

THE GLASGOW SCHOOL! PART

Queer (and) Decolonial (and) Feminist Botanical Entanglements: I Am Listening

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I, Storm Greenwood declare that the enclosed submission for the degree of Fine Art, PhD by Practice and consisting of a research project which comprises a written thesis with an integrated portfolio meets the regulations stated in the handbook for the mode of submission selected and approved by the Research Degrees Sub-Committee.

I declare that this submission:

is my own work, and has not been submitted for any other academic award.

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For Giulia Carla Rossi, who holds my complexities with tenderness

and

for my mother, Deborah Barker, my first feminist teacher

Abstract

This practice-as-research PhD explores the inextricable entanglement of botanical art with liberatory queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist artmaking practices and violent legacies. Flowers, present in our gardens, parks, roadsides and homes, are often overlooked as benign presences, an Enlightenment-influenced attitude that names plants as passive entities (Wandersee and Schussler). Within this research project, flowers, as living plants, painted objects and/or metaphors, act as companions in praxis and have a direct impact on the research, ethics, aesthetics and structure of the project. The central aim of this project is not to redeem or redress the violent history of botanical art, but rather, through a succession of illustrated and interwoven arguments, to illuminate how dwelling with the history and present of botanical art, through a form of slow scholarship, can offer a new botanically entangled approach to academic study as a form of queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist world making (Sara Ahmed).

The original artworks included in the project take the form of contemporary illuminated manuscripts, in which botanical paintings are interwoven with citations from queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist texts. Created as part of a 'devotional citation' praxis, the artworks are interwoven with the writing and the final installation brings together the finished artworks and a staging of the domestic space in which they were made. Informed by a queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist ethics, the project is rooted in research within Undercommons and Indigenous Studies (Emma Dabiri, Stefano Harney & Fred Moten, Robin Wall Kimmerer), black feminist love-politics (Alexis Pauline Gumbs, jennifer c. nash) and queer theory (ashon t. crawley, Amber Jamilla Musser).

The thesis is organised around the life cycles of a flowering plant: Seed & Root; Sprout & Leaf; Bloom & Pollinate and Wither & Seed. While Seed & Root attends to the history of British women botanical artists of the 19th and 20th centuries, the links between plant taxonomy and the foundations of scientific racism, and botanic and cottage gardens relationship with the colonial weaponization of Christian ideology, Sprout & Leaf provides a contemporary context for my praxis through exploring the work of British and North American artists and flower growers working with flowers as living plants, painted objects and/or metaphors to speak to queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist liberatory politics, such as Lauren Craig, Benny Nemer, Roisin Taylor

and Charmaine Watkiss. *Bloom & Pollinate* attends to my devotional citation gifting practice, in which the artworks are gifted to the scholars who authored the cited texts, in an act of honouring the importance of 'unmet friends' (Carolyn G. Heilbrun) and the sensorial embodied acts of reading and citing (ashon t. crawley, Amber Jamilla Musser). Furthermore, I highlight how the creation of an installation space that imitates my domestic working environment, and brings together paintings, fresh flowers and documentation of the movement of my devotional citation artworks, invites the reader/viewer to engage with a new approach to academic study. Finally, *Wither & Seed* considers the scope and limitations of the work and plants the seeds for the future growth of the project.

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6.30am. Winter. Soft yellow sunlight filters through the spindly branches of a willow tree onto a long wooden table. On the table sits an array of colourful inks in squat, round bottles and three fire coloured tulips reaching sunward in a glass milk bottle. Beside them rests a heavily annotated copy of jennifer c. nash's *black feminism* reimagined after intersectionality propped open to page 19 and a pencil sketch of an anemone from root to bloom.

Hold the image in your mind. Breathe in. Breathe out.

At first glance, queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist theory and the practice of botanical art may seem worlds apart. While queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist theory seeks to facilitate minoritarian world making (Ahmed, 2017) and critiques of violent legacies, botanical art might seem to stand in contrast to this. The description of this idyllic early morning scene might conjure images of 19th century upper-class white women engaging in botanical painting which, as science historian Jiang Hong writes, was considered a 'proper and delicate activity for women' (2020, p. 423). Flowers, present in our gardens, parks, roadsides and homes, are often overlooked as benign presences, a phenomenon that makes up part of the picture of that which biologists James H. Wandersee and Elisabeth E. Schussler refer to as 'plant blindness' (1999). Take a closer look, however, and you'll find that flowers

contain multitudes; flowers hold within them the fragility of life cycles, contemporary systems of exploitation, queer and feminist histories and present unfoldings and, as artist and historian Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll writes, 'the discipline of botany, which researched resource extraction through agriculture using indentured and slave labour, operated in the wider context of colonial control' (2018, p. 299).

The central aim of this project is not to redeem or redress the history of botanical art (one entangled with capitalist colonial heteropatriarchy), but rather, through a succession of illustrated and interwoven arguments, to draw attention to the inextricable entanglement of botanical art with both emancipatory artmaking practices and violent legacies. I do not seek to solve or untether these entanglements, but rather to ask how researching complex histories of suffering, resilience, beauty and brutality through a 'devotional citation' praxis might enact, after Sara Ahmed, a form of queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist world making. In Living a Feminist Life, Ahmed writes, 'feminism is at stake in how we generate knowledge; in how we write, in who we cite. I think of feminism as a building project: if our texts are worlds, they need to be made out of feminist materials. Feminist theory is world making' (2017, p. 14). The queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist materials I converse with in this project are not limited to theoretical texts, but include artworks, flowering plants, pigments, personal narratives and papers. After Black Studies scholars such as jennifer c. nash, Tiffany Lethabo King, M. NourbeSe Philip and Alexis Pauline Gumbs, whose work I will attend to in section three, Bloom & Pollinate, the work of this project is fundamentally about dwelling with discomfort and complexity as a queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist research method that can aid artist-researchers

in gaining a nuanced understanding of the entwined global histories of white supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy.

This understanding is necessary in order to move towards dismantling the current systems of exploitation, founded on the mass mistreatment of people and the planet, and rebuilding a more equitable society through collective efforts across multiple places, practices and languages. As organic food grower and writer Claire Ratinon states, in conversation with artist and educator Sam Ayre, decolonial practice entails 'reconsider[ing] the dominant narratives, examining who they serve and who they deplore' (2021, para. 46). Furthermore, she writes that 'the conversations that arise from those questions should find us feeling compelled to act' (2021, para. 49) in whatever small ways we can, from being more deliberate in our choices as consumers to creating art that instigates conversation to educating ourselves through reading, listening, conversing and making. This doctoral research project offers a particular fine art-based practice-as-research approach to dwelling with complex questions as a starting point for revolutionary queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist world making. Through an exploration of the complex entanglements of British and North American botanical art, it aims to contribute to the interconnected global community of people making small, informed steps towards queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist liberation. The thesis asks how flowers' complex entanglement with colonial legacies, botanical art, sacred aesthetics and queer expression make them ideal companions in the development of a botanical devotional citation praxis that facilitates this form of dwelling and aids in the creation of an alternatively structured fine art practice-as-research doctoral thesis.

To this end, the central aims of the thesis, as a written document are: 1) to contextualise contemporary queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist botanical art within

the history of 19th and early 20th century colonial botanical art and within contemporary sustainable flower growing and floristry; 2) to demonstrate how dwelling with flowers, as living plants, painted objects and/or metaphors can facilitate the questioning of established academic conventions and lead to the alternative structuring of a queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist doctoral thesis as a form of feminist world making; 3) to argue that flowering plants should be taken seriously as a complex and highly relevant research topic because of their entanglement with both emancipatory artmaking practices and violent legacies. Due to the limitations of the project, I chose to focus on the entwined history of Britain and North America and on the intersections of queerness, decoloniality and feminism. For this reason, the thesis does not attend to the role that flowers and botanical art play within other global communities and in relation to the interconnected areas of capitalism, disability, physical and mental health and class.

The visual aspect of the project has been created through my devotional citation praxis. Devotional citation, which is the term for a particular praxis rather than a descriptive phrase, is a visual secular-sacred form of close-reading grounded in a queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist ethics of love. In its most basic form it is a practice of devotionally creating botanical artworks in which citations from queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist texts are hand-printed or embroidered amongst flowering plants and gifted back to the scholars who wrote them. The central aims of my devotional citation artworks are: 1) to act as a research method that allows me to dwell with the complex scholarly texts I have read in the creation of this project as a form of secular-sacred close-reading; 2) to demonstrate a queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist citation practice as a form of feminist world making; 3) to create a doctoral research project that integrates a written thesis with an art portfolio and an

installation whereby the work asks for multiple forms of engagement from the reader/viewer. As a citation practice, devotional citation is to some extent limited to the realm of mirroring as a form of reply, whereby the response is an echo or augmentation of the call, but not a new response entirely. Furthermore, my commitment to citing work from across queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist work means that my level of engagement with any one particular community, discipline or subject is limited in depth, even while it is a praxis based on deep engagement and dwelling with the work of others.

I use the word 'dwelling' throughout this thesis to highlight the deeply situated nature of the secular-sacred attention I am seeking to cultivate, in both myself and those who view/read my work. This concept of dwelling as a world making practice resonates with architect and anthropologist Isabel Gutiérrez Sánchez's writing, who, after Spanish philosopher Amador Fernández-Savater, writes on 'dwelling as politics' (2022). While written within the context of community organising, Gutiérrez Sánchez's conception of dwelling shares many of the emancipatory aims of my own praxis. Through the analysis of three grassroots initiatives, Gutiérrez Sánchez writes about 'dwelling as a multidimensional praxis that involves in the same operation the creation of space and time – the act(s) of making room, making time for - and of meanings through which to find and claim belongingness' (2022, p. 559). Within my own work, I am seeking to facilitate a form of dwelling-as-attention in order to listen in multi-sensorial ways and to encourage multiple forms of engaging with knowledge, and in particular citation, within my readers/viewers. Furthermore, I use the word dwelling to situate my artistic-scholarly work within the specificity of my own domestic space, the East London home I share

with my fiancée Giulia Carla, as the physical and emotional realm within which my intellectual and artistic work takes place.

In creating the botanical devotional citation artworks for this project, I have extended the time spent with a variety of research materials, as I carefully transcribed citations from queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist texts onto hand-dyed paper. This extended period of dwelling with both textual and organic research materials facilitates the creation of nuanced understandings and questions regarding flowers' involvement in queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist world making practices and colonial legacies. Recontextualised within these botanical artworks, the exposed entangled roots encourage the reader/viewer to contemplate exploitative forms of citation and colonial botanical art as violent practices of uprooting even while the practice offers an alternative model. Like the study of botanical art, the study of citational practices reveals a tangled network of approaches and consequences, from Enlightenment influenced methods of extraction and refutation, to queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist approaches rooted in an ethics of listening and honouring. According to the Cite Black Women Collective, 'the academy has traditionally used authorship to create hyper-individualistic hierarchies of knowledge that can be monetized and catalogued according to capitalist and neoliberal measurements' (Smith et al., 2021, p. 10). The aim of their collective is to encourage scholars to recognise and cite the often invisibilised intellectual labour of Black women. They state, 'it is urgent that we reconfigure the politics of knowledge production by engaging in a radical praxis of citation that acknowledges and honours Black women's transnational intellectual production' (2021, p. 11). The work of the Cite Black Women Collective elucidates how even if one understands citation as a process of uprooting, as words are lifted from the original text and recontextualised

elsewhere, the ethics of different approaches to citation effect how the work circulates and the impact it has on those who write and read it.

The development of my artistic research praxis, devotional citation, the resulting artworks of which illustrate this thesis and appear in the final installation, was inspired by the Cite Black Women Collective and Sara Ahmed's approach to feminist citation in Living a Feminist Life, in which she did not cite any white men (2017, p. 15). One strand of my devotional citation praxis, which I will attend to in Bloom & Pollinate, involves gifting my artworks, which feature embroidered, painted or printed citations from scholarly texts, back to the scholars who wrote them. These acts of gifting are motivated by a desire to extend the time I spend with a text that has enriched my research and to gift something back to the scholars whose work has guided my thinking. In the fast-paced economy of contemporary academia, where too often scholars have limited time to engage with the work of their colleagues, I wanted to create work that would essentially say *I* am listening and sit as a counter methodology to the aforementioned extractivist modes of citation. The kind of listening I am motioning towards here is a form of deep listening that resonates with Alexis Pauline Gumbs' definition in *Undrowned*. She writes, 'listening is not only about the normative ability to hear, it is a transformative and revolutionary resource that requires quieting down and tuning in' (2020a, p. 15). In this way, I understand listening as a form of witnessing and identifying mutualities without eliding difference, influenced by black feminist scholar jennifer c. nash's writing on black feminist love-politics as based on a 'dual commitment to mutual vulnerability and witnessing' (2018, p. 116). The excessive workload of academics in the UK is clearly evidenced in the University and College Union's (UCU) 2021 workload survey, which found that academic staff were working the equivalent of more than two days per

week unpaid (2022: 26). Furthermore, the UK wide industrial action in 2022 and 2023, which is ongoing at the time of writing, has arisen in response to issues including low pay, pension cuts and precarious contracts, but also seeks action to 'address excessive workloads and unpaid work [and] action to address the impact that excessive workloads are having on workforce stress and mental ill-health' (Higher Education Joint Unions, 2023, p. 1). While my devotional citation praxis has widened in scope since its early days as a gifting practice, gifting has remained a central element of the work and I have created gift pieces for several of the scholars whose work has been central to the development of my praxis.



Fellow Fugitives, 2022. Gift artwork. Watercolour, acrylic and ink on indigo-dyed cotton rag paper.

My devotional citation gift pieces now sit in the offices and living rooms of academics across the UK, Europe and North America. These devotional citation artworks not only enabled me to extend the time I spent with the text and other research materials and show the writer that I was listening to the work they were

putting into the world, but also extended the text into a dialogic form, rather than remaining as a one-way text-to-reader transmission. The complex citational networks woven through my gift praxis are cultivated and sustained by attending to the acknowledgements section of texts as a point of departure. By focusing on the already existing networks of care and mutual support often foregrounded in acknowledgments, but not always represented in the citational pattern of the main body of the text, I seek to elucidate the ways in which care and mutuality already sit at the heart of the creation of many queer (and) feminist (and) decolonial texts, for as jennifer c. nash suggests in the acknowledgments to black feminism reimagined after intersectionality 'the best of academic life [is] a deep generosity with ideas' (2018, p. x).

Throughout the research process for this project, I have cultivated reciprocity and porosity in my approach to research materials, invested in that which artist and Black Studies scholar ashon t. crawley refers to as 'the capacity for that which we study to work on us, to transform us, to change how we inhabit the world' (2020a, p. 9). This approach to study is the result of the meeting place of my central research materials: queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist theory, flowering plants and plant-based papers and pigments. My relationship to flowers as companions in praxis is a direct response to the Enlightenment-influenced attitude that names plants as passive entities and leads to phenomena like the aforementioned 'plant blindness' (Wandersee and Schussler, 1999). As Ros Gray and Shela Sheikh write, 'landscape and nature are widely perceived as a passive, non-changing environment, the static backdrop or the stage upon which human historical events and actions take place, reflecting the capitalist and colonial notion of nature as a passive object, a resource to be extracted, to be profited from, to be controlled and mastered' (2021, p. 16). Within the space of my doctoral project, my research materials are active

collaborators in the process of knowledge production. In reading, making and writing in this way, I aim to position myself not as a colonial agent of knowledge, seeing textual and botanical materials as passive, stagnant objects to be used, but as a collaborator in the process of research.

My study of queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist research methods, such as those enacted by artist-scholars ashon t. crawley, Renee Gladman and Alexis Pauline Gumbs, anthropologists Isabel Gutiérrez Sánchez and Anna Tsing and indigenous scholars Potawatomi author and scientist Robin Wall Kimmerer and Sámi scholar Rauna Kuokkanen, have encouraged me to approach flowers as companions in praxis. In this way, my understanding of flowers as companions is aligned with queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist relationships to land rooted in indigenous understandings of humans as part of nature. I do not refer to North American indigenous, Sámi and African diasporic relationships to land in an attempt to collapse all indigenous communities into one inseparable group or to suggest that there are not complex and vibrant differences between these communities, but rather to dwell with and learn from their varied understandings of entanglement with nature; an understanding that started for me as a small child growing up in the Sussex countryside, homeschooled in fields, on tractors and in the vegetable garden and which has been enriched through the study of queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist entanglements with the natural world.

During the creation of this project, flowers have led me from economic botany and botanical illustration, to Benny Nemer and Hanif Abdurraqib, from illuminated manuscripts and illustrated herbals, to Mary Delany and Jennifer Packer and from May Sarton and ashon t. crawley to Roisin Taylor and Lauren Craig. This way of thinking with flowers has influenced my approach to citation, as my devotional

citation praxis has extended beyond the books I have read to the cut flowers on my kitchen table, the plants with which I have dyed my paper, the embossed pages of mediaeval illuminated manuscripts, and the flowering plants I have sketched during visits to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and Brooklyn Botanic Gardens.

This thesis is a celebration of art and/as scholarship by people from marginalised communities in Britain and North America from the 19th to the 21st centuries. Because it is first and foremost a work of feminist world making (Ahmed, 2017), it is largely a celebration of women's art and/as scholarship. However, as the styling of queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist art and/as scholarship implies, I understand the oppression and power of women, queer people and people of the global majority to be interconnected and recognise that these categories frequently overlap within a single person's identity, as well as within the complex, intertwined and fractured communities within which we live and work. My commitment to intersectional feminism is rooted in my understanding of intersectionality as arising from a long history of black feminist love-politics. As jennifer c. nash writes, 'we need not consider love-politics and intersectionality as in opposition, [as] intersectionality is itself a black feminist articulation of love' (2018, p. 116). For so much of history, art and/as scholarship has been dominated by what Jamaican sociologist Sylvia Wynter would refer to as the 'genre' of human that is the White European Male (2003). According to Wynter, within the story and recorded history of humanity, the White European Male 'over represents itself as if it were the human itself' (Wynter, 2003, p. 260) and this thesis is therefore a celebration of 'the relativity and original multiplicity of our genres' (Wynter, 2014, p. 31). It is also an honouring of the ways in which flowering plants act as companions for contemporary artists from marginalised backgrounds in creating work that speaks to histories and

presents of violence, beauty, fragility, temporality and resilience and in exploring the entangled history of Britain and North America. As black British artist Charmaine Watkiss notes in *Sprout & Leaf*, 'plants have been colonised too so there is opportunity for a lot of metaphor in the work' (2023, para. 2).

Within this project, writing and making towards work from different cultures, practices, disciplines and even, in the case of flowers, species, is a practice of listening across differences. I use the phrase 'writing towards' to indicate that this form of writing is not one of possession or hierarchy but one of reaching and listening, inclining one's ear towards sounds other than those that one has been trained to listen for. This conception of listening is influenced by Stefano Harney and Fred Moten's writing on encoded noise in The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study. Referring to the systems of knowledge of marginalised peoples, they write that 'encoded noise is hidden in plain sight from the ones who refuse to see and hear' (2013, p. 74). Writing towards difference is not without its complications or likely misunderstandings and citation provides a vital way to write across difference without claiming ownership or mastery over the work of others. It is for this reason that the focus within this thesis is not on critique in the conventional sense, but rather on listening for points of resonance across differences as a queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist research praxis. As part of this practice of listening I have also endeavoured to respect the ways in which the artist-scholars cited within this thesis write about themselves, particularly in regard to the styling of their names as lower or upper case and, in the case of the Black artist-scholars, whether they use an upper or lower case 'b' when writing the word Black in connection to themselves and their work. For this reason the styling of this word shifts throughout the thesis.

Furthermore, my collaboration with flowers has bloomed in the structuring of this doctoral thesis, which is organised around the life cycles of a flowering plant: Seed & Root; Sprout & Leaf; Bloom & Pollinate and Wither & Seed. This section, Seed & Root, acts as introduction to the thesis itself and to the historical context of the research, illustrating how flowers are complexly entangled with colonial legacies, botanical art, gifting practices, sacred aesthetics and queer expression and elucidates how being led by flowers, as a research method, has allowed for the alternative structuring of this queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist doctoral thesis. It is in this section that I argue that categorisation and taxonomies, especially those reliant on binaries, are colonial methods rooted in the history of economic botany in the 18th and 19th centuries and in Christian ideology. This argument is furthered by an explication on colonial nomenclature and the links between naming plant species and the foundations of scientific racism and the ways in which the concept of the botanic garden was founded on the idea of a new Garden of Eden. I explore how the colonial history of women botanical artists and illustrators in the 19th century demonstrates the entanglements of capitalist heteropatriarchal colonial histories and the ways in which these histories ask us to sit with discomfort and ambivalence.

Section two, *Sprout & Leaf*, is focused on the contemporary context of botanical art. I argue that approaching the study of flowers from a queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist ethics enables a reading of flowers, as living plants, painted objects and/or metaphors, as ideal companions in queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist world making and through close readings of a series of contemporary artists, florists and flower growers who work with flowers and/or floral imagery, such as Jennifer Packer, Charmaine Watkiss, Susan Chen, Alice Kettle and Hanif Abdurragib, Lauren Craig and Emma Hams. Furthermore, I argue that

entanglement with flowers enables contemporary artists and writers working from queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist perspectives to dwell with temporality and fragility and express their ethical and political positions through the medium of botanical art, a genre once dominated in Britain and North America by white supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchal sentiment.

Section three, Bloom & Pollinate, is focused on my research methodology and praxis. I demonstrate how thinking alongside flowers and queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist theory has enabled the development of my botanical devotional citation praxis and how this devotional praxis facilitates dwelling with discomfort and complexity as a queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist research method and a form of world making. I contextualise the development of this research method within my reading of black feminist texts such as those by Alexis Pauline Gumbs, Tiffany Lethabo King, M NourbeSe Philip, jennifer c. nash and Renee Gladman, all of whom dwell with difficult objects, geographies and histories in their work as starting points for conversation, elaboration and world making. Later in Bloom & Pollinate, I argue that scholarly citation can be considered both an act of uprooting and a transformational devotional act, elaborating the ways gifting allows for otherwise economies of care even while the concept of the gift is tied to the colonial concept of ownership and property. Finally, I explore how creating an installation space that brings together botanical art with queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist texts, fresh flowers and a staging of my domestic working environment for my final doctoral exhibition creates a space that invites the reader/viewer to dwell with flowers, as living plants, painted objects and/or metaphors, as companions in queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist research. In section four, Wither & Seed, I bring together the various strands of the doctoral research, reflect on the process and attend to the

shortcomings and limitations of the project, such as the focus on Britain and North America within a specific time period and the limits of citation. I also describe how the creation of an earlier artwork, *Five Tondos* (2021), marked the transition towards the centrality of flowers to my doctoral project.

By organising the thesis around the life cycles of a flowering plant, I hope to emphasise the richness offered by flowers as companions in thinking, as well as to offer an alternative structuring that challenges categorical distinction. While categorical distinction might at first appear to be a neutral research method, it is deeply rooted in patriarchal colonial history, a fact that is clearly evidenced in the history of colonial nomenclature. Swedish taxonomist Carl Linneaus (1707-1778) created a system for naming, ranking, and classifying organisms that is still used, albeit in an altered form, today. His taxonomic system to sort plants, animals, bacteria and fungi into categories, is also utilised to sort humans into a hierarchy of 'varieties' by skin colour and geographic origin, with white Europeans at the top and Black Africans at the bottom. Although Linnaeus did not specifically use the word race, this hierarchical sorting of humans by skin colour contributed to the development of scientific racism (The Linnean Society, no date), the pseudoscientific belief that empirical evidence exists to support racism.

