentity' (2010: 253 – 254). The phrase exactly echoes Jarman's garden and his life with AIDS. "Limit experience" and "limit condition" suggest a form of near-death experience. In Foucault's theory, these extreme experiences contain both pleasure and pain, morbidity and vitality. "Limbo" is an interesting word in Foucauldian discourse, which means abandoned places. It also indicates somewhere in between and in an ever-changing condition. To cite Foucault's words in *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, such a limbo place is "fruitless expanse between two countries that cannot belong him" (1965: 11).

Both Jarman and Foucault understood their precarious lives as élan to *project* (as in Jean-Paul Sartre's ontology) themselves and to approach another dimension. Illness, an unhealthy body, or near-death experiences seemed to become an opportunity to care for the self, and to let a wider world participate in one's life. For Foucault, the dialectic perspective of illness and death potentially generated another form of possibility. After a horrible car crash, Foucault described his near-death experience as "a very, very intense pleasure, a marvellous time" (quoted in Davis, 2010: 253). Foucault's account of the near-death experience was expanded in his theory of Sadomasochism (S & M), in which he considered the sex game could give the players an extreme experience and an ecstatic feeling that could be apocalyptic. In "Sex, Power, and the Politics of Identity", Foucault argued that S & M is "the real creation of new possibilities of pleasure" ([1982] 2020: 165). The players "are inventing new possibilities of pleasure with strange parts of their body – through the eroticization of the body", and he continued, "I think it's a kind of creation, a creative enterprise, which has as one of its main features what I call the desexualisation of pleasure" (ibid). The pain, for Foucault, can generate new emotions and experiences. Likewise, as Jarman wrote in his journal, "my fever has brought a deep, almost

comforting lethargy. Spring remarked yesterday that I was unusually calm – it seems ridiculous to worry” (2018: 151).

In queer culture, a revolutionary dynamic and an upbeat temperament often spring out of the dialectics of morbidity and vitality. Foucault’s view on S & M is reflected in the American photographer Robert Mapplethorpe’s floral photography, in which the photographer conveyed a dialectic manner, and stimulated an alternative way of mourning and memorialisation.



Figure 42 Howard Sooley, *Prospect Cottage, Dungeness, Kent*. 1990.
© Howard Sooley.



Figure 43 Derek Jarman, *Act Up*, 1992.
Oil on canvas, 251.5 x 179 cm. Irish Museum of Modern Art



Figure 44 Joel Sternfeld, *Ailanthus Trees, 25th Street, May 2000 from High Line, 2000*.
Digital c-print, 100.33 x 127cm. © Joel Sternfeld.



Figure 45 Suzanne Szasz, *City "Farmers"*, 1973.
Culture Thriving Garden. Volunteers were Assigned Their Plots by Community Association.
National Archives at College Park.



Figure 46 Unknown Photographer, *The Gate of Le Petit Versailles*.
Photo from Allied Productions Inc..



Figure 47 Howard Sooley, *Prospect Cottage, Dungeness, Kent*. 1990.
© Howard Sooley

Chapter 5 Queer Ideality and the Politics of Remembrance: Vitality and Morbidity in Robert Mapplethorpe's Flowers

In the Introduction, I argued that this thesis aims to deconstruct a stereotype of queer art. As Halberstam argues, "some ninety-eight percent of what people call queer art is naked male bodies painted by gay men" (2022: n. p.). The American photographer Robert Mapplethorpe's pictures of gay nudity and S&M activities can also be considered a stereotype of queer art. Yet fortunately, Mapplethorpe also created a number of floral pictures that surpassed this stereotype. Therefore, in accordance with the aim of this thesis, I select Mapplethorpe's flowers as a case study and examine a manner that evokes bodies, desires, and sexuality without depicting figurative models. On the other hand, I will consider Mapplethorpe's representations of nudity and S&M because some of these works are related to the subject of queer flowers. The brief discussions of these figurative pictures will be conducted together with Mapplethorpe's floral photography because, as I shall argue, they contain similar aesthetics, politics, and sensibilities.

Compared with his depictions of nudity and S&M, Mapplethorpe's floral still-lives appear to be innocuous. Yet, these perfectly bloomed and voluptuous flowers emit a complexity of contradictory emotions, politics, turbulent desire, vitality, and morbidity. As Arthur Danto argues in *Playing with the Edge: The Photographic Achievement of Robert Mapplethorpe*, Mapplethorpe's still-lives "are elegant, luxurious, sophisticated, impeccable. But they are far more than that" (1996: 129). In *Mapplethorpe and the Flower: Radical Sexuality and the Limits of Control*, Derek Conrad Murray also argues that Mapplethorpe's floral imagery created "the complex ideological value systems" (2020: 2). Based on these comments, this chapter explores desires, politics, and ambivalent emotions within Mapplethorpe's "impeccable" flowers.

This chapter argues that Mapplethorpe's perfectionist style contains a dialectics of vitality and morbidity. This dialectics can also be found in the sexual culture of the 1970s and the AIDS era. The tension between trauma and pleasure established a queer sexual culture, and for the American critic Douglas Crimp, this culture was a form of ideality that requires remembrance and mourning (2004: 140). Namely, Crimp argues that it is necessary and urgent to mourn "the ideal of perverse sexual pleasure itself" (ibid). Crimp's argument opens up a space for considering those optimistic emotions in queer sexual culture. Chapter 4 shows that Jarman's garden was a melancholic space of mourning, but we can still see how the memories of pleasures flashed up in a critical time. Jarman documented many ideal images of the past that

illuminate a futurity. Therefore, Jarman's art suggests a way of mourning, which emphasises not only negative but also optimistic sensibilities. In this chapter, I will continue to explore this way of mourning by looking at Mapplethorpe's floral photography. His perfectionism, as I shall analyse, is equivalent to queer ideality. Firstly, this chapter will consider the debate about mourning in the AIDS era. As I will review, the American writer Larry Kramer argued that the mourning activity and its artistic representations can be problematic. They propose that there are more abstract images and aesthetics that are able to document the sexual culture of the 1970s and the AIDS era. Based on these arguments, this discussion will propose a question: regardless of the traditional mourning activities such as the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt, can we imagine alternative ways of mourning and remembrance? According to the critiques that I will discuss, we need a form of image that does not necessarily replicate history (like the Quilt) but evokes imagination through transmitting sensibilities, desires, and loves. By reviewing the issue of mourning, I will show that it is important to remember both trauma and pleasure in the AIDS era, and this politics of mourning can be found in Mapplethorpe's floral pictures.

After discussing the issue of mourning and remembrance, I will analyse Mapplethorpe's aesthetic to explain why his images can be an alternative way of memorialisation. Secondly, this chapter explores a Mapplethorpean perfectionism that comprises a dialectical dynamic that contains both vitality and morbidity. Furthermore, I look at the disposition of morbidity in Mapplethorpe's floral photography, and connect this factor to the *fin-de-siècle* culture of flowers. Moreover, based on the discussion of the dialectics of vitality and morbidity, I will consider Mapplethorpe's technique of photographing in order to illustrate his desire-sharing manner. This specific way of shooting makes Mapplethorpe's works an archive of queer sensibilities. In the final discussion, I will respond to the debate of mourning that I proposed in the first section, and suggest that Mapplethorpe's dialectical aesthetic illuminate an alternative way of mourning and remembrance. I argue that Mapplethorpe's floral pictures allow us to perceive those queer desires that we have not experienced. In such images, we can imagine an ideality, and invent our memories.

5.1 The Issue of Mourning in the AIDS Art

The debate of mourning happened in the 1980s. As I will discuss, some critics supported mourning activities, whereas others criticised. In this section, I examine this debate by looking at the critiques on the Quilt, and explore an alternative way of mourning and remembrance. Jarman had his own way of mourning, which was different from, for example, the Quilt. During

the AIDS era, the Quilt was considered as a collective art-making for remembering personal losses, which can be traced back to the 1985 memorial march for the assassination of Harvey Milk. In the 1987 Lesbian and Gay Freedom Parade, forty memorial panels were shown at San Francisco City Hall. The movement further spread to Washington, D. C. and other cities in North America, and then arrived in England. Yet Jarman was not fond of the project, as he wrote:

When the AIDS quilt came to Edinburgh during the film festival, I attended just out of duty. I could see it was an emotional work, it got the heartstrings. But when the panels were unveiled a truly awful ceremony took place, in which a group of what looked like refrigerated karate experts, all dressed in white, turned and chanted some mumbo jumbo – horrible, quasi-religious, false. I shall haunt anyone who ever makes a panel for me (1995: 91).

The value of the Quilt has been articulated in studies such as Charles E. Morris edited *Remembering the AIDS Quilt* (2011). This discussion will instead focus on the problematic side of the Quilt. As I quoted above, Jarman apparently did not want to be remembered via a panel, and rather, he preferred to be remembered as a red-hot poker flower (Jarman, 2018: 122). As quoted, Jarman described a sensational mourning activity, and likewise, some queer critiques pointed out that this spectacular mourning was sentimental and was lack of revolutionary dynamics. Like Jarman, critics stressed the issue of the Quilt and other collective activities of mourning, such as the march. Crimp illustrated the issue in his famous essay “Mourning and Militancy” (1989). Firstly, he pointed out that in “Report from the Holocaust”, Kramer (1989) questions Candlelight Marches on Christopher Street New York in 1989. Kramer noted that the movement was lack of political awareness, arguing that there were many people in the march, but less were committed to ACT UP; there are many people in grief, but less in anger (Crimp, 2004: 132). As Kramer wrote:

huge numbers regularly show up in cities for Candlelight Marches, all duly recorded for the television cameras. Where are these same numbers when it comes to joining political organizations ... or plugging in to the incipient civil disobedience movement represented in ACT UP (quoted in Crimp, 2004: 132).

Furthermore, Kramer argued that “I do not mean to diminish these sad rituals ... though indeed I personally find them slightly ghoulish” (ibid). For Kramer, these kinds of activities were sensational gatherings. Some public mourning, in part, can merely serve for the living people. For Kramer, such activities could be easily reduced to a form of psychological therapy,

developing a comfort and self-indulgence that would relieve the “survivor’s guilt” (Crimp, 2004: 139) and undermine one’s activism. Jacques Derrida understood it as “self-delusion”, meaning that “we use the dead for some end or purpose of our own” (Barult & Naas, 2001: 7). Crimp also notes that “public mourning rituals ... nevertheless often seem ... indulgent, sentimental, defeatist – a perspective only reinforced ... by media constructions of us as hapless victims” (2004: 133). Thus, “Don’t mourn, organize!” was a slogan emerged for resisting this mourning spectacle (ibid).

Yet the work of mourning is necessary, and as Derrida argued, mourning “is love itself” because “while we know that we can never resurrect our loved ones, we still desire, in an act of love and fidelity, to do so” (Dooley & Kavanagh, 2002: 16). In “Mourning and Militancy”, Crimp also emphasises the importance of mourning, yet he argues that we must combine mourning with militancy (2004: 149). In *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*, Ann Cvetkovich argues that mourning and militancy “are intertwined rather than opposed” (Cvetkovich, 2003: 165). Cvetkovich writes that in his essay Crimp:

maintains that militancy cannot ease every psychic burden and that the persistence of mourning, if not also melancholy, must be reckoned with in the context of activism ... he reads militancy as an emotional response and a possible mode of containment of an irremediable psychic distress (2003: 163).

Unlike Jarman, Crimp admired the Quilt because, to him, it was a combination of mourning, activism, and queer culture. Crimp saw a queer culture and ideality in the Quilt. He wrote, “I saw my culture, my sexual culture. I felt I knew many of these people, knew them from the bars and bath houses, from the streets and parks” (2004: 200). The narrative of “sexual culture” is essential in Crimp’s argument that echoes my discussion of Mapplethorpe’s floral photography. In “Mourning and Militancy”, Crimp considered Freud’s “Mourning and Melancholia” (1917), and asks:

Freud tells us that mourning is the reaction not only to the death of loved person, but also “to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of the one, such as fatherland, liberty, and ideal” Can we be allowed to include, in this “civilized” list, the ideal of perverse sexual pleasure itself rather than one stemming from its sublimation? Alongside the dismal toll of death, what many of us have lost is a culture of sexual possibility: back rooms, tea rooms, bookstores, movie houses, and baths; the trucks, the pier, the ramble, the dunes (2004: 140).

Referring to Freud, Crimp stressed that a queer sexual culture was a form of ideality, and it is important to remember “the ideal of perverse sexual pleasure itself” in the AIDS era. From the panels, Crimp noted that there was a queer culture that contained some utopian potential. Here, Crimp argued for remembering pleasures of “our sexual culture”, and he stressed that the Quilt was able to bring back his experiences.

However, Crimp gave this speech in 1989, and the phrase “our culture” itself has limitations. By “us”, Crimp meant his “community of AIDS activities” and “gay men confronting AIDS” (2004: 131). Now, we can expand the scope of “our culture” to queer people of colour and non-Euro-American-based queer communities, and importantly, to those who have not experienced the sexual culture. For queer communities nowadays, it is important to feel backward while looking forward because ideality and utopias reside in the past (Love, 2007: 4). Therefore, it is necessary to ask, for these queer people who have been “left out”, how to “remember” a sexual culture that they have not experienced? How to connect ourselves to the past in order to go through the current crisis? What kind of remembrance can make queer ideality alive and influential for the present and the future? The role the Quilt played in the AIDS era was evidently significant, and for some queer individuals such as Crimp, this form of public commemoration encouraged mourning and militancy. However, in this chapter, I instead aim to find another form of imagery that can consistently influence queer communities without being hindered by the boundaries of time and space. In Mapplethorpe’s photography, we might find a new way of mourning and remembrance, which is not built on actual historical facts but on the mechanism of desire-sharing. I argue that Mapplethorpe’s floral art is, to cite Christopher Castiglia and Christopher Reed, “an aesthetics of memory that can articulate the relationship of loss and hope” (2012: 186). Compared with the Quilt, Mapplethorpe’s floral pictures allow future generations to imagine, fantasise, and reinvent memories, and make the past to “serve” the present and the future (Castiglia & Reed, 2012).

I read Mapplethorpe’s floral photography as an imagery of “imaginative ideality” (Castiglia & Reed, 2012: 177). This form of imagery is not a direct or tangible expression of loss, death, and grief. It often represents tantalising sensibilities, which is able to offer space for fantasies. Again, I will use the Quilt as a counterpart. The Quilt also was a form of AIDS art, yet Castiglia and Reed suggest, there is another aesthetic language that is able to articulate mourning and remembrance more effectively. Castiglia and Reed argue that

It is important to acknowledge that these types of visual memorialization of AIDS inadequately fill the need for the memorialization of the gay culture(s) lost as a result of

the AIDS crisis. We should not expect that collectively created memorials to individuals lost to AIDS will, as a side effect, memorialize gay culture. Such efforts, heartfelt and moving as they are, will be subsumed into civic or national identities or be lost to their own ephemerality, falling into a vacuum of unremembering and miscomprehension (2012: 186).

The two authors do not see a sexual culture within these panels. They instead argue that the Quilt only represents a painful fact that gay communities went through. This form of mourning irreversibly leads to “unremembering” and fails to open to the future. Consequently, Castiglia and Reed stress the importance of *Memory* rather than *History*. History is usually constituted by facts, victors, men, progresses, and a linear temporality, whereas Memory can be invented and nonlinear, which includes dreams, imagination, and fantasies (Castiglia & Reed, 2012: 178). By questioning the Quilt, Castiglia and Reed offer us a new way of mourning. They argue that it is important to add some fantasies to the memory, and our memory is “not transparent recovery but imaginative ideality” (2012: 177). Their argument resonates with Benjamin’s theory in “These on the Philosophy of History”, in which he argued that “to articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it ‘the way it really was’ (Ranke)” ([1940] 1968: 255). In this way, the memory will serve for the present and for the future, and as well as for the generations who have not experienced queer sexual culture.

Castiglia and Reed stress the function of fantasy in the structure of memory, arguing that “loss implies experience, while fantasy implies the absence of that experience” (2012: 176). Yet the absence can be positive, and it is the sense of the absence that creates fantasies and ideality. In order to explain this mechanism, Castiglia and Reed apply the case of Patrick Moore (2012: 177). The authors note that Moore considered the 1970s as an ideal period because she “didn’t live through the sexual utopia of the 1970s” (ibid). Moore said that “my fascination with the sexual culture of the 1970s, derives largely from the fact that I did not experience it directly” (2004: xxii). As Castiglia and Reed argue:

in calling narratives of pastness produced by queer ‘memories’ rather than ‘histories,’ then, we do not intend to invoke firsthand experience but its opposite, imaginative potential ... not the perspective of the victor but the experience of those pushed to the margins for whom the outcome of struggle is still uncertain ... Memory is thus the basis for what we call ideality politics (2012: 178).

Art practices play an important role in the phantasmatic structure of memorialisation. As Castiglia and Reed suggest, there is “an aesthetics of memory” that can “*renovate* the past in

light of our present ideals, inviting viewers to create inventive hybrids of a past loss that will move us from our contemporary unremembering into a current idealism that will turn the past into a more just and satisfying present” (2012: 186). This is Castiglia and Reed form of messianic time. In their study, Castiglia and Reed examine the queer artist Felix Gonzalez-Torres’s work, arguing that his work expresses “a phantasmatic memorialization that archives both commemoration and idealism” (2012: 186 – 187). Gonzalez-Torres’s installations of candy represent “‘tears, hope, sex, and love’ – as an always-already lost ‘history’” (Castiglia & Reed, 2012: 187). Castiglia and Reed suggest that Gonzalez-Torres “made art as ‘an attempt to create a kind of historical picture, a reminder, to reinstate certain events’” (ibid). His candy art is not an immediate imagery of mourning, yet the audience can experience the artist’s emotions. When one picks up a candy, one actually shares sensibilities with the artist.

In Mapplethorpe’s floral photography, we also cannot see immediate imagery of mourning and remembrance. Is Mapplethorpe’s floral imagery also “a reminder to reinstate certain events”? In this chapter, I argue that Mapplethorpe’s art is what Castiglia and Reed called “an aesthetics of memory” that stimulates “vision”, imagination, and fantasies (ibid). In the following section, I will explore Mapplethorpe’s perfectionism that links to queer ideality, which is one of the visions that he offered to us.

5.2 Mapplethorpe’s Perfectionism

The ideality that Crimp proposed can be discovered in Mapplethorpe’s floral photography – a work of perfection that contains both morbidity and vitality. It is worth noting that Mapplethorpe himself also had such a contradictory character. Jack Fritscher, one of Mapplethorpe’s lovers, considers the artist as “a sexual outlaw” (2016: n. p.). Yet simultaneously, Mapplethorpe was also a professional and diligent artist who had been pursuing what he called “perfection in form” (quoted in *Tate*). I suggest that these two files of the artist cannot be separated because his contradictive character enhanced a Mapplethorpean perfectionism. In “The Satyr and the Nymph: Robert Mapplethorpe and His Photography”, Germano Celant argues that Mapplethorpe “always tries to bridge the dichotomy between opposites, between order and disorder, assent and dissent, idealism and anarchy” (1992: 11). This section will show how this mannerism works harmonically to perfection.

An anecdote that happened between Mapplethorpe and Jarman shows the dark side of Mapplethorpe. In “He was a sexual outlaw’: My Love Affair with Robert Mapplethorpe”, Fritscher recalls that:

In 1984, Robert went to Heaven, the gay disco under Charing Cross in London, where he ran into his frenemy, film director Derek Jarman, who famously described Robert's life as "the story of Faust", Derek was going down one stairway as Robert, who did indeed say he had sold his soul, was climbing up another. Robert shouted: "I have everything I want, Derek. Have you everything you want" (2016: n. p.).

Jarman described Mapplethorpe as Faust who made a deal with the devil. This metaphor remarked on the "bad boy" side of Mapplethorpe, but the artist embraced the devil, as he said, "I want to see the devil in us all. That's my real turn-on" (Fritscher, 2016: n. p.). "The devil" in Mapplethorpe's narrative is not a negative description of queer lifestyles. It largely refers to a form of desire that dares to negate heteronormative morality. "The devil", to use Crimp's argument, can be understood as a description of "gay male promiscuity" – "a positive model" that "will save us" rather than "destroy us" (1987: 253). Mapplethorpe's "demonic" aesthetic appears in his understanding of flowers, which resonates with Crimp's argument about gay male promiscuity. Mapplethorpe described flowers as both beautiful and the devil, saying that "beauty and the devil are the same thing" (ibid). Moreover, Mapplethorpe's aesthetic is associated with his sexually radical life. His aesthetic is erotically charged, and this factor connects flowers to eroticism and radicality, and in addition, to queer ideality. As Fritscher recalls, Mapplethorpe "described ideal passion as 'intelligent sex'. One night, during stoned pillow talk, he exhaled a stream of Kool menthol smoke: "I want to be a story told in beds at night around the world" (2016: n. p.). A queer ideality emerges in Fritscher's description. This anecdote describes a nostalgic imagery of the everyday queer love life that was injected with sexual dynamics. It illuminates utopian potential that was full of jokes, ideas, and "ideal passion". I suggest that these sensibilities left traces in Mapplethorpe's perfect flowers.

