

Professional Art Practice:

I Want you to Hold Me, but I'm Afraid to Ask

Thesis:

*I Want Him to Hold Me, but I'm Afraid to Ask:
the objective correlative and the souvenir as representational narrative devices of queer male
intimacy.*

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Abstract

This thesis centres itself around an investigation into the representations of the relationship between intimacies and ideas of romance, love, desire, and vulnerability in male relationships. The premise for this body of work was sparked by my own observations on the conflation of sex and intimacy in representations of queer male love—particularly (but not exclusively) in mainstream film and media. Whilst intimacy and sex are not unrelated, the over-emphasis on the physical when trying to represent the connection between two men led me to consider other ways in which a relationship or special connection could be gestured towards — through other kinds of signifiers that last longer than physical contact and point to the importance of a particular connection. In the introduction, I consider my own experiences as a closeted queer teen when contemplating representations of queer relationships in mainstream media. I explore several studies by gender and film theorists who consider reasons and modes in which the representations of queer intimacies on-screen are distorted to favour a presumed heterosexual audience. In the first chapter, I discuss two potential means by which to relay a more complex emotional state via the use of narrative signifiers. I examine T.S. Eliot's (1919) theory on the *objective correlative* in narratives as a means to explore the emotional state of a character through metaphors which open up the reading rather than illustrating it through dialogue or direct speech. I then explore Susan Stewart's (1992) ideas on *souvenirs* of personal experience. In Chapter Two, I conduct a close reading of three mainstream films, which employ such signifiers in the attempt to share more complex representations of queer male intimacies through well-developed storylines and characters. The films *Brokeback Mountain* (2006), *Moonlight* (2016), and *Call Me by Your Name* (2017) have been selected based on their use of *the objective correlative* and *souvenirs* as plot devices (rather than exclusively physical intimacy) to demonstrate the emotional resonance between characters. The third and final chapter explores my own use of *objective correlatives* and *souvenirs* as symbolic, narrative devices in my practical body of work: an online garden of remembrance. My practical work focuses largely on the process of creation of these intimacy objects (*the objective correlative* or *the souvenir*) through an investigation into my own poetry, which details my experiences of intimacies with other men, specifically where vulnerability and secrecy played a large role.

Declaration of Originality

I declare that this thesis is my own work and that all the sources I have used have been acknowledged by complete references. This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for Master of Fine Arts at Rhodes University. I declare that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at another university.



Signed

11/03/2022
Date

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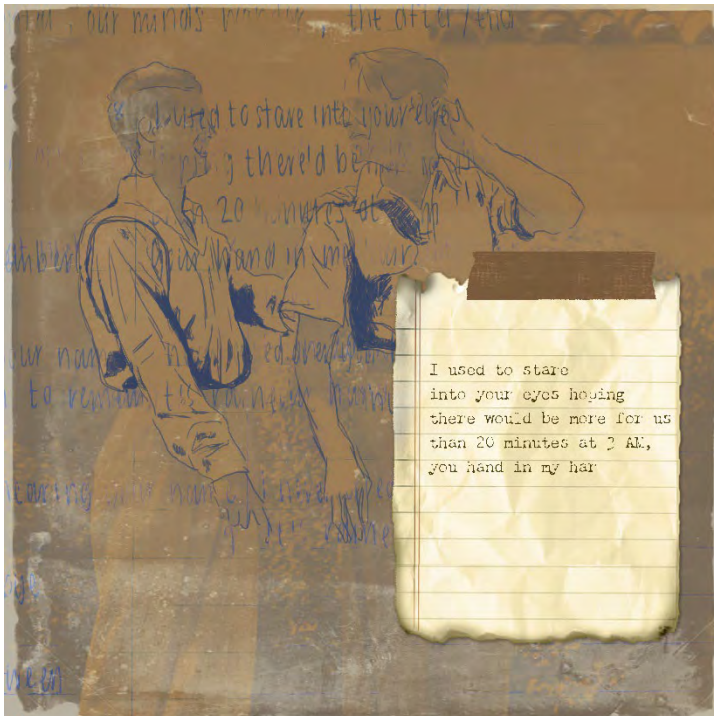


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INTRODUCTION

When I was in high school and Valentine's Day came around, a clipboard would be passed around the boarding house with two columns: one for a girl's name and her boarding house, the other for the number of roses she was to be sent. Being a closeted queer teenager, I never sent any roses to girls, or to guys, for that matter. However, I wanted nothing more than to send and be sent a rose on Valentine's Day — to see affection, love, romance, and intimacy shown in a tangible form.