In this way, taxonomy and colonial nomenclature, as forms of categorical distinction, underpinned both the study of botany and the justification of the transatlantic slave trade. For this reason, while the four sections of this thesis are named and attend to specific aspects of my research, the argument is found through the accumulation of different parts and the structure is cyclical, as it both starts and ends with a seed, and the footnotes, which feature artworks, scholarly text and

autoethnographic writing, occupy full pages, not relegated to margins or placed in a hierarchy to the main text. Seeking to further embody this cyclicality and non-categorical ethics, the artworks I have made during the process of my research are interwoven in the writing, which is also interspersed with personal reflection, most notably in two poetic autoethnographic footnotes. These footnotes situate my scholarly work within a personal history, blurring the boundary between the personal and the theoretical. As feminist theorist Nancy K. Miller writes in *Getting Personal: Feminist Occasions and Other Autobiographical Acts*, 'if one of the original premises of seventies feminism (emerging out of sixties slogans) was that "the personal is the political," eighties feminism has made it possible to see that the personal is also the theoretical: the personal is part of theory's material. Put another way, what may distinguish contemporary feminism from other postmodern thought is the expansion in the definition of cultural material' (1999, p. 21). After Miller, my own personal history, as presented within both the main text and the footnotes, is yet another research material from which this feminist project is made.

Botanical art is not separate from the history of taxonomy but rather, as Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll observes, 'artists have played a key role in botanising, and in the transfer of botanical knowledge, not only as illustrators of the physical characteristics of botanical subjects, but also in advancing the ways that scientists [...] have understood, named, represented, categorised and related to plants' (2018, p. 290). Furthermore, as Ros Gray and Shela Sheikh write, 'by supplanting the local name, the world in which that plant existed also disappeared' (2021, p. 16), in a process that Jiang Hong names as 'a form of 'linguistic imperialism' and a politics of naming' (2020, p. 423). While in botanical illustration the whole plant is traditionally painted for scientific accuracy and for the purpose of correct categorisation, I have

painted flowering plants from root to bloom in order to illustrate how plants have been uprooted across continents and cultures and to draw attention to the ways in which, as Tomaz Mastnak, Julia Elyachar and Tom Boellstorff write, 'planting and displanting humans and plants are elements of the same multispecies colonial endeavour' (2014, p. 363). By intertwining these uprooted plants with citations from queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist texts within my art, I have sought to bring acts of literal and metaphorical uprooting to the fore to illuminate the ways in which botanical art asks that we reckon with complex objects and violent legacies even within the midst of admiring the vibrant orange of a painted petal. Furthermore, I have created a list of the flowering plants featured in the artworks within the thesis and noted what is known of their origins.



The Politics of Naming, 2023. Watercolour, acrylic and ink on madder-dyed cotton rag paper.

As previously noted, botany and botanical art were considered respectable activities for middle and upper-class white British women in the 19th century (Hong,

2020). Despite this, social restrictions and a lack of access to Latin meant that even women who were travelling the globe, such as Marianne North, Constance Gordon-Cumming and Theodora Guest, identifying species previously unknown to British botanical institutions did not have the power to name plants. As Jiang Hong writes, these women 'did not have access to peer networks, libraries, herbaria collections, exchange facilities or museums, and they could not have their work published in journals, though they were indeed honoured by authoritative botanists who named genera or species after them' (2020, p. 428). Certain women botanists of the 19th century, such as Guest and North, did use Latin names to label their artworks, but they did not assign plant names themselves. Jeanne Kay Guelke and Karen M. Morin therefore argue, 'as a cultural practice binomial nomenclature [became] a way for them to establish narratorial authority rather than to supplement scientific advances' (Guelke and Morin, 2001, p. 320).

One of the questions that this doctoral thesis asks is how one can dwell with the disparity between access and recognition for white middle and upper-class women botanists and botanical artists of the 19th and 20th centuries compared to their male counterparts, while also holding the truth of the inherent violence of these colonial activities and their role in colonisation. White middle class, and more often upper class, women were allowed to take part in botany and botanical art due to the ways in which gardens were seen as part of the domestic sphere. Colonial gardens created on land colonised by the British Empire and those cultivated in Britain with imported plants were seen as enacting part of the 'civilising' mission of the Empire (Hong, 2020, p. 429). Upper class white women's simultaneous complex advantages and oppressions placed them in a unique position within botany, natural history and botanical art.

Marianne North, a wealthy white 19th century botanical artist, travelled the world painting and collecting plants, which contributed to the Royal Botanic Garden, Kew's mercantilist colonial mission (Guelke and Morin, p. 320). North's specimen collections on behalf of Kew make clear her colonial beliefs, and her extensive writings demonstrate her endorsement of slavery (Hong, 2020, p. 434). Despite the fact she never married and enjoyed her geographical freedom, she was not a proto-feminist and spoke out against women fighting for voting rights (Hong, 2020, p. 436). As botany and botanical art, endeavours deeply entwined with colonial expansion, were often used as the justification for wealthy white British women to travel and engage in scientific activity, it is not surprising that women such as North would speak in support of the British Empire and see themselves aligned more with the elite men of their day than with the women fighting for equal rights (McEwan, 1998, p. 219).



North American Carnivorous Plants © Estate of Marianne North, 1870. Oil on paper.

Despite her patriarchal colonial affiliations, North's paintings evoke an altogether different affect in the viewer due to her use of intensely bright colours in

oil paint, unusual inclusion of the plant's environment in situ and close-up details of petals and stamens. Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll argues that North's work demonstrates an 'openness to becoming vegetalised or thinking with plants as complex living beings' (von Zinnenburg Carroll, 2018, p. 293) and that rather than acting solely as an illustrator in service to colonial science, North's style of painting shaped knowledge of the vegetal world (2018). Towards the end of the century, North paid for a gallery to be built to house her life's work at Kew Gardens (Guelke and Morin, 2001, p. 310) and it remains unusual as a permanent gallery dedicated to the work of a single female artist. North designed the layout of the gallery and chose to display her work in tight proximity, the frames placed directly together, and gaps filled by small planks of wood. The work is ordered by geographic region and the effect of the layout is to create a sensorially rich and experiential interaction with global plant life as it existed in the 19th century. In examining North's work and legacy, we are asked to confront discomfort and ambivalence as we find ways to both appreciate her incredible skill and devotion while not denying the violence of the systems which she sought to further.

Another 19th century woman artist who travelled alone to the British colonies was Theodora Guest, whose naturalist writing was often intertwined with description of her journey, her meals and her surroundings. As Jeanne Kay Guelke and Karen M. Morin write, 'because few British women received a systematic university education before 1900 (Creese 1998), many of their writings today suggest a more idiosyncratic, reflexive, eclectic, and fluid tone than the discrete fixed hierarchical categories and theories beloved of university men' (2001, p. 312), which, in turn 'subverts masculinist classifications and narrative structures of scientific botany and regional geography' (2001, p. 323). The limitations set on women's writing

by their exclusion from certain forms of education meant that while their work was often not taken seriously by male scientists who favoured (supposed) objectivity, women such as Guest wrote radical hybrid texts which mixed together naturalist writing and original artwork with descriptions of their days and travels in a prescient precursor to today's life writing and arts practice-as-research. In this way, women naturalists such as Guest, practised a form of interdisciplinary practice-as-research even while contributing knowledge to the system that would soon be reified to the extent that it would discredit their own interdisciplinarity.

As I have noted, botany and botanical illustration allowed predominantly white upper class women of the 19th century unprecedented access to the world of science. Though often dismissed or uncredited, female botanical illustrators made a significant impact on the development of our contemporary understanding of botany, with botanical artists such as the aforementioned Marianne North (1830-1890) and illustrators such as Sarah Anne Drake (1803-1857), Ann Lee (1753-1790) and Maud H Purdy (1874-1965) creating important botanically accurate illustrations. The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew in London and the Oak Spring Garden Foundation in Virginia, USA, are currently working on a collaborative project to increase accessibility to work by female botanical artists through digitising their collections. While botanical illustration was elevated by its botanical accuracy and usefulness to male scientists, flower painting was considered less significant than historical painting, landscape painting or portraiture. As art historian Rebecca Birrell writes in This Dark Country, 'still life, floral subjects in particular, became the remit of artists who, because of their gender, were denied access to essential lessons on anatomy' (2021, p. 8). The Royal Academy, for example, did not allow women to attend life drawing classes until 1893 and even then male models had to be partially

dressed (Whickham, 2018). For both this reason and reasons of societal acceptability, flower painting is a form through which many women and people assigned female at birth, including gender nonconforming British painter Gluck (1895–1978), have expressed a multitude of emotions, notions and political positions. Like a botanical artist, I include the full plant in my renderings of flowers, from roots to foliage and blooms, but like a flower painter, I paint for artistic expression more than for botanical accuracy. I want to capture the full, grounded plant, not as a perfect bloom in a vase on my kitchen table, but as something that comes from and returns to the earth. However, I have no expectation that my botanical artwork would be scientifically useful. In fact, I am distinctly disinterested in the idea of "use" in the utilitarian sense, but rather I am interested in complexity, elaboration, decoration and beauty as useful in their own right.



Floral Subjects, 2023. Watercolour, acrylic and ink on coreopsis-dyed cotton rag paper.

An artist who made floral artworks that were both botanically accurate and visually stunning was Mary Delany. Born to a white upper-class English family in

1700, Mary Delany was raised for life at court and educated accordingly, learning several languages and receiving an education in art and music. It wasn't until her early 70s, however, after the death of her second husband, that Delany created her most enduring work. At the age of 72, Delany conceived of her own form of paper-cutting or decoupage, which she called 'paper mosaiks'. In 1772, Delany wrote to her niece 'I have invented a new way of imitating flowers' ([1772] 2019, para. 4) and she was right in her assessment; her botanical artworks were groundbreaking and are believed to be one of the earliest examples of collage within the history of Western art (Hessel, 2022, p. 51). As art historian Katy Hessel writes in *The Story of Art Without Men*, Delany's 'radical technique involved her amassing different colour, weights and types of paper, which she spontaneously cut into (with no preparatory studies)' (2022, p. 51) to create botanically accurate floral images. She pasted these cut papers onto a black background, creating the impression that the flowers were somehow illuminated in the dark.

These artworks led to the creation of the decade-long project, *Flora Delenica*, for which she made nearly a thousand 'paper mosaiks'. While she did not perform preparatory studies but rather cut directly into the paper, her dexterity at accurately representing flowers was no doubt honed through both her artistic training and her lifelong devotion to flowers and gardens. Throughout her life, Delany had worked to improve the gardens of the properties in which she lived and collected botanical specimens (British Museum, no date). What seems evident in Delany's tender and botanically accurate work is a well-honed capacity for looking at flowers. In order to create botanically accurate artworks, one needs both a technical understanding of art materials and botanical specimen preparation and a keen understanding of how to pay close attention to living plants. A kind of 'close looking' which is, I would argue,

akin to a form of prayer, for I am in agreement with French Philosopher, mystic and political activist Simone Weil who proffered in *Gravity and Grace* that 'attention, taken to its highest degree, is the same thing as prayer' (1952, p. 105).



Centaurea Cyanus © Estate of Mary Delany, 1779. Paper, watercolour, bodycolour and ink.

Delany created her artworks by preparing, mounting, observing and then
copying botanical specimens. At the beginning of the project she sourced the plants
herself, but as word of her work spread, collectors and botanists began to gift her
plants in order for her to make an artistic record of them (Moore, 2005: 63). Many of
these plants were brought to England through trade and colonisation and in this way
Delany's Flora Delenica was a product of the Enlightenment movement to understand
the world through observation and classification. On the reverse of each artwork,
Delany noted the date, place of creation, name of the specimen's donor and a unique
collection number. Furthermore, each of Delany's artworks featured a label with the
plant's Linnaean and common names, as well as her signature. In Delany's tender

'paper mosaiks' the devotional beauty of her capacity to illuminate flora dwells alongside the reality of the violent acts of colonisation that led to many of the botanical plants she worked with being available to her. Dwelling with her work means dwelling with both awe and delight at her incredible skill and a heavy discomfort with the ways in which these exquisite artworks are the product of brutal colonisation and Enlightenment scientific classification.

Figures such as Delany, North and Guest were able to work without the recognition required for payment to be possible due to their inherited wealth. Their privilege as upper-class, white and British afforded them the opportunity to make art, write, and, in the case of North and Guest, travel, even while their gender prohibited them from full access to the scientific world. There are uneasy comparisons between my own positionality and theirs, as my botanical painting praxis, acts of gifting and devotional academic work have been afforded to me as a result of a doctoral scholarship, which is co-funded by the UK government, by way of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), and my research institution. While I do not come from a wealthy family and I live modestly, I am aware there is still a sense in which my position as a white, educated British woman has allowed me to spend these years researching, painting and writing about flowers. Within my praxis and the texts I work with, I have sought to find ways to dwell with the discomfort of these comparisons and neither seek to elide them or to be consumed by them. In positioning flowers as a complex research material with a violent legacy, I hope to demonstrate that while it is an enormous privilege to undertake a doctoral level degree and to spend my days in conversation with plants, flowers are neither neutral nor frivolous as a subject of scholarly research.



The Holy, 2023. Watercolour, acrylic and ink on madder-dyed cotton rag paper.

The movement within my work between flowers and text is pertinent to discussion of 20th century American poet, memoirist and novelist May Sarton's relationship with flowers. In the span of her long career, Sarton published over fifty books and wrote particularly poignantly on solitude, the writing process and lesbian love, but one of Sarton's great devotions, which recurs across her publications of all genres, was flowers; flowers as companions, flowers as evocative emotional metaphors, flowers as sources of delight, flowers as sacred. The memoir of her writing life in New Hampshire, *Journal of a Solitude*, opens with a description of the 'lovely, bright singing pink' roses on her desk and the 'two sprays of white lilies' on her mantel (1973, p. 11). She writes, 'when I am alone the flowers are really seen; I can pay attention to them. They are felt as presences. Without them I would die... they change before my eyes. [...] I am floated on their moments' (1973, p. 11). I feel the absence of flowers like an ache whenever there is a gap between one bunch dying and another being gathered or purchased and while I do not grow enough plants to

have cut flowers from the garden year round, there is always at least one vase of flowers present on my kitchen table/writing desk. When I have not grown them myself, I buy flowers from local florists working with sustainable supply chains and depending on the season, availability of certain varieties and the work I'm reading or writing, I might buy a few tall single stems or a proliferation of blooms. Often, between reading paragraphs of text, I pause to look at the afternoon light as it shifts across the flowers arranged in a vase before me. In this way, flowers serve a similar purpose in my writing life as they did in May Sarton's—they are companions in praxis that keep me company as I sit with joy, revelation, uncertainty and discomfort within my research, writing and making.



Companions in Praxis, 2022. Watercolour, acrylic and ink on cotton rag paper.

Sometimes it is my fiancée, Giulia Carla, who buys and arranges the flowers, and this brings another collaborator into the floral-textual-domestic space of creation. On our third date I gifted her a single white rose, a stem of lisianthus and a spray of wax flowers, and gifting flowers has since become an integral part of our

relationship. Our second autumn together I filled the flower pots in the garden with an avalanche of deep purple and vibrant yellow violas and they have survived even the coldest seasons. Giulia Carla, who is a curator and multimedia artist, has pressed these violas and incorporated them into her art (Rossi, 2023), while I have painted them and written them into this thesis. Thus flowers circulate between my life, my love, my research and my art, connecting me to the queer artists before me who lived alongside flowers in their own ways, such as May Sarton and Gluck. As previously mentioned, women were first banned and then discouraged from painting nudes and Gluck, in lieu of painting her own body or her female lover's portraits, painted flowers in bold and sensuous ways. In this subtly subversive move, Gluck recorded her love for women and ambivalent relationship with her own gender within the parameters of her artistic training and without risk of retribution from a society that was openly hostile to queerness. As Rebecca Birrell writes, Gluck's initial flower paintings came out of a collaboration with the florist Constance Spry, who went on to become Gluck's lover and would arrange the flowers for Gluck to paint. Birrell notes that in these paintings, 'Gluck uses a hyper-real figurative aesthetic that clearly specifies the flower are flowers while also making reference to the most erotic zones of the body' (2022, p. 157).



Convolvulus © Estate of Gluck, 1940. Oil on canvas.

While I am working in a time and place where I could acceptably paint nudes, I am drawn to the multiple ways in which flowers signify and the possibilities they provide for thinking through nature, the sacred, colonialism, patriarchy, the domestic and the complexities of queerness all within a single flower arrangement. There is a particular tenderness I feel in painting flowers chosen and arranged by my partner and by bringing the flowers in my home into the visual, textual and installation elements of my project, I aim to make the domestic realm in which I work an acknowledged presence, rather than an opaque space of creation. The home as a central workspace is not an unusual setup for a PhD student, especially for those of us whose work does not frequently include labs or other forms of onsite working and during the coronavirus pandemic, when a portion of the research for this PhD was completed, swathes of people were working from home under the 'stay home' orders of the Covid pandemic control measures. However, my decision to name my domestic working environment and allow it space in the project is inspired by the

ways in which artists, particularly women artists have, often out of necessity, made a studio of their home.

A vibrant example of the domestic as a space of artistic creation is

Bloomsbury Group members Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant's Sussex home,

Charleston Farmhouse. While there are many well documented aspects of the

Bloomsbury Group's approach to life I would not wish to emulate, Charleston

provides an example of a home in which art was placed in a reciprocal relationship

with a domestic setting. As Rebecca Birrell writes, at Charleston in the 20th century,

modernism 'could be lived through, with domestic life and radical aesthetics forever

intermingling and bolstering one another. No surface was left untouched: door

panels, window embrasures, tables, wallpaper and soft furnishings were all covered

in vibrant colours and abstract forms' (2021, p. 244). Charleston has been open to the

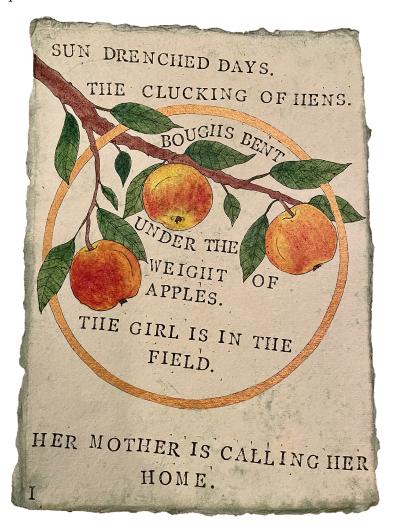
public since 1986 and my childhood was dotted with numerous visits to the house

and gardens, which, along with Virginia and Leonard Woolf's house, Monk's House,

is situated in the Sussex countryside near to the village where I spent the first

eighteen years of my life and where I was homeschooled until the age of sixteen.\(^1\)

The walled garden at Charleston Farmhouse is bursting with life; flowers, plants, fruit trees and sculptures and beyond the walls a large pond in which koi carp meander through the tree-lined water. During the years in which Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant lived at Charleston, the garden was an extension of the house and acted as another canvas for creation and exploration. As noted by art historian Quentin Bell and writer Virginia Nicholson, the respective son and granddaughter of Vanessa Bell, in *Charleston House and Garden*, 'this is a painters' garden, and like the house was not intended to be tasteful or restrained' (1997, p. 125). Although the garden was largely managed by a gardener, known as Young Mr Stevens, 'Vanessa



Ι

Sun drenched days. The clucking of hens.

Sweet ripe blackberries. Sticky red fingers. Mournful cows. Quiet grain.

Boughs bent under the weight of apples. Fruit thudding to the floor. The girl is in the field. Picking blackberries. Playing in the grain. Collecting apples.

Her mother is calling her home.

Η

This is the time before the neighbour at the door. The time before the greenhouse.

The time before the gun. The time before the shattering.

The time before 12 months 8 deaths 5 heartbreaks 3 months notice.



Ш

The time after is a silent scream. Harsh city lights.

A dull ache. Fear disguised as longing. The woman is 5000 miles away. Writing journals. Studying theories. Calling her father.

10 weeks became 10 months became 10 years.





IV

A stack of books on a kitchen table. Dawn light filtered through the leaves of a willow tree.

Fragrant peonies in a vase. Two women washing the dishes together. Laughing. Delicate. Fragile. Sacred.

Home.

Home: A *Quartet*, 2023. Watercolour, acrylic and ink on indigo-dyed cotton rag paper.

and Duncan's choice of flowers reflected their love of colour, of Bonnard and Matisse' (1997, p. 134). In 1930, Vanessa Bell wrote to English painter Roger Fry, 'I'm painting flowers - one can't resist them - [...] when the sun comes out once in a blue moon you can't conceive of what the medley of apples, hollyhocks, plums, zinnias, dahlias, all mixed up together, is like' (1997, p. 134). As previously mentioned, May Sarton, who was at the periphery of the Bloomsbury Group, also nurtured a reciprocal relationship between flowers and her creative life. In Journal of a Solitude, she writes, 'in the garden the door is always open into the "holy" - growth, birth, death. Every flower holds the whole mystery in its short cycle, and in the garden we are never far away from death, the fertilizing, good, creative death' (1973, p. 88). In Sarton's use of language regarding gardening, it is clear that there is a spiritual aspect to her relationship with growing and living alongside flowers. The architect and landscape architect responsible for the restoration of Charleston in the 1980s, Sir Peter Shepheard, described the garden as 'an apotheosis of the traditional English cottage garden' (1997, p. 125); 'apotheosis' interestingly meaning both the pinnacle of something and, from Greek 'apotheoun', 'make a god of', the elevation of something to divine status.



Jug of Flowers © Estate of Vanessa Bell, 1933/34. Oil on canvas.

The presence of plants imported through colonisation in English cottage gardens, such as Charleston, demonstrates the entanglement of the contemporary English cottage garden with the colonial history of the British Empire's botanic gardens, as well as with their beginnings as the food gardens of labourers. The origins of the English Cottage Gardens are characterised by their abundance and lack of organisation by category, with flowers, fruit trees, herbs and vegetables all grown together. These types of gardens were first created as a practical solution to the necessity for growing one's own produce in a small garden. As Andrew Sankey writes in *The English Cottage Garden*, 'cottage gardens in the past were never consciously designed but evolved over the centuries to fulfil the needs of the poorer classes (labourers, cottagers and village craftsmen) who generally lived a 'hand-to-mouth' existence. With little or no wealth to speak of, they took advantage of the native flora, new vegetable introductions and the discarded flowers from the lord of the manor or farm owner for whom they worked' (2021, p. 21). Cottage gardens became less common over the centuries, with 'seven million acres of land

being enclosed by 4,000 Acts of Parliament between 1750 and 1870, thus wiping out virtually all the common land in and around rural villages and creating lasting hardship for the cottagers' (Sankey, 2021, p. 79).

Unsurprisingly, what had started as a labourers-garden and one cultivated out of necessity and threatened by the increasing power of the upper-classes, later became fashionable. As Sankey notes, 'from the 1880s onwards the cottage garden divides into two streams - the productive self-sufficient poor labourer's garden (being vegetables, herbs and animals), and the 'new' romantic, picturesque style of cottage garden of the middle class who wished for the idyllic country life' (2021, p. 106). It is this second stream that Charleston Farmhouse fits into and these newer kinds of country gardens, the ones today's country gardens are based on, also had a marked difference: rather than growing predominantly cheap and easily available native plants, they relied largely on plants imported through colonisation. The flowers now associated with the traditional English country garden are largely flowers imported during the 15th - 18th centuries. For example, zinnias and dahlias, mentioned by Vanessa Bell in her letter to Roger Fry (1997, p. 134), originated in Mexico, arrived in Britain during the 18th century and were named after German botanist Johan Zinn and Swedish botanist Anders Dahl respectively (Campbell-Culiver, 2001, p. 284).