In *Mapplethorpe and the Flower: Radical Sexuality and the Limits of Control*, Murray suggests that "the flowers in fact synthesizes Mapplethorpe's desire for *perfection* [emphasis added] and a need to find beauty in the profane" (2020: 4 – 5). It is not hard to perceive Mapplethorpe's artistic effort when one looks at his pictures. In general, his photography shows the perfectly balanced compositions in a classic mannerism, and every detail is infused with a refined craftsmanship. This manner becomes more evident in his photography of flowers. As a devoted artist, Mapplethorpe always asked his assistant to purchase the most perfect flowers from the florist. In his studio, he played with the indoor lights, arranged the flowers, and tried different vases. Most of his floral pictures showed flowers in full bloom and

were accompanied by the perfect light that gave the work a serene aura. While these store-bought flowers wither quickly, Mapplethorpe documented their perfect moments, as if he were documenting those ideal moments that he experienced in the pre-AIDS period. Just as queer ideality fills with both trauma and jouissance. Mapplethorpe's taste can be found in his works of the calla lily, which can be read as another resource for my queer archive of the calla lily (see Chapter 2, 2.2.3.2 The Calla Lily as a Queer Motif). On his pictures of carnation and 1988 *Calla Lily* (fig. 48), the American poet John Ashbery argues:

The most powerful photos are those in which he focuses on a single flower or just a few, pinning them almost cruelly under the lens. A bunch of carnations jammed into a constricting glass cylinder is one of many that hint at the voluntary constraints of S&M. Even more highly charged are the calla lilies with their teasing phallic pistils, perhaps derived from [Georgia] O'Keeffe, but to which he imparts a dangerous eroticism of his own. Perhaps all the darkness and grit of his earlier work was a preparation for these sumptuous yet demonic explosions of light and light-saturated forms. The great white calla lily whose horizontal lines serve as a foil to its proud gold erection, strikes an uncharacteristic jubilant note. It is an invitation to pleasure that will not be rebuffed. They are cruel and comforting, calm and disruptive, negative and life affirming (1996: 7).

Ashbery's interpretation points out how the contradictory emotions operated in Mapplethorpe's pictures, in which sensuality, grace, beauty, pleasure, and "a dangerous eroticism of his own" composed an upbeat finale of "life affirming". Interestingly, Ashbery parallels O'Keeffe's paintings of calla lilies with Mapplethorpe's photography. In this comparison, we can see that the representations of the calla lily became queer and erotic. Reading Mapplethorpe's calla lilies together with O'Keeffe's paintings, the hotness of sensuality becomes more distinct.

Mapplethorpe seemed to stick to perfectionism under the shadow of pending death. His first major retrospective exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York is also called *The Perfect Moment*. The artist attended the show sitting in a wheelchair. Danto reminisces that "until the opening it was not quite so widely known how close to death he was: he had gone, in a matter of months, from youthful good looks to the appearance of a man old before his time" (1996: 3). Mapplethorpe's near-death condition made a contrast with the title of the exhibition, conveying a paradoxical image of queer love that contains both ideality and destruction. As Celant writes, "love, to which we owe life, can also quite literally lead us to death, and not just in fairy tales" (1992: 62).

Mapplethorpe died from an AIDS-related disease in 1989 at age 42, just after *The Perfect Moment*. His perfectionism continued. His album *Flowers*, which was published a year after his death, is an opposite illustration of Mapplethorpe's perfectionism. The album collects 49 full-colour floral photographs that were mostly created in his later years. Mapplethorpe was becoming ill when he photographed these flawless flowers, and this connection between death and art-making makes these flowers meditative and emotionally complicated. Patti Smith, Mapplethorpe's former lover and lifelong friend, offers a poetic introduction titled "A Final Flower". She writes:

He came, in time, to embrace the flower as the embodiment of all the contradictions
reveling within ... He found them to be worthy conspirators in the courting and
development of conflicting emotions. He also found it was as easy to hurl beauty as
anything else. Often they were symbolic of him; his processes. Modelled in geometric
shade. Modified in a famous vase and inevitably turned in the realm of their own
simplicity – the blossoming of the mystifying aspects of the pure.

And the eye became a body, the murky hearts of a rose. The sinister shadow of an orchid.
Or the indolent poppy balanced behind the ear of Baudelaire.

All the finery, all the flame, distilled in the burning veins of the jack-in-the-pulpit, the
blood of the spike surging upward into a butterfly crown. In the foreskin of a lily. In another
lily military, erect. In victory stems asymmetric, exact. In the head of a tulip, the curve of a
staff or in the unfolding flower's face (1990: n. p.).

Smith's interpretation points out the disposition of Mapplethorpe's flowers – contradictions, purity, sensuality, and the sinister tone. Even in his last works, Mapplethorpe's flowers bear no evidence of ageing or decay, and they are always in full bloom and in perfection.

A perfectly opened flower shows its inner visceral structure. Importantly, in this chapter, I argue that some of Mapplethorpe's flowers suggest the *sign* of illness. To prevent misunderstanding, it is important to note that, as Simon Watney argues in *Policing Desire: Pornography, AIDS and the Media*, "HIV virus infection" is "a blood disease affecting the body's immune defence system" (1996: 34). This means that "the *sign* of illness" in Mapplethorpe's floral photography only refers to "the symptoms of individual opportunistic infections which result from severe damage to the body's immunological defences" (ibid). In his last album, one of his latter *Orchids* (1988) highlights the astonishing morbidity. I will return to this theme at the end of this chapter. What I will address here is the connection between Mapplethorpe and

Baudelairean aesthetics. In her introduction, Smith refers to Baudelaire, and this connection intrigues some critics. I also suggest that Mapplethorpe's depiction of morbidity and vitality echoes the *fin-de-siècle* aesthetics. Mapplethorpe himself had never said that he was inspired by the *fin-de-siècle* sensibility, whereas there are some critiques discovering this interesting bond. I read this connection as another opportunity to create an imaginative and phantasmatic interpretation. In the following discussion, I will explore Mapplethorpe's aesthetic by locating it in the *fin-de-siècle* context.

To look at Mapplethorpe's floral pictures through a historical genre or artistic tendency is not uncommon because the presentation of his works is arguably classic. On the other hand, Mapplethorpe's classicalism was often criticised. "The aesthetic strictness of Mapplethorpe's approach – tightly composed, classical, highly finished photographic prints –", for art critics such as Kobena Mercer, even "demonstrated ... a 'fundamental conservatism'" (Sutton & Martin-Jones, 2008: 67). What is more, some critics considered Mapplethorpe as a Neoclassical artist. Neoclassicism was a genre that emerged in the late 18th century, and extended to the *fin-de-siècle* period (DeJean, 1996: 793). His Neoclassic aesthetics was once criticised by Crimp, who considered this manner as a degeneration (Reed, 2010: 223). This critique resonates with Mercer's argument of "fundamental conservatism", which I will discuss later in this section. A 2005 exhibition at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, titled "Robert Mapplethorpe and the Classical Tradition: Photographs and Mannerist Prints", offers "the unique opportunity to see Mapplethorpe's work through the matrix of Neoclassicism" (2005: n. p.). The press release stresses:

Neoclassical artist, in homage to the Greek and Roman Classical tradition, crystalized their subject matter to a pure, harmonious form with a sober clarity and a subdued sense of color. The static, rigorous frontal view of a figure in the shallow picture of Neoclassical practice was often also utilized by Mapplethorpe, with striking and beautiful results. Mapplethorpe's photographs exemplify classical ideals of form and proportion with their controlled relationships between light and shadow, balance and asymmetry, beauty and obscenity, while at the same time clearly reflecting both a Classical and highly contemporary interest in the human body (ibid).

Mapplethorpe's classical manner makes him different from his contemporaries like Jarman, who often filmed by using Super-8 – a household and amateur way of shooting. This aesthetic of "*imperfection*", as a resistance to the Hollywood cinema, flourished during the British New Wave cinema movement from 1968 to the early 1980s (Mulvey, 2022: n. p.). At that time, Mapplethorpe still insisted on his perfectionism. Next, I will review a debate about

Mapplethorpe's pictures of Black men and flowers, which is another work of perfection, in order to show the necessity of paralleling Mapplethorpe with the *fin-de-siècle* culture.

In 1984, Mapplethorpe created a series titled *Ken Moody* (fig. 49). This controversial series shows a perfect, masculine, and beautiful Black body holding a large lily, creating an impressive contrast and composing a harmony of men and flowers. On this series, Murray remarks that:

Mapplethorpe's photographs of black men with flowers allude to French writer Charles Baudelaire's volume of poetry entitled *Les Fleurs du Mal* (The Flowers of Evil). First published in 1857, Baudelaire's metaphorical vision of the floral engages with themes of eroticism, decadence, lust, and desire; he finds a subversive monstrousness in *ideal* beauty and an alluring splendor in the grotesque (2020: 43).

Moreover, Murray points out a genealogy of queer use of floral symbolism. He writes:

We see this symbolism throughout the histories of art, from the masters of seventeenth-century Europe through to our contemporary moment, as reflected in the work of pop artist Andy Warhol, Mapplethorpe, as well as his Afro-British contemporary, artist Rotimi Fani-Kayode (1955-89). Fani-Kayode – who, like Mapplethorpe, succumbed to AIDS in the late 1980s – was known for his complex symbolism, which often took the form of richly colorful photographs of black men with flowers (ibid).

Murray's account reveals a possibility of locating Mapplethorpe in a historical context. This chapter discusses Mapplethorpe's works of flowers with Black men very briefly because this theme of "racial beauty" (Murray, 2020: 73) deserves special research. It shows a tension between "the beautiful Black men in front of the lens and the troublesome white patron/photographer behind the lens" (Muñoz, 1999: 68). These pictures (Black men with or without flowers) were criticised by Butler and Mercer, who argued that these works are undoubtedly racial and offensive (1999: 118; 2007: 435 – 447). Yet by tracing a historical linkage between Black bodies and flowers, critics such as Murray and Christopher Looby show some different views beyond the direct negation. In "Flowers of Manhood: Race, Sex and Floriculture from Thomas Wentworth Higginson to Robert Mapplethorpe", Looby argues that, instead of negating the significance of Mapplethorpe's flowers with Black men:

We situate Mapplethorpe's pictures in a long history of white American men's profound investment in disavowed homoerotic gazing at black men's bodies, and their recurrent

metonymic association of black male flesh with exotic flora. In the interest of redeeming the erotics and aesthetics of race from exploitative racist romanticism, Mapplethorpe in such photographs has *thematized* that very metonymy. What he has done in his photographs is bring this metonymy into the light of conscious scrutiny: made it available, by the theatricalizing practice of his stagy studio images, for critique and transformation (1995: 141 – 142).

Looby remarks on the resemblance between Langston Hughes's ('Slave on the Block') and Mapplethorpe's floral images, arguing that, in both artists' works, the images of Black nudes with flowers construct a "desiring gaze" that "ask the viewer to take pleasure in the visual conjunction of Black flesh and exotic bloom, as well as simultaneously invite the viewer to question the politics of that pleasure" (1995: 111). Similarly, on another picture of flowers and Black nude titled *Dennis Speight*, Murray argues that:

the most powerful characteristic of the photograph is the returned gaze, the piercing look that Speight directs back at the photographer. His gaze has a clear defiance, although it is neither aggressive nor confronting: rather it is knowing and claims a certain agency that would contradict a purely fetishistic reading of the image ... it is devotional in its softening of a physical subject so overdetermined by pathology and social dysfunction, and it more rightly functions as a corrective – forcing his viewers to find the beauty in a subject that has not been culturally condoned in such a manner (2020: 42 – 43).

Likewise, on these pictures, Muñoz eschews simple negations. In *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*, he argues:

Mapplethorpe's photographs do not provide an unequivocal yes/no answer to the question of whether they reinforce or undermine commonplace racist stereotypes – rather, he throws the binary structure of the question back at the spectator, where it is torn apart in the disruptive 'shock effect'" (1999: 70).

These arguments have already established an essential debate about the issue of race in Mapplethorpe's pictures of nudity. However, what I found important in both Murray and Looby's studies is their methodology. Both of them connect Mapplethorpe's works to the art of the past, which illustrates the necessity of situating Mapplethorpe in a historical genealogy of queer use of flowers. Based on Smith and Murray's interpretations, I argue that Mapplethorpean flowers of evil echoes Baudelairean aesthetics in a queer way.

5.3 A Dialogue with the *Fin-de-Siècle* Floral Aesthetics

In this section, I will read Mapplethorpe's floral photography together with the *fin-de-siècle* aesthetics with a special focus on the legacies of Baudelaire and Joris-Karl Huysmans. As Dominic Janes argues, flowers "played a queer role in art and literature from Wilde to Proust through to the photography of Robert Mapplethorpe and beyond" (2023: 155). In "Say It with Flowers: The Poetry of Marc-Andre Raffalovich", Ed Madden also argues that "by the end of century, homoerotic writing was full of flowers" (1997: 14). In the 20th century, the *fin-de-siècle* sensibilities still fascinated many queer artists. As discussed in Chapter 2, the *fin-de-siècle* culture influenced Demuth. Moreover, both Demuth and Hartley admired the work of the French Symbolist artist Odilon Redon, who created floral illustrations for the early publication of Baudelaire's *The Flowers of Evil*. Twombly, which I have discussed in Chapter 3, paralleled the German Decadent poet Rilke's verses with his roses. Likewise, Rilke influenced the queer artist Gonzalez-Torres (Castiglia & Reed: 2012, 191). In "Water, Sky, and Where They Meet", Pietro Rigolo argues that Rilke was Gonzalez-Torres's poet, and the artist was particularly interested in Rilke's "concept of 'blood memory'" (2023: n. p.). Rigolo writes that "Rilke reflects on the relationship between memory and writing, and how poetry arises not directly from memory, but from a long period of distillation in which memories are forgotten, and come back as part of ourselves, as if they constituted out blood" (ibid). Rilke's concept of memory inspired Gonzalez-Torres who created "a phantasmatic memorialization" (Castiglia & Reed, 2012: 187). Moreover, Smith's passion for the *fin-de-siècle* culture is evident in her poetic foreword for Mapplethorpe's album, in which she situates Mapplethorpe in a Baudelairean matrix. This linkage can also be found in several studies and literary works that I shall discuss later in this section.

In this chapter, I am particularly interested in building a connection between Mapplethorpe's flowers and the *fin-de-siècle* floral metaphor of disease. Mapplethorpe's close-up revealed the spots, speckles, and sarcoma of flowers that resemble the symptoms of human illness. However, these queer-looking flowers themselves were in full bloom, and were photographed perfectly by the artist. This intriguing dialectic imagery, as I suggest, is a visual illustration of queer idealism.

There was an aesthetic tendency of morbidity in the late 19th century. In *Fin de Siècle: Art and Society in an Age of Uncertainty*, Shearer West points out that:

the issue of disease permeated late nineteenth-century literature, from Baudelaire's perverse poems, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, to Ibsen's Oswald Alving in *Ghosts*, who suffers from syphilis. In art, paintings of illness and death, such as Munch's *Death in the Sickroom*, expressed a horrified fascination with decay and disorder (1994: 23).

In the *fin-de-siècle* period, this aesthetic of morbidity appeared to be gloomy and indulgent, yet a vital creativity of the artists still grew from the "decay and disorder". This dynamic of morbidity and vitality became more alive when this *fin-de-siècle* sensibility was adapted by queer artists. Next, by looking at Baudelaire's aesthetics, I will reveal a form of morbid aesthetic in Mapplethorpe's "flowers of evil".

Published in 1857, Baudelaire's *The Flowers of Evil* anticipated the *fin-de-siècle* aesthetics that subsequently flourished across the Europe. In the Dedication of the book, which was to his "master and friend" Théophile Gautier, Baudelaire highlighted the disposition of "maladives". He wrote, "De la plus profonde humilité / Je dédie / Ces fleurs malades (Of the most profound humility / I dedicate / These unhealthy flowers)" ([1857] 2015: 11). Baudelaire set up a key disposition for his work, which was this sensibility of the "unhealthy". In the original versions that were published in 1857, 1890, and 1900 respectively, the cover drawings by Félix Bracquemond (1857), Redon (1890), and Carlos Scheabe (1900) indicated the aesthetic of this sinister and morbid beauty (fig. 4). However, Mapplethorpe's flowers, with their impeccable exhilaration and serenity, were distinguished from the illustrations of Bracquemond, Redon, and Scheabe.

Looking at Mapplethorpe's *Ken Moody* again, firstly, he revealed the grotesque appearance of the lily, recalling Baudelaire's detailed description of the sinister object such as the corpse. As I will discuss, a similar way of description also appeared in Huysmans novel. In the drawings of Bracquemond, Redon, and Scheabe, their flowers explicitly expressed a deadly tone. In Redon's piece (fig. 4, Upper right), for example, the flower was depicted as a rotten organism. Yet in Mapplethorpe's *Ken Moody*, the flower has a perfect shape, which is wide open and in full bloom. Mapplethorpe made the flower show its speckled petals and flirtatious interior. The robust condition of the flower collaborates with the masculine body. The model seems to be meditating with his eyes closed, and the lights enhance this aura of serenity. The whole composition is harmonic and classic, whereas the flower illuminates an ominous quality. In another *Ken Moody*, the purple light resembles the light of nightclub, enriching this underground ominous atmosphere. Considering the lily in this series, I will suggest that Mapplethorpe depicted the "gaze" that comes from a flower. In his *Orchid* (1988), the flower

seems to be staring at us. By using the technique of close-up, Mapplethorpe let the flowers show themselves candidly, and the gesture of the flowers troubled the audience as we must confront these blood-red trypanophobous speckles that recall human disease yet confirm the robust condition of the flowers. Mapplethorpe's camera approached the heart of the flowers, uncovering their stigmas, bumps, veins, and spots, which recall the symptoms of AIDS such as Kaposi sarcoma. As I shall discuss, it is worth noting that Mapplethorpe's close-up resembles an act of penetration, which echoes the manner of art-making in the *fin-de-siècle* period.

In *A Touch of Blossom: John Singer Sargent and the Queer Flora of Fin de Siècle Art*, Alison Syme (2010) examines John Singer Sargent's floral paintings, revealing the connection between floral visual art, sexuality, disease, medicine, and literature. She also explores a *fin-de-siècle* flower-bee metaphor, suggesting that painters were like pollinators, and the process of art making resembled the mechanism of pollination (2010: 3). As Syme argues, "in addition to the artist-as-pollinator, the artist-like-plant was a flourishing paradigm in the nineteenth century" (2010: 4). In his book *Freak to Chic*, Janes also suggests that "the very act of painting flowers could be interpreted in a sexualized manner as, for instance, the male artist pollinating the canvas with his brush" (2023: 145). Though this process of artistic pollination was not necessarily "male" but queer. As I pointed out in the Introduction, when Gluck painted calla lilies, she felt like a bee penetrating the centre of the flowers and drinking the sweetness from them. Considering "the pollinator personae when Sargent painted *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose*", Syme suggests that "Sargent's rushing back and forth was to match tones on his palette from a distance", and this way of painting "mimicking the spiralling dance of the bee" (2010: 145). In a sense, Sargent's manner resonates with Mapplethorpe's way of photographing. As Smith wrote, Mapplethorpe's eyes "became body", walking in "the murky hearts of a rose" – he inserted in flowers by using his camera. Moreover, there is also a dance between the photographer and his flowers, as Mapplethorpe spent time to arrange, craft, and caress these flowers during the process of shooting. He was "rushing back and forth" between the camera and the flowers. By using this technique, Mapplethorpe revealed another side of flowers, which is the sinister morbidity and evilness.