While trying to understand my sexuality, it had become apparent to me, through my own experiences and in conversation with my peers, that the queer men I encountered did not want same-sex intimacy. Instead, they were looking for quick, secretive hook-ups and meaningless one-night stands. This was made evident to me on dating apps, where it was obvious that most queer¹ men on the app were not looking for love or intimacy but rather a quick release. One they hoped to keep as discreet as possible, many forgoing profile pictures and names. Many queer men I have encountered, outside of these dating apps and in person, find themselves involved in a cycle of meaningless hook-ups that seldom stretch beyond the boundaries that have been placed in their way not only by society and the queer community but also by themselves in their assimilation to this culture.

But what is intimacy? The online Oxford Dictionary offers the following explanations:

intimacy

/ˈɪntɪməsi/

mass noun

¹ The use of the word queer in this thesis (as opposed to gay, bisexual, or homosexual) is an attempt to avoid using words that divide non-heterosexual men into separate camps, but rather group them, as men who are experiencing intimacy that is not usually practised by men who consider themselves to be strictly heterosexual. Furthermore, the use of this term is influenced by the fact that the men in the films I will study in Chapter Two do not use labels to describe their sexuality and so they are assumed to be queer as opposed to heterosexual.

1. Close familiarity or friendship.

'the intimacy between a husband and wife'

- 1.1. A cosy and private or relaxed atmosphere.

'the room had a peaceful sense of intimacy about it'

- 1.2. *euphemistic* Sexual intercourse.

'Have older gays lost touch with the value of sexual intimacy?'

(OED, 2020)

As a starting point for this body of work, I began to investigate the meanings and associations of intimacy. What I observed in this research is how the idea of intimacy is often reduced to, or conflated with, sex. While the Oxford English Dictionary describes intimacy as "close familiarity of friendship", Google searches of 'intimacy' (whether casually or through Google Scholar) more commonly produced links that advertise intimacy as something linked specifically to sexual relations. This emphasis on physical relations is even more apparent when searching for same-sex male intimacy. Interestingly, the example sentences in the above definition reinforce the perception which brought about my interest in this subject: that intimacy for heterosexual couples is seen as a familial and friendly connection, while intimacy in homosexual couples is strongly premised on their sexual acts. In my own experience and in discussion with my queer male peers, I have observed a pervasive idea that intimacy is a matter that is often separated from sex, to not involve the one in the other.

A. Gendering Expression and Demonising Queerness

In 2009, sociologist Sean Slavin published a study that sought to investigate a group of queer Australian men's thinking around sex and intimacy. Slavin's findings point out that the men he interviewed have created a distinction between sex and love, understanding that as queer men, it is rare to find both at the same time. For this reason, sex between men is seen as either "social or not social, as physical, or emotional, about being in the moment or an unfolding process; as intimate or mechanical [leading to a pattern of] emotionally disengaged sex" (Slavin, 2009:84). This way of thinking, which I have noticed in my own queer community, affects the way we as queer men view ourselves and in turn how the world views us; as hyper-sexualised but

emotionally distant beings. While Slavin's interviewees understand that there is a distinction between sex and love, they do not necessarily view them as mutually exclusive. One interviewee expresses that while he longs for both sex and love (intimacy), it is,

dangerous to focus on wanting to be a couple with somebody because it may never happen. My opinion on gay men and sex and intimacy is that we don't connect very well with each other. We don't like intimacy issues, when sex is taken care of, we can get on with the rest of the day instead of going to the effort of actually developing something with somebody. (Slavin, 2009:86)

Slavin argues that it is through these preconceived rules, parameters, and behaviours that queer men learn to speak to a broader discussion around toxic masculinity and the learned performance and expression of gender. From a young age, there is a subconscious internalisation of specific expectations and traits that are appropriate for one's respective biological sex. Gender studies academic Dorie G. Williams (1985:589) notes that the pressure to conform to these gender expectations is even greater amongst boys, as was the case in my own youth. In spaces like my high school, gender 'appropriate' behaviour was necessary to avoid being marked as feminine and, by extension, queer (or gay). Williams refers to these behaviours as *expressive orientations*, which form part of a group of sex appropriate behaviours for men and women. These gender expressions dictate how men and women are supposed to behave if they want to be considered everyday heterosexual citizens (as opposed to outcasts) (1985:589).