As previously mentioned, botanic gardens were an important part of the British Empire. While there was an exotic garden at Kew Park in the early 18th century, Kew Gardens did not become a national botanic garden until 1840. By this time the main aim of botanic gardens was to collect profitable plant specimens, but as historian John Prest highlights, in the 16th and 17th centuries, 'contemporaries interpreted the foundations of these encyclopaedic gardens in a context of the

recreation of the early paradise, or Garden of Eden' (1981, p. 6). During the early years of the British Empire's colonial missions, both Protestants and Catholics alike believed in the creationist narrative of *Genesis* and thought that the Garden of Eden might have survived the Great Flood. When colonial efforts to find it proved futile, as Prest writes, 'men began to think, instead, in terms of bringing the scattered pieces of the creation together into a Botanic Garden, or new Garden of Eden' (1981, p. 9). This idea of a reclamation or recreation of the Garden of Eden and the binary division between kept/unkept, sacred/profane and civilised/uncivilised was one of the early justifications used for colonial invasion. As Science Historian Jim Endersby writes, 'the ideas that were used to justify enclosure of common land in England – that it was going to waste – were used to justify colonialism all over the world' (Endersby, 2019, p. 3).

This early justification for colonial botanic gardens remained part of the narrative even as the focus turned towards economic botany, which can be clearly seen in Thomas Croxen Archer's *Popular Economic Botany* (1853), which begins with the author conjuring an image of the Garden of Eden even while motioning towards the economic importance of colonial botany (Endersby, 2019: 5). Furthermore, early European botanic gardens were commonly arranged in a manner that made individual plants not only taxonomically identifiable but easily reachable from the walkways to be studied, sketched, felt or smelled (Prest, 1981: 6). For this reason, Prest proposes that the garden was not only a sacred place but an encyclopaedia (Prest, 1981: 6). By outlining the entanglement of botanical art with botanic gardens, economic botany, colonial invasion and Christianity, I hope to draw attention to the ways in which studying flowers can also allow us space to consider how Christianity and the sacred have been weaponized as a colonial tool and justification for violence.

This propensity for Christianity to depend on binary categorisation is also clearly evidenced in the creation of illuminated manuscripts in the mediaeval period. As Michael Camille writes in *Image on the Edge*, whereas the centre of the manuscript was a place for holy scripture, 'by the end of the thirteenth century no text was spared the irreverent explosion of marginal mayhem' (1992, p. 25) and, as a necessary opposing force, 'travesty, profanation and sacrilege are essential to the continuity of the sacred in society' (1992, p. 34). Although mediaeval manuscripts often featured images of mayhem and dissent, such as the Rutland Psalter (British Library, Add MS 62925) and the Ormesby Psalter (Bodleian Library, MS. Douce 366), flowers were a motif that were able to move freely between the margin and the centre as they were utilised for both illustrative and decorative purposes, such as in the 13th century Latin manuscript on medicinal herbs *Tractatus de herbis* (British Library, Add MS 747) and the 15th century Hebrew *Lisbon Bible* (British Library, Or 2626).

As previously stated, I have sought to evade categorical, taxonomic and binary thinking and presentation within this project, and for this reason the artworks I have made during the process of my research are interwoven with the writing, the footnotes occupy full pages and the final installation brings together both the finished artworks and a staging of the domestic space in which they were made. Quoted or original text that appears in the artworks often appears in the main body of the thesis and within the artworks themselves the text is interwoven with flowers and gold abstract shapes with no easily identifiable margin. Therefore, in this movement between painting and text, researching and writing, the structure and layout of this thesis moves like the flowers in an illuminated manuscript: both marginal and central, illustrative and decorative, entangled with words, evading easy categorisation.

Another key element of my visual works influenced by illuminated manuscripts is my use of gold. My connection to the use of gold in art goes back to one of the most formative homeschooling trips my mother and I embarked on. At the age of fourteen, my mother took me to Italy, and I remember being utterly entranced by the gold-ground paintings at the National Gallery of Umbria in Perugia and the frescos in the Basilica di San Francesco in Assisi. What drew me to both the gold-ground paintings and the frescos was a combination of the presence of the sacred, which is to say the lingering sense of time spent in deep emotional and/or intellectual contemplation during the process of creation, and the immersive nature of the work. In the case of the frescos, I was completely surrounded by religious stories told through the medium of art, while in the case of the gold-ground paintings, the gold seemed to suspend both its subjects and me, the viewer, in a warm glow. In 2022, The British Library mounted an exhibition, Gold, which showcased a selection of illuminated manuscripts from around the world. In her introduction to the catalogue, co-curator Eleanor Jackson writes that, within sacred texts, 'the material value of the gold becomes a metaphor for spiritual value, and [...] its shine suggests the radiance of divinity and wisdom' (Jackson et al., 2022, p. 3). She notes that the majority of surviving texts written entirely in gold ink are sacred texts and that 'the incredible brightness of gold gives it an otherworldly quality which could help the reader to focus their attention and raise their mind in prayer' (2022, p. 6).

It is due to this capacity of gold to illuminate and command attention that it has become a motif in my devotional citation artworks, as I seek to allude to sacred forms of study within a secular praxis. The aesthetics of my artwork has been particularly influenced by Christian and Jewish illuminated manuscripts created

between the 11th and 16th centuries, such as the intensely gilded pages of the 16th century French Book of Hours Book of Hours, Use of Rome (British Library, Add. MS 35214) and the 15th century Flemish Breviary of Queen Isabella of Castile (BL, Add. MS 18851) and Hastings Hours (BL, Add. MS 54782). Both a breviary and a Book of Hours are devotional books used by lay people during the mediaeval era to pray the canonical hours which encouraged an ethics of slowness. Due to the difficulty of sourcing ethical gold leaf with a transparent supply chain, however, I made a choice early on to work with acrylic gold paint. I will further attend to my devotional citation praxis and journey towards sourcing ethically-produced art supplies in section three, Bloom & Pollinate, but this was a flawed choice as an alternative, as acrylic paint contains microplastics. One of the most important small steps which the research methods I engaged with during the creation of this project has facilitated is a growing understanding of the entanglement of climate justice with racial justice and class equality and how these discoveries have influenced my relationship with the materials I work with. I am in the process of finding more equitable ways to work with illumination and have been experimenting with natural pigments and plant dyes.

In *Seed & Root*, I have sought to illustrate how flowers are complexly entangled with colonial legacies, botanical art, gifting practices, sacred aesthetics and queer expression and elucidate how being led by flowers, as a research method, has allowed for the alternative structuring of this queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist doctoral thesis. Through discussing the colonial history of women botanical artists and illustrators in the 19th century I have sought to demonstrate the capitalist heteropatriarchal colonial histories in which they participated and how considering their work asks us to dwell with discomfort and ambivalence. Furthermore, by

exploring the entangled histories of taxonomy, categorisation and binaries, I have sought to illuminate the complex entanglements of flowers with the colonial history of the British Empire, economic botany and Christian ideology and to begin to motion towards the ways in which this thesis and my praxis of devotional citation seeks to facilitate engagement with these topics.



10.30am. Springtime. A long walk up a winding road. The North Carolina sun beats down on the pavement and it's already 26 degrees. Inside The Nasher Museum of Art it's cool and white. On an expanse of wall hangs a portrait in a mahogany frame. The drawing depicts a woman gazing regally past the viewer's eyeline. Around her neck the fruit of a Cerasee plant creates a collar. A small sign next to the painting informs the reader that the painting is *The Warriors Way: Restructuring the Self* (2022) by black British artist Charmaine Watkiss.

Hold the image in your mind. Breathe in. Breathe out.

What might this painting and its placement in an American gallery tell us about the colonial botanical entanglements of Britain and North America? What might this intermingling of plant and human communicate about African and indigenous Jamaican relationships with plants? How might researching the plants depicted in this painting inform us about other systems of plant knowledge? What does the artist's use of drawing indicate about how they wish their work to be received?

The artists whose work I attend to in this section paint, arrange, draw, weave or describe flowers in order to converse with something beautiful, fragile and temporary. Flowers ask for attention: attention to colour, texture, light, temporality and life cycles. Flowers inhabit the space of the immediate present while also

summoning us into conversation with the past and the future as we contemplate life cycles, colonial histories and contemporary renderings of flowering plants. These British and North American artists' conversations with, and representations of, flowers are informed by queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist ethics and offer a contemporary alternative to capitalist colonial heteropatriarchal botanical art. Present in this writing are artists who have created large bodies of work concerning flowers, such as Charmaine Watkiss, Paris-based queer Montreal-born artist, diarist, and researcher Benny Nemer and Métis visual artist and author Christi Belcourt, alongside artists who turned to flowers during the coronavirus pandemic lockdowns, such as British contemporary textile and fibre artist Alice Kettle and Asian American painter Susan Chen. Black American artists Jennifer Packer, Hanif Abdurraqib and ashon t. crawley paint or describe flowers as a form of grieving and honouring life amidst racial violence. London-based American textile artist Cecilia Charlton explores the generous and transcendent possibilities of weaving garden flowers, while Lauren Craig's work in the floristry industry paved the way for the contemporary sustainable flower movement in Britain and flower growers Emma Hams and Roisin Taylor offer alternatives to exploitative forms of conventional floristry.

Just as my devotional citation artworks endeavour to communicate that I am listening to the theorists I read, this exploration of contemporary botanical art is a series of acts of careful listening to the artists and their work. Mindful of the hierarchies that can be created when a scholar or critic writes about the work of an artist, I contacted the artists for interviews. My focus within this section is not only on what these contemporary artists offer to the public through their completed works, but also concerns their processes of creation and what these enable for them.

I was fortunate to visit both Cecilia Charlton and Lauren Craig in their London studios and interview them while surrounded by their recent artworks. Alice Kettle, Benny Nemer, Charmaine Watkiss, Emma Hams and Roisin Taylor generously consented to be interviewed via email. In the case of the other artists written about in this section, such as Hanif Abdurraqib, Jennifer Packer and Susan Chen, I have endeavoured to represent and speak to their work in ways that honour and celebrate the ways in which they publicly describe their practices and processes.

During the Coronavirus pandemic, online conversations regarding racial inequality, LGBTQ hate crime, gender-based violence and modern slavery seemed to gain new traction. In the summer of 2020, the murder of George Floyd by a police officer in Minnesota caused an international resurgence in the Black Lives Matter movement, while in spring 2021 there were three shootings at spas in Georgia, in which eight people were murdered, including six women of Asian descent. This led to a proliferation of Stop Asian Hate protests against violence targeting Asians, Asian Americans, and others of Asian descent. These protests were also in response to racial discrimination against Asian Americans in the wake of coronavirus.

The 2021 spa shootings are the subject of Asian American painter Susan Chen's powerful work *March 16th Remembrance Mums*. In the painting, a vase of white chrysanthemums with eight visible blooms, the number of people killed in the shootings, sits alongside three candles for the three spas and a blank yellow legal pad. Several leaves and petals are scattered on the table, showing the flowers are dying even as they bloom. In a post on Instagram, Chen wrote that she made the painting a week after the shootings and stated, 'I saw all the bouquets of flowers people had left outside these spas in memory of the victims. I couldn't fly to Georgia myself, so i [sic] thought I'd gift my own flowers via a painting' (2021, para. 3). Made

in memory of Soon Chung Park, Hyun Jung Grant, Suncha Kim, Yong Yue, Delaina Ashley Yaun, Paul Andre Michels, Xiaojie Tan and Daoyou Feng, all sales from the painting were donated to the victims' families GoFundMe fundraiser. Through painting flowers, Chen was able to express her own grief in the wake of the shootings, honour the lives that had been lost and offer tangible help to the victims' families. Chen also created a second, similar painting, titled *Remembrance Mums* for the *We Stand Together To Stop AAPI Hate* fundraiser exhibition at Make Room Los Angeles. The exhibition included work by artists such as Judy Chicago, Pixy Liao, and Dominique Fung and the profits from the exhibition were donated to the Stop AAPI Hate Organization and AAPI Community Fund (Make Room, 2021).



March 16th Remembrance Mums © Susan Chen, 2021. Oil on canvas.

Chen first turned to flower painting at the start of the pandemic when she found herself sheltering in place and at a loss for what to paint. In an Instagram post on 18th May 2020, she wrote, 'every painter goes through the existential crisis (at some point in their lives) that is the #flowerpainting The first painting I made in my home studio after evacuating our Columbia MFA studios with 48 hours notice' (2020, para. 1). She also noted in the post that she was moved to action after reading a letter

from American artist Sol LeWitt to German-born American sculptor Eva Hesse (2020, para. 1). This letter resurfaces in relation to flower painting in a 2022 series of three vibrant still lifes inspired by the paintings of 18th-century French painter Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin and Vietnamese painter Lê Phổ. Chen cake-piped oil paint onto canvas in order to create flowers with highly textured petals (Wong, 2022, para. 12) and next to the vases in each of the three still lifes sits a card emblazoned with the word 'DO' in reference to a letter which helped Chen to move through creative block within the changing circumstances of the pandemic (Wong, 2022, para. 12). Speaking to American artist Heidi Howard regarding making the work for her 2021 show, I am Not a Virus at Night Gallery in Los Angeles, Chen notes 'when you paint objects or still life, you spend so much time looking at that object that you start to wonder if it's alive (I have on many occasions talked to flowers that I'm painting, and sometimes I feel like they can totally hear me!)' (Chen, no date, para. 19). Furthermore, in an interview with Elizabeth Cheatham McNairy, Chen states that 'the things around you really do affect your work—what you see everyday, even if they're small, mundane things. I'm a big believer that your living environment really affects your painting subconsciously' (Chen, 2020b, para. 33). It is clear that within Chen's work, flowers are not simply objects to be painted, but rather act as companions, listening ears, conduits, metaphors and gifts. In the case of March 16th Remembrance Mums and Remembrance Mums they also seem to speak to the potential of floral metaphors, as the eight victims of the shootings are represented by eight chrysanthemums.

Similarly to Susan Chen, Black American artist Jennifer Packer's intimate drawings and paintings of figures and flowers speak to the potential of flowers as an alternative form of representation. In an interview for *The Art Newspaper*, Packer

noted that 'a painting is like a quotation out of context. And it's very clear sometimes when you go to a museum how poorly some things are quoted' (2020, para. 5). The idea of a painting as a quotation is representative of Packer's relationship to rendering her subjects, for similarly to Chen's botanical memorial paintings, rather than creating straightforward portraits or still lifes, many of Packer's artworks represent the subject through other means. For example, her 2017 painting *Say Her Name* references Sandra Bland, a Black woman whose death was a result of police brutality, through the medium of flower painting.



Say her Name © Jennifer Packer, 2017. Oil on canvas.

Packer stated that flower painting in response to grief and rage was a way to create art as a form of mourning while also not giving in to the white-centric curatorial pressure to create easily digestible protest art, a pressure that she sees as indicative of an attitude that is 'quick to historicise something, to put it in the past. That stops real change from happening in the now' (2020, para. 9). In this way, Packer's art invites the viewer to sit with the complexity and multiplicity of the Black American experience and face the limitations of representation while also honouring

art's capacity to create spaces for contemplation and perhaps even faith. Packer notes that this potential for nuanced reflection is found in the maker's and viewer's understanding that 'there are things that we don't have access to, that exist around the things we make and things we do' (2020, para. 3). Within the artworks created for this project I am not seeking to replicate the texts I cite in an easily readable manner or represent them visually, but rather to draw them out and augment them so that they might be engaged with otherwise.

It is evident in Packer's work that she approaches her subjects with respect for their innate opacity and she cites Édouard Glissant as an influence on her paintings, alongside other Black intellectuals such as bell hooks, Audre Lorde and Kevin Quashie (2021, para. 3). In *Poetics of Relation*, Glissant writes of the acceptance of the inevitability of opacity as the necessary prerequisite for collaboration. Proffering that 'the self's opacity for the other is insurmountable', Glissant conceptualises a 'poetics of Relation' in which 'every last detail [is] as complex as the whole that cannot be reduced, simplified or normalized' ([1990] 1997, p. 33). While the idea of representation in portraiture or still life can evoke work led by the impulse to capture the reality of a person or a scene, the title of Packer's 2021 exhibition at The Serpentine in London, The Eye Is Not Satisfied With Seeing, points to a different relationship with the subject. This title is taken from the Christian Old Testament, otherwise known as the Ketuvim of the Hebrew Bible, and the full citation reads: 'All things are full of weariness; a man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing' (The Holy Bible: Ecclesiastes. 1:8). For Packer, this citational title speaks to the limitations of the senses and hence the limitations of human renderings of their perception of reality.

Respect for the opacity of experience is also central to the work of Sarah Jane Cervenak, who in Wandering: Philosophical Performances of Racial and Sexual Freedom notes, after Daphne Brooks, that 'the opacity in the spectacular is the undetectable place of an errant movement, an interior kinesis that resists forces attempting to trace, follow, and read' (2014, p. 14). While seeking to illuminate the power and potentiality of wandering for racial and sexual freedom, Cervenak also underscores the ways in which 'resistance to understanding is the site of radicalism' (2014, p. 14) and maintains a respect for the 'spectacular opacity' of those she writes about. As Daphne Brooks writes, "spectacular opacity," [...] emerges at varying times as a product of the performer's will, at other times as a visual obstacle erupting as a result of a hostile spectator's epistemological resistance to reading alternative racial and gender representations' (2006, p. 44). What writers such as Glissant, Cervenak and Brooks underscore in their scholarship is that the need to trace, quantify and analyse in order to understand is a desire rooted in a colonial heteropatriarchal mindset that places respect as something only possible on the other side of understanding, necessitating translation into the dominant ways of knowing. Understanding the inherent opacity of experience asks that respect be granted without the need for translation into the dominant system of analysis, namely Enlightenment-based calls for transparency, 'reason', binary and/or taxonomic categorisation, linear argumentation and written knowledge.

Packer's use of the biblical quote for her exhibition's title also points to the presence of faith in respecting the opacity of others. As Black Studies and Religious Studies scholar J. Kameron Carter reminds us, 'this is what goes unheld by state projects. What remains non-possessable is nothing less than the opacity of the sacred' (2020, p. 183). These words resonate with Glissant's reminder that 'to imagine

the transparency of Relation is also to justify the opacity of what impels it. The sacred is of us, of this network, of our wandering, our errantry' ([1990] 1997), p. 56). Through engaging with flowers, as painted objects and/or metaphors, Packer demonstrates how faith, respect for opacity and the capacity to pay attention are central to the cultivation of the sacred.

Respect for the opacity of other beings, or respect for that which is unknowable or untranslatable, feels present in the work of British textile and fibre artist Alice Kettle, another artist who turned to flowers during the coronavirus pandemic, culminating in the exhibition Threadbound at Candida Stevens Gallery in 2021. Working from her home in Somerset where her studio overlooks a garden (Kettle, 2021), Kettle created a body of work between March 2020 and September 2021 that features plants and human figures interweaving and coalescing. For Kettle, whose mother died when she was a teenager, both textiles and gardening are linked to her memories of her mother (2023a). She wrote, 'this catastrophe has affected my whole life and I seek to recover and construct myself through stitching. Making is about creativity, reproduction, new life' (2023a, para. 3), 'my childhood was distinguished by my mother's interest in gardening. She had a vast flower border and would make huge flower arrangements. It was her thing. We lived in a boy's school and her creativity was defining. Much of the reason I turned to art as a means to empower my own and a woman's voice through creativity and aesthetics and informality' (2023a, para. 2). Smaller in scale than the majority of Kettle's work, the floral pieces made during the pandemic were created using Kettle's distinctive freehand machine embroidery style. Although some artworks, such as Flower Head 1 and Two Heads, feature a profusion of colours and shapes, both figurative and floral, all the artworks have an airy quality to them, which Kettle credits to the view from

her studio and 'just seeing the sky, the sky is so present' (2021, 05:58). Other works, such as *Garden* and *Seed Heads* feature a much smaller number of stitches, with the plants and figures abstracting almost beyond recognition.



Two Heads © Alice Kettle, 2021. Thread on linen

Kettle notes that the series arose from her reminding herself 'Don't try and be too clever, just do what you see, sit and do what you are' (2021, 08:58), a statement that, with its repetition of the word 'do' seems to echo Chen's 'DO' series. Both artists found themselves in proximity with flowers during the coronavirus lockdowns and turned to them as companions and a means of expression. For Kettle, who had been working with women and children refugees and asylum seekers as part of projects such as the *Thread Bearing Witness* art project, these new artworks became both complex portraits of the women she'd been working with and conversations with the flowers she had grown in her garden. In her interview with me, she noted that 'the Yellow flower that became a repeated motif in the work is a representation of a combination of a rubekia and cosmos' (2023a, para. 1) and in an conversation with Angela Truscott for *Fibre Arts Take Two*, Kettle shares that the works were, 'either tributes to people I know, women I've worked with, or they're about people you couldn't see anymore.' (2023b, 1:02:10).

The bringing together of refugee, asylum seeking and migrant women with the natural world within artworks that speak to the possibility of harmonious coexistence with nature is an apposite choice, as the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees found that 'climate, environmental degradation and disasters increasingly interact with the drivers of refugee movements' (United Nations, p. 4) and one of the causes of the climate crisis is the exploitation of the earth's resources founded on the colonial concept of human supremacy over nature. As the gallery statement accompanying the 2021 exhibition notes, Kettle's 'strong belief in the importance of creating a world in which we coexist harmoniously with nature is evident here: human faces morph with flowers, figures emerge from the plants. In others the lines between person and flower become blurred or fractured and the work becomes abstracted' (Candida Stevens Gallery, 2021, para. 2). In Kettle's commitment to interspecies entanglement, she motions towards something akin to American anthropologist Anna Tsing's contention that 'human nature is an interspecies relationship' (2012, p. 144). While Tsing asks us to imagine 'a human nature that shifted historically together with varied webs of interspecies dependence' (2012, p. 144), Kettle draws us into her own private world of interspecies becoming, where, to use her own words, 'craft gives you the language to make the imaginary world real' (2023, para. 27) and the people that populated her consciousness during a time of enforced isolation shift fluidly in and out of relation with the flowers in her garden, the human figures 'integrated and balanced, so they emerge from [nature] rather than [...] impose on it' (2021, 7:11).

This reciprocal relationship between plants and people and honouring of plants as interspecies companions is also present in the work of American London-based textile artist Cecilia Charlton. Charlton's recent series for London

Craft week, Memory Garden, was exhibited at the Garden Museum in London and takes the form of four large-scale site-specific weavings, each inspired by a different flowering plant; lily, hydrangea, peony and lavender. Suspended by clear wire from poles placed horizontally between arches in the historic nave of the Garden Museum, which is situated in the deconsecrated Church of St Mary-at-Lambeth, the four weavings can be walked around and viewed from all sides. While Hydrangea's central colours are two shades of blue and *Peony*'s are pink and red, the other two display more contrasting colours with Lavender interweaving green and lilac and Lily bringing together deep purple with a peachy pink. Created using a technique called overshot, Charlton explained that 'the pattern is created by alternating two different wefts -- one cotton and one wool. The wool is twice the thickness of the cotton, so it creates a strong sense of relief' (2023a, para. 25). Charlton describes her weaving as a form of 'weaving-painting', noting that this painterly approach to another medium was also employed by British horticulturist, garden designer and author Gertrude Jekyll (2023b). At the bottom of the weavings, unwoven threads swoop from one side to the other, creating yet another geometric pattern as they meet and turn and bringing a spaciousness to the otherwise densely patterned artworks.