The connection between disease and flowers can be traced back to the *fin-de-siècle* Europe (Murray, 2020; Syme, 2010). In *A Touch of Blossom*, Syme points out that, in the late 19th century, floral metaphors had been used to illustrate venereal disease in the medical field (2010: 19). For example, Syme explores the case of the French surgeon and gynaecologist Samuel-Jean Pozzi (who was depicted by Sargent as a figure with scarlet gown and 'elegant hands'). Syme suggests that Doctor Pozzi described venereal infection by using a floral

metaphor. She writes that “through them we enter into the flowery world of venereal disease”, and further she points out that “the metaphoric and sublimatory excess of Pozzi’s descriptions of symptoms can be explained in part by the contemporary cultural resonance of syphilis, which embraced the longstanding association of the disease with luxuriant plant life” (2010: 127). The combination of “luxuriant plant life” and the deadly disease was presented in Huysmans’s *À rebours*, in which the author offered a detailed description of exotic vegetations. In Chapter Eight, Huysmans elaborated how Des Esseintes, his protagonist, carefully and obsessively selects tropical plants for his greenhouse, which resembles Mapplethorpe’s craftsmanship of picking and arranging flowers. Flowers, in Huysmans’s story, are extremely corporeal, exuberant, and morbid. Des Esseintes visits the hothouses of the Avenue de Chatillon and the Valley of Anuary, as he is fascinated by those well-nurtured plants. He spends all his money pre-ordering carts of flowers and greeneries. When he returns, he cannot stop thinking of “the strange species” that he purchased. Those “lurid flowers of evil” are like ghosts, haunting him with their exotic temperaments (Paglia, 1990: 432). These flowers also “display glamor and status, notably when the plants involved were exotic and brought to perfection out of season in hothouses” (Janes, 2023: 146). The flowers are healthy and perfect, but Des Esseintes fascinated by the morbidity of these flowers. When his delivery arrived, Des Esseintes showcases a wild and morbid floral world for the readers, as he says:

...most of them (the tropical plants), as if disfigured by syphilis or leprosy, displayed livid patches of flesh, reddened by measles, roughened by eruptions; others showed the bright pink of a half-closed wound or the red brown of the crusts that form over a scar; others were as if scorched with cauteries blistered with burns; others again offered hairy surfaces eaten into holes by ulcers and excavated by chancres ... ([1884] 2018: 74)

In every sense, this is a disturbing description of flowers, yet it recalls George Bataille’s philosophy, which is crucial for the discussion of queer ideality and utopianism. In “The Language of Flowers” (1985), Bataille argues that, if we see a flower only as a thing-in-itself without additional meanings that are made by human beings, the flower is not necessarily a pure, romantic, and beautiful organism. Bataille argues that:

In fact, most flowers are badly developed and are barely distinguishable from foliage; some of them are even unpleasant, if not hideous. Moreover, even the most beautiful flowers are spoiled in their centers by hairy sexual organs ... other flowers, it is true, present very well-developed and undeniably elegant stamens, but appealing again to common sense, it becomes clear on *close examination* [emphasis added] that this elegance is rather *satanic* [emphasis added]: thus certain kinds of fat orchids, plants so

shady that one is tempted to attribute to them the most troubling human perversions (1985: 12).

Reading Bataille in relation to Huysmans's writing, this form of detailed description can deconstruct the romantic symbolism of flowers. According to Bataille, to reveal the "satanic" and biological instinct of flowers is to bring them back to materialism – flowers became themselves. Thus, the discussion of queer flowers must include their "hideous" side, just as we cannot consider ideality without including negativity.

Des Esseintes's exotic flowers clearly have a morbid appearance that is in relation to human disease. Yet this appearance proves that the flowers are living in a "luxuriant plant life", whereas the excitement and passion of a luxuriant life might cause disaster. For Des Esseintes, the meditation of the flowers turns into a reflection of a fatal disease in the 19th century. "It all comes down to syphilis in the end", the narrator says, "he (*Des Esseintes*) had a sudden vision of human race tortured by the virus of long past centuries" ([1884] 2018: 77). Likewise, the shadow of the virus made Mapplethorpe's flowers eerie. In his study on Mapplethorpe, Danto cited the words of the photographer, saying that "some of them (flowers) have a certain sinister side to them, I think. A certain edge, a creepy quality ... I think there is some weirdness to my pictures of flowers", and "they are not fun flowers" (quoted in Danto, 1995: 115). This statement echoes Janes's argument, as he writes, "not all flowers were bright and gay: some were dark, strange, and evocative of decadence" (2023: 1).

As mentioned, in Mapplethorpe's last album, one of his latter *Orchids* (1988) highlights the astonishing morbidity (fig. 50). The piece was created when he was seriously ill (he was becoming ill during the early 1980s). Yet the flower was perfectly presented and widely opens to the audience, showing its impudicity and potent life force. Together with this vitality, the blood-red speckles on the petals shows the "creepy quality" and the "sinister side" of the orchids. Morphologically, the speckles can be related to the symptoms of AIDS/HIV. Looking at another work of "fat orchid" (Bataille, 1985: 12) in 1986, the little bumps on the dual hanged petals can be associated with skin lesions (fig. 51). The flower casts its ghostly shadow, and above the flower, a triangle shade seems like dark clouds that are about to shut down the picture. Mapplethorpe captured a moment during the movement of the lights. This orchid was not a "fun" flower, and is was "bold rather than delicate" (Janes, 2023: 147).

I argue that the boldness of the orchid shows "how to have promiscuity in an epidemic" (Crimp, 1987), distinguishing Mapplethorpe's flowers from the fin de siècle aesthetics. In the

late 19th century, the doctor used flowers to illustrate the symptoms of venereal disease. This form of floral image can be read as a graphic warning that could cause a fear of sexuality, as in Des Esseintes's horrifying description of flowers. However, Mapplethorpe's flowers appear more vigorous. In his 1988 *Orchids*, the unapologetic gesture of the flower shows no signs of being ashamed about desire. Mapplethorpe did not attempt to make a warning about homoerotic desire by photographing "the creepy quality" of flowers. It is crucial to stress that Mapplethorpe's flowers are not educational illustrations from the health department that advertised "the close-up of a face with KS lesions on it" (Crimp, 1987: 268). As Watney argues, some medical images of symptoms equate AIDS with venereal diseases, and claimed that AIDS "is intrinsically sexual" (1996: 10). At a Boston conference in 1985, Watney documented:

One doctor presented a slide show ... He showed a large number of images of active cases of syphilis, gonorrhoea, and herpes, finishing up with opportunistic Aids conditions including Kaposi's sarcoma. His aim was clearly to associate Aids with venereal disease, in a narrative of moral outrage and physical disgust (1996: 19).

Mapplethorpe's "sinister" and "creepy" flowers are not illustrations that remind the public of having safe sex. Rather, I argue that Mapplethorpe's flowers reflect the "gay male promiscuity" that Crimp argues. Mapplethorpe did not show how "promiscuity kills", which, for Crimp, is a homophobic narrative that seems to be the "truth" yet criminalises the queer sexual culture (1987: 247). I contend that the artist shows us how queer desire and "promiscuity" bloom. Mapplethorpe revealed the beauty of desires by describing the nobility of the orchid. The orchid is essentially vigorous. The perfect colour, shiny petals, and the erect stem are apparently well nurtured. In Mapplethorpe's pictures and Des Esseintes's depictions of exotic flowers in Huysmans's *À rebours*, we can see that flowers can embody some opportunistic symptoms of human disease yet their "morbid" appearance shows the vitality of themselves. I suggest that these vigorous and queer floral images illustrate a mode of life that coexists with disease and virus – an ailing body can still bloom perfectly and unapologetically. Therefore, as I will illustrate further, the ideal beauty of Mapplethorpe's perfect floral photograph was filled with conflicting dynamics and tensions, including robust and morbid, noble and "promiscuous", as well as eternal and ephemeral.

As discussed, Mapplethorpe's art and his adventurous life were intertwined. His pursuit for a contradictory kind of ideal beauty can be found in some anecdotes. Growing up in a strict Catholic family, Mapplethorpe had a great passion for Catholic aesthetics and ideas. In her memoir *Just Kids*, Smith recalls that Mapplethorpe always arranged things like altars and called

himself an altar boy (2010: 16). However, like Jarman, Mapplethorpe was not a conventional believer; he used religious elements for aesthetic purposes. “He liked being an altar boy”, Smith writes, “he didn’t have a religious or pious relationship with the church; it was aesthetic. The thrill of the battle between good and evil attracted him, perhaps because it mirrored his interior conflict, and revealed a line that he might yet need to cross” (ibid). Smith also unfolds Mapplethorpe’s passion for illusions, mysteries, as well as for Satan and Lucifer. She writes, “he would say that the Church led him to God, and LSD led him to the universe. He also said that ‘art led him to the devil, and sex kept him with the devil’” (2010: 63). In part, pursuing extreme *jouissance* and pain became an enticement of Mapplethorpe’s art and life. Even more disturbing, Smith recalls that “Robert was cutting out sideshow freaks from an oversized paperback on Tod Browning. Hermaphrodites, pinheads, and Siamese twins were scattered everywhere” (2010: 67). Later, the two went to the sideshows, and Mapplethorpe was fascinated and inspired by these fragmental body parts in specimen jars, and decided to use them on a piece of artwork (2010: 68). These ominous collections inspired the artist and stimulated his imagination. Mapplethorpe’s eccentric fancy of Catholic culture and evil resonates with “decadent tastes for freakish and excessive things”, but “it also strove insistently toward aesthetic beauty” (Janes, 2023: 146).

From the scenario of Smith and Mapplethorpe in their visit of the sideshows, we can flashback to the world of Baudelaire. This special aesthetic taste of Mapplethorpe was a nod to Baudelaire, who “finds a subversive monstrousness in ideal beauty and an alluring splendour in the grotesque” (Murray, 2020: 43). To cite Mapplethorpe’s own words, “beauty and the devil are the same thing”. Considering Mapplethorpe’s taste, one of the most disturbing poems in *The Flowers of Evil* emerges. In “A Carcass”, he exclaimed, “And the sky was watching that superb cadaver / Blossom like a flower” ([1857] 2015: 51). With the process of decay, inside a dead body, Baudelaire looked for lives, and the body of the woman becomes another form of organism. The last verse goes, “Then, O my beauty! Say to the worms who will / Devour you with kisses. / That I have kept the form and the divine essence / Of my decomposed love!” (ibid). The “death-drama” (Murray, 2020: 127) of “A Carcass” links to Mapplethorpe’s floral close-ups which revealed the morbid side of flowers and illustrated that “love smells like death” (Bataille, 1985: 13).

The flowers, as Murray points out, have an “inglorious death” because they are sex organs of plants that will live briefly, and their death, which happens after the climax, is caused by sexual *jouissance* (2020: 122). Casting Rilke’s “The First Elegy”, Danto wrote that:

the beauty of Mapplethorpe's flowers is not that of Wordsworth's daffodils. It is beauty characterized by Rilke in the *First Duino Elegy* as the 'beginning of terror we're still just able to bear, / and why we adore it so is because it serenely / disdains to destroy us.' Mapplethorpean beauty is a compound of elegance and menace ... it is the kinds of beauty whose objective correlative is that dangerous sort of sex he chose to portray (1995: 117).

Danto's interpretation shows that "Mapplethorpe's flowers is not that of Wordsworth's daffodils". Likewise, Jarman's nature is not that of John Constable's. Queer representations of nature and flowers do not avoid the sinister sensibilities.

Danto argued that Mapplethorpe's flowers show the beauty of the "dangerous sort of sex", and they had "little to do with pleasure". Danto realised that Mapplethorpe was "a sexual outlaw". The phrase "dangerous sort of sex" might refer to the artist's radical sexual life, and in particular with engagement with S&M. As Danto documented, Lynn Davis, one of the closest friends of Mapplethorpe, reminisced that:

Robert was very active in sadomasochist sex, and every day he would phone and describe to her what he had done the night before. She said in effect that at times her jaw would hang open in amazement" (1996: 7).

However, S&M culture is essentially about pleasure and entertainment. Every day he had a new experience to share with a friend – this anecdote shows that Mapplethorpe was obsessed with a form of "new pleasure" that created by S&M activities (Foucault, 1997: 166). "Pleasure" is a crucial concept in Foucault's theorisation of "the S&M game" as it can create a dynamic "strategic relation" and "great new friendships" (1997: 169; 166). This argument considers S&M as a form of entertainment with revolutionary dynamics. As Foucault argues, S&M "is an acting-out of power structures by a strategic game that is able to give sexual pleasure or bodily pleasure" (1997: 169). This pleasure-creation itself contains the act of resistance. In the introduction of *Macho Sluts*, Pat Califia discusses the function of pornography, arguing that entertainment is not "trivial" (1988: 15). He writes, "if you live in a society that wishes you didn't exist, anything you do to make yourself happy disrupts its attempts to wipe you out" (ibid). I suggest that Mapplethorpe's vital *Tulips* justifies the attempt to "make yourself happy".

I argue that this cluster of tulips are filled with pleasure and entertainment, representing the vitality of queer sexual culture. These flowers appear crowded, unapologetic, and multiple. The amount, biological traits, and the seductive appearance of tulips reflects Crimp's argument

of gay promiscuity. He writes, “our promiscuity taught us many things, not only about the pleasures of sex, but about the great multiplicity of those pleasures” (1987: 253).

Mapplethorpe captured the vital moments of flowers – in this photo, none of them emaciated. The perfection of flowers indicates an exuberant attitude, which can be read as an ode to life and sex.

Danto’s interpretation however is helpful for politicalising Mapplethorpe’s flowers. On Mapplethorpe’s 1983 *Tulips*, he wrote:

to my mind the masterpiece among the flower masterpieces is the box of the tulips of 1983, where the wooden container is placed in the center of the square format, but with its bottom edge nearly coincident with the bottom edge of the frame. It is like a coffin, out of which the flowers writhe upward, like flames or souls, while the background is divided by some shadow of mysterious provenance into three vertical rectangles, like a view of nothingness through the bars of a prison (1995: 119).

According to Danto’s comments, I argue that this picture is political because the tulips are trying to emancipate themselves from the bondage of a wooden box and from “the bars of a prison”. They are showered by the light; it is more like an uprising of tulips. Importantly, Mapplethorpe created *Tulips* in 1983, which allows us to read this image together with gay promiscuity, AIDS/HIV, and S&M culture. Reading *Tulips* with this historical context in mind, the group of flowers turns into a political demonstration charged with queer sex. With the dynamic of S&M, Mapplethorpe makes “minority forms of sex” (Califia, 1988: 15) highly visible.

This political potentiality, as I will argue, bring Mapplethorpe’s floral photograph to the realm of queer politics. Throughout this section, I have argued that flowers can be a metaphor for disease and can also be an embodiment of luxuriant desire. Importantly, this paradoxical metaphor represented queer love life since the pre-AIDS era – a lifestyle that has been considered as a form of queer politics. Fritscher recalls that:

the pre-AIDS past of the 1970s has become a strange country. We lived life differently a dozen years ago. The High Time was in full upswing. Liberation was in the air, and so were we, performing nightly our high-wire sex acts in a circus without nets. If we fell, we fell with splendor in the grass. The carnival, ended now, has no more memory than the remembrance we give it, and we give remembrance here (1990).

Mapplethorpe's camera work and aesthetic sensibilities reveal the essence of queer ideality, and in the following, I will examine how Mapplethorpe's manner and technique create queer idealism, mourning, and remembrance, and explore "an aesthetics of memory that can articulate the relationship of loss and hope" (Castiglia & Reed, 2012: 186).

5.4 Queer Ideality in Mapplethorpe's Flowers

In the previous discussion, I argued that Mapplethorpe's perfectionism contains a dialectics of morbidity and vitality. Connecting to the *fin-de-siècle* floral sensibilities, I have explored an aesthetic of morbidity in Mapplethorpe's flowers, arguing that this perspective is crucial for the discussion of queer ideality. Based on these discussions, this section will access a more optimistic disposition in order to reveal queer ideality that grows out of this dialectical aesthetic. I have discussed how Mapplethorpe's technique of close-up reveals the morbid sensibility of the flowers. In this section, I will examine his use of lighting. The trace of queer ideality in Mapplethorpe's floral photography, as I will suggest, was made by his technique of lighting. Some of Mapplethorpe's floral pictures show the fugitivity of the light (fig. 51; 52), and thus, I will argue that this lighting effect can be read as a representation of queer desire in the AIDS era, which was registered by the activities of cruising, S&M, and public sex. These activities showed that queer desire often blazed and quenched in a short period, yet these ephemeral moments illuminated a series of queer sensibilities, including optimism, joy, nobility, vitality, ecstasy, and idealism (Muñoz, 2009: 33 – 48). As I will suggest, Mapplethorpe seemed to be affirming these queer sensibilities with his camera, and he transformed them into dramatic scenarios of flowers. Furthermore, I will analyse why a Mapplethorpean lighting effect illustrates the essence of queer ideality and utopianism, as well as illuminates the residue of Eros. In this section, I focus on the sensibility of Eros that lingers in his corporeal photography of flowers. This exploration is important because this is where Mapplethorpe's floral pictures nod to queer politics. Eros, in Mapplethorpe's works, echoes Edward Carpenter's ideology who contended that "Eros is a great leveller. Perhaps the true Democracy rests, more firmly than anywhere else, on a sentiment which easily passes the bounds of class and caste, and unites in the closet affection the most estranged ranks of society" (1908: 114 – 115). The "leveller" Eros, illuminates a queer utopian form of democracy. Through a desire-sharing mechanism, we can perceive this revolutionary dynamic not from the hardcore nudity, but from these ostensibly innocuous floral still-lives.

Mapplethorpe's "dramatic and elegant" (Muñoz, 1999: 68) lighting is unique especially in his photography of flowers. The light directly constructs a sinister yet contemplative atmosphere

with a revelation of temporality. Mapplethorpe captured something that was about to perish, and this ephemeral thing, as I suggest, can be imagined as queer desire. When the light silently shone on the flower, the vase, and the wall of his studio, the striped shadow of the shutter showed the lapse of time. The artist seemed to chase the light and to grasp the moment, whilst creating an aura of serenity, fugitivity, and eternity. Although Mapplethorpe is not the only artist who was interested in crafting the light, his works are still special because he created them before and during the AIDS era, and he photographed flowers when he was in crisis. We also can imagine a striking contrast: an artist who lived a wild life, experienced radical masochistic jouissance, and simultaneously, elaborately photographed flowers in his studio. This contrast resonates with the dramatic light in his floral photography. Mapplethorpe acknowledged Eros while he was facing pending death. His images, therefore, became the testimonies of queer way of life.

This representation of the fleeting light links to an important theme of queer memorialisation. Namely, it might reflect the situation of queer communities in the AIDS era when they had to face being sick, dying, loss, grief, and mourning. In some pictures, such as *Iris* (1986, fig. 52), the lights are almost at the edge of dying yet the artist captured the perfect moment before it gone. The composition is noble, balanced, and dignified, and the flowers show a strong presence with an urn-shaped vase that was depicted like a monument. These store-bought irises are the objects of time. These flowers are in a perfect condition, yet they will wither soon because they were blooming in a vase rather than in the soil. On such a composition, Celant comments:

They are fixed in their full splendor; however, this moment is short-lived, ephemeral. It appears and disappears, asking to be illuminated ... He wants to bring forth a dance of palpitation and an interplay of changing colors around this miracle of fleeting, yet sublime and glorious life (1992: 41).

Celant's comment is not only an accurate interpretation of Mapplethorpe's floral pictures but also a precise definition of queer utopianism. Therefore, I suggest that Celant's interpretation has already pointed out the connection between queer utopia and Mapplethorpe's floral pictures. Queer utopianism, to cite Celant's words, is an anticipation residing in the moment of "short-lived" and "ephemeral", and "it appears and disappears" as an illumination in the "miracle of fleeting". According to Bloch (1986), the dream of utopia is indetermined, and to cite Muñoz (2009: 1), "queerness is an ideality ... We may never touch queerness, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality". According to Muñoz,

this sense of ephemerality is a particular queer emotion. In “Gesture, Ephemera, and Queer Feeling”, Muñoz argues that ephemera, which is like “trace, the remains, the things that are left, hanging in the air like a rumor”, can be found in queer gestures (2009: 65). For example, according to Muñoz, “a cool look of a street cruise” or “a mannish struct of a particularly confident woman” suggest a queer sensibility of ephemera. Gestures are instantaneous, and thus, they will not be constant, and they also perform for love. I apply Muñoz’s concept of ephemera to Mapplethorpe’s use of the light. The shadows in *Iris*es are “residue”, “a queer trace”, and “an ephemeral evidence” (Muñoz, 2009: 71) that were seized by Mapplethorpe’s camera.

In this regard, I will look at pictures like *Iris*es through the culture of cruising and public sex, suggesting that these images can be read as testimonies that can prove the existence of queer ideality, although they did not show sexual activities directly. The ephemerality that is represented by the lighting effect evokes those “short-lived” (Celant, 1992: 41) queer sexual activities. Since the pre-AIDS period, many queer people chose cruising and public sex as a lifestyle, and this collective choice was becoming a subculture. For example, in *Cruising the Dead River: David Wojnarowicz and New York’s Ruined Waterfront*, Fiona Anderson (2019) examines the culture of cruising in the 1970s and the 1980s. At the time, queer people wandered around “the disused Brooklyn harbor” (ibid) and sought for sex and love. Those abandoned buildings on the waterfront, according to Anderson, were “ephemeral traces of the cruising cultures of the late 1970s” (2019: 5). For these queer lovers, their desires and loves were also ephemeral, and sometimes violent, and even unpleasant, speaking to the collapsed buildings in front of the water. The similar queer scenes can be found in the old High Line, as I have discussed in Chapter 4. Lovers cruised, hooked up, had sex, and then parted. As Crimp argued, this was “the ideal of perverse sexual pleasure” and “a culture of sexual possibility” (2004: 140). Mapplethorpe was no stranger to this queer way of life. He was one of the lovers who dedicated himself to radical sexual activities; he was the one who was willing to take the risk of contracting the virus. During these short-lived affairs, the desire and love blossomed and withered in a moment. Mapplethorpe seemed to represent and document these ecstatic moments and emotions by photographing flowers with delicate lights and shadows.