I was fortunate to have the opportunity to interview Charlton at her London studio, and our conversation led us from interspecies relations to childhood memories and the transcendent possibilities of craft. One of the things that interested Charlton was 'the capacity for textiles as well as flowers to carry those really deep memories or connections to other people or to a place or a moment' (2023a, para. 12). Each of the weavings is therefore inspired by a flower with which Charlton has a particular connection; peonies grew in her garden as a child, lavender has accompanied her on sleepless nights, hydrangeas are loved by her mother and

lilies are the fragrant flowers she buys to perfume her home (2023a). Speaking to the creation of *Memory Garden*, and the carefully chosen coloured threads, Charlton noted, 'I couldn't help but be reminded of those flowers as I was sitting there staring at this pallet. It's not as though I was looking at an image of that flower all day, but I was looking at the essence of that flower in a way. Immersed in this essence I could almost smell the smells and I could remember certain people or moments' (2023a, para. 13). This capacity for imagination and transcendence within weaving is a thread that runs through Charlton's textile practice and there is a sacred quality to the *Memory Garden* series, emphasised by their placement in the historic nave of the Garden Museum.



Memory Garden, Lily and Hydrangea © Cecilia Charlton, 2023. Handwoven cotton and wool yarn.

Charlton stated 'the spirituality expressed in the work comes through the way in which they're made' (2023a, para. 4), drawing a comparison between gardening and weaving as practices that ask for patience and imagination. She articulated that, 'with weaving you can see each row of weft is a representation of a unit of time that was spent in its creation. [...] You have to give over your idea of time to the process and that's true of gardening as well. When you put something in the ground you have to put your own expectations aside for at least a few months, if not a year, if not five years, until you can see how that plant is expressing itself, how it's relating to the

other plants that you've put around it, how it's relating to the garden. Similarly, with weaving, there's this element of time in how it's represented in the building blocks of the artwork itself, but then also your inability to see the results of your labour immediately' (2023, para. 1). Thus, both weaving and gardening require that the person engaging in these activities surrender to temporality and materiality, honouring the agency of other forms, whether that's plants in the soil or threads on a loom.

Charlton offered workshops and both weaving and bargello demonstrations during London Craft Week and over the past few years has run workshops for groups of various ages and abilities, from primary school students to seniors. During our conversation she articulated her curiosity about 'the more subtle ways that you can encourage change through working with textiles' (2023a, para. 14) and noted that making their own textile artworks can be an opportunity for people to contemplate the reality of the labour behind the textiles that we interact with everyday. Charlton stated, 'I find textiles to be a carrier' (2023a, para. 15), noting that 'we're dressed in them when we're born, we die in them, we're so dependent on them' (2023a, para. 21) and yet textiles are underappreciated and excessively overproduced. The contemporary textiles industry, the largest sector of which is the garment industry, is founded on exploitation of people and the planet (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017). According to Sofi Thanhauser, author of Worn: A People's History of Clothing, 'textile and garment work have been dangerous to labourers since industrialization, but three of the four deadliest garment factory disasters in history occurred during the 2010s. Textile making has been damaging the environment for centuries, but today the industry produces a full fifth of global wastewater, and emits one tenth of global carbon emissions' (2022, p. 5). The ubiquity of clothing and the simultaneous

opacity of supply and labour chains suggests the prevalence of something we might call 'textile blindness' after biologists James H. Wandersee and Elisabeth E. Schussler 'plant blindness' (1999), mentioned in *Seed & Root*. While Charlton's *Memory Garden* and accompanying workshops and demonstrations exist within the realm of art as opposed to fashion, perhaps the opportunity to experience the time, effort and expertise that goes into creating textiles might gently prompt participants to reconsider their relationship with the textiles they buy, wear and interact with every day.

Clothing plays a central visual role in black British artist Charmaine Watkiss' recent work as it is used as a tool for interspecies expression and storytelling. Her Plant Warriors series, originally created for her first solo show, The Seed Keepers at Tiwani Contemporary in London in 2021, consists of predominantly drawn portraits of plants imagined as female warriors. The women in the portraits share the same face, Watkiss', but she considers her face a reference point rather than referring to the artworks as self-portraits (Rutlin, 2022, para. 2). In each of the portraits, the women are depicted sitting in a poised upright position, their hands resting in their laps and their gaze fixed somewhere to the right, away from the viewer's eyeline. As Watkiss stated in her interview with me, 'I was inspired to look at the botanical knowledge my parents' generation had, because I was treated with herbs as a child by my mother. My research led me to look more broadly at botanical legacies, knowledge which travelled the transatlantic along with the enslaved. [...] That show [The Seed Keepers] was the start of looking at plants and indigenous knowledge which black women have kept alive through generations. So the works are gently political and as one curator expressed to me the stories are emancipatory' (2023a, para. 2).



The Warriors Way: Recalling the lost legacies © Charmaine Watkiss, 2022. Graphite, watercolour, pencil, ink and 22ct shell gold on paper.

Watkiss' parents were born in Jamaica and the plants represented in her work are both plants indigenous to Jamaica and plants that were colonised and brought to Jamaica along with enslaved people. As Watkiss noted, 'plants have been colonised too so there is opportunity for a lot of metaphor in the work. Where they are used on clothing then the plants become a device. But sometimes the plants are the subject, such as the 'plant warrior women' (2023a, para. 4). For example, *The Warriors Way: Recalling the lost legacies* (2022) depicts 'the Bitter Melon (Memordia Charantia), also known as African Cucumber / Bitter Apple / ndakdi in Dera' (Watkiss, 2022, para. 1). The fruit of the bitter melon, an orange flower-like shape with bright red seeds dangling from the underside of the fruit's oval segments, adorns the plant warrior woman as a collar reminiscent of colonial lace collars. Her dress is decorated with young green fruits while hanging from a string around her collar are three wooden boats, representing the transatlantic journey of colonised plants and people.

The woman's body is solely drawn in pencil, while her background and clothing are coloured with a subtle watercolour. The gallery statement for *The Seed*

Keepers notes that 'her light touch, her leaning towards less as opposed to more, is deliberate. Concerning her insistence upon pencil work, the delicateness of her compositions and her preference for watercolour, Watkiss sees herself as 'committed to the drawing aspect' (Adukwei Bulley, 2021, para. 11). The use of pencil and the detail and delicacy of the plant warrior women ask the viewer to look closely at the painting. Like many of the works attended to in this section, Watkiss' paintings contain layers of meaning that are only accessible to those willing to slow down for long enough to contemplate and learn. As Victoria Adukwei Bulley writes, 'the universe of seeing and sensing from which Watkiss has crafted The Seed Keepers is one in which stillness – the very quality of quiet that her grandmother called for whilst herbseeking – is still vital for survival. Even as the world we inhabit today demands less of this attuned sensitivity, in her latest body of work Charmaine Watkiss asks us to consider it necessary, if only momentarily' (2021, para. 13). I would argue that attuned sensitivity is still vital for our survival, even if in less immediately obvious ways.

While *The Warriors Way: Recalling the lost legacies* (2022) depicts a plant native to Africa, the portraits of the plant warrior women also depict plants sacred to the indigenous people of Jamaica, known as the Taino. In her commission for the British Museum, which was created in response to the Sloane collection of botanical drawings and Hans Sloane's book *The Natural History of Jamaica* (1707/1725), which are part of one of the founding collections of the British Museum, Watkiss represents the aloe plant, which has been used for medicinal purposes in Jamaica by both indigenous communities and people of the African diaspora. Sir Hans Sloane was an Anglo-Irish physician, naturalist, and collector with significant ties to the transatlantic slave trade through both personal investment and matrimonial assets.

In a video made to accompany the commission, Watkiss states 'this drawing I think, for me, speaks about indigenous knowledge and it speaks about a knowledge share between the native peoples of the Caribbean but also the enslaved Africans. It speaks about knowledge that is centuries old, long before westerners even knew these plants existed' (2023b, 2:46). Similarly to The Warriors Way: Recalling the lost legacies (2022), the figure depicted in The Warrior's Way: Safeguarding the Natural History of Jamaica (2023) features a plant warrior woman in a regal pose with a plant collar around her neck. In this portrait, the collar is made of the yellow flowers of the aloe vera plant, known as 'single bible' in Jamaica, because it acts like a bible, or a cure, for the body. Hanging from a thread on her dress is a wooden boat containing castor fruit (Ricinus communis) and cocoa pods (Theobroma cacao), plants that were colonised and brought to the Caribbean alongside people. In her lap, the warrior is holding a scroll depicting a legetto plant. Watkiss explains that 'Enslaved women used this to make clothing with but more importantly, with her holding this scroll with the legetto plant, I'm referencing a portrait that was painted of Hans Sloane also holding a scroll with the legetto plant' (2023b, 11:41). This 1736 portrait of Sloane signalled his mastery over the natural word and Watkiss' decision to echo this portrait is an act of reclamation. She says 'my plant warrior holding this same scroll she's taking that back... this is about me and my heritage [...] For her to carry that weight of knowledge and to present it to the world is a big deal. And I think that she's a keeper of the knowledge and she is just presenting to you what she knows and that is it. What you do with it is up to you' (2023b, 13:00).

Much like the plant warrior women created for *The Seed Keepers* exhibition, the complexity and delicacy of the drawing asks the viewer to stop and pay attention. In response to a question I asked about the presence of the sacred within her work,

Watkiss noted 'the works get you to slow down, they invite you to really take time to look and reflect on what you are looking at' (2023a, para. 6). This request for the viewer to slow down resonates with Black Studies scholar Tiffany Lethabo King's use of the shoals, offshore geologic formations that exist between land and sea, as a metaphor and methodology for slowing and disrupting heteropatriarchal colonial dialectics. For Lethabo King, shoaling is a form of dwelling with complexity in order to create new lines of inquiry through practices of slowing down and paying attention to the 'accumulation of granular materials (sand, rock, and other) that through sedimentation create a bar or barrier that is difficult to pass and, in fact, a 'danger to navigation' (Lethabo King, 2019, p. 2). Furthermore, Lethabo King's work conceptualises the shoals as the meeting place of Black Studies and Native Studies, and as such speaks to Watkiss' desire to draw attention to the shared medicinal knowledge of the native peoples of the Caribbean and the enslaved Africans, not only drawing attention to the violence inflicted on both peoples through brutal colonisation, but celebrating their resilience and shared intergenerational knowledge.

Indigenous plant knowledge is also central to the work of Métis artist Christi Belcourt, who draws on her indigenous heritage to create intricate paintings of plants made up of a proliferation of dots in a style that evokes the floral beadwork of her ancestors. As curator Tracey Henriksson writes, the Métis 'developed their unique and distinctive floral patterns [in the 1800s], prompting other First Nations to call them the "Flower Beadwork People." Their beadwork emphasized symmetry, balance, and harmony in patterns extracted from nature' (2003, para. 2). Belcourt often works on a black background, reminiscent of the black velvet used by Métis beadworkers and simulating the appearance of beading by producing small dots with

the end of a paintbrush or needle (Henriksson, 2003, para. 3). The intricacy of Belcourt's paintings ask the viewer to pay close attention and to 'notice details, objects, and events whose worth and importance are often belied. To this end, she uses the bead, an object insignificant in size and simple in design, as the foundation of her art' (Henriksson, 2003, para. 1). Belcourt's use of flower beadwork imagery is an important act of indigenous reclamation, for as Christoph Laugs asserts, 'while Euro-Canadians could not dispute the existence of these decorations, they disputed their meaning and origin. The Euro-Canadian master narrative has portrayed Franco-Canadian nuns--and thus Euro-Canadians--as originators of floral patterns' (2022, para. 41).

Belcourt's 2003 painting *Medicines to Help us*, which later became the inspiration for a 2007 book of the same name, depicts 27 wild plants which grow in the traditional Métis homeland, which stretches from Ontario to British Columbia (Belcourt, 2003). At the bottom of the painting are various exposed roots in red and white, which then extend upward into small plants or tall towering vines that reach to the top of the painting. Branching from these vines are different flowers in bloom, including strawberry, yarrow, nettle and American ginseng. Belcourt has written that the idea for the painting came from a talk given by Métis Elder and medicine person Rose Richardson. As Belcourt has written, 'Rose also spoke about the importance of preserving the natural habitat for various species of plants and how those natural habitats are disappearing' (2003, para. 2). In this way, *Medicines to Help Us* utilises the aesthetics of a traditional Métis art form in order to both preserve Métis medicinal plant knowledge and celebrate the Métis' connection to the natural world. The ways in which the plants interweave with one another embodies the interconnection of living things and Belcourt's commitment to harmonious

coexistence, as she proposes, 'when we respect each other and the land, we are reminded of the old ways, we feel good about ourselves and we treat each other as brothers and sisters. The land has a great deal to teach us about how to live with one another' (2003, para. 3).



Medicines to Help Us © Christi Belcourt, 2003. Acrylic on canvas.

There is a strong spiritual aspect to Belcourt's work, which is grounded in an understanding of the sacredness of all living things. Belcourt speaks of nature as an antidote and a balm to the horrors of the world, stating, 'I use my paintings to assert that life is beautiful. There is an incomprehensible complexity found in a simple, single blossom, stem or bud.... My paintings are manifestations of my prayers for everything in life to be in balance and harmony' (2004, para. 6). This statement resonates with one made by Charmaine Watkiss, who told me, 'the story of colonialism is problematic and often harrowing so the use of plants introduces a healing frequency' (2023a, para. 4). Within both Watkiss' and Belcourt's work, flowers act as companions, carriers of indigenous knowledge and opportunities for healing. According to Tracey Henriksson, the sacred resonance of Belcourt's work with flowers 'also manifests itself in her the great patience and rhythmic application of paint her working methods demands. While she paints, Belcourt listens to music -

jazz, old time country, and urban folk - that seeps into her consciousness' (2004, para. 6).

Music is also central to the creation of scholar and artist ashon t. crawley's series of paintings The Sound of Blackpentecostal Noise Grows Flowers, Is Floral (2018). crawley describes the series as 'an attempt at deconstructing the noise practices of blackpentecostalism, an attempt of decomposition, to sense the relationship between blackpentecostal noise and life?' (2018, para. 1). All the paintings in the series feature a background of light colour washes bleeding in and out of one another; *The Sound of* Blackpentecostal Noise Grows Flowers, Is Floral (number 8), for example, features washes of pink, yellow, lilac, orange and grey paint. At the bottom of the paintings the soil is painted in thickly applied black paint, streaked through with blues. Rising from the earth are the stems of the flowers, which have a spontaneous, splattered quality to them. The blooms are represented by flecks of coloured paint and by tambourine cymbals and buttons attached to the paintings. Drawing on his blackpentecostal upbringing, crawley creates his colourful, lively paintings through practices of shouting, stomping, and clapping (crawley, 2020a). Describing his initial experiments with this form of praxis in The Lonely Letters, crawley writes, 'I discovered something in the movement itself, something that could not be contained by a confessional faith, something that is not merely transcendent but that is, most fundamentally, constitutive' (2020a, p. 59). There's a vividness to crawley's paintings that is perhaps the result of this highly physical spiritual process of creation.



The Sound of Blackpentecostal Noise Grows Flowers, Is Floral (number 8) © ashon t. crawley, 2018. Mixed media on Yupo paper.

In Blackpentecostal Breath: The Aesthetics of Possibility, he writes that 'the object - whether song, sound, image or text - has within the capacity to be a multiplicity' (2017, p. 64) and in The Sound of Blackpentecostal Noise Grows Flowers, Is Floral he embodies and represents this visually, dismantling tambourines to scatter their cymbals like flowers blooming across the work. Like Belcourt, crawley listens to music while painting, and the notes accompanying the series list a number of the works that accompanied him in the process of creation; Music for 18 Musicians (1976/78), Glacier by Grand Valley State University's New Music Ensemble, becoming ocean, Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting (1959) and Reverse Theology (a sermon by Lynice Pinkard), with Music for 18 Musicians (1976/78) recurring several times. In The Lonely Letters, crawley writes that Music for 18 Musicians 'is based on an eleven-chord cycle and each movement is a reworking of the rhythmic pulse and harmonics of this eleven-chord cycle. Limiting himself to this constraint, Reich and his ensemble produce worlds of sonic inhabitation that vibrate out and produce feeling. Limit, Nahum Chandler would say, was also possibility, impossible for it not to be possibility' (2020a, p. 35). Within The Sound of Blackpentecostal Noise Grows Flowers, Is Floral, as well as within many of the other artworks considered within this section

and within this project itself, the subject of flowers is a limit that creates possibilities.

The same is true of American writer and poet Hanif Abdurraqib's series of poems titled How Can Black People Write About Flowers at a Time Like This. He wrote the series after attending a poetry reading by a fellow black poet, shortly after the 2016 election, who was speaking to the beauty of flowers. A white woman standing near Abdurraqib said to her companion "How can black people write about flowers at a time like this?" (2018, para. 4). Writing on his reaction to this question, Abdurraqib queried, 'what is the black poet to be writing about 'at a time like this' if not to dissect the attractiveness of a flower—that which can arrive beautiful and then slowly die right before our eyes?' (2019, para. 4). In one of the poems in the series he writes, 'as a way of surrender, I pull the already dying thing from the earth in a mess of tangled knots' (2019, para. 6), viscerally conjuring the experience of engaging with flowers in the immediacy of their brief temporal journey. Within Abdurragib's poetry it is clear that flowers are not considered inconsequential or irrelevant, but a powerful means through which to understand a shared experience of the cycles of life. As Abdurraqib writes 'I thought it was much better to grasp a handful of different flowers, put them in a glass box, and see how many angles I could find in our shared eventual demise' (2018, para. 4). ashon t. crawley, after Abdurragib and towards gospel singer Twinkie Clark, states that he, too, wants to write about, think about and give flowers and proposes that 'one has to notice, but figure out ways to negotiate, suffering. Gotta know it's there, but not get caught up in it. What is this but the attention to detail of form as a spiritual practice of delight? What is this but an attention to the complexity of flowers?' (2020b, para. 29). It is clear that for both

Abdurraqib and crawley, flowers are potent symbols for the fragility of life and the beauty of the natural world.

While the examples I have given thus far focus on flowers as metaphors or painted objects, Lauren Craig, Benny Nemer, Emma Hams and Roisin Taylor work directly with flowers and in different ways utilise flower growing and flower arranging as art forms. London-based artist and cultural futurist Lauren Craig spearheaded the move towards sustainable floristry in London, beginning with the founding of the 'living business' Thinking Flowers? in 2003. Craig utilised sustainable floristry as a form of black eco-feminist activism and 'as one pathway to social justice' (Craig, 2014, p. 108). When I interviewed Craig in her London studio she noted that people often misunderstood the name Thinking Flowers?, stating 'humans would always centre themselves and think the title was about us humans thinking [...] and that was part of it. But I was always very much set on centralising and elevating the respect and acknowledgement of the plant intelligence, of the flowers intelligence, and us actually just settling ourselves down a little bit to understand' (2023, para. 6). Deeply committed to creating and strengthening ethical approaches to floristry, Craig not only sourced flowers locally but also invested in ethical flower farms overseas in South America and South Africa (Craig, 2014). Craig noted 'I became really concerned with the way the flowers would make me feel. My hands would itch or would make me feel emotionally. And that's what led me to want to find out where they came from. [...] And through that roundabout activism and campaigning, I started to move in some of the circles where there were large purchases being made by these companies that would consult me as to how best to do that' (2023, para. 8). At a time when fair trade for flowers was in its infancy, the Fairtrade Foundation did not include flower certification (Fairtrade Foundation,

2019, para. 2) and the Western slow movement was yet to gather cultural momentum, Craig was advocating for ethical flower growing and floristry and slow respectful work with flowers. Craig noted 'this [was] a precursor to the slow movement, you know, and ideas of slowing down to be able to interact and understand and attune with things that are equally as important as us humans' (2023, para. 6).

Craig's 'seed-to-seed' (2014, p.75) business model offered not only a sustainable approach to floristry but an important contribution to creating 'a new landscape of healthy urban ecologies' (2014, p. 76). Craig brought about the term 'floral installation' to speak about 'the idea of minimal usage, high impact through compositions' (2023, para. 9). Inspired by minimalistic flower arranging traditions such as the Japanese art of Ikebana, Craig experimented with arranging flowers in such a way as to honour their unique shapes, colours and textures. Sometimes her choice of flowers was influenced by her desire to honour blooms that would otherwise be thrown away. Noting that whatever was in fashion would also lead to large amounts of flower waste, Craig stated 'I would find other ways to use them, unexpected ways to use them, or ways that I felt maybe that they would appreciate being used more' (2023, para. 23). She also introduced dried flowers into her arrangements, stating 'because the display and celebration of conspicuous consumption was always about the freshness and the brief rarity in that life being used to celebrate, incorporating the dried was a huge game changer' (2023, para. 11). Echoing the poetry of Hanif Abdurraqib, Craig's work with Thinking Flowers? spoke to the capacity of flowers to hold both grief and hope. It was the presence of flowers and their reminders of the cyclicality of life that offered her solace at the many funerals she attended of young black people in London, whose lives were taken 'for reasons as unimportant as material gain and playground feuds' (2014, p. 73). In an

interview with *The Hindu*, Craig told the interviewer, K. Pradeep, that 'donations were made to the funerals of three young black boys killed in street crimes and whose families could not afford flowers' (2016, para. 16) through her floral donation scheme.

Craig's investment in ethical supply chains, her use of wasted and dried flowers and her creation of a floral donation scheme evidence the rigour and integrity of her sustainable approach to floristry. Craig's affinity for systems thinking and understanding the entanglement of complex issues seems indicative of her upbringing within traditions that do not ask for binary thinking or separatism. When asked about whether there was an aspect of the sacred in her relationship with flowers, Craig noted 'I think going back to my ancestry, there isn't that removal of, or separateness of, the sacred, of the divine, of the secular, of the religious; that separation isn't made as equal to the separation of nature as ourselves being made. So there isn't in that sense. But I think what we would consider an element of sacred from a Western perspective, or divine or religion or spiritual, I would say yes' (2023, para. 16). This understanding of the sacred as inseparable from the natural world and the fact of existence resonates with my own understanding of what I term the 'secular-sacred'; the sacred is not something removable, quantifiable or particular to any one religion or practice, but something that exists as an integrated part of all living things.

Similarly to Charmaine Watkiss and Christi Belcourt, Craig has an interest in 'different [plant] medicines and different, you know, ways that they can heal, can assist and be stewards, companions, be communed with, supported, nourished' (2023, para. 22). Furthermore, she states that '[plants] have the capacity to teach us everything and that their knowledge, I think, is very much ancient, older than us and

that we owe existence, I think, to them, our continued sustained existence to them. And so I think [my relationship to them is] always one of awe, a relationship where I feel in awe and feel honoured really to be part of this world alongside them' (2023, para. 22).

Despite the enormity of Craig's influence on the British floristry industry, not just as a florist but also as a businesswoman who helped to implement ideas and create ethical supply chains and systems at a time when conspicuous consumption was the norm within flower growing and floristry, she has received very little credit. Craig noted in our interview, 'that was the reception of a young black woman coming into the horticultural world, throughout, sadly [...] in the end, and funnily enough, years later, when all of this kind of came to surface, it was probably only some of the guys from the market that had the kind of self-respect to be like, now we know what you're talking about. [...] I can say that it was only very much through them that I was ever kind of acknowledged for the influence and ideas and the implementation' (2023, para. 10). Craig now runs a studio in London, where she collaborates with various artists she met while running her first gallery, Field. They work together using the conceptual modality 'S:E:P:A:L:S'. As Craig stated when I interviewed her, the modality is grounded in her maternal ancestry, 'in the foot and the first ascension of the Blue Mountains in Jamaica' (2023, para. 3) and 'each letter is a mode and each mode is governed by a theme; sustainability, sociability, environment, engagement, practice, process, activation, archive, action, attunement, law, legal elements, learning and sustainability again, closing the loop' (2023, para. 3). Craig grounds her work with her artistic collaborators in an allotment nearby the studio. In this way, while Thinking Flowers?, as a business closed in 2016, the ethos of the work lives on in her other projects. She noted that 'in some respects, you know, I will always be

Thinking Flowers?, that will always be part of me and that concept lives on in very much different guises now in various pockets of things' (2023, para. 6) 'it's currently offering a framework or protective system to continue to work with the artists that I do and take care of in the studio now' (2023, para. 22).