Bearing the culture of cruising in mind, it is not difficult to perceive the work of Eros in Mapplethorpe’s floral pictures. Mapplethorpe’s technique and manner enriched the sensibility of Eros. Mapplethorpe’s craftsmanship of the light and his depiction of the gaze (as I discussed before) essentially documented desires and the moments before they disappear. This is where we approach queer ideality and utopianism. Again, to quote Carpenter, Eros “is a great

leveller" (1908: 114). Floral imagery can be read as such a leveller, as Looby argues, floral images are able to represent the historical structure of a perverse desire that shuttles between races, sexualities, and gender (1995: 142, 148). Celant's statement of Eros directly points out the utopian potential in a Mapplethorpean aesthetic. He argues that:

Eros rules the world, and Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs glorify the power and proliferation of eros ... he believes that in a satisfied and realized eros that always encompasses the new portions of life and the new powers of love ... Mapplethorpe demonstrates his need to conquer the people who want to love one another (1992: 11).

The sensibility of Eros lingers in Mapplethorpe's images of S&M and his floral photography. Moreover, his S&M series is necessary to discuss because it is associated with his floral photography. In Mapplethorpe's S&M pictures, the circulation of desire is more evident, in which the artist created a dynamic between the model, the photographer, and the audience. As Danto argues:

it was transparent to me that Mapplethorpe's contribution was in this genre of photography ... at a visceral level it was an exceedingly frightening moment: those were real people who put themselves in that way in front of the camera, individuals for whom a certain kind of sexuality was their attribute in the same way as a certain kind of suffering, embodied in some instrument of torment and degradation, was the attribute of the martyr. They clearly trusted the artist, who recorded the extremity of their sexual being with an uninflected clarity and candor, and who, given the physical constraints of the photographic session, has to have shared a space with them as well as a set of values, since he showed himself as participant in the same form of life (1996: 9 – 10).

Danto's account reveals the presence of Eros during the artist's working process. It is true that Mapplethorpe sometimes participated in the sexual game before he started shooting, as he said, "some of those experiences that I later recorded I had experienced first-hand, without a camera" (1988). Eros lingered in these S&M pictures because these bodies had experienced what Foucault called "the real creation of new possibilities of pleasure" ([1984] 2020: 165). In these provocative images, therefore, the traces of desire emerged because Mapplethorpe created them after sexual activities. Thus, there were "residue", "a queer trace", and "an ephemeral evidence" (Muñoz, 2009: 71). We can also imagine how Eros wandered on the set when the artist photographed these men. Those moments were potentially utopian because desire, love, friendship, and art coexisted cohesively in a particular time and space.

Some of Mapplethorpe's floral pictures represent S&M activities, and comparing with those figurative and hardcore images, the floral dramas deepened the theme of Eros. For example, in *Tulips* (1984), Mapplethorpe portrayed two flowers seducing each other. The white tulip is masochistic, waiting to receive the actions from its partner – a tighter striped tulip. This composition, I will suggest, resembles the S&M game of edging (a sexual technique to delay an orgasm). Noteworthy, Mapplethorpe photographed many flowers in narrow-necked vases, and this can be read as a metaphor of bondage. As Ashbery argues, “a bunch of carnations jammed into a constricting glass cylinder is one of many that hint at the voluntary constraints of S&M” (1996: 7). In addition, in his 1985 *Tulip* (fig. 53), Mapplethorpe placed the curved flower between the fork of thorns, and one spine slightly stabs the plump blossom, representing the painful pleasure and the power dynamic between sadism and masochism. Murray's argument on this piece shows how the flower deepens the theme of S&M, as he writes:

Mapplethorpe's *Tulip* (1985) exudes this horrifying *jouissance*: an ambivalent quality somewhere between pleasure and pain, desire and shame. However, there is simultaneously an expressed awareness of death as an intrusive and mysterious force: something that penetrates the beauty of life at the moment of its greatest splendor. Like all of Mapplethorpe's flowers, the tulip is captured at the moment of its perfection – but in this instance, the photographer injects the deathlike coldness of the thorns, eliciting a *jouissance* that renders the image unsettling (2020: 168 – 169).

Tulip is yet another perfect piece of work that contains “an ambivalent quality somewhere between pleasure and pain, desire and shame” (ibid). Surpassing pure sex, this botanical metaphor reveals a philosophy and poetry behind the S&M sensibility.

Considering Mapplethorpe's S&M works together with floral pictures like *Tulips*, it follows that Eros can be read as the thread in Mapplethorpe's photography, running through his pictures of nudes, the S&M series, and flowers (including flowers with Black bodies). I suggest that Mapplethorpe's flowers cannot be separated from his erotic pictures. In the interview with Janet Kardon, Kardon commented, “I think you treat the flowers like the cocks and the cocks like the flowers”, and he answered, “yes, I think they're the same” (Mapplethorpe, 1990). This means that Mapplethorpe applied the same method of shooting to all these subjects. Some critics like Celant also understand Mapplethorpe's flowers as an extension of S&M pictures and a response to a sexual culture in the AIDS era. Furthermore, one exhibition can explain the connection between Mapplethorpe's flowers and sexual pictures. In 1977, Mapplethorpe curated a dual exhibition called *Pictures*. The exhibition was held at two galleries: Holly

Solomon Gallery and the Kitchen. The announcement card shows two hands – the left embodied S&M culture (with leather fingerless glove and metal bracelets), and the right embodied the everyday, or a kind of normativity (with a watch and casual cuff). Interestingly, like he did in many of his works, Mapplethorpe played a paradox. He exhibited his flowers in Holly Solomon Gallery, which was symbolised by the gloved hand, and his erotic pictures in the Kitchen, which was symbolised by the casual hand. Therefore, we can see that the photographer himself interpreted some of his floral pictures as embodiments of S&M culture. I will use Fritscher's comments to conclude this discussion of Eros, in which he suggests Eros threads Mapplethorpe's oeuvre. He writes, "laboured throughout his career to inject that sex rush, that religious feeling, that existential frisson, into his holy pictures of leather sex, Black men, celebrity women and flowers as brilliant as night-blooming sex organs" (2016: n. p.).

5.5 Conclusion: Queer Politics of Remembrance and Mourning

This chapter explores a dialectical ideality in Mapplethorpe's photographs of flowers. I have explored Mapplethorpe's perfectionism which contains both vitality and morbidity, arguing that this form of perfectionism recalls queer ideality in the AIDS era. In "The Issue of Mourning in the AIDS Art", I suggested that Mapplethorpe's floral pictures can be read as "an aesthetics of memory that can articulate the relationship of loss and hope" (Castiglia & Reed, 2012: 186). His non-figurative representations offer us an opportunity to imagine, fantasise, and invent the past, and simultaneously, to create futurity. His desire-sharing mechanism enables later generations to keep that queer ideality alive and influential. This form of queer art is important for those who did not experience the sexual culture in the 1970s and the 1980s.

Mapplethorpe's floral imagery therefore can be understood as a queer archive of feelings, communicating with us via a circulation of desires. These images enable memory to "serve" the present and the future because we can sense and share these sensibilities by looking at Mapplethorpe's pictures, and namely, by aesthetic activities (Castiglia & Reed, 2012).

This mechanism of desire-sharing itself can deconstruct a temporal boundary as it functions through a nonlinear temporality. Queer desires and sensibilities often transmit timelessly. As I have discussed in Chapter 3, the fragmental poem of Sappho tells a shared struggle that existed since ancient times. When a queer individual struggles in here and now, he/she/they is also in contact with this ancient archive of queer emotions. For the Beat poet Allan Ginsberg, this desire-sharing mechanism is what he called "transmission", in which the poet, who came from the 20th century, connected himself to Walt Whitman through the experience of oral sex (Anderson, 2019: 119). This case of Ginsberg illustrates that queer desires and sensibilities can

be transmitted through artistic imagery that comprises erotics and pleasure. Therefore, there is a space for fantasies and imagination, and the queer individuals can invent memories in order to go through the present and open up an ideal futurity. Ginsberg offered his own fantasy to us, as Anderson writes:

Ginsberg put Whitman, and in particular his poem “We Two Boys Together Clinging,” at the head of his own canon of influences, and he was eager to join in this neo-Grecian practice, sleeping with Gavin Arthur who “had slept with Edward Carpenter who had slept with Whitman,” thus “[receiving] the Whispered Transmission ... of that love,” which Ginsberg in turn passed to Neal Cassady. This transfer is emphatically not chronological. “The main thing is communication” (2019: 119).

Anderson’s examination is crucial for this thesis, in which I also argue that queer desires transmit through a form of imaginative sensual “communication” rather than History. This communication functions via artworks that represent queer memories in an indirect and ahistorical way, and Mapplethorpe’s floral photography is able to achieve this goal. Mapplethorpe’s aesthetic contains a “cross-historical” (Love, 2009: 35) desire-shared mechanism. Through this transmission of queer desire, aesthetic perceptions become bodily, material, visceral, and sensual. This bodily turn recalls the Presocratic concept of *aisthesis*, in which the philosophers “tended to suggest materialist theories of perception” (Preus, 2007: 36). Namely, the aesthetic sensation can be a bodily reaction rather than a form of knowledge.

Finally, based on the previous discussions, I will return to queer politics of remembrance and mourning. Mapplethorpe’s flowers suggest a politics of memorialisation “aiming at pleasure” (Celant, 1992: 11). What I will address here is the optimistic temperament of queerness. That is to say, I insist that it is important to remember those ecstatic and ephemeral moments of love and to acknowledge those ideal imagery of a traumatic period. These ecstatic sensibilities are crucial factors of queer ideality. Queer ideality or utopianism are fundamentally associated with pleasure and Eros. According to Munoz, a better world of queerness will contain “better relations within the social that include better sex and more pleasure”. In Celant’s comments, a Mapplethorpean ideality is “a togetherness” (relationality) and a new form of love (better sex and more pleasure). He writes:

His journey allows only the free and circular union of human beings, a togetherness that can broaden and surpass the final concept of eroticism. What he portrays is the exuberance of an art of love which, in aiming at pleasure per se, ignores any difference

between love and perversion, active and passive, dominant and dominated, good and evil (ibid).

Celant points out that Mapplethorpe's works "broaden and surpass the final concept of eroticism". This means that Mapplethorpe's pictures contain queer politics that develops from an erotic basis yet surpasses it, and thus the erotics is not only related to the private sensuality. For Carpenter, Eros itself is political, as he argued, Eros functions as "a great leveller", and we can perceive how Eros levelled all kinds of contradictories, including "love and perversion, active and passive, dominant and dominated, good and evil" (1908: 114). In Mapplethorpe's universe, Eros brings human beings together.

Walking into the world of flowers, Mapplethorpe seemed to be affirming the pleasure of sex and the vitality of life, although he was facing death. Until one of the last self-portraits (1988), the artist showed how illness and the pending death weakened his creativity. Yet Mapplethorpe still depicted exhilarating, sensual, and perfectly healthy flowers in the same year. The vulnerability of his own body and the potent flowers made an intriguing contrast. Perhaps, flowers remind him of the vital and risky life that he had. Mapplethorpe's last self-portraits can be read alongside his 1985 *Tulips*, which can reflect "death as an intrusive and mysterious force: something that penetrates the beauty of life at the moment of its greatest splendor" (Murray, 2020: 168). To conclude, these queer sensibilities in Mapplethorpe's floral photograph that I have explored throughout the chapter portray a character of queerness, who is also depicted in Castiglia and Reed's argument. They stress that:

Queers are not lacking; queers are productively abundant. Queers do not experience only shame, guilt, or grief; we also experience exuberance, defiance, pride, pleasure, giddiness, enthusiastic innocence, outrageous optimism, loyalty, and love. We are, in short, as wonderfully and complexly queer as were those in our social and rhetorical pasts (2012: 148).

It is important to recall those unofficial ecstatic memories of the AIDS era, whereas official memory, embodied by, for example, the red ribbon, gave us a cleaned-up version of the queer past. When these exuberant emotions were veiled, it is difficult to access the whole picture of that particular time, and thus, the ideality cannot be imagined. Mapplethorpe's flowers embodied a contradictory idealism; therefore, these flowers offer us a way to remember and mourn, not just for losses, but also for unofficial pleasures and ideals. Beyond other ways of remembrance such as the Quilt, Mapplethorpe's flowers therefore expand the imagination of queer memory, illuminating that it is equally important to remember traumas and losses but

also desire, pleasure, beauty, possibility, ideals, and love in the time of AIDS/HIV – that the blossoming of desire is as beautiful as its fading.



Figure 48 Robert Mapplethorpe, *Calla Lily*, 1988.
Gelatin silver print, 60 x 50 cm. © 1992 by The Estate of Robert Mapplethorpe, New York.



Figure 49 Robert Mapplethorpe, *Ken Moody*, 1983.
Gelatin silver print, 50 x 40.3 cm. © Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation.



Figure 50 Robert Mapplethorpe, *Orchid*, 1988.
Dye transfer print. © 1990 by The Estate of Robert Mapplethorpe.

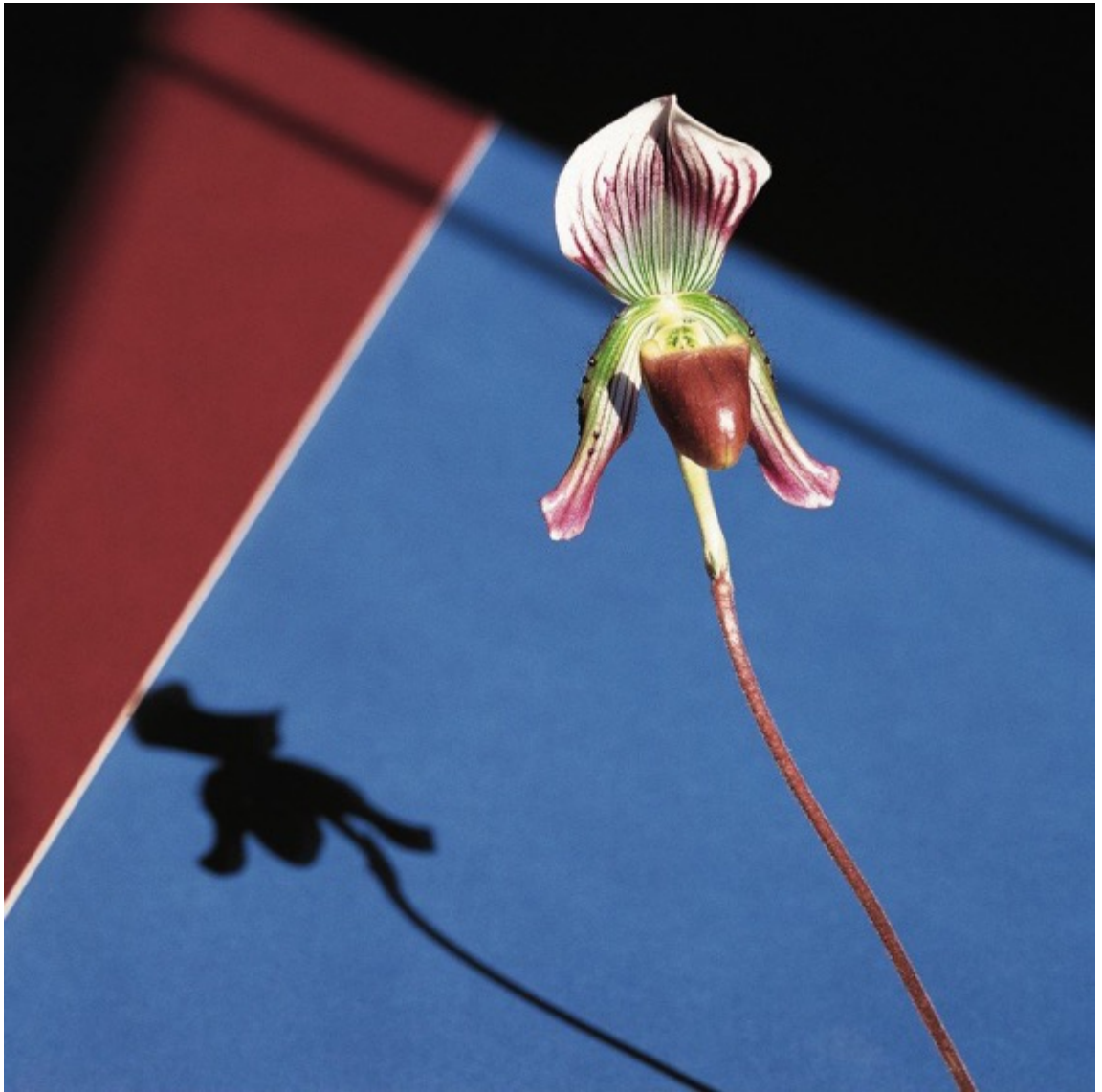


Figure 51 Robert Mapplethorpe, *Orchid*, 1986.
Gelatin silver print. © 1990 by The Estate of Robert Mapplethorpe.



Figure 52 Robert Mapplethorpe, *Irises*, 1986.
Platinum on paper, 66 x 50 cm. © 1992 by The Estate of Robert Mapplethorpe, New York.



Figure 53 Robert Mapplethorpe, *Tulip and Thorn*, 1985.
Gelatin silver print, 40.64 x 50.8 cm. © Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation.

Conclusion Cruising Utopias in Queer Flowers

This thesis argues that the queer art of flowers not only symbolises nonbinary sexualities, but also contains a wide variety of sensibilities, aesthetic philosophies, ideologies, and politics. Instead of conducting an in-depth exploration of the symbolic connotations of queer flowers, this study focuses on the connection between the artists and their floral subjects. I consider the erotic and temporary sensibilities that the artists perceived when they painted or meditated on flowers. Furthermore, I investigate anecdotes, gossip, and queer memories of desires behind these floral works. I suggest that, for the artists that I have discussed in this thesis, flowers are fascinating not only because they have peculiar androgynous distinctiveness. I argue that these artists created floral art mostly because they attempted to “affirm survival” (Butler, 2005: 34) through interacting with flowers and natural environments. In the case studies of this thesis, I have illustrated this vital connection and how it performed when the artists went through crises. It is this connection that opens up another space for exploring the significance of queer flowers beyond Symbolism. Therefore, this thesis contends that queer utopias reside in a flower-body connection. This transcorporeal interaction between human beings, flowers, and natural environments illustrates how a nonhuman force supports and simultaneously disturbs and invades the human body and system. This dynamic registers the vulnerability and porousness of human bodies, and thus deconstructs identity, subjectivity, and bodily autonomy. As discussed in the Introduction, to concern the bodies of others and the bodies in other forms becomes an urgent task. “We are neither invincible nor self-sufficient”, as Alemani states in Venice Biennale Arte 2022, “but rather part of a symbolic web of interdependencies that bind us to each other, to other species, and to the planet as a whole” (2022: n. p.). Therefore, I argue that this flower-body connection illuminates a utopian possibility. Representations of floral bodies show that it is necessary to include the nonhuman when we imagine utopias. These sensibilities can be found in the case studies of O’Keeffe, Demuth, Hartley, Twombly, Jarman, and Mapplethorpe. I use theories of queer temporality, ecology, wildness, transcorporeality, mourning, and memorialisation to explore their works of flowers. In doing this, I offer expanded and imaginative interpretations of their floral imagery, and stress the political dynamics within these ostensibly innocuous flowers.

In this Conclusion, I will develop an open ending for the theme of queer flowers because this thesis is a future-oriented study. Also, this thesis insists on queer utopianism, and thus the question is, how can we imagine a utopia in the current world, where crises are virtually rehearsing a dystopia? This study will be incomplete without responding to this question and therefore I will consider this question by looking at particular artworks. Instead of summarising

my arguments through revisiting the contents of the chapters, I prefer to conclude this thesis by looking at two contemporary artists, who are passionate about creating floral works, and by exploring their strategies of negotiating the dystopian tendency. I choose to conclude in this way because I consider that it is important to locate this theme in here and now and to see how today's queer floral artworks connect to the past and illuminate the future.

As Getsy argues, "since its formulation in the crucible of the AIDS crisis of the 1980s, 'queer' has an ongoing political and cultural currency that continues to prove catalytic to artists and thinkers" (2016: 12). The queer artistic exploration of flowers is an ongoing project towards futurity, yet it remains attached to the darkness and the vitality of the past. In the 21st century, some artists have explored queer floral themes, expanding and deepening the concept of queerness to the areas of politics, feminism, race, ecology, and posthumanism. These artists include Jim Hodges (b. 1957, fig. 54), Nick Cave (b. 1959, fig. 55), Yayoi Kusama (b. 1929, fig. 58), Amber Cowan (b. 1981, fig. 56), Leonce Raphael Agbodjelou (b. 1965), Max Colby (b. 1990), Kehinde Wiley (b. 1977), Rashaad Newsome (b. 1979, fig. 57), and Mickalene Thomas (b. 1971). These works show a common tendency of considering human bodies in alternative forms. I have chosen two active queer artists, Jim Hodges and Nick Cave, to review the main concepts that I have argued. While Hodges's works open up a space "just like heaven" (Muñoz, 2009: 131 – 146), Cave's "wild" flowers offer us a dystopian dynamic (Halberstam, 2020: 47 – 49). In the following, I would explain how this dialectical dynamic can be seen as another paradigm of imagining a queer utopia.

By looking at Hodges and Cave's works of flowers, in this final discussion, I want to return to the initial questions, asking whether it is possible to imagine a queer utopia from looking at the art after the 1980s, and at our moment when the ideality of a revolutionary sexual culture can only be detected through traces. Why is a utopian dream still necessary and conceivable in an era of the internet, artificial intelligence, consumerism, and global political and environmental crises? Perhaps, the discourse of utopianism itself is becoming less pragmatic in such a dystopia world, yet, as Bloch (1986) argues, we could still glimpse potential utopias in art. He understands "art as an arena in which an alternative world can be expressed – not in a didactic, descriptive way as in traditional 'utopian' literature, but through the communication of an alternative experience" (Levitas, 1990: 170). This shows that a utopian potentiality could emit from the sense of astonishment that we perceive through aesthetic activities. Thus, firstly, I will review Bloch's theory of *concrete* utopia in relation to art. Secondly, I shall explore Hodges's floral installations and trace queer utopia in his techniques, manners, and the astonishing aesthetic effects that these practices produced.

This thesis is future-oriented and hope-based; however, it must be considered in the existing situation whereby our current world is appearing increasingly dystopian. Covid-19, climate crisis, gender issues, local wars, racism, and other forms of political conflict witness a world that is collapsing. Therefore, a concrete utopian paradigm must consider, rather than escape, such a precarious condition. It means that queer utopia must be considered without evading the hardship, crisis, and darkness of the current world. Therefore, it is necessary to concern the relationship between the idea of queer utopia and our increasingly dystopian reality. To reflect on this subject, finally, I would like to offer a brief examination of the Black queer artist Nick Cave's floral sculptures. I will discuss his works along with Halberstam's concept of wildness and the aesthetics of collapsing, in which Halberstam potentially envisages a utopia in dystopia influences. Moreover, through this discussion, I also review the idea that queer art-making extensively links to a strategy of survival, rather than just to sexuality and gender. This idea is demonstrated more explicitly in the works of Hodges and Cave.

A Concrete Utopia

When Muñoz wrote *Cruising Utopia*, "a dismissal of political idealism" dominated the academic field (Muñoz, 2009: 10). The discourses of utopia, hope, and ideality may seem sound even more unrealistic nowadays. Yet cruising queer utopias in queer floral art, as I mentioned above, is not a naïvely optimistic task because utopias can be *concrete* and potentially exists even in a dystopian situation (Muñoz, 2009). Muñoz suggests that a concrete utopia is "relational to historically situated struggles, a collectivity that is actualized or potential" (2009: 3). A concrete utopia will be "daydream-like, but they are the hopes of collective, an emergent group, or even the solitary oddball who is the one who dreams for many" (Muñoz, 2009: 3). In *The Principle of Hope*, Bloch (1986) describes concrete utopias in many forms of arts. Concrete utopias reside in these aesthetic-technological practices and in these moments when we encounter artworks, in which we can search for "the communication of an alternative experience" (Levitas, 1990: 148). In other words, utopias emerged from artistic practices. In the art of the 21st century, the use of new technologies produces more surprises, illusions, and wonders to the audience (for example, as in Benjamin Blaquart's virtual installation in Le Petit Versailles Garden that I have discussed in Chapter 4). Compared with easel paintings or photography, in a contemporary exhibition space, the interaction between the audience and artworks has become more sensual. Some contemporary art tends to produce a bewildering sense of time and space and to offer a form of ecstatic experience. For Bloch, "the modern world is a thing of wonder" (Muñoz, 2009: 5). Likewise, the

astonishment of the modern world fascinated Walter Benjamin who understood “the new economically and technologically based creations” as “a phantasmagoria” ([1939] 1999: 14). Benjamin’s fascination came from the modernisation in the late 19th century, but what he called phantasmagoria perhaps becomes more vivid in our contemporary world. This form of astonishing sensibility could become a trajectory to utopias.

A “wow” or “gee” (Muñoz, 2009: 5) probably is not an uncommon response when one encounters a piece of contemporary art in a specific space (imagining the reaction of the audience when walks into a floral universe such as Newsome’s exhibition *To Be Real* or Kusama’s *Flower Obsession*) (fig. 57; 58). This exclamation of “wow” and “gee” exists in the everyday, rather than in a metaphysical world. Muñoz argues that the exclamation of “wow” and “gee” can be “a mode of utopian feeling” and as “hope’s methodology” (Muñoz, 2009: 5). In addition, a “wow” and “gee” is also a temporary reaction that would be able to emancipate people from a linear temporality, creating an ecstatic state (Muñoz, 2009: 1). The feeling of ecstasy, in Muñoz’s account, is a form of queer temporality. As he argues, “queerness’s time is the time of ecstasy. Ecstasy is queerness’s way. We know time through the field of the affective, and affect is tightly bound to temporality” (Muñoz, 2009: 187). This statement articulates what might happen in aesthetic activities, especially when the audience encounters an artwork with others collectively in a certain time and space. As Jill Dolan argues in *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater*, “live performance provides a place where people come together, embodied and passionate, to share experiences of meaning making and imagination that can describe or capture fleeting intimations of a better world” (2005: 2). Muñoz writes further, that:

taking ecstasy with one another, in as many ways as possible, can perhaps be our best way of enacting a queer time that is not yet here but nonetheless always potentially dawning ... Taking ecstasy with one another is an invitation, a call, to a then-and-there, a not-yet-here (2009: 187).

In the following, I will cruise concrete utopias in the art after Jarman and Mapplethorpe’s time, whilst searching for “a collectivity that is actualized or potential” (Muñoz, 2009: 3).

Jim Hodges: Utopia in Astonishment and the Quotidian

In *Cruising Utopia*, Muñoz offers a rich account of Hodges’s experiments with camouflage, arguing that his installations “are passports allowing us entry to a utopian path, a route that

should lead us to heaven or, better yet, to something just like that” (2009: 146). In this discussion, however, Muñoz did not undertake a detailed analysis of Hodges’s floral installations. I therefore use Hodges’s flowers as one of the final frameworks to unfold the synthesis of artistic techniques, queer desire, bodies, and nature. Following the publication of the first book-length study in 2021, Hodges’s works are deserving of more academic attention. As an artist who went through the AIDS era and as a *survivor*, Hodges now expands those queer emotions such as mourning, grief, shame, nobility, and vitality towards a wider ecological terrain, offering a wishful landscape containing a traumatic past, a troubled present, and a utopian future.

From the early 1990s, Hodges spent his afternoons in a local café working on a three-year art project. This scenario itself already illuminates an aura of the everyday queer life in the city when the shadow of AIDS/HIV remained and when queer artists had experienced massive loss and grief. Hodges drew a flower each day on napkins and stored them in a pink clam-shell box. This artistic act was turned into a daily ritual that could negotiate the ongoing linear process of time. After three years, he created 565 delicate floral drawings in ballpoint ink. These crumpled and stained restaurant napkins were transformed into an astonishing piece of work, which was titled *A Diary of Flowers* (1994, fig. 59). This series has been exhibited flexibly in different compositions and poetic subtitles. It is the aroma of the everyday life that makes the piece intriguing. The fragile tissue drawings, coffee stains, common ballpoint pen, and a quotidian space in the AIDS era constitute a form of hymn, in which we also could perceive a deepened feeling of grief, loss, and brilliant illuminations. In his essay “Jim Hodges: A Survey. From Naturalizing Art to Acculturating Nature”, Robert Hobbs writes:

The remarkable beauty of his drawings on these throw-away supports dramatizes the preciousness of life’s even most offhand moments ... These fragile drawings ... can be appreciated in terms of intertwining polarities by discerning how the flowers’ awesome beauty transcends their ephemeral substrate and, alternatively, by considering how the works’ seeming ephemerality holds these distinctively radiant blossom hostage (2020: 65).

The characteristic of ephemerality shows a sense of the breath of life, and this philosophical sensibility is apparent in Hodges’s works. I will argue that, in *A Diary of Flowers*, there are two dispositions related to queer utopian dynamics, which constitute the visual effect and the quotidian aesthetics of Hodges’s handmade style. In *Cruising Utopia*, both astonishment and the quotidian are considered as integral to utopian dynamics. Muñoz argues that the feeling of astonishment has utopian potential because it “helps one surpass the limitations of an

alienating presentness and allows one to see a different time and place”. *A Diary of Flowers* was displayed in Hodges’s first solo exhibition in 1994. The artist says:

I wanted to make a strong statement with the slightest gesture possible, so I ended up filling the walls of the gallery with hundreds of drawings on napkins. The room would flutter when anyone walked in and all these flowers would gently shiver when you approached them. The room retained a white softness and had an ethereal aura (2020: 14).

Every delicate and quiet move of these napkin floral drawings suggests an astonishing aesthetic experience. In the passage above, Hodges describes an astonishing aesthetic effect that occurred with the cooperation of the air and also with the breath of the audience. This illustrates how much the napkin flowers were connected to space. Hodges argues that “space as a material, context, state, condition, stage, theatre, etc offers loads of opportunity and ranges and spectrums for intervention. I’m attuned to spaces and reading with my body in spaces” (2020: 32). Hodges are informed by “actual theatre experiences and collaborations with performers, composers, singers, musicians and dancers” (ibid). This resonates with Dolan’s argument in *Utopia in Performance*, which is a method of constructing utopia by surprising the audience with wonders and ecstasies.

Hodges’s *A Diary of Flowers* is made from everyday materials, and it is special because the astonishment emerges from the quotidian and the lightness. Muñoz argues that:

Roland Barthes wrote that the mark of the utopian is the quotidian. Such an argument would stress that the utopian is an impulse that we see in everyday life. This impulse is to be glimpsed as something that is extra to the everyday transaction of heteronormative capitalism. This quotidian example of the utopian can be glimpsed in utopian bonds, affiliations, designs, and gestures that exist within the present moment (2009: 22 – 23).

For Muñoz, Frank O’Hara’s poem *Having a Coke with You* is clearly a hymn to the everyday, in which the structure of a better world nested in a quotidian act when the narrator was sharing a coke with a loved one (2009: 5 – 9). He argues that O’Hara described “a vast lifeworld of queer relationality, an encrypted sociality, and a utopian potentiality” (Muñoz, 2009: 6). Reading O’Hara’s poem with Warhol’s drawing of a rose in a coke bottle (fig. 60), Muñoz suggests that, in Warhol’s drawing, the coke bottle:

is not an isolated mass-produced commodity; it is touched by a flower that springs forth much in the same way that a transformed Narcissus blooms as a flower ... That Warholian notion of a radical idea of democracy via commodity form, taken alongside the image of the flowering Coco-Cola bottle, a natural surplus that surges forth from the apparently sterile container, illustrates Warhol's particular version of the queer utopian impulse (2009: 145).

In a similar way, Hodges's flowering napkins are queer touches of the everyday. The coffee-stained napkins witness the familiar city afternoons and the aura of the instant in every coffee break. The busy city street, the sidewalk café, and the passer-by show a mundane scenario with a dynamite utopian potential, which illuminates a feeling of ecstasy. As the art critic Skye Sherwin writes:

pinned gently to the gallery wall, these trembling sheets are a catalogue of fleeting moments, testament, we might suppose, to coffee shop daydreaming or time filled while waiting for friends or lovers ... Hodges's work confronts us with everyday epiphanies, the revelation that ordinary things have the potential to induce a state of rapture (2010: n. p.).

Furthermore, Hodges's technique is quotidian because his works, especially his floral installations, are handmade crafts that register intimacy and relationality. As Stewart Carin writes for *The New York Times*, the artist himself loves "craft-based forms, ephemeral and found materials, and images – flower, butterflies – traditionally associated with mortality and transience" (quoted in Cotter, 2014: n. p.). *A Diary of Flowers* belongs to Hodges's major floral project that took place between 1995 and 1998 when the crisis of AIDS/HIV had not yet finished (Hobbs, 2020: 66). This project includes a series of floral installations that were made by store-bought silk flowers, such as *A Possible Cloud* (1993), *A Line to You* (1994), *Every Touch* (1995), *In Blue* (1996), *Changing Things* (1997), *You* (1997), and so forth. In these practices, artificial flowers were composed collectively, as Cahan argues, these flowers were patiently stitched one by one, serving as "points of physical contact between beings" (2007: 101). Handmade art is also able to register the intimacy between the artists and their works, and the spirit of handmade, according to Muñoz, can be read as a refusal of alienation. Craftmanship itself therefore contains a queer politics, and can assume intimacy, solidarity, and relationality of people in a utopian future.

Indeed, according to Cahan, Hodges's floral works witnessed queer intimacies in the AIDS era. In this regard, Hodges's practices witness memories, traces, ghosts, desire, and love of the past, and I will read his works as a quotidian diary of queer emotions. The performative queer

ghost in *A Diary of Flowers* is Hodges's beloved friend Félix Gonzalez-Torres, who died from AIDS-related disease in 1996. In 1994, 72 drawings of *A Diary of Flowers* were installed in Gonzalez-Torres's bedroom, an intimate space where secretive queer stories would take place. In this way, *A Diary of Flowers* was connected to Gonzalez-Torres's ghost who represented the ideality and utopian potential in a sexual culture in the AIDS era. In his 2010 essay "What Was", Hodges remembers his dear friend and comrade, acknowledging both the illumination and devastation of a queer artist's life. Hodges writes:

I'd listen to the sadness in the story, his desire, his strength and courage that toned his struggle, the flavor of loss, the fixation on time – an impossible body never meant to be held, the impossibility of ending and the unrelenting insistence of the unavoidable concrete horror of what was to come, the tragedy, the crime ... He's talk about history, its continual presence; about optimism in design and 'social amnesia'; of a lack of brilliance in our surroundings – 'brilliance,' a rarity that was diminishing with each loss to AIDS ([2010] 2020: 126 – 127).

Gonzalez-Torres's vitality had to negotiate tragedy, illness, heteronormativity, and homophobia. Hodges met Gonzalez-Torres because of *A Diary of Flowers* (Hodges, 2020: 14). After watching the work, Gonzalez-Torres encouraged Hodges to create a blue floral curtain. Hodges created *In Blue* in 1996, which dedicated to his comrade who passed away in the same year. On Hodges's floral curtains, Cahan argues that:

what is mourned in Hodges's flower curtains? Certainly friends, lovers, family members, but Hodges's grieves something more, something so fundamental that the words that come to mind sound almost trite: humanity, dignity, citizenship rights ... Hodges's flower curtains provide sites of both social and personal grief without exploiting either the victim or the survivor, and without sensationalizing death and dying (2007: 102).

The termination of the floral project registers a futurity because the artist tends to expand these queer emotions to a wider terrain. In 1998, Hodges concluded his floral project with a black floral curtain. Cahan suggests that "his decision to end the series may been influenced by the course of AIDS treatment (2007: 104 – 105). In mid-1997 news first emerged of the effects of a new AIDS 'cocktail,' involving a combination of drugs including protease inhibitors" (ibid). In the early 21st century, Hodges expanded his floral theme and continued to investigate the relationship between nature, trauma, memories, queerness, and bodies. Since then, floral imagery seems to go beyond the subject of sexuality and gender, registering that floral theme is departing from the Symbolist framework and has arrived at the terrain of queerness, where

a deviant sexual desire operates as a revolutionary power that illuminates a utopian futurity. In Nick Cave's floral installations, this political dynamic demonstrates queer utopianism loudly and wildly.

Nick Cave: Utopias in the Wild

Instead of building, making, and doing, Halberstam proposes a way of rebooting the world through a set of dystopian strategies in relation to failure, chaos, collapsing, unmaking, undoing, disorder, and wildness. In her latest book *Wild Things: The Disorder of Desire* (2020), Halberstam builds a dialogue with Muñoz's queer utopianism and his early consideration of wildness, illustrating a theory of dystopia by looking at wild queer aesthetics (Halberstam: 2020: 46). "Art, even today", she writes, "provides us with witnesses to the wildness of queer lives and the queerness of the wild. It does so by offering us utopic visions but also by joining those visions to madness, failure, the temporality of the belated, darkness, and negativity" (2020: 47). At the end of the first chapter titled "Wildness, Loss, and Death", Halberstam includes Cave's 2008 sculpture *Soundsuit* (fig. 61) to her discourse on wildness (2020: 47 – 49). She argues that Cave's work represents the ethos of wildness because the artist orchestrates massive materials and elements into one piece, and makes the work "the sound of chaos" (Halberstam, 2020: 47). Firstly, Cave's works are loaded with materials, and the dazzling and rich effect would arise a "wow" and "gee". Secondly, his deconstructive chaos illuminates a utopian vision, whilst capturing nonlinear layers of temporality that is comprised by an attachment to the darkness of the past (as the Black body is concealed), the struggling yet dazzling present, and a possible future (as the body is enlarged by the upbeat costume). This utopian vision is not constructed by introducing another form of new order, but is manifest through chaos, "madness, failure, the temporality of the belated, darkness, and negativity" (ibid).

Compared to the serene aura of Hodges's works, Cave's *Soundsuit* is a playful, noisy, and flowery complex. Connecting to historical culture and politics, *Soundsuit* shows "African ceremonial regalia and African-American traditions, and explore ways of recontextualising objects, costume and couture to cast a new light on America's racial history" (Madeleine, 2014: n. p.). As a luxuriantly wild combination of costume, installation, craft work, textile art, and performance, the piece consists of a blazing flowery outfit and a majestic headdress. The costume covers the whole body of the performer and makes noises when they move. Unlike Mapplethorpe, who made Black bodies fully visible, classic, and noiseless, Cave conceals and enlarges Black bodies under a hyper-visible surface. Yet his concealment makes the body even

louder, paradoxically showing how to “be a voice” rather than just to “have a voice” (Halberstam, 2020: 49). Furthermore, Halberstam offers a beautiful interpretation on Cave’s work, as she writes:

This speech as a mode of being, and sound as a form of protest, leavens the hypervisibility that marks the Black male body out for violence and marks it as violent all at once. Cave here deploys a wild and queer logic in that he covers over one form of vulnerable visibility with another form of spectacle – the suits are loud, literally, colorful, full of joy and chaos. They amplify the Black (gay) male body even as they encase it. Far from a closet marking off freedom from confinement, the suits represent a wild remaking of the surface that both hides the body and remakes it as part of a different universe, a utopian space of play and pleasure (2020: 49).

It follows that Halberstam’s dystopian concept of wildness is not opposite to Muñoz’s queer utopianism. Cave’s work appears to be a construction of flowers, yet it actually shows the collapse of the body, identity, and order. Cave’s floral suits grow out of the collapsed and out of the ruins of capitalist ideology. In light of Cave’s aesthetic view, what Halberstam argues is an aesthetics of collapsing. Here, a dialectical dynamic emerges, suggesting that a utopian world might reside in the collapsed. Expanding on the ideas in *Wild Things*, in a 2021 lecture titled “An Aesthetics of Collapse”, Halberstam further asserts that “we are in a collapsing order of things ... that is in some ways a good thing” (2021: n. p.). She argues that we need a huge change to subvert the current capitalist system that is full of mistakes, and this deconstruction would offer us a new way to “rethink our relationship to the environment, to each other, to the future, and to the past”. Halberstam suggests that instead of talking about “world making” in the field of queer cultural production, it is a good time to consider “unworlding”. “Before we start thinking in utopian terms about what should come next”, she says, “we have to do the hard work of unmaking this particular arrangement of powers, bodies, and being”.

Cave’s *Soundsuit* series can be read as the unmaking of the body and identity. *Soundsuit* resonates with the trans artist Craig Calderwood’s drawings, which Calderwood dazzles the viewer by overflowing his figures with dramatic floral patterns. In “Dynamic Static”, Nicole Archer discusses Calderwood’s 2015 piece *Dissonance* (2017: 297). In this work, Calderwood’s figure wears a floral outfit, and the top is heavily decorated by the pattern of anthurium flowers. The head of the figure is covered by a crystal-shaped cage as only their mouth is visible. They also hold a drill on the right hand, and their left hand shows long polished nails. Archer argues that:

In Calderwood's drawings, the act of looking is predicted on the contingency – as opposed to the certainty – of seeing (what lies beneath the garment, the code, the work of art). Her figures make no promises to resolve their identities (2017: 297).

Similarly, regarding his floral costume, Cave "initially conceived of them as a kind of race-, class- and gender-obscuring armature (O'Grady, 2019: n. p.). The armature is also made by floral "pattern". Archer understands "the aesthetic strategy of pattern-jammed" as "a key trope across the practice of prominent black diasporic artists" (2017: 318).

Secondly, in some floral-themed pieces of the *Soundsuit* series, Cave adds something new to the body: flowers and noise. Although the body is covered, it can perform visually and vocally louder. I suggest that Cave creates a form of a new body that reflects the dynamic of transgenderism by showing the tension of visibility and invisibility and of making and unmaking. This tension reflects the living conditions of trans people. As Abram J. Lewis comments in "Trans History in a Moment of Danger: Organizing Within and Beyond 'Visibility'", today, trans lives are facing both "great possibility" and "great violence" (2017: 60). This paradox of making and unmaking also reflects Halberstam's theory of transgenderism. In her book *Trans*: A Quick and Quirky Account of Gender Variability*, Halberstam recalls her experience of receiving top surgery. Reflection on the operation that her body went through, she argues that the procedure of the surgery "was not building maleness into my body; it was about editing some part of the femaleness that currently defined me" (2018: 23). A top surgery can be a process of unmaking, yet through which a "new configuration(s) of flesh" is made (Halberstam, 2005: 110). Similarly, Cave's floral costume also edits the parts of the body that can define a person's gender. Cave makes a gendered body invisible and a wild body visible.