Benny Nemer, meanwhile, creates flower exchanges and sculptural flower arrangements as forms of reading and affective exchange. In his performance installation Garde Rose (since 2012), he asks that participants 'arrive with a single flower leave with another,' stating that 'all who arrive with a flower are welcome' (Nemer, 2012, para. 2). In this piece, acts of gifting take place whereby one flower is replaced by another and by asking that everyone arrive and leave with a flower, there is a guaranteed reciprocity to the exchange as something held by one participant comes to be carried by another. In À Fleurer (2016), Nemer enacted another floral exchange, but in this floral action, the exchange was between text and flowers. In \hat{A} Fleurer, he shared his private letters with a florist, who in a tender act of translation, interpreted the letters in the form of flower arrangements. When I asked Nemer via email about his choice to work with flowers he noted that 'flowers have always been a part of my aesthetic and affective life, and after many years creating work concerned with emotion and relation, flowers presented themselves as potential collaborators in posing my greater artistic questions' (Nemer, 2023, para. 2). For Nemer, his interest in flowers is also closely linked with his interest in queerness, noting 'everything I do is drenched in queerness' (Nemer, 2023: para. 3). Although his initial interest in flowers was around 'the way flowers serve as gifts of emotion and relation, of love, desire, memory, and grief' (Nemer, 2023, para. 2), the more he worked with flowers, the more he was struck by their queer potentialities (Nemer, 2023). Furthermore, he noted that after reading Sara Ahmed's Queer Phenomenology

he 'became interested in queer orientations, lines, arrangements of things' (Nemer, 2023, para. 2). Like Craig, Nemer found himself drawn to Ikebana, 'which arranges botanical matter in what to [his] situated worldview seemed like unexpected, dissonant, and odd ways' (Nemer, 2023, para. 3). Although Ikebana is not explicitly a queer artform, his study of Ikebana gave him an understanding of techniques 'with which to nourish [his] curiosity about potentially queer ways of arranging flowers' (Nemer, 2023, para. 3). Nemer stated, 'this research is inconclusive, but queerness now occupies a central position in the way I think of flowers, and the artistic projects I undertake with them.' (Nemer, 2023, para. 3).



À Fleurer © Benny Nemer, 2016. Floral and epistolary action.

Nemer's interest in the queer potentialities of flowers can be seen in *I Don't Know Where Paradise Is* (2019, 2020, 2023), which exists as an audio work, a book and an exhibition, which took place in 2020 at Carleton University Art Gallery, and which also included flower arranging as a form of response. The audio 'mediates encounters with objects found in the libraries, gardens, and homes of a series of loosely-interconnected gay scholars in Europe and Canada' (Nemer, 2020,

para. 1) and each week during the exhibition, Nemer created an arrangement in response to a chapter from the audio work, while another arrangement was created by a member of the Ottawa-Gatineau Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer+ community. Throughout Nemer's work with flowers, there are many occurrences of similar exchanges between text and flowers, as he engages with visual art, flower arranging and text as equal co-creators in his work. When asked about his relationship with the flowers he works with, Nemer wrote, 'I would like to believe they are always subjects, but I know that I do sometimes objectify flowers in my life as an artist, simply enjoying or "employing" their formal characteristics, their surface beauty. I definitely feel accompanied by flowers, they are companions and collaborators, they shape the contours of my life, even if I instrumentalise them. I hope somehow, that they instrumentalise me, too' (Nemer, 2023, para. 5). In this way, similarly to Craig, Kettle and Belcourt, the flowers in Nemer's work are collaborators in the creation of work. Nemer also noted that flowers serve as a form of connection that has outlasted certain human connections, stating 'I sometimes use flowers as portals of contact with people who are no longer physically in my life, people with whom I shared a love of flowers. I am thinking of two people in particular: one a dead relative, one from whom I am romantically separated. They are gone, but flowers persist' (Nemer, 2023, para. 5).

In response to a question regarding what Nemer had learned from flowers, he wrote, 'as I get older I observe their wilting, their withering, their deaths with much interest. I sense there is a lesson about how to approach death — my own and the death of other beings, relationships, things. I don't think I have yet grasped the lesson, or integrated it into my way of living' (Nemer, 2023, para. 5). It is clear that Nemer's relationship with flowers is ongoing and ever unfolding. Interestingly, while

some of the ways Nemer described his relationship with flowers would fit within my understanding of secular-sacred structures of feeling, Nemer noted 'I don't feel very in touch with spirituality at the moment, and although I imagine some of what I experience when relating with flowers is of a spiritual nature, I do not feel able to articulate it in such terms. I am more attached to thinking in emotional/affective terms than spiritual ones' (Nemer, 2023, para. 7). Although coming from a different perspective and positionality, there is something in Nemer's answer that reminds me of Craig's assertion of the simultaneous sacred and non-sacred nature of her relationship with flowers. As previously noted, my own interest in the term secular-sacred is for the very ways it challenges the separation between the secular and the sacred and names them as integrated ways of being and thinking.

While Nemer and Craig both work directly with flowers as well as with floral metaphors, Emma Hams and Roisin Taylor are flower growers working to grow sustainable cut flowers in the British countryside. Emma Hams is one of two garden managers at Plaw Hatch Farm, a 200-acre community-owned mixed biodynamic farm in West Sussex. Alongside keeping a dairy herd, beef cattle, sheep, pigs and laying hens, Plaw Hatch grows a wide variety of vegetables and flowers. Hams works in the 12-acre garden, which includes 11 polytunnels, covered structures used for growing plants. Weather permitting, the flowers are an integrated part of the crop rotation and as Hams told me via email interview, 'every field of 0.2 of a [hectare] has a strip of flowers to encourage insects and pollinators' (2023, para. 1). Since joining Plaw Hatch three years ago Hams has increased the flower production, noting that flowers are 'getting more integrated in the farm by us and customers and hopefully the pollinators are finding their way to them too' (2023, para. 1). For Hams, growing flowers is a way to honour the life cycles of plants, as she notes 'plants never really

get the chance to live their full life cycle when they've been used for food. And a flower is the last step of a plant before they get back to being organic matter. I think it's the most beautiful circle to see from seed to seed' (2023, para. 3). There is also a meditative aspect to Hams' relationship with flowers, as she states 'for me working with flowers feels like a moment for myself, there is no one else helping me and I make it my own little ritual, filling up the buckets and then being creative when it comes to making them into bouquets' (2023, para. 5). As I write this, one of Hams' arrangements sits in front of me on the table; it is an abundance of blooms in diverse colours, shapes and sizes, from delicate pink cosmos to rambunctious dahlias and small dark pink echinacea. There is an obvious sense of care in the arrangement and a desire to honour the variety and richness of the flowers on the farm. Hams values the unique capacities of the flowers she works with, stating 'while I am making the bouquets, I like to think about who will buy them and enjoy them. I love that flowers are a gift for many occasions, it can support someone who goes through pain, it could celebrate a moment, to show someone love, to just cheer your house up and many more reasons' (2023, para. 6). Hams shares her responsibilities with fellow garden manager Liz Charnell. Plaw Hatch has a high number of women farmers and growers and Hams wrote to me, 'I think in the past a job description of a farmer has been associated with a "male" job, I hope this is something that is changing, on Plaw Hatch we have a lot of female farmers and growers and it does give me a great feeling that we are presenting to customers/visitors and on social media that farming can be done by anybody no matter what gender' (2023, para. 4).



photo © Emma Hams, 2023. Bouquets of flowers.

A similar sentiment was shared with me by fellow sustainable flower grower Roisin Taylor, who runs Verde Flower Co. in the North of England, a small-scale wholesale and direct-to-client cut flower business set up by her mother, Caroline Beck, seven years ago (Taylor, 2023, para. 1). Taylor wrote in her email interview 'I saw the potential of the growing space to be part of a wider community, to provide solace for members of my community, and to be interwoven with nature. For me, this change has enabled me to lean more into practices of feminism that centre community, sharing, and learning deeply about the history of women in this space, from paganism, to witchcraft, to the heavily male-dominated horticulture space etc' (2023, para. 3). While myself, Alice Kettle and Susan Chen turned to flower painting in the pandemic, Taylor turned to flower growing during that time. She stated 'whilst I helped [my mother] tentatively with the growing and cutting and lately the floristry for weddings and events, I wasn't involved in the business until covid hit in 2020' (2023, para. 2). Taylor, who is queer, noted that in beginning her journey as a flower grower 'a new type of acceptance bloomed in me as well as a new vision of what my life could look like. A happier life. Not necessarily an easier life, nor a more secure life, but one that was filled with nature, and hard work' (2023, para. 2). Moving away from office work and towards flower growing also allowed Taylor to explore and understand her queerness in new ways, noting 'disconnecting from a path that led

me into more corporate/office based world, where success was about climbing a ladder I didn't want to climb also allowed me to lean into and explore who I was when I didn't have to subscribe to certain rules, both in terms of my clothing and how I presented. It was everything, from how muddy I was, being clad in dungarees and secateurs 24/7, and wearing no makeup - all of these things helped me to see the strength and brilliance of my body as it was in the framework of nature, as part of an ecosystem rather than sitting in opposition to it' (2023, para 4).



photo © Roisin Taylor, 2023. Cutting tulips.

Taylor's relationship to her queerness has also been enriched by exploring natural dyeing and growing dye plants. Reflecting on how the abundant colours of flowers had encouraged her to explore her own queer self-expression, Taylor wrote 'I had spent a large portion of my life shying away from colour because I was frightened that it 'outed me', but the more I grow the more I fall in love with bold expression, and have found myself making clothing and natural dyeing clothing that celebrates joy and colour' (2023, para. 4). Furthermore, Taylor's work as a flower grower has shifted her understanding of the role of the sacred and what I interpret as the possibilities for a secular-sacred space within the natural world, writing 'I've always been an atheist, but connecting with the land makes it harder and harder not to believe in a (secular) relationship with plants and the earth. It isn't so much

religious to me (in my interpretation) as it is about a deep connection to what I'm growing and my role in that, as a caretaker for the space' (2023, para. 6). Reflecting further on what growing flowers has taught her, Taylor stated that, 'it has taught me that failure is a good thing, that the only way to learn is to fail and fail and fail again and that nothing is linear in nature. Linearity in life and in creative practice and existing should be messy and chaotic and strange and we should live to emulate that messiness so that we can find new ways to do things, new ways to find joy and new ways to explore our own identity' (2023, para. 6).

In Sprout & Leaf I have demonstrated how a number of British and North American contemporary artists have created botanical art, a genre once dominated by white supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchal sentiment, from queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist ethical and political positions. While Susan Chen, Hanif Abdurraqib and Jennifer Packer use flowering plants as metaphors and companions in responding to racial violence in the United States, Alice Kettle and Cecilia Charlton attend to the feminist potentials of textiles. Charmaine Watkiss and Christi Belcourt use painting and drawing to honour and preserve indigenous and ancestral understandings of plants as healers and Benny Nemer and ashon t. crawley think with flowers as part of queer art practices. Lauren Craig not only brought about the term 'floral installation' but also had a major impact on the British floristry industry at the beginning of the 21st century, paving the way for the current conversations regarding sustainability in floristry and the work of flower growers such as Emma Hams and Roisin Taylor, both of whom grow and arrange local sustainable flowers.

Formally, Charmaine Watkiss's commitment to drawing and attention to scale led me to consider my own choices regarding the use of detail in my work, while Cecilia Charlton's understanding of floral immersion during her weaving process

resonated with my conception of the secular-sacred. Hanif Abdurraqib and Lauren Craig's commitment to flowers as companions and teachers encouraged me to take my own relationship with flowering plants seriously and both Craig's and Benny Nemer's use of live flowers in their artistic practices encouraged me to incorporate flowers into the final presentation of my doctoral artworks. Within my own writing and making for this project, memory has played an important role and similarly, when asked about their relationship with flowers, many of the artists I interviewed for this section mentioned memories linked to flowers. Cecilia Charlton and Alice Kettle spoke of their mothers' gardens, while Charmaine Watkiss and Lauren Craig both noted their ancestral knowledge of plant medicine. While memory, as a critical framing device, can be a slippery and unreliable tool, it serves as an important impetus on the creative choices of many artists and is, I would argue, a material for feminist world making. In a world where the voices, stories and histories of women, queer people and people of the global majority have often been marginalised and excluded, weaving our memories into our work is a way to create an archive of who we have been and how we became who we are, for as feminist scholars Rosa de Nooijer and Lillian Sol Cueva write in Feminist Storytellers Imagining New Stories to Tell, 'for feminist researchers, storytelling is a way to challenge dominant narratives which erase, oversimplify and universalize women's voices and experiences' (2020, p. 234). The inclusion of personal memory in artworks and scholarly texts is therefore another way to engage in embodied and sensorial forms of work not grounded in dualistic Enlightenment thinking (ashon t. crawley, 2016. Saidiya Hartman, [2006] 2021. Carolyn Heilbrun, [1988] 1997. bell hooks, [1984] 2000. Audre Lorde, 1984. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 1993).



2.30pm. Summertime. The garden table is shady and sheltered, but just past the gate the sun illuminates the algae floating on the River Lea. In its inhabited state it looks more like a garden than a river, small green leaves surrounding the pads of the water lilies, whose white flowers punctuate the forest green and chartreuse. At the riverbank closest to the house, a coot nests among white hemlock and yellow water iris with its young, its floating nest made of sticks, algae and trash discarded by humans. Bees buzz insistently, collecting nectar from the flowers. On the table, a tabletop easel sits before a round ceramic pot brimming with bright orange marigolds. At one corner of the table sits a stack of books, a rich brown spine stating Sensual Excess: Queer Femininity and Brown Jouissance Amber Jamilla Musser, a red spine emblazoned with the words ZONG! Philip and Boteng and a simple cream cover reading Plans for Sentences Renee Gladman.

Hold the image in your mind. Breathe in. Breathe out.

This image contains my three main research areas, rendered together within the space of my garden; flowering plants, botanical art and queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist theory. It is the intersections of these areas that have inspired my devotional citation praxis, which brings together paintings of flowering plants with citations from queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist texts painted on sustainably made

hand-dyed paper. Within the space of this project my devotional citation praxis operates as a research method which illustrates, augments and embodies my arguments through recontextualising citations and original text within botanical artworks. In this way, devotional citation facilitates queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist conversation, elaboration and world making as a research method. In this section, I situate the development of this research method within my reading of black feminist texts by scholars such as Alexis Pauline Gumbs, Tiffany Lethabo King, jennifer c. nash, M NourbeSe Philip, and Renee Gladman, all of whom dwell with difficult objects, geographies and histories in their work as starting points for queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist intellectual, artistic and political liberation. Later in the section, I argue that plant pollination metaphors can be utilised in understanding the nuanced effects of divergent approaches to scholarly citation, with citation practices encompassing everything from forms of uprooting to transformational devotional acts. Furthermore, through an exploration of the gifting element of devotional citation, I elaborate the ways gifting allows for otherwise economies of care even while the concept of the gift is tied to the colonial concept of ownership and property. Finally, I explore how creating an installation space that brings together botanical art with queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist texts, fresh flowers and documentation of the movement of my devotional citation artworks can create a space that invites the reader/viewer to dwell with the ways in which flowers, as living plants, painted objects and/or metaphors, can be perceived as ideal companions in critiquing violent legacies and in queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist world making. A section of the writing in Bloom & Pollinate on my use of sustainable materials in the creation of my devotional citation artworks originally appeared as 'Devotional Citation' & Sustainable Praxis in MAI: Feminism & Visual Culture (Greenwood, 2021).

My commitment to understanding feminism as a practice that, if it is to truly serve humanity, must contain not only critiques of gender and sex, but also of capitalism, racism, classism, ableism and heterosexism, has led me to read widely within a variety of feminist perspectives. Given the focus of this project on the shared colonial history of Britain and North America, the intersections of gender, race and sexuality, and the emphasis on dwelling with difficult objects, in this case flowering plants, my methods and methodology have been most influenced by black feminist scholarship, particularly black feminist love-politics, as a radical form of theory that challenges the limits of traditional Western scholarship. Scholars such as Tiffany Lethabo King, who uses the image of the shoals as a conceptual meeting point between Black Studies and Native Studies, and Alexis Pauline Gumbs, whose writing speaks to the possibilities for interspecies becoming, have taught me about how animals, plants and organisms can be called upon as companions and metaphors in praxis. Returning to the critical foundations of contemporary Black feminist texts, the work of Black feminist scholars and poets such as Alice Walker, June Jordan, bell hooks, Ntozake Shange, Gwendolyn Brooks and Hortense Spillers have given me an understanding of love that is powerful, expansive and political.

As a white British lesbian woman and first-generation graduate student, I am writing about queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist studies from a place of solidarity and coalition. As Jack Halberstam writes in his introduction to Stefano Harney and Fred Moten's *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*, 'racial hierarchies are not rational and ordered, they are chaotic and nonsensical and must be opposed by precisely all those who benefit in any way from them' (2013, p. 10). Fred Moten, drawing on The Black Radical Tradition, and in particular the work of the Black Panther Party activist Fred Hampton, writes, 'I would love it if [white people] got to

the point where they had the capacity to worry about themselves. Because then maybe we could talk' (2013, p. 140).²

In this way, Moten makes explicit the need for coalition that comes from a shared understanding of the irreparable violence of the current systems of power. Whiteness might offer certain protections and privileges which I myself, as a person racialised as white, profit from, but it is ultimately a central building block of the colonial heteropatriarchal system that is devastating the Earth and the people and plants who call the Earth their home. This is an area that scholar and broadcaster Emma Dabiri attends to in her book What White People Can Do Next, for as she notes, 'whiteness violently interrupted our interconnectedness with ecological systems and non-human life' (2021, p. 61). Furthermore, I use the phrase queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist studies to signal my belief in the interconnection of these terms; queer people, women and non-binary people, people of the global majority, people living in poverty and those from impoverished and working class backgrounds are all oppressed in different but interconnected ways by white supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy and as jennifer c. nash notes, 'if our survivals are mutually dependent, we are, then, mutually vulnerable, as our thriving requires our coexistence. To act in love, with love, is to recognize this mutual vulnerability as something that must be not eschewed but rather embraced, as a necessary positionality to the project of social justice' (2019, p. 116).3 My devotional citation praxis is an attempt to work, in some infinitesimal way, from love towards our mutual survival, through taking the time to listen to and dwell with the words of others as a form of queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist world making.

In honouring the flowers, materials and my body as equal participants in the co-creation of study, making becomes not something separate to be analysed and

Undercommons study, as outlined by Stefano Harney and Fred Moten in *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*, is a mode of studying 'with and for' others. Drawing on the Black Radical Tradition, they do not separate the forms of study that happen within academic institutions from those that happen through singing, talking, making and generally living alongside other people. Positing that 'there is no refuge in restoration. Conservation is always new' (Harney and Moten, 2013: 63). Harney and Moten suggest that instead of investing our energy in reforming the current societal and academic systems, we should enter into 'fugitive study' and work together towards other ways of being and belonging. In this way, we (the term of address in the Undercommons is always 'we') 'refuse the choice as offered' (Harney and Moten, 2013: 8) and create our own elaborations of study, sociality and care.



Undercommons Sociality, 2022. Watercolour, acrylic and ink on coreopsis-dyed cotton rag paper sewn onto indigo-dyed silk taffeta with weld and dahlia-dyed silk threads.

In Practising Love: Black Feminism, Love-Politics, and Post-Intersectionality (2011) black feminist scholar jennifer c. nash charts black feminism's history of love-politics. Focusing on Second Wave black feminists June Jordan, Audre Lorde and Alice Walker, nash attends to the important contributions of black feminists beyond intersectionality. Nash notes that contemporary Affect Theory shares numerous resonances with black feminist love-politics and warns against the tendency to reduce black feminist intellectual contributions to the identitarian realm.



labors oflove, 2023. Watercolour, acrylic and ink on coreopsis-dyed cotton rag paper.

Citations selected as follows:

June Jordan Words: *Where Is The Love?* ([1978] 2002). Flower: Roses for *Letter to the Local Police* (1980).

Audre Lorde Words: My Words Will Be There (2009). Flower: A clover for Recreation (1978).

Alice Walker Words: *In Search Of Our Mothers' Gardens* ([1983] 2004). Flower: A purple anemone for the quote 'womanism is to Feminism what purple is to lavender' ([1983] 2004, p. xi) from the same book.

measured, but something that is in and of itself a sensorial act of thinking, a way of coming to further questions or temporary understanding and a form of queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist world making. My understanding of study as an embodied sensorial act has been largely influenced by the work of scholars such as Hortense Spillers, Amber Jamilla Musser, Alexis Pauline Gumbs and ashon t. crawley, all of whom explore the power and beauty of understanding a self that is fundamentally of flesh — flesh that can think and breathe and study through communion with other beings, flesh that is not separate from the intellect or bound by Cartesian dualism (crawley, 2020a. Gumbs, 2019. Musser, 2014).

In her seminal article Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe, Spillers describes how black people during slavery were relegated to the realm of the flesh as an act of violence. She writes, 'I would make a distinction in this case between 'body' and 'flesh' and impose that distinction as the central one between captive and liberated subject-positions' (1987, p. 67). While the extreme violence of dehumanisation and enslavement dictates a particular understanding of both mind and flesh, Spillers goes on to elaborate the ways in which this binary separation is in itself a central tool of colonial violence. Arguing that the dehumanisation of black bodies has problematised the concept of gender to the point that African American women are placed 'out of the traditional symbolics of female gender' (1987, p. 80), Spillers urges black women to claim their "monstrosity" in order to rewrite [...] a radically different text for female empowerment' (1987, p. 80). Furthermore, writing after Spillers, Amber Jamilla Musser's critical hermeneutic 'empathetic reading' is grounded in the idea that the text can act on the flesh and allow for critical responses enabled through sensational, fleshy forms of thinking (Musser, 2014), a sentiment echoed by Alexis Pauline Gumbs, who writes in DUB: Finding Ceremony, 'we are word made

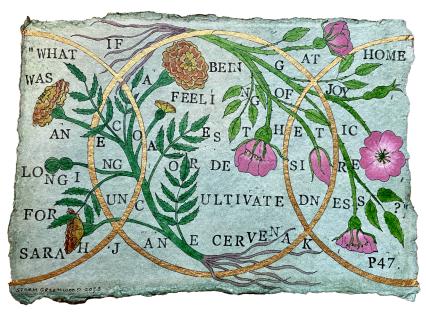
flesh. But we make words. So we can make ourselves anew' (2020b, p. xi). Finally, in Black Pentecostal Breathe: The Aesthetics of Possibility, crawley writes that, 'to "live in the along" is to live as flesh, to refuse the enclosure of language that produces grammar, the enclosures of land that produce private property, the enclosures of flesh that produce the conceptual body' (2016, p. 84). In this way, all four scholars claim the flesh as an originary site of belonging, entanglement, becoming and 'otherwise possibility' (crawley, 2016) and offer a different way of understanding embodiment. When describing my devotional citation praxis I use words like embodied and sensorial to signal that I am not aspiring to engender epistemologies grounded in dualistic Enlightenment thinking, but instead working 'with and for' others (Harney and Moten, 2013) and towards otherwise epistemologies grounded in care. After Spillers, Gumbs, crawley and Musser, I am striving towards anti-Enlightenment modes of making-as-thinking that honour the haptic and the sensational as vital relational forms of study. In cultivating my devotional citation praxis, I have sought to create an approach to citation whereby I might experience multiple ways of holding and apprehending the text somatically.