Moreover, one of Cave's aesthetic resonates with an important point of this thesis. I stress that queer floral imagery is more than a symbol of sexuality, and thus, it is not necessarily an expression of the oppressed sexual desire or unconscious libido. I argue that queer floral imagery is a political and personal creation that illuminates a strategy of survival. In Cave's floral installation *Arm Peace* (2019, fig. 63), a Black and masculine bronze arm carries a cluster of tole flowers that are beautifully crafted and arranged, and again, the black body is presented fragmentally, as if the torso, the limb, and the head are concealed by the wall. The work "reveals Cave's sense of personal urgency, yet ultimate optimism, in his work against social injustices" (Guggenheim, 2022: n. p.). This is a crucial statement, through which we can see that, for some contemporary artists, flowers are no longer symbols of sexuality and gender. Cave's *Arm Peace* recalls the political use of flower in the Hippie movement when

flowers were considered not as a symbol of sexuality or queerness, but a revolutionary dynamic. Moreover, in the context of Black Lives Matter, Cave makes floral works because it is crucial to keep creating in order to live through social injustices. The same urgency also can be found in his process of making *Soundsuit*. According to Hilarie M. Sheets's article in *The New York Times* (2018), Cave created his first *Soundsuit* in 1992 "in response to the police beating of Rodney King". Under this circumstance, the work became both a political reaction and a strategy of survival. As Archer argues, "the dissonant and queer strategy of 'pattern-jamming' presents both a serious mode of political resistance and a strategic plan for everyday survival during this key historical moment" (2017: 298). Halberstam's interpretation illustrates this account, as she argues:

Cave thinks of it as a kind of armor. Cave made his first suit in 1992 after the Rodney King beating and created the suits to encase, protect, transform the wearer, imagined here as a Black male who requires a suit for armor in order to make it through the violent landscape of surveillance and profiling (2020: 47).

Cave's floral suit is a form of armour for protecting Black people from police violence and racism, and so floral imagery suddenly connotes a matter of life and death. All these queer artists depicted flowers not because they were lacking sexual satisfaction, identification, or companionship, but because they had to search for a way to keep living. Thus, their artistic practices became vital. Although these works were infused with sexual dynamics, they ultimately went beyond the subject of sexuality, gender, and the politics of identification. In this respect, the queer art of flowers is essentially associated with how to live a life through the crisis and in precariousness.

In our everyday life, a flowering field itself is an astonishing sight to watch. A floral bed or a bouquet can always stimulate one's desire for a more beautiful life, whilst the seasonal and dramatic florescence reflects the vulnerability and fugitiveness of both nature and human bodies. Also, florescence shows a form of carelessness. A flower springing out of the soil, free from human troubles and crises, is always a wild and wishful phenomenon. "Beyond the human", Halberstam argues, "wildness spins narratives of vegetal growth" (2020: 7). When touched by queer techniques and emotions, flowers not only represent sexuality but also are transformed into the gateway to wildness and utopias. In some circumstances, human beings might want to become flowers. In a polaroid picture of Hodges's young lover Valenciano, the man opened his arms and happily jumped through a flower threshold (2020: 14). At the bottom of the picture, Valenciano wrote, "We're Just Like Flowers" (ibid). This wish for bodily

transformation and transcorporeality, somehow upbeat, contains a utopian potentiality. “Acknowledging ourselves to be -morphized by a nonhuman”, as Morton argues, “means acknowledging that the nonhuman is sharing its world with us” (2019: 140). For Morton, this is the path of approaching Communism that is not only international but also *planetary* (2019: 1). This imagination of transcorporeality is becoming important, especially in the current world of crisis and collapsing. To care about other human beings and nonhuman organisms and to accept the vulnerability of bodies are urgent tasks especially after we went through COVID-19 pandemic. In *Precaious Life*, Butler offers a perspective of being ecstasy, which is able to respond to nowadays situations. She comments that “to be ec-static means ... to be outside of oneself ... to be transported beyond oneself by a passion, but also to be beside oneself with rage or grief” (2006: 24). She problematises the ideology of individualism, subjecthood, identity, and bodily integrity, arguing that “the body implies mortality, vulnerability, agency”, and “my body is and is not mine” (2006: 26). The virus reinforces the connection and the vulnerability of bodies, and highlights to what extent we depend on each other. The contemporary world of art also realises and responds to this theory. As discussed, Venice Biennale Arte 2022 also focuses on the transformation of the body, whereby the artistic representation of the transformed bodies becomes a way of facing the current crisis. That is why it is necessary to tell the story of queer flowers. The desire to be reconstructed or shattered into floral forms (or any other nonhuman forms) suggests a desire to be gender-queer or genderless and the will to be in another nonhuman system. Thus, this desire of bodily transformation visualise the hope of being freed from the human world that is filled with inflexible normalcy. As Haraway states, “the possibilities for our reconstitution include the utopian dream of the hope for a monstrous world without gender” (2016: 67).

The queer art of flowers, especially those from the 1980s, illuminate an ecstatic feeling of pleasure. To cite Muñoz’s manifesto, I also use the verb “cruise” to describe the work of searching for queer utopias. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, to cruise means that “sail about in an area without a precise destination, especially for *pleasure*”. For Muñoz, cruising queer utopia, in a sense, is to search for a new form of pleasure and love that “we may never touch” (2009: 1). This dream can be *felt* in the queer art of flowers, in which we can imagine the blossoming of futurity that will be queerness’s realm.



Figure 54 Jim Hodges, *Changing Things*, 1997.
Silk, plastic, and wire. 193.04 × 375.92 cm. Dallas Museum of Art, Mary Margaret Munson Wilcon Fund and gift of Catherine and Will Rose, Howard Rachofsky. Christopher Drew and Alexandra May, and Martin Posner and Robyn Menter-Posner. © Jim Hodges.



Figure 55 Nick Cave, *Soundsuit*, 2008.
Fabric, sequins, fiberglass and metal. 254 × 63.5 × 35.6 cm. © Rubell Family Collection



Figure 56 Amber Cowan, *Rouge Flambé and Mandarin Cluster No. 1*, 2022.
Glass and mixed media, 44.45 × 38.1 × 15.24 cm. © Amber Cowan.



Figure 57 Rashaad Newsome, *To Be Real* (installation view), 2019.

Photo courtesy of Fort Mason Center for Art and Culture.

Sculpture: *Ansista*, 2019. African mahogany wood, silicone, leather, metal, textile, hair, resin, paint, Swarovski crystal, 1.55m.

Canvas in the left: *Akosua*, 2017. Collage on paper, 106.997 × 76.99 cm.

Canvas in centre: *It Do Take Nerve 2*, 2019. Collage in custom mahogany and resin artist frame with automotive paint, 174.307 × 174.307cm.

Canvas in the right: *Kofi*, 2019. Collage on paper, 107.63 × 79.06 × 6.03cm. © Rashaad Newsome.



Figure 58 Yayoi Kusama, *Flower Obsession*, 2017
On display in NGV Triennial at NGV International 2017. Photo: Eugene Hyland.



Figure 59 Jim Hodges, *A Diary of Flowers (When We Met)* (details), 1994.
Ink napkins and pins. 178 × 188 cm. Photo from *The New York Times*.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/15/arts/design/jim-hodges-at-the-institute-of-contemporary-art-boston.html>

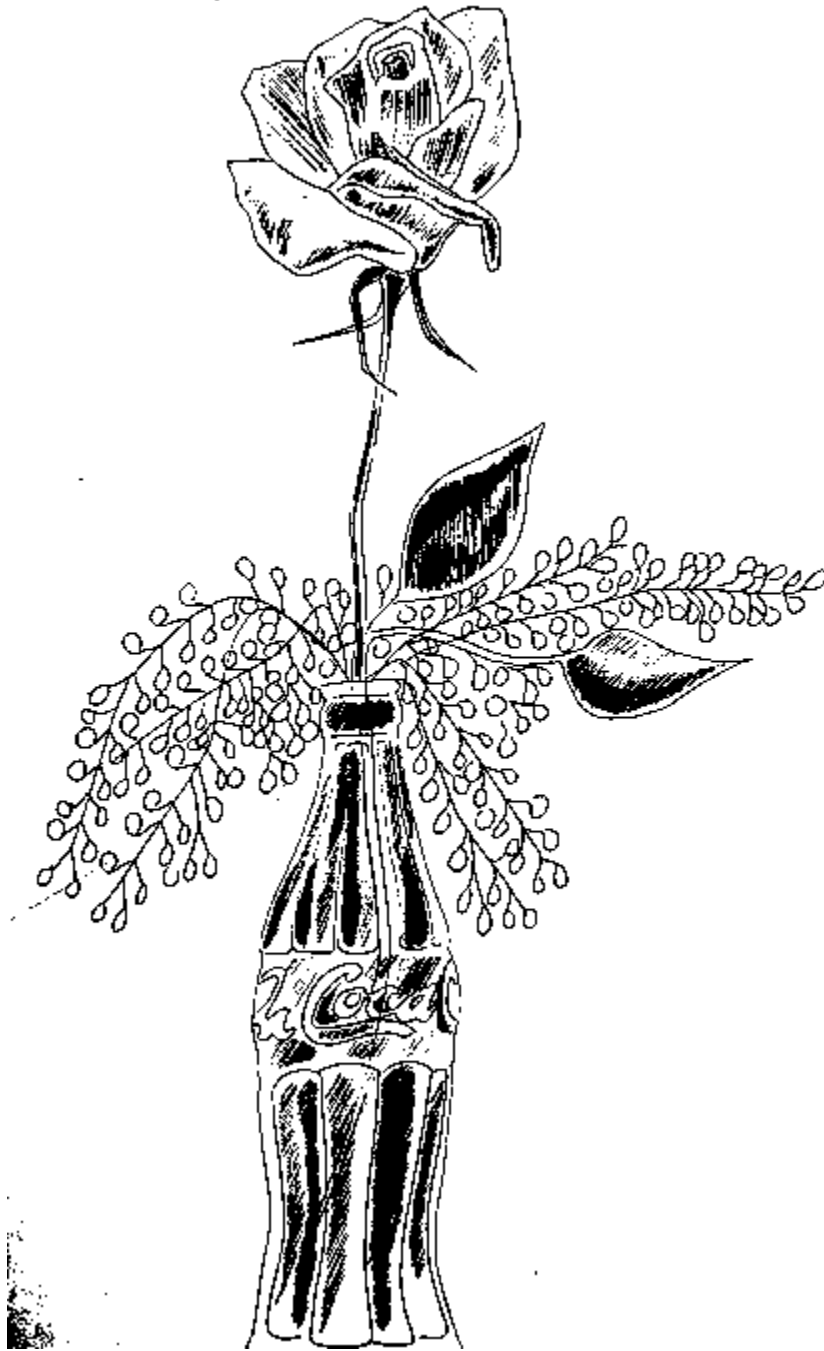


Figure 60 Andy Warhol, *Still-Life (Flowers)*, 1950s.
Ballpoint ink on Manila paper, 42.5 × 35.2 cm. The Andy Warhol Museum,
Pittsburgh; Founding Collection, Contribution, Andy Warhol Foundation for the
Visual Arts, Inc. © 2008 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts/ARS, New
York.



Figure 61 Nick Cave, *Soundsuit*, 2008.
Mixed media including embroidery, fabric, vintage toys, and mannequin,
238.8 × 89 × 89 cm. Copyright Nick Cave. Photo by James Prinz
Photography, courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.



Figure 62 Nick Cave, *Soundsuit*, 2009.
Synthetic textile, metal, and paint. 246.38 × 66.04 ×
50.8 cm. Collection SFMOMA. Accessions Committee
Fund purchase. © Nick Cave. Photo: James Prinz
Photography, courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman
Gallery, New York.



Figure 63 Nick Cave, *Arm Peace*, 2019.
Bronze and found metal objects, 215.9 × 99.06 × 30.48 cm. Courtesy
the artist. Copyright Nick Cave. Photo: Midge Wattles and Ariel
Williams © Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York.

Bibliography

Abraham, J. (2009) *Metropolitan Lovers: The Homosexuality of Cities*. Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press.

Adut, A. (2005) A Theory of Scandal: Victorians, Homosexuality, and the Fall of Oscar Wilde. *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 111, No. 1, 213 – 248.

Agostini, R. (2021) *Dissertation Video Essay – Riccardo Agostini* [Video]. Available online: <https://vimeo.com/529690943> [Accessed 2 / 10 / 2022].

Ahmed, S. (2010) *The Promise of Happiness*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.

Ahmet, S. (2023) *The Feminist Killjoy Handbook*. London: Allen Lane.

Alaimo, S. (2000) *Undomesticated Ground: Recasting Nature as Feminist Space*. New York: Cornell University Press.

Alaimo, S. (2010) *Bodily Natures: Science, the Environment, and the Material Self*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Alaimo, S. (2012) States of Suspension: Trans-corporeality at Sea. *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Summer 2012), 476 – 493.

Alaimo, S. (2016) *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times*. Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press.

Albert, N. G. (2016) *Lesbian Decadence: Representation in Art and Literature of Fin-de-siècle France*. Translated from the French by N. Erber and W. Penston. New York & York, North Yorkshire: Harrington Park Press.

Aleman, C. (2022) *The Statement in the 59th International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia*. Available online: <https://www.labiennale.org/en/art/2022/statement-cecilia-alemani> [Accessed 26 / 5 / 2023].

Aldrich, R. (2007) Remembrances of Gay Paris. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2007, 149 – 151.

Anderson, B. R. (1991) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd edition. New York: Verso Press.

Anderson, F. (2019) *Cruising the Dead River: David Wojnarowicz and New York's Ruined Waterfront*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press.

Archer, N. (2017) Dynamic Static. In Gossett, R., Stanley, E. A., and Burton, J. (eds) *Trap Door: Trans Culture Production and the Politics of Visibility*. Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, England: The MIT Press, 293 – 319.

Arendt, H. (1968) *Illuminations*. Translated from the German by H. Zohn. New York: Schocken Books.

Arn, J. (2023) Cy Twombly, The Content Painter. *The New Yorker*, 7 February 2023. Available online: <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/the-art-world/cy-twombly-the-content-painter> [Accessed 8 / 8 / 2023].

Arcott, C. (2013) William Morris, Ornament and the Coordinates of the Body. In Carter, W., Haran, B., & Schwartz, J. F. (eds) *Renew Marxist Art History*. London: Art Books Publishing Ltd., 246 – 256.

Art Fund (2020) Derek Jarman's Prospect Cottage saved for the nation. 1 April 2020. Available online: <https://www.artfund.org/our-purpose/news/derek-jarmans-prospect-cottage-saved> [Accessed 12 / 11 / 2023].

Ashbery, J. (1996) *Pistils*. New York: Random House.

Aye, P. (2017) *Cy Twombly: Against Interpretation*. Available online: <http://www.miacollectiveart.com/articles/2017/1/13/cy-twombly-against-interpretation> [Accessed 4 / 4 / 2022]

Baker, C. & Howcroft, M. (2023) Gay Bod: Civic and LGBTQ+ Pride after Brexit in a City on the Margins of the UK and Europe. In Loftsdóttir, K., Hipfl, B., & Ponzanesi, S. (eds) *Creating Europe*

from the Margins: Mobilities and Racism in Postcolonial Europe. London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 108 – 124.

Baker, K. (2017) How to Read a Cy Twombly. *The Art News Paper*, 28 November 2017. Available online: <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2017/11/28/how-to-read-a-cy-twombly> [Accessed 12 / 8 / 2023].

Banes, S. (1993) *Greenwich Village 1963: Avant-garde, Performance, and the Effervescent Body*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.

Barson, T. (ed) (2016) *Georgia O'Keeffe*. London: Tate Publishing.

Baudelaire, C. (2015) *The Flowers of Evil, Les Fleurs fu Mal* English and French Edition. Translated from French by W. Aggeler. Digireads.com Publishing.

Becker, A. G. (2017) Marks and Material in Cy Twombly's North African Sketchbooks. *Journal of Contemporary African Art*, 41, 60 – 73.

Benjamin, W. (1940) On the Concept of History. In Arendt, H. (ed) (1968) *Illuminations*. Translated from the German by H. Zohn. New York: Schocken Books.

Benjamin, W. (2002) *The Arcades Project*. Translate from the German by H. Eiland & K. McLaughlin. Harvard University Press paperback edition. Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Benjamin, W. (2006) *On Hashish*. Translated from the German by H. Eiland and Others. Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Berlant, L. (2011) *Cruel Optimism*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Bernini, L. (2021) *Queer Theories: An Introduction from Mario Mieli to the Antisocial Turn*, Routledge edition. New York: Routledge.

Bersani, L. (1987) Is the Rectum a Grave? *AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism*, Vol. 43, 1987, 197 – 222.

- Biga, T. (1992) The Principle of Non-Narration in the Films of Derek Jarman. In Lippard, C. (ed) (1992) *By Angels Driven: The Films of Derek Jarman*. Trowbridge: Flicks Books.
- Bird, J. (2007) Indeterminacy and (Dis)order in the work of Cy Twombly. *Oxford Art Journal*, 30.3, 484 – 504.
- Bliss, J. (2015) Hope Against Hope: Queer Negativity, Black Feminist Theorizing, and Reproduction without Futurity. *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, March 2015, Vol. 48, No. 1, a special issue: QUEER/AFFECT (March 2015), 83 – 98.
- Bloch, E. (1986) *The Principle of Hope*. Translated from the German by N. Plaice, S. Plaice & P. Knight. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd.
- Bloch, E. (1988) Better Castles in the Sky. In *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: Selected Essays*. Translated from the German by J. Zipes & F. Mecklenburg. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Bloch, E. (1998) Can Hope Be Disappointed? In *Literary Essays*. Translated from the German by A. Joron et al. Stanford: Stanford UP, 339 – 345.
- Bohan, R. L. (2006) *Looking into Walt Whitman: American Art, 1850 – 1920*. University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Boyer, D. (2019) Does Cy Twombly's Sexuality Matter? *The Gay & Lesbian Review Worldwide*, Vol. 26, Issue. 3, 40. Available online: <https://glreview.org/article/does-cy-twomblys-sexuality-matter/> [Accessed 1 / 9 / 2022].
- Braidwood, E. (2023) 'Like moving through water while everyone is on land': the writers exploring sexuality through sea life. *The Guardian*, 3 February 2023. Available online: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2023/feb/03/queer-writers-exploring-sexuality-and-gender-through-sea-life#:~:text=%E2%80%9Cdo%20think%2C%20looking%20back,your%20lungs%2C%E2%80%9D%20they%20say.> [Accessed 12 / 10 / 2023].
- Breslin, J. E. (1977) William Carlos Williams and Charles Demuth: Cross-Fertilization in the Arts. *Journal of Modern Literature*, April 1977, Vol. 6, No. 2, 248 – 263.

Bronski, M. (2011) *A Queer History of the United States*. Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press.

Brophy, S. (2004) *Witnessing AIDS: Writing, Testimony, and the Work of Mourning*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Brown, J. (1999) *The Pursuit of Paradise: A Social History of Gardens and Gardening*. London: HarperCollins Publishers.

Bryson, N. (1990) *Looking at the Overlooked*. London: Reaktion Books.

Burke, C. (2019) *Foursome: Alfred Stieglitz, Georgia O'Keeffe, Paul Strand, Rebecca Salsbury*. New York: Vintage Books.

Butler, J. (2005) On Never Having Learned How to Live. *differences*, Vol. 16, Issue 3, 1 December 2005, 27 – 34.

Butler, J. (2006) *Gender Trouble*, Routledge Classics. New York and London: Routledge.

Butler, J. (2006) *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, Paperback edition. New York & London: Verso.

Califia, P. (1988) *Macho Sluts*. Los Angeles & New York: Alyson Books.

Cage, J. & Pellerin, A. (eds), Trinder, K. Smith, H. A. & Long, L. (illustrations) (1975) *John Cage: A Mycological Foray: Variations on Mushrooms*. Los Angeles, Montreal, Berlin, and London: Atelier Editions.

Campbell, D. A. (ed) (1989) *Greek Lyric, Volume I: Sappho and Alcaeus*. Revised edition. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press The Loeb Classical Library.

Carpenter, E. (1912) *The Intermediate Sex: A Study of Some Transitional Types of Men and Women*. New York & London: Mitchell Kennerley.

Castiglia, C. & Reed, C. (2012) *If Memory Serves: Gay Men, AIDS, and the Promise of the Queer Past*. Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press.

- Cather, W. (1981) *The Professor's House*. Virago Press edition. London: Virago Press.
- Celant, G. (1992) The Satyr and the Nymph: Robert Mapplethorpe and His Photography. In *Mapplethorpe*. Hayward Gallery Electa.
- Champa, K. (1974) Charles Was Like That. *Artforum*, March 1974, 54 – 59.
- Chan, J. (2020) The Magic of Mushrooms in Art – in Pictures. *The Guardian*, 18 Jan 2020. Available online: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/gallery/2020/jan/18/the-magic-of-mushrooms-in-arts-in-pictures> [Accessed 23 / 5 / 2022].
- Chauncey, G. (1994) *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890 – 1904*. New York: Basic Books.
- Chave, A. (1990) O'Keeffe and Masculine Gaze. *Art in America*, 78, No. 1, 1990, 114 – 125.
- Cirigliano, M. (2017) Marsden Hartley and Wilfred Owen: Queer Voices of Memorial in Wartime. *The Met*. Available online: <https://www.metmuseum.org/blogs/now-at-the-met/2017/marsden-hartley-wilfred-owen-world-war-i> [Accessed 1 / 3 / 2021].
- Clair, Hugh St. (2023) *A Lesson in Art & Life: The Colourful World of Cedric Morris & Arthur Lett-Haines*. London: Pimpernel Press LTD.
- Clarke, G. (2017) Gluck: A Life in Art. In Haye, A. de la & Pel, M. (eds) *Gluck: Art and Identity*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 19 – 45.
- Conley, V. A. (2009) Thirty-six Thousand Forms of Love: The Queering of Deleuze and Guattari. In Nigianni, C. & Storr, M. (eds) *Deleuze and Queer Theory*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 24 – 36.
- Corn, W. M. (2017) *Georgia O'Keeffe: Living Modern*. New York & London: Prestel.
- Cotter, H. (2014) Taking Wing in a Time of Extremis. *The New York Times*. 14 August 2014. Available online: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/15/arts/design/jim-hodges-at-the-institute-of-contemporary-art-boston.html> [Accessed: 21 / 9 / 2023].

Crane, H. (1986) *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*. New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation.

Creasy, J. (2013) *Poets are the Only Pedagogues*. Available online: <https://black-mountain-research.com/2015/02/18/poets-are-the-only-pedagogues/> [Accessed 27 / 3 / 2022].

Crimp, D. (1987) How to Have Promiscuity in an Epidemic. *October*, Vol. 43, AIDS: Culture Analysis/Culture Activism, 237 – 271.

Crimp, D. (2004) Mourning and Militancy. In *Melancholia and Moralism: Essays on AIDS and Queer Politics*. First MIT Press paperback edition. Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, England: The MIT Press, 130 – 149.

Crowdy, J. (2017) Queer Undergrowth: Weeds and Sexuality in the Architecture of the Garden. *Architecture and Culture*, 5:3, 423 – 433.

Cullinan, N. (2008) Double Exposure: Robert Rauschenberg's and Cy Twombly's Roman Holiday. *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 150, No. 1264, 2008. American Art and Architecture, 460 – 470.

Cullinan, N. (2011) *Twombly and Poussin: Arcadian Painters*. London: Dulwich Picture Gallery.

Cullinan, N. & Serota, N. (2010) 'Ecstatic Impulses': Cy Twombly's 'Untitled (Bacchus)'. *2006 – 08 The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 152, No. 1290, 613 – 616.

Cvetkovich, A. (2003) *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Cy Twombly: Philosophy in Paint. *Studio International*. Available online: <https://www.studiointernational.com/cy-twombly-philosophy-in-paint> [Accessed 18 / 8 / 2023].

Danto, A. C. (1996) *Playing with the Edge: The Photographic Achievement of Robert Mapplethorpe*. Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press.

Darwent, C. (2002) Remember You're a Twombly. *The Independent on Sunday*, 18 August 2002, 9.

David, J. & Hammond, R. (2011) *High Line: The Inside Story of New York City's Park in the Sky*. Vancouver: D&M Publishers Inc..

Davidson, A. A. (1978) The Poster Portraits of Charles Demuth. *Artforum*, November 1978, 54 – 57.

Davis, W. (2010) The Unbecoming: Michel Foucault and the Laboratories of Sexuality. In *Queer Beauty: Sexuality and Aesthetic from Winckelmann to Freud and Beyond*. New York: Columbia University Press, 243 – 269.

De Looz, P. A. (2011) Cy Twombly 1966. *O32c Magazine*, February 8, 2011. Available online: <https://032c.com/magazine/from-vogue-to-nest-032c-activates-the-secret-history-of-cy-twombly-by-horst-p-horst> [Accessed 26 / 5 / 2022].

DeJean, J. (1996) Did Seventeenth Century Invent Our Fin de Siècle? Or, the Creation of the Enlightenment That We May at Last Be Leaving behind. *Critical Inquiry*, Summer, 1996, Vol. 22, No. 4 (Summer, 1996), 790 – 816.

Delavan, T. (2018) How an Eight-Month Trip Shifted the Course of Art History. *The New York Times Style Magazine*, October 21. Available online: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/11/t-magazine/cy-twombly-robert-rauschenberg-art-travel.html> [Accessed 1 / 8 / 2023].

Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1983) *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated from the French by R. Hurley, M. Seem, and H. R. Lane. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1987) *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated from the French by B. Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Delistraty, C. (2018) Inheriting a Legacy. *The Paris Review*, May 8. Available online: <https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2018/05/08/inheriting-a-legacy/> [Accessed 2 / 8 / 2023].

Delvaux, M. (2001) The Garden as Memento Mori: Derek Jarman and Jamaica Kincaid. *Canadian Woman Studies*, 21.2: 135 – 138.

Derrida, J. (2001) *The Work of Mourning*. Translated from the French by P. A. Brault & M. Naas. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Dickey, T. (2012) William Carlos Williams and Nativist Portraiture. In *The Modern Portrait Poem: From Dante Gabriel Rossetti to Ezra Pound*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 183 – 212.

Didion, J. (1979) *The White Album*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

Dijkstra, B. (1998) *Georgia O'Keeffe and the Eros of Place*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Dijkstra, B. (2006) White on Her Doorstep. *American Art*, Vol. 20, No. 3, 14 – 20.

Dinshaw, C. (1999) *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre and Postmodern*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Dolan, J. (2005) *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Dooley, M. & Kavanagh, L. (2014) *The Philosophy of Derrida*. New York & Oxon: Routledge.

Doty, M. (1996) *Heaven's Coast: A Memoir*. New York: HarperPerennial.

Duberman, M. (2009) *Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community*. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.

Duncan, C. (1973) Virility and Domination in Early 20th Century Vanguard Painting. *ArtForum*, Vol. 12, No. 4, December, 1973, 30 – 39.

Edelman, L. (2004) *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.

Eiland, H. & Jennings, M. W. (2014) *Walter Benjamin: A Critical Life*. Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Eliot, T. S. (1968) *Four Quartets*. London: The Folio Society.

Ezell, J. (n.d.) *Martin Duberman's Queer Historiography and Pedagogy*. Available online: <http://www.blackmountainstudiesjournal.org/volume1/1-4-jason-ezell/> [Accessed 12 / 3 / 2022].

Fahlman, B. (1983) *Pennsylvania Modern: Charles Demuth of Lancaster*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Farago, J. (2016) Robert Mapplethorpe: The Perfect Medium review – hunting for sex and death. *The Guardian*, 16 Mar 2016. Available online: <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2016/mar/16/robert-mapplethorpe-the-perfect-medium-photography-los-angeles> [Accessed 2 / 4 / 2022].

Farnham, E. (1971) *Charles Demuth: Behind a Laughing Mask*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Ferris, D. (2008) *The Cambridge Introduction to Walter Benjamin*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fillin-Yeh, S. (1995) Dandies, Marginality and Modernism: Georgia O'Keeffe, Marcel Duchap and other Cross-Dressers. *Oxford Art Journal*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 33 – 44.

Folland, T. (2010) Robert Rauschenberg's Queer Modernism: The Early Combines and Decoration. *The Art Bulletin*, 2010, Vol. 92, No. 4, 348 – 365.

Foner, E. (2005) *Give me Liberty! An American History*, Seagull edition. New York & London: W. W. Norton & Company.

Foshay, E. M. (1990) *Art in Bloom*. London & New York: Phaidon Press.

Foucault, M (1982) Technologies of the Self. In Rabinow, P. (ed) (2020) *Michel Foucault Ethics: Essential Works 1954 – 84*. Penguin Modern Classics edition. Translated from the French by R.

Hurley and others. London: Penguin Classics, 223 – 251.

Foucault, M (1984) *Sex, Power, and the Politics of Identity*. In Rabinow, P. (ed) (2020) *Michel Foucault Ethics: Essential Works 1954 – 84*. Penguin Modern Classics edition. Translated from the French by R. Hurley and others. London: Penguin Classics, 163 – 173.

Foucault, M. (1976) *The History of Sexuality*. Translated from the French by R. Hurley. New York: Pantheon Books.

Foucault, M. (1988) *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, Vintage Books Edition. Translated from the French by R. Howard. New York: Vintage Books.

Fowler, A (2016) I Fell in Love with a Woman, and Everything Changed. *The Guardian*, 26 November 2016. Available online: <https://amp.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2016/nov/26/aly-fowler-coming-out> [Accessed 6 / 8 / 2023].

Freeman Quint, E. L. (2022) Frida and Vita: A Tale of Two Gardens. *The Gay & Lesbian Review*, March-April. Available online: <https://glreview.org/article/frida-and-vita%E2%80%88a%E2%80%88tale-of-two-gardens/> [Accessed 25 / 6 / 2022].

Friedan, B. (1963) *The Feminine Mystique*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc..

Fritscher, J. (1994) Mapplethorpe: Assault with a Deadly Camera. Hasting House. Available online: <https://jackfritscher.com/Non-Fiction/Mapplethorpe/Mapplethorpe.html> [Accessed: 21 / 9 / 2023].

Fritscher, J. (2016) 'He was a sexual outlaw': my love affair with Robert Mapplethorpe. *The Guardian*, 9 Mar 2016. Available online: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/mar/09/robert-mapplethorpe-photography-jack-fritscher-look-at-the-pictures> [Accessed 19 / 2 / 2023].

Fryd, V. G. (2000) Georgia O'Keeffe's 'Radiator Building': Gender, Sexuality, Modernism, and Urban Imagery. *Winterthur Portfolio*, Vol. 35, No. 4, 269-289.

Gaard, G. (1997) Toward a Queer Ecofeminism. *Hypatia*, Winter, Vol. 12, No. 1, 114 – 137.

Garden Museum (n. d.) *Derek Jarman and Gerard's Herbal*. Available online: <https://gardenmuseum.org.uk/jarmansgarden/derek-jarman-and-gerards-herbal/> [Accessed: 3 / 6 / 2020].

Getsy, D. (2015) *Abstract Bodies: Sixties Sculpture in the Expanded Field of Gender*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Giardina, H. (2021) *Green is the Gayest Color*. Available online: <https://www.intomore.com/a-queer-love-letter/green-gayest-color/> [Accessed 15 / 3 / 2022].

Gilbert, E. L. (1983) "'Tumult of Images': Wilde, Beardsley, and 'Salome'" *Victorian Studies*, Winter, Vol. 16, No. 2. 133 – 159.

Glasgow Building Preservation Trust (2022) *Jack Halberstam - Collapse, Demolition and the Queer Geographies* [Video]. Available online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vHkvlJ9pcnM> [Accessed 26 / 5 / 2023].

Gosetti-Ferencei, J. A. (2007) *The Ecstatic Quotidian*. University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Grant, C. (2011) Fans of Feminism: Re-writing Histories of Second-wave Feminism in Contemporary Art. *Oxford Art Journal*, 2011, Vol. 34, No. 2, 265 – 286.

Grasso, L. M. (2013) "You are no stranger to me". *Texts, Readers, Audiences, History*, Vol. 5, 24 – 40.

Grasso, L. M. (2019) *Equal under the Sky: Georgia O'Keeffe and Twentieth-Century Feminism*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Greenhalgn, D. (2022) An Audience of Each Other: Rauschenberg & Johns: Significant Others. *National Gallery of Australia Digital Publication*, June. Available online: <https://nga.gov.au/publications/significant-others/an-audience-of-each-other> [Accessed 12 / 8 / 2023].

Greub, T. (ed) (2018) *Cy Twombly: Image, Text, Paratext*. Cologne: Morphomata.

- Grosse, K. (2017) C.T.S.T.: Katharina Grosse reflects on the work of Cy Twombly. *Gagosian Quarterly*, Spring 2017 Issue. Available online: <https://gagosian.com/quarterly/2017/02/23/ctst/> [Accessed 20 / 3 / 2022].
- Grover, J. Z. (1997) *North Enough: AIDS and Other Clear-Cuts*. Minneapolis: Graywolf Press.
- Guggenheim (2022) Description of Arm Peace, 2019. 17 November 2022. Available online: <https://www.guggenheim.org/audio/track/description-of-arm-peace-2019> [Accessed 21 / 9 / 2023].
- Halberstam, J. (2005) *In a Queer Time & Space: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York & London: New York University Press.
- Halberstam, J. (2018) *Trans*: A Quick and Quirky Account of Gender Variability*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- Halberstam, J. (2020) *Wild Things: The Disorder of Desire*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.
- Halperin, D. M. (2003) The Normalization of Queer Theory. *Journal of Homosexuality*, Vol. 45, No. 2/3/4, 2003, 339 – 343.
- Haran, B. (2020) Documenting an 'Age-Long Struggle': Paul Strand's Time in the American Southwest. *Art History*, February 2020, 120 – 153.
- Haraway, D (1985) A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century. In D. Haraway (2016) *Manifestly Haraway*. Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 7 – 90.
- Haring, K. (2010) *Keith Haring Journals*, Illustrated edition. London: Penguin Classic.
- Harvard GSD (2021) *Kate Thomas, Lesbian Arcadia: Desire and Design in the Fin-de-Siècle Garden* [Video]. Available online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TiO9AdwyUZ0> [Accessed 29 / 5 / 2023].

Haskell, B. (1987) *Charles Demuth*. Exhibition catalogue. New York: Whitney Museum of American Art in association with Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers.

Hemingway, A. (2013) *The Mysticism of Money*. Pittsburgh & New York City: Periscope Publishing, Ltd.

Hermann, M. D. (ed) (2020) *Andy Warhol: Love, Sex & Desire*. Köln: TASCHEN.

Herring, S. (2010) *Another Country: Queer Anti-Urbanism*. New York & London: New York University Press.

Herrington, S. (2009) *On Landscapes*. London: Routledge.

Hickey-Moody, A. & Rasmussen, M. L. (2009) The Sexed Subject in-between Deleuze and Butler. In Nigianni, C. & Storr, M. (eds) *Deleuze and Queer Theory*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 37 – 53.

Higgle, J. (2021) *The Mirror and the Palette: Rebellion, Revolution and Resilience: 500 Years of Women's Self-Portraits*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

Hiller, S. (1993) O'Keeffe as I See Her. *Frieze*, Issue 11, June-August 1993, 24 – 26.

Hole, H. (2007) *Marsden Hartley and the West: The Search for an American Modernism*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Huysmans, J. K. (2018) *Against Nature*. Translated from the French by R. Baldick. Dover Thrift Editions. Mineola & New York: Dover Publications, Inc.

Impelluso, L. (2004) *Nature and Its Symbols*. Translated from the Italian by S. Sartarelli. Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum.

Ingram, D. (2006) "The clutter of the unkempt forest": John Cage, Music and American Environmental Thought. *American Studies*, 2006, Vol. 51, No. 4, 567 – 579.

Jacobus, M. (2016) *Reading Cy Twombly: Poetry in Paint*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Jakobsen, J. (1998) Queer Is? Queer Does? Normativity and the Problem of Resistance. *GLO: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 4(4), 511 – 536.

Janes, D. (2023) *Freak To Chic: "Gay" Men In and Out of Fashion after Oscar Wilde*. London & New York: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Jarman, D. (1992) *Modern Nature*. London: Vintage.

Jarman, D. & Sooley, H. (1995) *Derek Jarman's Garden with Photographs by Howard Sooley*. London: Thames & Hudson Ltd.

Jones, J. (2011) Twombly and Poussin: Arcadian Painters – review. *The Guardian*, 28 June 2011. Available online: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2011/jun/28/twombly-poussin-arcadian-painters-review> [Accessed 12 / 3 / 2023].

Jones, J. (2016) Cy Twombly review – blood-soaked coronation for a misunderstood master. *The Guardian*, 30 November 2016. Available online: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/nov/30/cy-twombly-review-centre-pompidou-paris#:~:text=This%20exhibition%20reveals%20the%20raw,the%20same%20of%20his%20behaviors>. [Accessed 12 / 3 / 2023].

Jones, J. (2021) Lust, heartbreak and suggestive sculpture: was this art's greatest love triangle? *The Guardian*, 12 February 2021. Available online: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2021/feb/12/valentine-day-ust-heartbreak-suggestive-sculpture-arts-greatest-love-triangle-twombly-jasper-johns-rauschenberg> [Accessed 12 / 3 / 2023].

Jorgensen, L. & Seeberg, M. (eds) (2020) *Marsden Hartley: The Earth is All I Know of Wonder*. Louisiana: Naragana Press.

Kaishian, P. & Hasmik, D. (2020) The Science Underground: Mycology as a Queer Discipline. *Catalyst: Feminism, Theory, Technoscience*, 6(2), 1 – 26.

Kaloski, A. (ed) (2003) *The Feminist Seventies*. York: Raw Nerve Books Ltd.

Kats, J. D. (2009) The Sexuality of Abstraction: Agnes Martin in Cooke, L. and Kelly, K. (eds) *Agnes Martin*, 170 – 197.

Kats, V. (2002) *Black Mountain College: Experiment in Art*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Kazanjian, D. (1994) Cy Twombly: A Painted Word. *Vogue*, September 1994, 546 – 547.

Kellner, B. (ed) (2000) *Letters of Charles Demuth: American Artist, 1883 – 1935*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Kemp, J. (2009) Schreber and the Penetrated Male. In Nigianni, C. & Storr, M. (eds) *Deleuze and Queer Theory*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 150 – 167.

Kincaid, J. (1999) *My Garden (Book)*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Koestenbaum, W. (2022) *Paradise by the Patchogue Ferry: A Hundred Years on Fire Island*. Available online: <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/07/books/review/fire-island-jack-parlett.html> [Accessed 24 / 7 / 23].

Koestenbaum, W. (1993) *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality, and the Mystery of Desire*. New York: Da Capo Press.

Kordic, A. Godward, F. & Martinique, E. (2016) Posthumanism and Contemporary Art. *New Media Widewalls*. Available online: <https://www.widewalls.ch/magazine/posthumanism-contemporary-art> [Accessed 26 / 5 / 2023].

Kramer, L. (1989) *Reports from the Holocaust: The Making of an AIDS Activist*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Kushner, T. (1995) *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes*. New York: Theater Communications Group.

Lacey, C. (2018) The Erotics of Cy Twombly. *The Paris Review*, 17 October 2018. Available online: <https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2018/10/17/the-erotics-of-cy-twombly/>

[Accessed: 2 / 8 / 2023].

Lammer, E. & Franchette, A. L. (2020) Derek Jarman's Garden. *Nero*, 8 September 2020.

Available online: <https://www.neroeditions.com/derek-jarmans-garden/> [Accessed: 12 / 11 / 2023].

Lane, M. (1990) *Black Mountain College: Sprouted Seeds: An Anthology of Personal Accounts*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.

Laroche, R. (2020) The Flower of Ointments and Early Modern Transcorporeality. In Jacobson, M. & Park, J. (eds) *Organic Supplements: Bodies and Things of the Natural World, 1580 – 1790*. University of Virginia Press, 61 – 76.

Larson, T. (1998) Skull and Roses: Reflections on Enshrining Georgia O'Keeffe. *Southwest Review*, Vol. 83, No. 1, 9 – 20.

Laughlin, J. (1988) *Pound as Wuz*. Minnesota: Graywolf Press, U.S.

Lawford, V. & Horst, P. H. (photographer) (1966) *Roman Classic Surprise*. *Vogue*, 15 November 1966.

Leeman, R. (2005) *Cy Twombly: A Monography*. Translated from the French by M. Whittal, 2005. Paris: Flammarion.

Levitas, R. (1990) *The Concept of Utopia*. Oxford, Bern, Berlin, Bruxelles, Frankfurt, Main, New York, Wien: Peter Lang.

Lewis, A. J. (2017) Trans History in a Moment of Danger: Organizing Within and Beyond 'Visibility' in In Gossett, R., Stanley, E. A., and Burton, J. (eds) *Trap Door: Trans Culture Production and the Politics of Visibility*. Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, England: The MIT Press, 57 – 66.

Lisle, L. (1997) *Portrait of an Artist: Georgia O'Keeffe*. New York: Washington Square Press.

Llewellyn, N. (2008) *Appearance and Identity: Fashioning the Body in Postmodernity*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lloyd, M. (2007) *Judith Butler: From Norms to Politics*. Malden & Cambridge: Polity Press.

Looby, C. (1995) Flowers of Manhood: Race, Sex and Floriculture from Thomas Wentworth Higginson to Robert Mapplethorpe. *Criticism*. Vol. 37, No. 1 (winter, 1995), 109 – 156.

Loughran, K. (2016) Imbricated Spaces: The High Line, Urban Parks, and the Cultural Meaning of City and Nature. *Sociological Theory*, December 2016, Vol. 34, No. 4, 311 – 334.