This embodied and sensorial approach to study is a form of feminist world making, as the practice of creating the works invites the artist-scholar into intimate relation with research materials, while the artworks themselves, as both physical objects and gifts, extend this invitation to slow down and pay close attention to those who encounter the work. The interweaving of words and images is also part of a rich feminist history, with feminist artists such as Jenny Holzer, Astrid Klein, Tracy Emin and Barbara Kruger using text based art as a way to convey their political and ethical positions. The aesthetic choices made in the creation of the devotional citation artworks offer the reader/viewer an invitation to engage in secular-sacred

contemplation as feminist world making as follows: 1) The intricacy of the drawing-based paintings invite the reader/viewer to move closer to the image in order to observe the details of the flowers. The level of detail in the artworks serves as evidence of time spent in contemplation of flowering plants and offers tacit knowledge of researching with flowering plants as companions; 2) The rendering of flowering plants from root to bloom reminds the reader/viewer that flowering plants come from and return to soil, encouraging them to be reminded of their own placement within a wider ecosystem of fragile and beautiful things; 3) Similarly, painting the flowering plants first means that the text has to sit around the flowers. This suggests to the viewer/reader that the text should not be considered as more important than the flowers, but rather that the two negotiate the space together, much like the need for humans to respectfully negotiate their placement as part of nature; 4) The golden circles and occasional rectangles evoke illuminated manuscripts, reminding the viewer/reader of a form of prayerful contemplation across multiple world religions and inviting them to pay attention as a form of secular-sacred devotion; 5) The illumination of citations from queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist text offers the reader/viewer the opportunity to slow down and spend time with liberatory text, deciphering the meaning of the words between the roots, leaves, stems and blooms. This kind of contemplation encourages dwelling with the meaning of the words before moving towards critique or comparison; 6) The hand-dyed cotton rag paper embodies the ethics of the work as every part of the paper has been considered and cared for, while the materials used to dye the paper have come from flowering plants such as Japanese indigo, madder and coreopsis, meaning that flowering plants have acted as literal as well as theoretical companions in creating the work. This use of natural materials encourages the viewer/reader to

consider their own use of art materials and the use and creation of ethical supply chains as an important aspect of queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist world making.

Indigo has been grown in Japan since roughly the 5th century and the art of indigo dyeing is known as Aizome (Balfour-Paul, [1998] 2012, p. 94). While I have used locally grown Japanese indigo (Persicaria tinctoria) in the creation of my artworks, I would be remiss not to mention that the history of indigo is closely tied to colonial British and American histories, as it was one of the main crops grown by enslaved people in America during the colonial period. The varieties most commonly grown in North America during the colonial era were the native Carolina indigo (Indigofera caroliniana) and the imported French indigo (Indigofera tinctoria) and Guatemala indigo (Indigofera suffruticosa) (Rembert, 1979). As Jenny Balfour-Paul notes in Indigo: Egyptian Mummies to Blue Jeans, 'without a suffering labour force indigo's story would have been very different. For every five acres of indigo four labourers were required. [...] Workers, whether slaves or local peasantry, paid a high price, often with their lives, to satisfy the European appetite for blue' ([1998] 2012, p.60). Dwelling with the violent history of indigo while creating the devotional citation artworks provided another opportunity to turn towards, rather than away from, the reality of Britain's colonial history.



Ecoaesthetic Longing, 2023. Gift artwork. Watercolour, acrylic and ink on indigo-dyed cotton rag paper.

When offered as gifts, the artworks also invite the original author of the text to re-engage with their own work, as well as communicating that someone has spent time in contemplation of their work and has listened closely to what that work was seeking to convey. At the beginning of the year I created a gift artwork for Women's Studies and African American Studies scholar Sarah Jane Cervenak, whose two scholarly books, Wandering: Philosophical Performances of Racial and Sexual Freedom (2014) and Black Gathering: Art, Ecology, Ungiven Life (2021) have been important companions for me in thinking through ideas around anti-Enlightenment philosophies, opacity, traceability, ecology, enclosure, ecoaesthetics and property. Having selected a rectangular A2 piece of cotton-rag paper which I hand dyed with fresh Japanese indigo leaves in 2021, I decided to paint dog roses in the first instance, as they frequently grow wild and in their sprawling shape have an undeniable 'uncultivatedness' (Cervenak, 2021, p. 47) about them. Dog roses also felt like an appropriate choice in that I had recently painted them in an artwork titled *labors of* love (2023), in which they were symbolically painted for Black feminist poet and essayist June Jordan and her 'regular profusion of certain unidentified roses, growing

to no discernible purpose, and according to no perceptible control' in the poem

Letter to the Local Police (1980, p. 28). June Jordan is part of the citational field of both the jennifer c. nash article that labors of love (2023) is centred around and Black

Gathering, and representing her with dog roses was a way to allude to her presence in both texts.

In the second instance, I chose to paint marigolds. I wanted the roses to be accompanied by a wild growing and self-seeding flower. I also thought of them in connection to the powerful symbolism around marigolds in Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye, in which the unwillingness of the earth to grow the marigolds from marigold seeds could be read as symbolic of the State sanctioned dehumanisation of and violence towards the Black community (Morrison, 1970). Although The Bluest Eye is not referenced in Black Gathering, Morrison is an important figure in the text and much of the book focuses on the complex relationship between nature, ecology and blackness. In this way, the artwork symbolically extends the citational field of the text into related texts by authors cited within the main body of the text. This is the first artwork I have made in which the flowers are growing in and around the gold circles rather than solely in front of or behind them. I wanted to emphasise the sense that the flowers are uncontainable and uncategorizable, pushing past preconceived notions of containment or property. The words too are disjointed and yet still readable with close attention, motioning to the opacity of forms of home 'otherwise unseen' (Cervenak, 2021, p. 77).

The citation began to sit differently on the tongue after hours of contemplation, words reverberating at a different frequency when lifted from the page and hand printed amongst flowering plants. Because I painted the flowers first, the words had to fit around them and new meanings were added by the ways a word

was broken up. 'Being' became elongated to 'Bein - (rose branch) - g', the word somehow stretched out in a way that reflects the expansive possibilities of the concept. A similar thing happened to 'feeli - (rose leaves) n- (rose leaves) g' and 'ecoaesthetic' becomes the wildly populated 'e - (marigold stem) c - (marigold leaves) o - (marigold stem) a - (marigold leaves) es - (rose leaf) t - (rose bloom) h - (gold circle) e - (rose stem) t - (gold circle) ic'. Sitting alone at the kitchen table, I found myself absorbed in these unexpected polyphonies, kept company by the words that unravelled themselves before me as they stretched to accommodate their floral page companions.

As I worked, I often found myself slipping from the paper in front of me and into a textual elsewhere. It was as though I entered portals in the page and while my hand drew the black outline of a marigold stem, my mind was skimming the pages of June Jordan's Where Is The Love? ([1978] 2002), recalling her desire 'to become willing and able to embrace more and more of the whole world, without fear, and also without self-sacrifice' ([1978] 2002, p. 271) and humming the tune of Stefano Harney and Fred Moten's Undercommons call for fugitive study in The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study (2013), as I pondered their question 'is there a way of being intellectual that isn't social?' (2013, p. 111). In this way, I found myself in a network of what French Feminist Philosopher Hélène Cixous might call 'others-in-writing' (2008) or Feminist Critic Carolyn Heilbrun called 'unmet friends' (1997).

For Hélène Cixous, the 'other-in-writing' is an 'other' capable of understanding that which one is trying to express. In *White Ink: Interviews on Sex, Text and Politics*, she tells French scholar and editor Christa Stevens that 'no one can write on that steep, treacherous disturbing pathway where you feel so alone if there isn't in

me, in her or him, in oneself, the presentation of an other' (2008, p. 10). In this way, her 'other-in-writing' shares something with Vivian Gornick's something or someone capable of giving one back to oneself ([1996] 2020, p. 88). In my academic life it is books, art materials and flowers that most often give me back to myself and act as my others-in-writing. For Carolyn Heilbrun, the 'unmet friend' (1997) was an author who one does not know personally but with whose work one has formed a particular connection. In *The Last Gift of Time: Life Beyond Sixty*, she wrote that 'unmet friends never test the bridge of their one-way correspondence. And if, like [American poet Maxine] Kumin, such a friend writes essays and poems, the bridge from her to her reader can never collapse as long as the reader lives' (1997, p. 155). Heilbrun was a feminist scholar and author and the first woman to achieve tenure in the English Department at Columbia University and her idea of 'unmet friends' was a distinctly feminist one, influenced by her belief that 'women catch courage from the women whose lives and writing they read, and women call the bearer of that courage friend' (1997, p. 138).

For me, Carolyn Heilbrun is herself an 'unmet friend', as I have read not only her scholarly texts such as *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny* ([1973] 1982) and *Writing a Woman's Life* ([1973] 1982), but also devoured her many murder mysteries, set in academia and featuring a woman English professor at a New York university as the sleuth. I found Heilbrun's work through May Sarton, as Heilbrun was Sarton's literary executor, friend and one of the few academics to write about Sarton's work. Through Heilbrun's work I discovered the writing of feminist theorist Nancy K. Miller, in particular her reflection on three formative feminist friendships in *My Brilliant Friends: Our Lives in Feminism* (2019), who taught with Heilbrun at Columbia University in the latter part of the 20th century. Miller, who now teaches at City

University of New York, has since become a friend and mentor, placing me as part of this lineage of feminist thinkers and making Heilbrun not only an 'unmet friend' but also something akin to an unmet mentor.⁴

My devotional citation praxis owes much to Heilbrun's concept of the 'unmet-friend,' but departs from it in my desire to 'test the bridge of [...] correspondence' (1997, p. 155). In gifting my artworks to the scholars whose work has given me courage, I hope to indicate that their writing has become an integral part of the materials of my feminist world making and that I am listening to the words they're putting into the world. My exchanges with the scholars I cite are often brief and rather than creating entirely new relationships to their work, our written exchanges serve to enrich my relationship to their text and allow for a sense of reciprocity whereby the work continues to circulate, both back to the writer and outwards to others who encounter their writing through my artworks.



Unmet Friends, 2023. Watercolour, acrylic and ink on madder-dyed cotton rag paper.

"As long as I'm writing about my friends, I'm Keeping them alive, and in Keeping them alive, I'm staying alive with them. We are 52211 in CONVERSALEON, even if I'm doing most of the talking" -Nancy K. Millet "They will know that there are books waiting for them as there were no books for me." -Carolyn Heilbrun Some day I will have to Xerox my letters to you, as I cannot seem to keep a journal. Besides, I think I give the best of myself (and the worst) to you in my letters. | Pleasure and memories to store up for the troisième -Naomi Schor "Really, there was never a better friend in any way, than you have been, are being, at this point in my life." - Diane

Still in Conversation, 2020. Ink and thread on paper.

One of the devotional citation artworks I made in the first year of the PhD was for feminist theorist Nancy K. Miller. I was deeply moved by My Brilliant Friends (2019) and the importance it placed on friendship with other feminists within one's life as a scholar. In the book, Miller traces her friendships with three feminist writers, all of whom have now passed away: literary critic and theorist Naomi Schor; literary critic, theorist and mystery writer Carolyn Heilbrun; and scholar, biographer and poet Diane Middlebrook. I created this work at a time when I had not yet introduced flowers into my devotional citation praxis and also when I was feeling the burden and anxiety of being a first generation scholar. Reading about Miller's journey through the academy and the importance of her feminist friendships reassured me and made me feel part of something larger than myself.

When I asked her about the experience of being gifted the devotional citation artwork Miller wrote:

I was surprised and delighted when Storm presented me with the artwork she created from *My Brilliant Friends*, my book about feminist friendships. I especially loved her choice of citations--one from me, and one each for the three friends I memorialize. I was doubly or triply moved that she had liked the book enough to embroider and print the words in ways that bear the mark of her hand--as reader and artist--and at the same time, keep these friends alive before my eyes, as it were. (Miller, 2023, para. 1)

This is the only devotional citation artwork I have made in reference to a text with such obvious personal significance to the writer and I was honoured that Miller felt the work helped to 'keep these friends alive before [her] eyes' (2023, para. 1). This statement also notes the material nature of the artwork, with the use of both hand-printing and embroidery, that 'bear the mark of [my] hand--as reader and artist' (2023, para. 1) and in doing so make material my careful process of reading.

The artwork that my work is propped against in this photo is *Families* (1973) by Mira Schor, a feminist artist and the younger sister of Naomi Schor.

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Still in Conversation framed in Nancy K. Miller's home, 2023.

It was these definitions of 'unmet friends' (Heilbrun, 1997) and 'other[s]-in-writing' (Cixous, 2008) that circulated through my mind as I pondered Cervenak's words alongside the questions posed by the other theorists whose work my mind had wandered to. The next day, having emailed Sarah Jane Cervenak with the offer of the artwork as a gift and an explanation of my praxis and received an enthusiastic response, I set out to the post office to send it to its new home in North Carolina. Returning home and opening the front door, it felt as though my kitchen was still humming with the presence of Sarah Jane Cervenak, Japanese indigo-dyed paper, June Jordan, dog roses, Stefano Harney, watercolour paints, Fred Moten, golden circles, Hélène Cixous, marigolds and Carolyn Heilbrun.

Several months later, when I asked Sarah Jane Cervenak about her experience of receiving *Ecoaesthetic Longing*, she wrote the following statement:

When scholar artist Storm Greenwood shared that she made a work of art out of one of my sentences, I was joyfully overwhelmed. Storm, with great care, moved a sentence from a page of my book *Black Gathering* and placed it onto a canvas. She then painted vines and flowers around individual letters, enframing it within a bouquet that also softly balanced the gravity of the words. It is one thing to learn that a fellow writer is reading your book; it is another to see how they walk, sit, paint around and invite the words into an ecosystem of their own creation. (Cervenak, 2023, para. 1).



Ecoaesthetic Longing framed in Sarah Jane Cervenak's home, 2023.

Cervenak notes in this statement that the flowers in the painting 'softly balanced the gravity of the words' (2023, para. 1), pointing to one of my intentions in intertwining the words with the flowering plants. Furthermore, in writing how I had 'invite[d] the words into an ecosystem of [my] own creation' (2023, para. 1), she motions towards the feminist world making that lies at the heart of my devotional citation praxis. In Cervenak's interpretation of my gifted artwork there is a clear sense of the movement inherent in devotional citation as a feminist world making praxis: the work that Cervenak writes about in *Black Gathering* has enriched her own complex, porous writing-as-world-making; this writing, in the form of her book, has in turn become a lively research material within my own feminist 'ecosystem'. The impact of Cervenak's work on my praxis has been evidenced through the creation of a devotional citation artwork which has then been re-gifted to her. This gift has invited her to witness where the affect of her intellectual labour has travelled and how it has been transformed through the creation of art.

One of the ways through which I judge the passing of time during periods of intensive research is by the state of the flowers on my kitchen table, their insistent temporality preventing the days from blurring into one. Bud-like blooms usually

mean Sunday, full blooms Wednesday and falling petals Saturday. Sometimes, however, different flowers have different life spans and time becomes elongated or shortened by their temporal cycles. Flowers are a celebration of life simultaneously in the process of decay and witnessing them creates space for my own complex thoughts and emotions as I learn from their capacity to hold complexity. Central to my work is the capacity to hold complexity with tenderness. In my devotional citation praxis I make artwork that is layered with multiple strands of meaning. These artworks are not made to be easily and immediately understood or comprehended, but rather are created to be dwelt with. As Anne Rudloff Stanton describes in Push Me, Pull You: Imaginative and Emotional Interaction in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art, in mediaeval Britain it was believed that 'simple visual contact with [an] activated sacred page would have provided a spiritual benefit that did not depend on decoding the text' (2011, p. 78). Similarly, I seek to make botanically illustrated manuscripts that offer the reader/viewer the possibility of a secular-sacred experience, through which there is the offer of tacit knowledge alongside more obvious textual encounters. In doing so I hope to provide the reader/viewer with a slow form of study whereby they might dwell with the complexity of thinking through ideas around the meeting places of queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist studies, the fraught history of botanical art and the revolutionary potentialities of flowering plants.

While the gifting of artworks as part of my devotional citation praxis is the most obvious act of gifting within my work and can easily be understood within Enlightenment-influenced Western logic, my understanding of gifting is not limited to these literal acts of gifting but rather is indicative of a queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist philosophy of reciprocity, relationality and interconnected survival. The

concept of the gift is fraught within traditional Western thinking, for as Cervenak writes in *Black Gathering*, when Enlightenment philosopher John Locke 'declared "all the world was America," a move that at once rationalized Black people and earth as ownable and givable and brutalized the expression of gathering as extraction, the logic of the gift buttressed life and freedom's expression' (2021, p. 5). This relationship between land as a gift to be extracted from is vastly different from the relationship to land that I grew up with. Growing up in the Sussex countryside, where I was home-schooled and lived with my parents and siblings in rented accommodation, we often foraged for food and ate local produce from the nearby farms.

My parents taught me to honour the land and to see it as a living system of abundance that asked for respect and reciprocity and my sister has since gone on to become a biodynamic farmer, while my mother works with organisations supporting sustainable approaches to farming. As I grew older, I learned that my parents' relationship to the land was formed through both their ancestral ties to the British countryside as people from historically rural working class families and through their reading around Celtic animism, or the belief that all things are alive and interconnected. As Emma Dabiri writes in What White People Can Do Next, 'as much as it was 'white' people who imposed this system [white supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy] around the world, it remains a system that has also been imposed on people racialized as 'white' (2021, p. 62). Throughout history England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland have had their own distinct indigenous traditions and particular relationships to land. For example, as Dabiri writes, 'duthchas is an ancient Scottish Gaelic ecological principle of interconnectedness between people, the land and non-human beings. Duthchas speaks to the type of coexistence, interrelationality and

entanglement that we are now, perhaps too late, recognizing the utter necessity of, if we are going to survive' (2021, p. 62).



Whiteness, 2022. Watercolour, acrylic and ink on indigo-dyed cotton rag paper.

Celtic philosophies, such as duthchas, resonate with indigenous
understandings of the earth, interrelation and our responsibility to one another
across numerous cultures. In Reshaping the University: Responsibility, Indigenous
Epistemes, and the Logic of the Gift, Sámi scholar Rauna Kuokkanen writes, 'I believe
that indigenous philosophies offer a timely alternative paradigm for the entire world,
which is increasingly characterized by tremendous human suffering and
environmental destruction' (2007, p. 25). However, she notes that 'before we raise
concepts that derive from our own cultural framework but that have strong colonial,
European (more specifically Enlightenment), and patriarchal connotations in
common parlance, we will need to carefully deconstruct and decolonize those
concepts so that we will be able to employ them in ways that remind us to heed their
oppressive origins in other cultural contexts' (2007, p. 25). In response to this call to

decolonise our understanding of gifting, Kuokkanen proceeds to name the ways in which Western scholars often cited on gifting, such as Pierre Bourdieu, Marcel Mauss and Jacques Godbout, offer 'interpretations [of gifting] rooted in certain colonial, Eurocentric and patriarchal worldviews, ideologies and values' (p. 30), which stand in contrast to Sámi culture, in which 'reciprocity implies response-ability—that is, an ability to respond, to remain attuned to the world beyond oneself, as well as a willingness to recognize its existence through the giving of gifts' (2007, p. 39).

This understanding of gifting as a life-sustaining practice not tied to market exchange is also prevalent in the work of Potawatomi author and scientist Robin Wall Kimmerer. In Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants Wall Kimmerer writes 'generosity is simultaneously a moral and a material imperative, especially among people who live close to the land and know its waves of plenty and scarcity. Where the well-being of one is linked to the wellbeing of all. Wealth among traditional people is measured by having enough to give away' (2013, p. 381). Furthermore, Wall Kimmerer writes of how the Western concept of the gift is in the process of destroying the natural resources on which we all depend, noting 'in Potawatomi, we speak of the land as emingoyak: that which has been given to us. In English, we speak of the land as "natural resources" or "ecosystem services," as if the lives of other beings were our property. As if the earth were not a bowl of berries, but an open pit mine, and the spoon a gouging shovel' (p. 383). Speaking of a traditional Potawatomi dance, Wall Kimmerer notes that 'in the dance of the giveaway, remember that the earth is a gift that we must pass on, just as it came to us' (p. 383). Furthermore, explaining Potawatomi understandings of the gift through the relationship between berries and people, Wall Kimmerer states that 'the berries

places to grow [...]. They remind us that all flourishing is mutual. We need the berries and the berries need us. Their gifts multiply by our care for them, and dwindle from our neglect. We are bound in a covenant of reciprocity, a pact of mutual responsibility to sustain those who sustain us' (p. 382).

This desire to sustain those who sustain me is an essential aspect of my devotional citation praxis. My acts of gifting are not limited to the physical objects I send through the mail, for my time, attention and care for the work of others is also a gift, as is the time, attention and care of anyone reading this thesis from a place of generosity. As previously stated, the central aim of my devotional citation artworks is to communicate the sentiment *I am listening* and to draw attention to acts of listening as foundational to queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist scholarly work. My acts of listening have also been influenced by the work of black feminist scholar Alexis Pauline Gumbs, who, writing after Jamaican sociologist Sylvia Wynter and speaking to the transatlantic oceanic encounter and the violent limits of Western taxonomy and categorisation, asks 'what if coral are not only using their bodies to write on the planet but also using us? What if I am copoetic with coral, the material it uses to write beyond its breathing? What if I am listening? [...] What if we are not the only authors of this story? Might we become humble tools for the ocean that unleashed us?' (2019, p. 342).⁵

Gumbs' concept of interspecies co-poetics speaks to jennifer c. nash's aforementioned assertion that 'our survivals are mutually dependent' (2019, p. 116) and extends this mutual vulnerability to include other non-human beings. It also resonates with ashon t. crawley's assertion, regarding Reich's *Music for 18 Musicians*, that 'it's a mysticism, a black mysticism, a mysticism that requires the renunciation



Being Human/Being Ocean, 2022. Watercolour, acrylic and ink on indigo-dyed cotton rag paper.

In Katherine McKittrick's critical genealogy of Jamaican sociologist Sylvia Wynter's work, she describes Wynter's concept of humans as 'a biomutationally evolved, hybrid species—storytellers who now storytellingly invent themselves as being purely biological' (McKittrick, 2014, p. 11) and draws out Wynter's call for us to understand 'being human as praxis.' Wynter, noting that the identitarian categories humans have created are not fixed or neutral, but specific interpretations of our fleshiness manipulated to serve the desires of the most powerful, calls for us to become active participants in the creation of our 'genres' of being human.

This concept is taken one step further by black feminist scholar Alexis Pauline Gumbs, who describes her work as 'a divestment in being human. An experiment in being ocean, as praxis.' (2019, p. 336) Writing of the dehumanising violence of the Middle Passage, Gumbs notes that 'the ocean has been the unit of exchange through which a sea change makes a person a commodity' (2019, p. 337) and goes on to elaborate 'the difference between being (dis) placed, or what I am calling being mistaken for an ocean, and being ocean as praxis.' (2019, p. 337) In doing so, Gumbs expounds on the ways in which humans continue to create a world that is unliveable, based on the capitalist colonial heteropatriarchal logic of what it means to be human. In answer to this ongoing violence, she asks that we displace humans from the centre of the story, and breathe into the reality of our interconnectedness with the vast ecological world, writing new stories in communion with our non-human companions.

An example of a story co-created with coral is the 2023 experimental opera/installation *Once She Dries*, which tells the story of the impact of climate change on coral reefs. The multimedia installation was created by Meagan Woods and Nancy Cohen in collaboration with Casper Leerink, Xinyue Liu, Kourosh Ghamsari-Esfahani and Amanda Sum.

of the one in favour of becoming plural. Or, not really becoming but acknowledging the plurality that is the grounds for existence' (2020a, p. 36). As stated in Seed & Root this project has been created through a collaboration with flowering plants. Flowers have led me from one topic to another, one country to another, one genre to another. Flowers have expanded my citational practice so that within my devotional citation artworks I am not only citing text but also citing flowering plants, natural materials, art movements, sacred manuscripts and my own embodied sensational reading of the text. This desire to be in relation, listening and reading to shift and change the course of my thinking has also influenced my decision to interview the artists whose work I explored in Sprout & Leaf. Interviewing artists such as Alice Kettle, Benny Nemer, Charmaine Watkiss and Cecilia Charlton was a way of placing the artists at the centre of the conversation about their work and not instrumentalising them to fit my own preconceived arguments. Where interviewing the artists was not possible, I studied their visual work, statements and interviews with the same care and attention I approach critical text and flowering plants, in the hope of sustaining some form of conversation with them even if a literal conversation did not take place. I also chose to interview people who grow flowers in an effort to represent different voices regarding flowering plants and to ground the writing on botanical art in the material reality of flowering plants that originate from and return to the earth and to draw attention to the sustainable flower-growing movement.

This desire for contemplation and slow forms of study has been informed by the work of Gender and Sexuality Studies scholar Tiffany Lethabo King, who, as previously mentioned in connection with Charmaine Watkiss' work, uses the concept of the shoals to theorise the meeting place between Black studies and Native studies. She writes that 'as an accumulation of Black thought, aesthetics, and politics, the

shoals of [the book] halt the all too smooth logics of White Settler Colonial Studies' (2019, p. 10). Though shoaling has a specific significance as a meeting place between Black Studies and Native Studies, there are important ways in which shoaling, as a methodology and mode of critique, resonates with my own desire to read and write in ways that cause a slowing and disrupting of heteropatriarchal colonial logics. For this reason, The Black Shoals was an important companion in thinking through slowness, complexity and modes of attention during the creation of this project. As the majority of the artworks feature words interwoven with flowers, a straightforward reading of the text is impossible. If a reader/viewer dwells with a particular work for a longer period of time, they are often able to accurately read the citations. However, more to the point is the practice of dwelling with the work long enough to decipher the citations and what can be gained through dropping into this space of quiet attention as a form of study. If straightforward comprehension of the text is not the intention of the viewer, they can also allow their eyes to roam across the work and pull together words and flowers in new orders. This process invites invention, whereby something new might be understood from the intermaterial tangle of words and flowers.

In this way, I do not seek to explain the citations I work with or render them more transparent. Rather, I invite the reader to engage with the citations amidst further complexity. Underpinning these artistic choices is a desire to respect the opacity of the work I seek to learn from and to enact that which jennifer c. nash refers to as 'a politics organized not around the elisions (and illusions) of sameness, but around the vibrancy and complexity of difference' (2011, p. 11). As Amber Jamilla Musser asserts, 'focusing on excess circumnavigates questions of sovereign subjectivity and desire to show us epistemologies rooted in opacity and sensuality'

(2018, p. 9). In gesturing towards alternatives to modes of study based on Enlightenment philosophies, I bring together a polyphony of voices articulating alternatives that, while raised from different directions, work towards a shared horizon. In doing so, I argue that transparency is not a prerequisite for collaboration and opacity is not incompatible with critical engagement, for central to my devotional citation praxis is the desire to illuminate opacity and to dwell within the contradiction in those terms.



Illuminating Multiplicity, 2023. Gift artwork. Watercolour, acrylic and ink on indigo-dyed cotton rag paper.

The devotional citation artwork above was created as a gift piece for Amber Jamilla Musser in 2023 and enabled me to think through her writing on citation as layered temporality, as well as to communicate to her the importance of her scholarship to my praxis. When asked about the experience of receiving the artwork, Musser wrote:

It's hard to distill my feelings about the process into a sentence or two. I think since the quote you used is about citation and I'm interested in citation as an embodied process of creating intimacy and plural selfhood, the work feels like a really cool materialization and enactment of that process. It feels so special to feel the ideas

being tended to and being materialized in such a deeply layered thoughtful way. It's a honor to be thought with in this way.

(Amber Jamilla Musser, 2023, para. 1)



Illuminating Multiplicity framed in Amber Jamilla Musser's home, 2023.

In this statement, Musser notes the ways in which devotional citation, as a praxis, acts as a 'materialization and enactment' (2023, para. 1) of a complex embodied approach to citation. In doing so, she offers back to me a further layer of citational practice, as she notes how my work has been created through reading her work and how my creation has then materialised and enacted her work in turn. Furthermore, her use of the words 'honor' and 'thought with' (2023, para. 1) signal the ways in which devotional citation is a practice of honouring and dwelling with the work, words and worlds of others.

This complexity and fluidity of praxis is indicative of my interest in forms of criticism that don't ask for closure, such as Renee Gladman's aptly named Plans for Sentences, which explores her 'devotion to the entwinement of drawing and writing' (2022, p. 139) and the possibilities opened up by creating 'drawn writings' in conversation with poetic text. Each spread of *Plans for Sentences* features drawing-writing on the left and writing on the right, the two forms sitting side-by-side on the page. The opening line reads 'These sentences — they — will begin having already been sentences somewhere else, and this will mark their afterlife, and this will mark their debut' (2022, p. 1). Similarly, my devotional citation artworks are representative of my desire to create spaces for fluid movement between different mediums, as drawing, painting, flower arranging, embroidery and hand printing are all partners in the cocreation of the artworks. Following the circular shapes featured in many of the paintings, the citations within the artworks are neither marginal nor central, but in conversation with the flowers and shapes. Furthermore, the artworks I have made during the process of my research are presented within the thesis, the footnotes occupy full pages and are given the same importance as the main body of the text and the installation presents my devotional citation artworks within the context of a staging of my domestic working environment. The collecting, collating, collaging, arranging and gilding of flowers and citations signifies both an attention to detail and an aesthetics of unfinishedness existing alongside one another. As with the complex history of Mary Delany's 'paper mosaiks', the aesthetics of my work invites both a dwelling with beauty and a sitting with discomfort. As an artist, creating the artworks allowed me the opportunity to spend time with the complex concepts I was researching and allowed space for me to sit with the questions that arose in response to them without pressure to find an

answer. In this way, devotional citation is a praxis that facilitates sitting with ambiguity and making peace with ambivalence.

Understanding language and text as dynamic and ever changing is a central aesthetic within my praxis. While the texts I cite are generally focused on queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist liberation, many of those texts grapple with the coloniality embedded in the English language and look for ways to slow, negate or draw attention to it. Within the work of a number of the scholars and poets I have been reading, such as M. NourbeSe Philip (2008), Saidiya Hartman (2019) and Tiffany Lethabo King (2019), they utilise their critical and creative capacities to reorganise, reroute or decontaminate textual and cartographical violence. A powerful example of this is Zong! by Tobagonian Canadian poet, writer and lawyer M. NourbeSe Philip. Zong! is a fragmented and complex poem, which seeks to 'decontaminate', through a process of deconstruction and reconstruction, the language of a horrifying legal document from the 18th century concerning the massacre of 133 enslaved African people aboard the ship 'Zong,' who were thrown overboard so that the boat's captain could collect insurance money for "lost cargo." As Environmental Humanities scholar Lisa Fink writes, 'Zong! imagines the sea as a literal, formal, and thematic agent for the decontamination of language and traditional forms of history polluted by imperialism' (2020, p. 4). Speaking to what colonial language holds, Philip writes in the afterword, 'I deeply distrust this tool I work with — language. It is a distrust rooted in certain historical events that are all of a piece with the events that took place on the Zong. The language in which those events took place promulgated the non-being of African peoples' (2008, p. 197). Furthermore, she writes about the 'the way the text forces you — me — to read differently, bringing chaos into the language or, perhaps more accurately, revealing the chaos that is already there' (2008, p. 205).

Reading Zong! had an important impact on the aesthetic and poetic construction of my devotional citation artworks, as it was Philip's attention to the inherent violence and chaos embedded in English as a colonial language and her processes of 'decontamination' that pushed me to think about how words took up space within my visual work. The aesthetics of unravelling and complexity also lend themselves to the cyclicality that invites the aesthetics of the refrain; refrains that are words running through the practice, as in the case of the citations from texts central to my project, such as jennifer c. nash and ashon t. crawley, and refrains of visual motifs, such as flowers, circles and gold. Because the work is always unfinished it can be forgotten and then remembered, held closely and then released in the knowledge that it will be taken up again. There was also a sense of this refrain in receiving the statements from the scholars I had gifted devotional citation artworks to, and in reading about their understandings of the work, which brought the artworks back to me in new ways and textured my memory of making them with new understandings of what the work does in the world. These acts of repetition are informed by the texts I seek to converse with within the work of the project, all of which move, in one form or another, towards a complex sociality of unravelling in order to remake.

This kind of unravelling could also be spoken of as being 'undone.' jennifer c. nash, after theorist Judith Butler, writes, 'to be undone is not synonymous with to be wounded, though it can take that form. The realization of our capacity to be "undone," of the way others can "undo" us, and the decision to embrace rather than retreat from the possibility of our potential undoing, is the logic of black feminist love-politics' (2018, 117). These acts of unravelling or 'undoing' in order to remake also resonate with the work of Cixous, who, along with other French poststructuralist feminist theorists such as Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray and

Catherine Clément sought to find ways of writing that expressed the embodied experience of womanhood (1976, [1986] 1992) and, in an effort to create alternatives to androcentric textual conventions, wrote from an understanding of the interdependency of flesh and text (1999). While writing from a different context than the previously cited Black Studies scholars, and one vastly dominated by white theorists, Cixous, Clément, Irigaray and Kristeva were all in some form trying to create alternatives to Enlightenment influenced forms of scholarly writing and seeking to claim their flesh, the thing reviled in women, queer people and people living in poverty and brutally dehumanised in people of the global majority, as a source of wisdom not separate from the intellect.

My citational ethics are grounded in a desire to honour the words of those I have learned from and situate my work as part of an unfolding conversation. The citational networks of the queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist texts I read invite me into seemingly endless discussions, as I follow a reference from one text to another, the citational network connecting sometimes seemingly disparate texts and inviting me to traverse critical unfoldings across space and time, even as I remain seated at the same kitchen table. In *The Lonely Letters* (2020a), ashon t. crawley, after bell hooks, June Jordan and Alice Walker, speaks to the ways in which the book exists as a series of love letters and proffers that 'love is the reckless abandonment of writing that hopes for but does not require response; love is a sense for solicitation towards reply, a desire to be in ongoing conversation' (2020c, para. 8). Perhaps this form of writing towards love, or writing towards conversation, could be understood as a wish for intellectual pollination; for a sharing of ideas facilitated by a visit from an intertextual bee or the repotting of a textual cutting next to yours. To follow the plant metaphor further, the most hurried forms of citation might be seen as acts of

uprooting, whereby an idea is lifted from a text with no reference to its environment and nothing offered in return, the violent act either killing or entirely isolating the concept. The prevalence of this form of citation in academic texts may not be due to ill intent but rather due to the exhaustion of working within time limitations that preclude slow study. As mentioned in *Seed & Root*, the current system in UK Higher Education places an emphasis on productivity in ways that obstruct slow scholarship and academic staff are widely overworked and underpaid (Higher Education Joint Unions, 2023, p. 1). I state this to emphasise that my call for slow scholarship, careful reading and devotional forms of citation are not an attack on individual scholars or based on a naive idea of academic workload, but a call for systemic change and a particular example of what slow scholarship can look like.



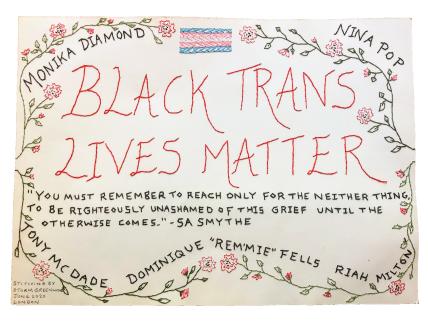
The Gift/At What Cost?, 2023. Watercolour, acrylic and ink on coreopsis-dyed cotton rag paper.

It is from an ethics and politics of queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist love that I approach my devotional citation praxis. In Living a Feminist Life, feminist writer and scholar Sara Ahmed writes that 'citation is feminist memory. Citation is how we acknowledge our debt to those who came before; those who helped us find our way when the way was obscured because we deviated from the paths we were told to

follow' (2017, p. 15). As previously mentioned, Ahmed did not cite any white men in Living a Feminist Life and while I have not set myself any specific rules for citation within the creation of this project, my emphasis has been on texts that have nourished and challenged my thinking and making towards a horizon of queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist liberation. In this way, devotional citation is my own particular contribution to a social and academic movement for feminist citation, that comes in the wake of movements such as the 2015 'Citation Practices challenge' initiated by Eve Tuck, K. Wayne Yang and Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández, who wrote that they 'aim to stop erasing Indigenous, Black, brown, trans*, disabled POC, QT*POC, feminist, activist, and disability/crip contributions from [their] intellectual genealogies' (2015, para. 9) and the aforementioned Cite Black Women campaign created by Black feminist anthropologist and social justice advocate Christen A. Smith. The collective asks 'what does it look like to dismantle the patriarchal, white supremacist, heterosexist, imperialist impetus of the neoliberal university and its accomplices by centering Black women's ideas and intellectual contributions?' (2021, p. 15) and posits plagiarism as 'as a form of exploitation imminently tied to the projects of colonialism, slavery and their progeny' (2021, p. 11).

As previously noted, my devotional citation praxis blossomed during the first lockdown, when I turned to the books, art materials and flowers in my home in search of alternative forms of sociality. Much like crawley's aforementioned writing on the multiplicity of even seemingly singular things (2016), in the quiet isolation of my home I became acutely aware of the 'otherwise possibilities' of even an individual volume of text or a lone anemone in a jar, an awareness that has remained with me even as London has emerged from lockdown and my partner has moved in with me. crawley uses the phrase 'otherwise possibilities' to announce 'the fact of infinite

alternatives to what *is*' (2016, p. 2) and even an ostensibly single-authored volume of scholarly work often cites a polyphony of other books and articles and therefore contains a multiplicity of voices. In the summer of 2020, I left my house for the first time in several months to attend the Black Trans Lives Matter march in central London. In the days leading up the protest, I stitched a poster for the event featuring the names of the five Black trans people who had been murdered in the United States in the first half of 2020; Monika Diamond, Nina Pop, Tony McDade, Dominique "Rem'mie" Fells and Riah Milton. The invitation for the protest asked participants to 'bring flowers, wear flowers' and I surrounded the words with embroidered roses and a trans flag.

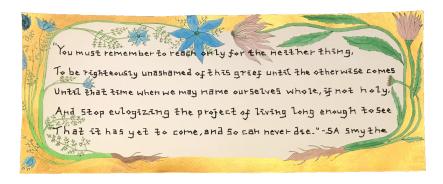


Black Trans Lives Matter, 2020. Thread on paper.

There is a rich history of flowers as symbols within the LGBTQ+ community. For the march, the flowers we were asked to bring were in mourning of the lives lost and many people deposited their flowers and placards on the railings opposite Parliament, creating a temporary memorial. Roses have become so symbolic of mourning our trans siblings that the phrase 'give us our roses while we're still here' has become a common rallying cry at marches for Trans rights. Although it is

unclear where this phrase originated from, it was popularised by B. Parker's artistic work for Trans Day of Resilience (2015, para. 34) and its meaning is all too clear: honour and cherish trans people while they're still alive to experience it. Under the words 'Black Trans Lives Matter', I stitched a citation from a poem by Black trans nonbinary poet and scholar SA Smythe, which reads, 'You must remember to reach only for the neither thing/To be righteously unashamed of this grief until the otherwise comes' (2019, p. 5). It felt important to include words from a writer within the Black trans community and sitting with Smythe's words while I stitched allowed a space in which I could hold both grief and love for my queer community.

After discovering Smythe's work, making the sign and having a brief exchange on Twitter in which they thanked me for taking their words to the march, I wanted to make a piece to give them in gratitude for their words. In spring 2021, I reached out to them via email, sending them an image of the gift artwork I had made and asking if they'd be happy to receive it. I noted in my email; 'The words are embroidered, and the border is painted. I initially considered using a citation from another of your scholarly or poetic works, but I felt the desire to stitch these words again, with the final two lines included this time. In this echo it felt as though the joy, energy and grief of last summer's marches in London were with me as I worked and are therefore woven into this piece' (Greenwood, 2021, para. 1). Smythe accepted the gift and it now resides with them in California.



The Neither Thing, 2021. Gift artwork. Watercolour, acrylic, ink and thread on paper.

This research project is rooted in love. Love of life, love of relationality, love of the earth, love of research, love of art, love of citation. Love in the context of this work is not limited to love in the romantic or interpersonal sense, but love as a political and organising force. As jennifer c. nash writes in Practising Love: Black Feminism, Love-Politics, and Post-Intersectionality, after June Jordan, Audre Lorde and Alice Walker, 'Love, then, is a practice of self, a labor of the self, that forms the basis of political communities rooted in a radical ethic of care' (2011, p. 14). This attention to love in all its forms has led me on a journey to understand the ethics of my material supply chains. When I first began making my devotional citation artworks, I was caught up in the theoretical and aesthetic aspects of my work and did not pause to consider the provenance of the art materials I was working with. For this reason, my early works were made using generically available art supplies, many of which contained micro plastics, arrived packaged in plastic and/or contained naturally occurring products which were farmed in other countries, with little information available about the ethics of their sourcing or the human labour involved. Learning about the entanglement of racial justice and global capitalism with climate justice during my textual research, led me to realise that the devotional ethics of my work needed to extend into the materials with which I was working.

Once I turned my gaze towards the material, it did not sit comfortably with me to write and theorise-through-making about liberation, queerness and decolonial feminism using materials that cause degradation to marginal communities through the impact of climate change and/or through the use of exploitative production lines. Through conversations with my extended communities in farming, natural dyeing and climate justice, I have begun to slowly move towards using naturally and locally sourced materials. We live in a system that normalises and invisibilises exploitation and often makes it easier and cheaper for us to access materials sourced through non ethical supply chains than to work in sustainable ways. In order to make different choices we need the time, energy, access to information and monetary freedom to do so. Hence, I have not given away all my art supplies and instantly rushed to buy 'better' ones, but rather, as I run out of each product or come to create a new piece, I research the environmental and human cost of the products I wish to use and discover if there is an ethical replacement. This is an ongoing project, the results of which can be seen in the artworks that are interwoven with the rest of the thesis and displayed in the final installation. There is a list of materials used at the end of the bibliography.

After attending a workshop at Indigo Garden London in 2021, where I learned how to approach fresh-leaf indigo dyeing, I was fortunate to be gifted a Japanese indigo plant by natural dyer and historian Jenny Dean, which I used to dye both cloth and paper. My mother, natural dyer and researcher Deborah Barker, has gifted me beautiful silk threads, which she dyed using dahlias from Plaw Hatch Farm, where my sister Gala Bailey-Barker is a shepherd, and weld from her garden. She also gifted me coreopsis flowers from her garden. I have therefore used indigo, coreopsis flowers and madder root to dye materials such as cotton rag paper and silk cloth and I have

been able to source natural inks and pigments from London Pigment and The Wild Pigment Project's natural pigment subscription Ground Bright. The ethically driven decision to move towards a more sustainable supply chain has had a noticeable impact on the aesthetics of my work. In the artworks I have made in the last two years, the use of acrylic gold paint has been far more sparing and I have experimented with illuminating with paint made from foraged ochre or by circling flowers with an embroidered line of dahlia-dyed golden silk thread. Whereas in my earlier work the flowers were bathed in gold, in the new work they are backed by indigo-dyed green, coreopsis-dyed yellow or madder-dyed pink cotton rag paper.



Indigo Triptych, 2021. Gift artwork. Ink and dahlia-dyed thread on indigo-dyed cotton rag paper.

One of the earliest sustainably made artworks I created was the above artwork, *Indigo Triptych*, a three part artwork that was gifted to Jenny Dean in gratitude for the Japanese indigo, to my mother, Deborah Barker, in gratitude for the dahlia-dyed silk thread and to jennifer c. nash, in gratitude for the theoretical work which has inspired the ethics of my praxis. In a statement about the experience of receiving the artwork, nash wrote:

I would say I was absolutely moved to know that my work had moved someone else, and moved them to react in a way that looked and felt different from how we are trained and socialized to engage with work in academia: through conventional

scholarly citation. I had never thought of any part of my work as moving through the world in such a beautiful form, and it was really inspiring for me to see my words in such an aesthetically stunning form.

(jennifer c. nash, 2023, para. 1)

I am interested in the double use of the word 'moved' in this statement, as nash mentions both that she was 'moved' that her work had 'moved' me and that she had never considered that her work could 'move' through the world 'in such a beautiful form' (nash, 2023, para. 1). This double use of the word 'move' speaks perfectly to how devotional citation can be understood as a praxis concerning the movement of ideas and the potential for embodied sensorial forms of reading and citing to engender new epistemologies and contribute to feminist world making.

Alongside turning my gaze to the art materials I work with, as previously mentioned, I have also been working to make more intentional decisions around the sourcing of the flowers I paint. Some of the time I paint from photographs or flowers grown in pots in my garden, but I also often paint from cut flowers and dwelling with flowers is essential to my process.⁶ Over the past three years I have been sourcing the majority of my cut flowers from Hattie Flowers and Forest, both of which are small sustainable flower businesses with local flower farms. When possible, I also paint flowers from Plaw Hatch Farm in Sussex. Buying locally grown seasonal flowers has allowed me to connect to the floral seasons of the year and anticipate the arrival of certain blooms when the weather changes and the days lengthen or begin to draw in.

Once the cut flowers I paint have begun to wilt, I often choose to dry them. Indeed, if you were to enter my East London home, one of the first things you might notice is the dried flowers hanging from the stairwell and the bookshelves. This kind of temporal layering, where a flower existed in a vase on the table, as a painting in an artwork and as a dried flower on a stairwell, is characteristic of citational practices,

I ask the tulips in the vase before me whether they miss the soil they grew from. I receive no answer, but paint them with roots all the same. Grown on a flower farm in Kent, these tulips have not travelled far, but as living beings that exist in time, they are inevitably moving towards decomposition. I want to hold them as they hold me in this instant. With their resplendent red blooms they summon me into that which Brazilian novelist Clarice Lispector would call the 'instant-now', their beauty asking that I inhabit this moment fully and remain attentive as it decays. I breathe them in and forget to think past the instant. But now the past and possible futures intrude, demanding that I remember the roots



Halted Time, 2021. Watercolour, acrylic and ink on indigo-dyed cotton rag paper.

these blooms belonged to before they reached my table and asking that I paint them now.

I walk to the bookshelf and retrieve Lispector's *Água Viva*, feeling its weight in my hands as I take it from the shelf. Opening the book where I last earmarked the page, I read 'I stopped to drink cool water: the glass at this instant-now is of thick faceted crystal and with thousands of glints of instants. Are objects halted time?'(Lispector, [1973] 2012, p. 37). I am pulled into conversation with a long dead author, whose words further layer the thick temporality of the domestic space which doubles as my studio.