Love, H. (2009) *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*. Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press.

Lynes, B. B. & Paden, A. (2003) *Maria Chabot – Georgia O’Keeffe: Correspondence 1941 – 1949*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Madden, E. (1997) Say It with Flowers: The Poetry of Marc-André Raffalovich. *College Literature*, February 1997, Vol. 24, No. 1, 11 – 27.

Madeleine, A. (2014) Artist Nick Cave’s Wild and Whimsical Soundsuits – in pictures. *The Guardian*, Thursday 13 November 2014. Available online:

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/gallery/2014/nov/13/artist-nick-caves-soundsuits-pictures> [Accessed 6 / 11 / 2023].

Mahoney, E. (2002) Flower Power, *The Guardian*, 20 August 2002. Available online:

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2022/mar/01/flower-power-why-blooms-are-an-essential-part-of-any-garden> [Accessed 31 / 10 / 2020].

Mainville, D. (2020) How Frida Kahlo Used Flowers to Express Her Identity. *Floracracy*.

Available online: [https://floracracy.com/blogs/art/how-frida-kahlo-used-flowers-to-express-her-](https://floracracy.com/blogs/art/how-frida-kahlo-used-flowers-to-express-her-identity#:~:text=Kahlo%20said%2C%20%E2%80%9CFruits%20are%20like,her%20own%20form%20of%20realism)

[identity#:~:text=Kahlo%20said%2C%20%E2%80%9CFruits%20are%20like,her%20own%20form%20of%20realism](https://floracracy.com/blogs/art/how-frida-kahlo-used-flowers-to-express-her-identity#:~:text=Kahlo%20said%2C%20%E2%80%9CFruits%20are%20like,her%20own%20form%20of%20realism) [Accessed 7 / 6 / 2023].

Mapplethorpe, R. (1990) *Flowers*. Text Patti Smith. München: Schirmer/Mosel.

Marinucci, M. (2016) *Feminism is Queer: The Intimate Connection between Queer and Feminist*

Theory, 2nd edition. London: Zed Books.

Marx, L. (1964) *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*. New York: Oxford University Press.

McCann, H. & Monaghan, W. (2022) *Queer Theory Now: From Foundations to Futures*, Bloomsbury Academic edition. London, New York, Oxford, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic.

McCausland, E. (1952) *Marsden Hartley*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

McLavery-Robinson, A. (2013) Walter Benjamin: Messianism and Revolution – Theses on History. *Ceasefire Magazine*, Friday, November 15, 2013 15:20. Available online <https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/walter-benjamin-messianism-revolution-theses-history/> [Accessed 2 / 9 / 2022].

Messinger, M. L. (2001) *Georgia O’Keeffe*. London: Thames & Hudson Ltd.

Schwenger, P. (2019) *Asemic: The Art of Writing*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Milliken, W. M. (1937) White Flower by Georgia O’Keeffe. *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, Vol. 24, No. 4, 51 – 53.

Mills, R. (2018) *Derek Jarman’s Medieval Modern*. Boydell & Brewer; D. S. Brewer.

Mitchell, H. M. (1978) Sexist Art Criticism: Georgia O’Keeffe: A Case Study. *Signs*, Vol. 3, No. 3, 681 – 687.

Moe, A. M. (2013) Toward Zoopoetics: Rethinking Whitman’s “Original Energy”. *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review*, Vol. 31, No. 1, 1 – 17.

Molesworth, H. (1993) Before Bed. *October*, Vol. 63, Winter 1993, 68 – 82.

Moore, L. L. (2011) *Sister Arts: The Erotics of Lesbian Landscapes*. Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press.

Moore, S. (2020) *Utopian Prospects*. Available online:

<https://tribunemag.co.uk/2020/09/utopian-prospects> [Accessed 24 / 7 / 23].

Morris, C. E. (ed) (2011) *Remembering the AIDS Quilt*. East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University Press.

Morton, T. (2010) Gust Column: Queer Ecology. *PMLA*, Vol. 125, No. 2, 273 – 282.

Morton, T. (2019) *Humankind: Solidarity with Nonhuman People*. Verso Paperback edition. New York & London: Verso.

Muñoz, J. E. (1999) *Disidentifications: Queer of Color and the Performance of Politics*. Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press.

Muñoz, J. E. (2009) *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. New York: NYU Press.

Muñoz, J. E., & Cahan, S., Ha, P. (eds) (2007) *I Remember Heaven: Jim Hodges and Andy Warhol*. Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis.

Murphy, F. (ed) (2004) *The Complete Poems: Walt Whitman*. London: Penguin Classics.

Murray, D. C. (2020) *Mapplethorpe and the Flower: Radical Sexuality and the Limits of Control*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing USA.

Myers, J. B. (1982) Marks: Cy Twombly. *Artforum*, April, 50 – 57.

Negrin, L. (2008) *Appearance and Identity: Fashioning the Body in Postmodernity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Nietzsche, F. (1969) *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. London: Penguin Classics.

Nochlin, L. (2021) *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?* 50th Anniversary Edition. London: Thames & Hudson.

O’Connell, R. (2017) Love Scenes and Garden Plots: From and Femininity in Elizabeth von Arnim’s *Elizabeth and Her German Garden*. *Women: A Cultural Review*, 28: 1 – 2, 22 – 39.

- O'Hara, F. (1995) review of Cy Twombly's first one-man show at Stable Gallery, New York, January 10 – 29, 1995. *Art News*, 53, No. 9 (January 1995): 46.
- O'Keeffe, G. (1976) *Georgia O'Keeffe*. New York: Viking.
- O'Neill, E. (1991) *Strange Interlude*. London: Nick Hern.
- O'Quinn, D. (1999) Gardening, History, and the Escape from Time: Derek Jarman's "Modern Nature". *October*, Vol. 89, 113 – 126.
- Parker, R. & Pollock, G. (1981) *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology*. London: Rivers Oram Publishers Limited.
- Patrick, D. J. (2017) Of Success and Succession: A Queer Urban Ecology of the High Line. In Lindner, C. & Rosa, B. (eds) *Deconstructing the High Line: Postindustrial Urbanism and the Rise of the Elevated Park*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 141 – 165.
- Peake, T. (2011) *Derek Jarman: A Biography*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Perreault, J. (1980) I'm Asking – Does It Exist? What Is It? Whom Is It For? *Artforum*, November 1980, 74 – 75.
- Perret, C. (n. d.) "Choirs of Wailing Shells": Poetic and Musical Engagements in Derek Jarman's *War Requiem* – between Documentary and Fiction. *Frames Cinema Journal*. Available online: <http://framescinemajournal.com/article/choirs-of-wailing-shells-poetic-and-musical-engagements-in-derek-jarmans-war-requiem-between-documentary-and-fiction/> [Accessed 2 / 2 / 2021].
- Peters, S. W. (1991) *Becoming O'Keeffe: The Early Years*. New York, London & Paris: Abbeville Press.
- Petry, M. (2010) "Hidden Histories: Curating a Male Same-Sex Exhibition". In Levin, A. K. (ed) *Gender, Sexuality, and Museums: A Routledge Reader*. London: Routledge, 151 – 162.

- Plumwood, V. (2008) Tasteless: Towards a Food-Based Approach to Death. *Environmental Values*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (August 2008), 323 – 330.
- Pollock, G. (2007) *Encounters in the Visual Feminist Museum: Time, Space and the Archive*. New York: Routledge.
- Pollock, G. (2016) Seeing O’Keeffe Seeing. In Barson, T. (ed) *Georgia O’Keeffe*. London: Tate Publishing, 102 – 114.
- Pollock, G. (2022) *Killing Men & Dying Women: Imaging Difference in 1950s New York Painting*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Pollock, G. (2022) *Mary Cassatt*, New Edition. London: Thames & Hudson.
- Possanza, A. (2023) *Lesbian Love Story: A Queer History of Sapphic Romance*. London: Square Peg.
- Poundstone, W. (2022) The Photo That Outed Cy Twombly. *Los Angeles County Museum on Fire William Poundstone on Art and Chaos*, 8 August. Available online: <http://lacmaonfire.blogspot.com/2022/08/the-photo-that-outed-cy-twombly.html> [Accessed 18 / 8 / 2023].
- Preus, A. (2007) *Historical Dictionary of Ancient Greek Philosophy*. Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press.
- Prickett, D. J. (2005) Defining Identity via Homosexual Spaces: Locating the Male Homosexual in Weimar Berlin. *Women in German Yearbook*, 2005, Vol. 21 (2005), 134 – 162.
- Probyn, E. (1999) An Ethos with a Bite: Queer Appetites from Sex to Food. *Sexualities*, Vol. 2(4), 412 – 431.
- Read, H. A. (1923) Georgia O’Keeffe’s Show an Emotional Escape. *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, February, 11.
- Rebrovick, T. (2015) The Politics of Diet: “Eco-dietetics,” Neoliberalism, and the History of Dietetic Discourses. *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 68, No. 4 (December 2015), 678 – 689.

- Reed, C. (2011) *Art and Homosexuality: A History of Ideas*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press.
- Reilly, M. (ed) (2015) *Women Artists: The Linda Nochlin Reader*. London: Thames & Hudson.
- Rich, A. (1986) *Your Native Land, Your Life*. New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Rigolo, P. (2023) Water, Sky, and Where They Meet. *Collecteurs*. Available online: <https://www.collecteurs.com/interview/water-sky-and-where-they-meet> [Accessed 25 / 9 / 2023].
- Rilke, R. M. (1979) *The Roses & The Windows*. Translated from the French by A. Poulin, Jr. Port Townsend, Washington: Graywolf Press.
- Ritchie, A. C. (1950) *Charles Demuth*. New York: Museum of Modern Art.
- Rivkin J. (2018) *Chalk: The Art and Erasure of Cy Twombly*. Brooklyn & London: Melville House Publishing.
- Robertson, B. (1995) *Marsden Hartley*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc.
- Robinson, R. (1991) *Georgia O'Keeffe: A Life*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Roscio, D. N. (ed) (2002) *Writings on Cy Twombly*. Munich: Schirmer/Mosel.
- Rosenfeld, P. (1922) The Paintings of Georgia O'Keeffe. *Vanity Fair*, October, 56 – 112.
- Rudnick, L. P. (1983) Mabel Dodge Luhan and the Myth of the Southwest. *Southwest Review*, Vol. 68, No. 3, 205 – 221.
- Rumaker, M. (2003) *Black Mountain Days: A Memoir*. Asheville & New York: Black Mountain Press.
- Ryan, H. (2019) *When Brooklyn was Queer*. New York: St. Martin's Publishing Group.

Said, E. W. (2007) *On Late Style: Music and Literature Against Grain*. Paperback edition. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Saks, J. M., Hobbs, R., Ault, J., & Hailand, T. (eds) (2021) *Jim Hodges*. London & New York: Phaidon.

Sappho (1994) Fragment 105(c), Fragment 105(a). Translated by Anita George from the Greek. *Poetry*, June 1994, 140.

Schjeldahl, P. (1994) Cy was Here; Size Down. *Artforum International*. 33, No. 1, 71 – 75.

Schreyach, M. (2017) *History and Desire: A Short Introduction to the Art of Cy Twombly*. An Open Access Publication: Trinity University Digital Commons. Available online: <https://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/mono/65/> [Accessed 24 / 4 / 2022].

Schulman, S. (2012) *The Gentrification of the Mind: Witness to a Lost Imagination*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Schwenger, P. (2006) *The Tears of Things: Melancholy and Physical Objects*. Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press.

Searle, A. (2008) His Scattered Dreams, *The Guardian*, 17 Jun 2008. Available online: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2008/jun/17/art.culture> [Accessed 27 / 3 / 2021].

Sedgwick, E. K. (1993) *Tendencies*. New York: Duke University Press.

Sedgwick, E. K. (2004) The Weather in Proust. In Goldberg, J. (ed) *The Weather in Proust*. Durham & London: 2011, 1 – 41.

Seiberling, D. (1968) Poets: The Second Chance. *Times*, Vol. LXXXIX, No. 9, 40 – 53.

Serota, N. (ed) (2008) *Cy Twombly: Circles and Seasons*. London: Tate Publishing.

Shearer, W. (1994) *Fin de Siècle: Art and Society in an Age of Uncertainty*. New York: Overlook Press.

Shearman, S. (2015) In New York City's Lower East Side, gardening is a political act of resistance. *The Guardian*, 11 August 2015. Available online: <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2015/aug/11/new-york-lower-east-side-community-gardens> [Accessed 4 / 6 / 2021].

Sheets, H. M. (2018) Nick Cave Uses His Capital to Help Aspiring Creators. *The New York Times*. 1 November 2018. Available online: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/01/arts/design/nick-cave-chicago.html> [Accessed 7 / 5 / 2023].

Sherwin, S. (2010) Jim Hodges' A Diary of Flowers. *Another*. 12 August 2010. Available online: <https://www.anothermag.com/fashion-beauty/376/jim-hodges-a-diary-of-flowers> [Accessed: 24 / 6 / 2023].

Shoemaker, D. T. (2019) *Smoke and Souvenirs: The Essence of Charles Demuth*. Claymont: Distinguished Arts.

Shopland, N. (2017) *Forbidden Lives: LGBT Stories from Wales*. Bridgend: Seren.

Siegel, L. (2005) Cy Twombly. *Slate*. 6 April 2005. Available online: <https://slate.com/culture/2005/04/assessing-cy-twombly.html> [Accessed 9 / 12 / 2022].

Smith, P. (2012) *Just Kids*. Paperback edition. London, New Delhi, New York & Sydney: Bloomsbury.

Smith, R. (2008) Let's Not Assign Gay Artists to the Obituary Closet, *The Guardian*, 23 May 2008. Available online: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/artblog/2008/may/23/letsnotassigngayartiststo#:~:text=Every%20gay%20man%20comes%20out,is%20not%20always%20the%20case.> [Accessed 31 / 7 / 2022].

Snediker, M. D. (2009) *Queer Optimism: lyric Personhoods and Other Felicitous Persuasions*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Sontag, S. (2018) *Notes on Camp*, Penguin Modern Classics: 29. London: Penguin Books.

Souhami, G. (2013) *Gluck: Her Biography*, Paperback edition. London: Quercus.

- Sparks, E. K. (2018) *Twists of the Lily: Floral Ambivalence in the Work of Virginia Woolf and Georgia O’Keeffe*. Vandivere, J. & Hicks, M. (eds) *Virginia Woolf and Her Female Contemporaries: Selected Papers from the 25th Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press; Clemson University Press, 36 – 46.
- Spathoni, A. D. (2020) *Idyllic, Pastoral and Abstract: Cy Twombly’s Reinvented Arcadia*. *IKON*, July 2020, Vol. 13, 373 – 382.
- Stahr, C. (2020) *Frida in America: The Creative Awakening of a Great Artist*. New York: St. Martin’s Press.
- Steedman, C. (1984) *Landscape for a Good Woman*. London: Virago Press.
- Stoekl, A. (ed) (1985) *Georges Bataille: Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927 – 1939*. Translated from the French by A. Stoekl, C. R. Lovitt & D. M. Leslie Jr.. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Storr, R. (2012) *Selections from the Private Collection of Robert Rauschenberg*. New York: Rizzoli International Publications.
- Storsve, J. (ed) (2017) *Cy Twombly*. Munich: Sieveking Verlag.
- Stott, A. (1992) *Floral Femininity: A Pictorial Definition*. *American Art*, Spring, Vol. 6, No. 2, 60 – 77.
- Stowe, S. (2015) *The Centuries-Old Italian House Where Cy Twombly Thrived*. *The New York Times Style Magazine*, 26 March 2015, 190. Available online: <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/26/t-magazine/nicola-del-roscio-cy-twombly-gaeta-cultivating-genius.html> [Accessed 2 / 8 / 2023].
- Sullivan, N. (2003) *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Sutton, D., Martin-Jones, D. (2008) *Deleuze Reframed: A Guide for the Arts Student*. New York: I. B. Tauris.

Sylvester, J. (ed) (2016) *Cy Twombly: Fifty Years of Works on Paper*. Munich: Prestel Publishing.

Syme, A. (2010) *A Touch of Blossom: John Sargent and the Queer Flora of Fin-de-Siecle Art*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Tate (n. d.) *The Photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe: From portraits of iconic figures in the art and music world to powerful and moving self-portraits*. Available online:

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/robert-mapplethorpe-11413/photographs-robert-mapplethorpe> [Accessed 5 / 4 / 2022].

Taylor, C. (2010) Foucault and the Ethics of Eating. *Foucault Studies*, No. 9 (September 2010), 71 – 88.

Taylor, P. (1995) *Dutch Flower Painting 1600 – 1720*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Tessler, N. (2015) *Flowers and Towers: Politics of Identity in the Art of the American “New Woman”*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation (n. d.) *Mapplethorpe: Neoclassicism Press Release*. Available online: <https://www.mapplethorpe.org/exhibitions/sean-kelly-gallery5/about> [Accessed: 20 / 7 / 2022].

Thomas, J. A. (1999) *Pop Art and the Forgotten Codes of Camp in Memory & Oblivion*. Proceedings of the XXIXth International Congress of the History of Art, held in Amsterdam, 17 September 1996, 989 – 995.

Tobin, A. (2023) *Women Artists Together: Art in the Age of Women’s Liberation*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.

Tsing, L. A. (2015) *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Twombly, C. (2003) *Cy Twombly: At Inverleith House Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh*. New York: Gagosian Gallery.

Twombly, C. (2009) *The Rose*. New York: Gagosian Gallery.

Tylor, P. (1990) Robert Rauschenberg by Paul Taylor. *Interview*, Vol. 20, No. 12, December 1990, 147.

Udall, S. R. (2000) *Carr, O'Keeffe, Kahlo: Places of Their Own*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.

Unger, C. N. (2010) From Jook Joints to Sisterspace: The Role of Nature in Lesbian Alternative Environments in the United States. In Mortimer-Sandilands, C. & Erickson, B. (eds) *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Université PSL (2022) [Les Rencontres SACRe] Céline Sciamma et Laura Mulvey (partie 1) [Video]. Available online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ht_Fwhis-vk&t=86s

University of Nebraska-Lincoln (2021) *An Aesthetics of Collapse – a lecture by Jack Halberstam* [Video]. Available online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wf6Xw6bHAfs&t=1924s> [Accessed 21 / 5 / 2022].

Varnedoe, K. (1994) *Cy Twombly, a retrospective*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art.

Von Arnim, E. (1898) *Elizabeth and her German Garden*. London: Macmillan.

Vogel, L. (1974) Fine Arts and Feminism: The Awakening Consciousness. *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 3 – 37.

Wade, S. (2019) *Foucault in California: A True Story – Wherein the Great French Philosopher Drops Acid in the Valley of Death*. Berkeley: Heyday.

Wagner, M. A. (1996) *Three Artists (Three Women): Modernism and the Art of Hesse, Krasner, and O'Keeffe*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.

Walker, H. D. (1947) Marsden Hartley. *The Kenyon Review*, Spring, Vol. 9, No. 2, 248 – 259.

Walker, L. M. (2024) "Home Wenches": Queer Domesticity and the Colonial Revival in Fannie Hurst's Imitation of Life. *Legacy*, Vol, 40, No. 1-2, 160 – 185.

Walls, A. A. (2014) Cy Twombly and the Art of Hunting Mushrooms. *American Art*, Vol. 28, No. 2, 50 – 69.

Watney, S. (1996) *Policing Desire: Pornography, AIDS, and the Media*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Weinberg, J. (1993) *Speaking for Vice: Homosexuality in the Art of Charles Demuth, Marsden Hartley, and the First American Avant-Garde*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.

Whitbread, H. (ed) (2020) *The Secret Diaries of Ann Lister: No Priest but Love*. London: Virago Press.

Wilson, E. (2021) *Céline Sciamma: Portraits*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Wittig, M. (1975) *The Lesbian Body*. Translated from the French by David Le Vay. London: Peter Owen Limited.

Wong, Z. (2015) Why Georgia O’Keeffe has Remained a Feminist Icon (and, that it wasn’t always about the flowers). *Vogue*, Australia, October.

Woolf, V. (1949) *A Room of One’s Own*. London: Hogarth Press.

Yau, J. (2017) Cy Twombly and Charles Olson and the ‘Archaic Postmodern’. In Storsve, J. (ed) *Cy Twombly*. Munich: Sieveking Verlag, 25 – 29.

Filmography

Call Me by Your Name (2017) Directed by Luca Guadagnino [DVD & Blue-ray]. Sony Pictures Classics (Worldwides), Warner Bros. Pictures (Italy), Memento Films International (International). 132 mins.

Mapplethorpe: Look at the Pictures (2016) Directed by Fenton Bailey and Randy Barbato [DVD]. HBO. 108 mins.

War Requiem (1989) Directed by Derek Jarman. Netflix. 85 mins.

The Garden (1990) Directed by Derek Jarman [DVD & Blue-ray]. Basilisk Communications. 115 mins.

Portrait of a Lady on Fire (2019) Directed by Céline Sciamma [DVD & Blue-ray]. Lilies Films. 120 mins.