I return to the kitchen table and lay the book open before me. Taking up my paint brush, I dwell with Lispector's words as I work. Time passes as I hum softly, held in the tender care of the tulips, the text and the vibrant watercolours that glide across the page. The floral illustrations complete, I take up my rubber letter stamps and one by one, stamp the letters that form Lispector's words onto the circular manuscript. I work around the tulips, holding the text in my mind a word at a time, checking back and forth between the book and the manuscript. The multitude of layered instants, the augmented moments of study, are providing spaces in which my mind can wander. It is a practice not of distraction or inattention, but of praise and illumination. Time passes.

I reach a place of stillness, putting my art materials down as the art I have made becomes 'halted time' (Lispector, [1973] 2012) containing the layers of all the temporal insurgencies that co-created the work with me. The manuscript becomes a starting point for further wa(o)ndering and offers an alternative entry point to Lispector's thinking and the light slanting across the resplendent blooms of the red tulips on my table. As I sit beside the completed work, I am held in gold.

for as Amber Jamilla Musser writes, 'citationality is an explicit manipulation of the layering of different moments of temporality' (2018, p. 19). Drying the flowers that once kept me company while I read, wrote or painted is a way for me to hold the complexity of temporality with tenderness. For while the fragility of life is a fact, so too is the illuminated glory of small moments and these moments, when extended, can act as an invitation to approach study from a queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist ethics of care.

The installation provides a further invitation to engage with devotional scholarship and is set-up to imitate my domestic working environment. It brings together my devotional citation artworks, fresh flowers, queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist texts, art materials and documentation of the movement of my devotional citation artworks. The fresh flowers are seasonal and sustainably grown. In displaying the work alongside cut flowers, I create a space that invites the reader/viewer to dwell with the work. By selecting scented flowers, the smell of the display both draws people in and encourages them to linger. As May Sarton writes in Plant Dreaming Deep 'flowers and plants are silent presences. They nourish every sense except the ear' ([1968] 1996. p. 124). The smell of the flowers encourages people to become aware of their breath and to approach the work from a more embodied, sensorial space. The flowers are placed in three receptacles, one of which is a spherical ceramic vase, while the other two are cream jugs of different sizes. I also drape the table on which the installation sits with a tablecloth, wishing to emulate the feeling of a kitchen table and invite the reader/viewer into a snapshot of my creative home, where flowers, art, theory and domestic objects sit together side by side.

This installation is inspired by the sensorial intensity and botanical devotion of the Marianne North Gallery, even while the intellectual and political agendas I seek to support in my work land firmly on the side of queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist horizons. To this end, on either side of the table my devotional citation artworks are displayed in simple oak frames, while at the centre of the desk sits a pile of books, a half finished botanical sketch and a row of ink pots. On the wall above the table, a series of printed emails and Instagram messages display statements from scholars who received devotional citation artworks. In this way, the installation demonstrates the embodied sensorial nature of the work and invites the viewer/reader into my queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist world (of) making. My hope is that this accumulation of study through different forms will invite the reader/viewer to dwell with the ways in which flowers, as living plants, painted objects and/or metaphors, can be perceived as ideal companions in critiquing violent legacies and in creating an otherwise structured queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist thesis as feminist world making.



7pm. Early autumn. A golden glow illuminates the trees across the river. On a trestle table by the water sits a notebook filled with citations and several sketches of fallen leaves. A phone lights up, revealing the beginning of a message that reads: 'When scholar artist Storm Greenwood shared that she made a work of art out of one of my sentences, I was joyfully overwhelmed. Storm, with great care...' (Cervenak, 2023, para. 1). A shower of leaves falls from the willow tree as a squirrel hurries across the branches overhead. The phone screen returns to black as the windows of the boats on the water begin to glow orange in the oncoming dark.

Hold the image in your mind. Breathe in. Breathe out.

Following flowers as a research method has led me to contemplate diverse topics and time periods while still answering a single central question; in what ways do flowers particular positionality as both companions in emancipatory art making practices and histories of heteropatriarchal capitalist colonial violence make them ideal collaborators in engaging in devotional scholarship as a form of queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist world making? My botanical devotional citation praxis has enabled me to hold complexity with tenderness, illustrating how botanical contemplation and queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist ethics can impact not just what we study, but *how* we study. Through a discussion of the historical and

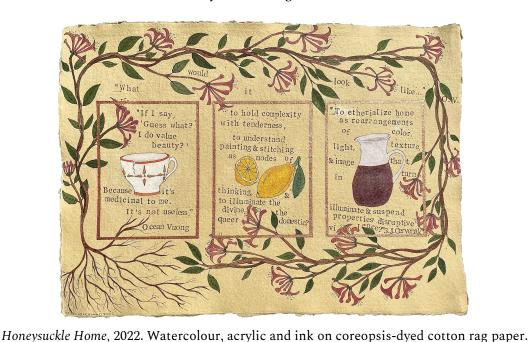
contemporary context of botanical art and the development of my devotional citation praxis I have drawn attention to flowers as a serious research material. Far from being passive, inanimate or solely decorative, flowers have accompanied humans through the ravages and joys of history, a history that is not only human but deeply and inescapably intertwined with plants. I have shown how the study of botanical art can lead researchers to multiple points of departure, as flowers have been colonised alongside humans and viewed as 'invasive' in turn, adorned the pages of sacred texts, been grown for food, healing, wealth and beauty, painted for colonial scientific research, indigenous cultural posterity and contemporary political art, arranged as a way of mourning the dead and celebrating life and utilised as poetic metaphors. Furthermore, I have demonstrated how creating a particular form of fine art practice-as-research grounded in an ethics of queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist love has enabled an 'otherwise' counter-canonical way of reading, writing, citing and structuring this doctoral thesis.

Through bringing together botanical language with citational practices I have uncovered new ways of thinking through divergent approaches to citation. While citation rooted in a queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist ethics of love (nash, 2011) can be understood as a wish for intellectual pollination or the repotting of a textual cutting which nourishes the original text, the most hurried forms of citation can be understood as acts of uprooting. In applying plant metaphors to citational practices I have named how the ethics of different approaches to citation affect the circulation of the work and those who write and read it. This approach to citation was enriched by Sara Ahmed's approach to citation in *Living a Feminist Life* (2017) and contemporary citation movements such as the *Cite Black Women* collective (Smith et al, 2021). My devotional citation praxis emerged from within this research and brings

together my desire to enact queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist world making through ethical forms of citation with my interest in the radical potential of botanical art as a critical creative practice. By combining paintings of flowering plants from root to bloom with citations from queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist texts, I have both drawn attention to the commonalities between citation and botany as practices that encompass everything from exploitative practices of uprooting, where ideas are ripped out and decontextualized, to generous acts of patience and care, which help to sow and circulate ideas, while also creating a research project which challenges the boundaries between written thesis, artistic portfolio and installation. Furthermore, by including descriptions of the process of making the devotional citation illustrations and gift artworks and staging the domestic space of creation for the final installation of the project, I have brought the reader/viewer into a particular process of making-as-thinking.

In this way, the accompanying installation facilitates an embodied sensorial experience of reading, as the artworks containing both flowering plants and critical text are displayed alongside fragrant seasonal flowers arranged in locally-made ceramic vases and jugs placed on a table set-up to imitate my domestic working space and including printed messages from those who have been gifted devotional citation artworks. Thus, the installation and artworks expand the citations and re-contextualise them within an artistic botanical context even while clearly acknowledging and honouring their sources and the importance of 'unmet friends' (Heilbrun, 1997) to queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist world making (Ahmed, 2017). Rather than solely using the citations as building blocks for my own theories or discrediting these sources, the artworks and installation honour the voices of those I have learned from and thought alongside by intertwining their words with my

artworks and critical reflections. These acts of queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist citation therefore become acts of world making (Ahmed, 2017. crawley, 2020. nash, 2011), made with time, care and a political conception of love (nash, 2011) that offers the reader/viewer an alternative way of reading.



Like a weed growing through the cracks of a pavement, this work is not a sweeping intervention, but a small act of rebellious hope grounded in a botanical poetics of care. This intertwining of text and flowers and the scholarly and the domestic is indicative of the anti-categorical distinction and anti-hierarchy ethics of the project. Having outlined in *Seed & Root* the entanglement of categorisation and taxonomy with colonialism, patriarchy and scientific racism, I have structured the project and the thesis with a commitment to fluidity and non-categorical distinction. Formally and tonally the work moves through numerous styles, from scholarly contextualisation, thick description and interviews, to personal reflection and poetic passages. Furthermore, the artworks containing both text and imagery illustrate the pages of the thesis, the footnotes sit on a level with the main body of the text and the

installation displays my artworks within a staging of my domestic working

environment, with fresh flowers, art materials and frequently cited texts. By including mentions of my fiancée, Giulia Carla, and our home together, I have situated the intellectual, emotional (and) artistic labour of this project within the specificity of a lesbian domestic. Finally, the structuring of the thesis through the lifecycle of a flowering plant is a queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist method for reimagining what a doctoral thesis can look like and challenging the anthropocentric idea of human logic as superior to the organising principles of flowering plants.

For the artists, florists and flower growers examined in section 2, Sprout & Leaf, flowers act as powerful personal (and) political metaphors, subjects, objects, teachers and companions. For the sustainable florists and farmers, growing and arranging flowering plants is both a form of interspecies companionship and a way to make a direct ethical and/or political intervention as they work directly with flowers as living plants that exist within capitalist structures and endeavour to find ways to make sustainable flower growing both ethical and financially viable. It felt important to include voices from flower growers alongside those of artists in order to draw attention to the important work being done by British flower growers to create sustainable business models, to honour flowering plants as fellow living beings that come from and return to the soil and to acknowledge both botanical art and flower growing as creative practices. The inclusion of Lauren Craig's work with Thinking Flowers? helped me to trace the roots of contemporary sustainable floristry and its beginnings as a black eco-feminist practice that combined floristry with an ethical business model as a form of activism and world making. After jennifer c. nash's writing regarding how 'black feminist love-politics engenders new publics, new forms of relationality, even if tenuous and fleeting, marked by forms of collective sentiment rather than by identity' (2011, p. 14), these artists, florists and flower

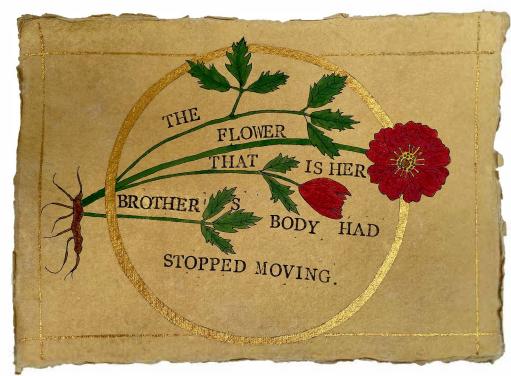
growers, while not bound together by identity, share a 'collective sentiment' and in myriad ways offer particular answers to the question of how flowers offer ways to survive and find moments of joy, rage and expression within systems of regulation and control.

For many of these artists and growers there is a sense of the sacred in their connection to flowers. While this connection is more explicit in the work of artists such as Jennifer Packer and Christi Belcourt, if one understands the sacred as an affective experience rather than something innately tied to religion or separated from the secular, the majority of these artists could be said to speak to something like the sacred or the secular-sacred in their work. Indeed, Lauren Craig and Benny Nemer's very inability to describe if and how the concept of the sacred figures in their relationship with flowers motions towards the ineffability of the sacred and the difficulty of naming something that is deeply embedded in experience outside of language (Nemer, 2023. Craig, 2023), while Emma Hams' turn to the ritual of arranging flowers as a way to talk about the presence of the sacred, further challenges the binary of the sacred and the quotidian. Within my devotional citation praxis I create botanically illustrated illuminated manuscripts that offer the reader/viewer the possibility of a secular-sacred experience, whereby there is the offer of tacit knowledge alongside more obvious textual encounters. In doing so, I hope to provide the reader/viewer with a slow form of study whereby they might dwell with the complexity of thinking through ideas around the meeting places of queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist world making, secular-sacred attention and botanical art. The form of devotion practised within the creation of my artworks and offered to my readers/viewers is not tied to a particular religion or ideology, but rather honours the sacred as something that is innately entangled with all living

things. In this way, the secular-sacred permeates all my acts of queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist world making, from reading, to writing, to painting, to stitching and citing. For both myself and the artists, florists and flower growers discussed in this thesis, working alongside flowers offers a multitude of creative and critical ways of carrying and conveying the complexities of living and researching alongside grief, joy, interconnection and survival.⁷

This sense of the secular-sacred has been present throughout the research process for this project. I was brought up agnostic, but with a family interest in Celtic Christianity and a strong sense of responsibility towards other living beings and this has remained my approach to life. The research for this project began with an interest in citation practices and how the tools and regulations of academic study were tied to the history of Western academia as a white supremacist, classist and patriarchal institution. As previously mentioned, I had first developed my devotional citation praxis in 2017 and when I commenced my doctoral studies in 2019 my aim was to explore and create alternative practice-as-research approaches to study from a queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist ethics. Between reading, writing and making, I would often sit and observe the flowers on my kitchen table in all their intricate beauty. I have always adored flowers and trained as a florist many years ago, but much like Susan Chen and Alice Kettle, I did not incorporate flowers in my devotional citation praxis until the pandemic. During that time, contemplating flowers became a meditative companion practice to textual research and a place for me to dwell with the complex networks of concepts, citations and thoughts amassed during my reading. Part of the reason I refer to flowers as collaborators is that I did not start this PhD with the intention of writing about or painting flowers, but their presence in my home and my love for their shapes, smells and complex histories led

The flower that is her brother's body had stopped moving.



And yet he was not dead. He was not/is not dead.

She looked upon him and she loved him. Loved the flower before her that was neither animated nor ready to be memorialised.

This is her first memory.

Years later, her mother told her that even at 18 months she had "sensed that the ICU was like a church."

She loved him. She loved/loves him. And so the ICU was the first church she prayed in. With no words for God and few for anything else, she prayed.

The flower that is her brother's body now blooms in Mexico City.



This because there came a day when he moved. A day she can't recall.

In her mind he is frozen and then agile. Her archive is broken, skipping from horizontal to vertical. From stasis to movement. From fear for him, to fear of him, to understanding.

A break. A leap. A gap where nothing is recalled and everything changed.

A reminder that even when stasis comes and stillness seems inevitable, you can still hope for movement.

The flower that is her brother's body now blooms in Mexico City.

Cactus flower. Yellow flower. Red rage flower. Still flower. Not death, not memorial, not release or regret. Just illumination of the now. Here you are with me – not yet dead.

Cactus Flower, 2022. Watercolour, acrylic and ink on coreopsis-dyed cotton rag paper.

to an interspecies conversation that slowly began to influence the direction of my research. It was during the second national lockdown that I picked up a pencil and began to sketch flowers and by the beginning of 2021 I had made my first major devotional citation installation artwork that brought together paintings of flowering plants with citations from queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist texts.

Working with cut flowers and art materials during that time of intense isolation allowed me to feel the solidity of my physical being as I held brushes, pens and stamps in the process of populating my space with artworks that both enriched my space and gave me back to myself. The idea of something or someone capable of giving me back to myself is an idea I came across in the work of memoirist and essayist Vivian Gornick, who often uses a version of the phrase to describe the ways in which both writing and good conversation enrich her sense of self. Describing her conversations with a complicated friend referred to as 'Rhoda Munk', Gornick notes that 'it gave me back more of myself than I'd had before' ([1996] 2020, p. 88), while in her description of her early days as a feminist she writes that 'when I thought I was less alone, I had myself for company. I had myself, period.' ([1996] 2020, p. 78) and posited that 'one's own working mind breaks the solitude of the self' ([1996] 2020, p. 78). Creating my botanical devotional citation artworks gave me back to myself in that the physicality of the process and the need for close attention to the intricacies of stems, petals, stamens and leaves grounded me as a physical being in space. Furthermore, the pens and paints gave me a form through which to explore my reading of texts and the meditative nature of the detailed work allowed me time in which to contemplate the work I wished to cite.

As I journeyed through texts in the early stages of my research, I found that particular words, and the ideas they attended to, continued to resonate across

multiple books and articles, their vibratory power growing with every appearance. Over time I began to think of my research as existing within the vibrational field of five words; Opacity, Aesthetics, Flesh, Open and Sacred. Working from the desire to dwell with these words and to bring the texts I had been studying into relation with one another, I gathered citations from my research featuring any of the five words and with these phrases as my starting point created a plan for five double-sided illuminated manuscripts. Each tondo featured six citations, four central and two marginal, the words blurring the lines between the marginal and the central, and between the tondos themselves, as the central word for one became the marginal word for another. In this way, Five Tondos demonstrated the harmonics of the citational polyphony I had developed during the first year of my doctoral research. While the aesthetics of my devotional citation artworks have shifted since then, largely as a result of my commitment to making my art practice more sustainable, Five Tondos marked the transition towards the centrality of flowers and the development of my relationship with flowers as companions in this research. Creating Five Tondos shifted my focus away from pain and towards repair, as the presence of the flowers and my desire to render them with care allowed me a new route for queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist world making that enabled me to engage in both a new form of study, as had been my intention at the start of the PhD, and contribute to queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist world making even while under 'stay home' orders.



Five Tondos, 2021. Acrylic, watercolour, ink and thread on watercolour paper.

By exploring this research through my own devotional citation praxis and by contextualising my praxis within the realm of queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist art and theory I have named the artists, growers, scholars and poets, such as Jennifer Packer, Alice Kettle, Lauren Craig, ashon t. crawley, jennifer c. nash, Amber Jamilla Musser and M. NourbeSe Philip, whose work has made my own work possible. In doing so I have also foregrounded my commitment to ethical forms of study and named my praxis as a research method that allows me to dwell with discomfort and ambivalence and hold complexity with tenderness. While my focus in this thesis has been on British and North American botanical art between the 19th and 21st centuries, there is more to be written and explored both in these times and places and beyond. Flowers have accompanied humans, or perhaps I should say humans have accompanied flowers, for thousands of years across landscapes, cultures and seismic ecological shifts. There is immeasurable wisdom in their cycles of birth, death and renewal and their capacity to adapt for the sake of their continued existence. Due to the limited scope of this thesis, I chose to focus on the intertwined histories of Britain and North America and of botanical art and colonial botanical conquest within a specific time period, but there are seeds of future work embedded in this project. I will continue to research the entangled histories of botanics and humans and the emancipatory possibilities of ethical citation practices, but perhaps some of the ideas in this thesis will also be carried to other researchers on the wind,

collected like nectar by intertextual pollinators or careful cuttings taken to grow new ideas in other poetic soils.

As Fred Moten and Stefano Harney wrote on the occasion of the translation of The Undercommons into Spanish, 'we should write together to incomplete each other. It may not cure our brokenness, but that is only because we are incurable, or to put it another way, our cura, our care, can never be of the self, but only of that touch, that rub, that press, that kinky tangle of our incomplete sharing' (2018, para. 15). This project is necessarily porous, open, offering conversation, inviting further innovation. My devotional citation artworks are an invitation to readers/viewers to re-engage with ideas already read in the thesis or in the case of the gift artworks, particular scholars' own past writing, while the installation invites the viewer/reader into a devotional space of making-as-thinking. They are offerings, gifts that reach for connection without obligation. In many ways, this thesis now does the same. As Alexis Pauline Gumbs writes in the introduction to Spill: scenes of black feminist fugitivity, 'this space, which is a temporary space, which we must leave, for the sake of future travellers and our own necks, is a sacred dedicated space' (2016, p. xii). The work of each scholar, poet, artist, florist, flower grower or plant named in this thesis was a stopping point that became a starting point, a moment of stillness, whereby the work changed me and was changed by me. It was not a journey about possession or manipulation but about a mutuality of experience, an honouring of a temporary exchange, where for a moment in time I built a temporary queer (and) decolonial (and) feminist world around me and called myself home.

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Section title artworks: Nasturtium

South America

Fellow Fugitives: Primula and roselle

Primula: Western and Southern Europe,

Northwest Africa, and parts of Southwest Asia

Roselle: West Africa

The Politics of Naming: Echinacea

Southeastern North America

Floral Subjects: Dahlia, zinnia, hollyhock,

cosmos, black-eyed susan vine

Dahlia: Mexico and Central America Zinnia: Mexico and Central America

Hollyhock: East Asia

Cosmos: Mexico and Central America

Black-eyed susan vine: East Africa and eastern

South Africa

The Holy: Zinnia

Mexico and Central America

Companions in Praxis: Black-eyed susan vine

and morning glory

Black-eyed susan vine: East Africa and eastern

South Africa

Morning glory: Central and South America

Home: A Quartet (footnote): Apple tree,

geranium, silverweed and peonies

Apple tree: Central Asia Geranium: South Africa

Silverweed: North America

Peony: Asia, Europe, and Western North

America

Undercommons Sociality (footnote): Black-eyed

susan, daisy and crocosmia

Black-eyed susan: Central North America

Daisy: Europe and temperate regions of Asia

Crocosmia: Southern and Eastern Africa

labors of love (footnote): Clover, anemone and

dog rose

Clover: Europe and Central Asia Anemone coronaria: Europe

Ecoaesthetic Longing: Marigolds and dog roses

Marigold: Southwestern North America and

South America

Dog rose: Europe, northwest Africa, and

western Asia

Unmet Friends: Corn flowers and sweetpeas

Corn flowers: Europe

Sweetpeas: Europe (Southern Italy)

Whiteness: Periwinkle

Periwinkle: Europe and North Africa

Illuminating Multiplicity: Gardenia

Gardenia: South Asia

The Gift/At What Cost: Buttercup and

pheasant's eye

Meadow buttercup: Europe and Asia Pheasant's eye: Europe and Asia

Black Trans Lives Matter: Roses

Asia

The Neither Thing: Echinacea and nigella Echinacea: Southeastern North America Nigella: Europe, North Africa and Southwest

Asia

Indigo Triptych: Japanese indigo and dahlia Japanese indigo: Eastern Europe and Asia

Dahlia: Mexico and Central America

Halted Time: Parrot tulips

Europe (France)

Honeysuckle Home: Honeysuckle

Europe and Russia

Her Brother's Body (footnote): Anemone

coronaria and prickly pear

Anemone coronaria: Europe

Prickly pear: North America, Central America

and South America

Reference Texts for Flower Origins

Barnes, S. (2022) The History of the World in 100

Plants. London, UK: Simon & Schuster UK.

Campbell-Culver, M. (2001) The Origin of Plants: The people and plants that have shaped Britain's garden history since the year 1000. London, UK: Headline Book Publishing.

de Candole, A. ([1886] 2011) *The Origin of Cultivated Plants*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Harris, M. (2003) Botanica North America: The Illustrated Guide to Our Native Plants, Their Botany, History, and the Way They Have Shaped Our World. New York, NY: Harper.

Salmón, E. (2020) Iwígara: American Indian Ethnobotanical Traditions and Science. Portland, OR: Timber Press.

Materials Used in the Creation of Artworks

Dr. Ph. Martin's, Selected Radiant Concentrated Water Colors.

Colop, Refillable stamp pad.

C. Robertson and Co. London, Liquid Metal in Bronze and Royal Gold.

Field and Folk, Coreopsis flowers grown by Deborah Barker in Sussex.

Field and Folk, Selected silk threads naturally dyed by Deborah Barker in Sussex.

Indigobluefields, Japanese Indigo Watercolour.

Indigo Garden London, Japanese indigo leaves grown by Liza Mackenzie and Luisa Uribe.

Khadi Papers, Cotton rag paper in various sizes.

London Pigment, Carbon black ink, Mediaeval red ink and Oak gall Charter ink.

J. Herbin, Selected inks.

Jenny Dean, Japanese indigo plant grown in Sussex with seeds from Bailiwick Blue.

Joel & Son Fabrics, Italian artisanal silk taffeta.

Sennelier, Selected shellac based inks.

Themazi, Madder root, grown in France.

Rubber and wood alphabet stamps, second hand and unbranded.