These dictations are especially apparent for some boys during the high school years, as it was for me, where masculinity is policed through verbal disapproval of feminine *expressive orientations*. This means that young men may consider it necessary to hide their sexuality from their peers because they fear being socially rejected. They are forced to actively avoid feminine *expressive orientations*, which may lead to an outright rejection of femininity and, by association, a rejection of queerness (Patrick & Beckenbach, 2009:53). This rejection of queerness often comes in the form of internalised heterosexism and/or internalised homophobia. According to Dawn Szymanski and Angela Hilton (2013:736-737), these internalised states play a large role in the lives of queer men who struggle with their sexuality. Combining all these factors results in queer men who struggle with intimacy because of the

insecurities they may have developed during their youth because of the pressure to conform to sex-oriented norms. These norms largely exclude what Williams defines as female *expressive orientations*, e.g., expressing emotions that might portray or be perceived as vulnerability (Szymanski & Hilton, 2013; Williams, 1985:589). Internalised heterosexism and homophobia are tools used to regulate societal definitions of masculinity and praise those men who exhibit heterosexual masculinities (or *expressive orientations*), while those who exhibit feminine *expressive orientations* are seen as disorderly.

In the 1984 volume: *Pleasure and Danger*, Gayle Rubin dives into understanding why certain individuals are given praise and others are rejected based on their sexuality. Rubin's research takes her to what she assumes to be the root of the cause, religion. Because religion is so tightly wound into much of Western culture and politics, she argues, understandings of sexuality are often based on Christian (and the related faiths of Judaism and Islam) understandings and tradition (Rubin, 1984:150; Weeks, 1981:22). It is no secret that the Christian faith, which is largely popular in the West and many previously colonised countries (at least in 1984), finds sex to be sinful and is only permissible within a marriage between a man and woman (Rubin, 1984:150). By extension, this would mean that sexual acts outside of heterosexual unions, that being queer sex or interactions that may lead to sex, is out of the question. While many people no longer see sex as an act that is restricted to heterosexual marriage, queer sex is still often considered taboo and should therefore exist in dark corners and never be spoken about. Rubin states that: "Popular culture is permeated with ideas that erotic variety is dangerous, unhealthy, depraved, and a menace to everything from small children to national security.... The mass media nourishes these attitudes with relentless propaganda" (1984:152).

It is Rubin's understanding that these Christian teachings on sexual morality (with the help of psychology and politics) have managed to permeate popular culture. Although Rubin's observations were written in 1984, many of these stigmas around sex (particularly homosexual sex) were still prevalent in my own school experience. In adolescent years, our developing understanding of what it means to be heterosexual or queer, a man, or a woman, is somewhat based on what we see in popular culture and the mass media. Popular culture still privileges certain lifestyles and sexualities and continues to promote harmful representations of queerness. This is evident in something as simple as the above dictionary explanation, where intimacy, when linked to heterosexuality, is viewed positively but then used negatively when in relation to queerness, specifically male queerness. In response to these ideas, Rubin put forward a sex hierarchy or system which privileges certain kinds of sex, interactions and

lifestyles-based on a selection of criteria that is not only outdated but conforms to the idea that sexuality and gender can be seen in binaries (1984:152). Rubin's proposed sex hierarchy presents us with two kinds of sex: 'normal', 'good' and 'natural' sex, versus 'bad, abnormal' sex. In the first category, Rubin places sex that is "heterosexual, marital, monogamous, reproductive, and non-commercial" (1984:152) with an added note that it should not occur anywhere besides the home and should not cross-generational boundaries, meaning that any other forms or acts of sex would be considered bad. In this other category, Rubin lists "homosexual, unmarried, promiscuous, non-procreative" (1984:152) and adds that such sex is often casual and crosses generational lines and may also occur in public (Rubin, 1984:152; Steinbugler, 2005:426-427). Rubin's paper points to the underlying systems that might be at play in our society, systems that have managed to work their way into mass media and have subsequently led to the misrepresentation of queer people in the media. Exposure to such media may therefore contribute to queer men's understanding of romance, love, and intimacy.

Amy Steinbugler (2005), who writes a reflection on Rubin's (1984) hierarchies of sex, offers the idea that heterosexuality is seen as the blueprint for what society sees as normal in relation to love, family, sex, lifestyle, intimacy, etc. It is because of this hierarchy that heterosexual intimacies, sex, and familial connections are thought to be normal in comparison to queer intimacies, sex, and familial connections, which are considered abnormal and unnatural. For this reason, queer intimacies and sex are less likely to appear in the public eye, be that in physical public or in the public spaces of our homes (as opposed to private spaces like the bedroom). The physicality of queer intimacies is often met with harassment and sometimes violence, especially when queer people engage in intimacy in public spaces because it goes against the rules of the hierarchy (Steinbugler, 2005:428).

B. Modern Families, Outdated Methods / Filming Queer Intimacies

Looking back at the history of queer representation in the media, it is no secret that there has been a significant increase in queer on-screen characters in the past 20 years, with television series like *Will & Grace*, and *Modern Family* and many more beginning to find their way into mainstream media. However, while there may be representation, it is important to investigate whether this representation is sincere. In 2009, 12 years ago, the longest-running gay character on television was Will Truman from *Will & Grace*, a show that ran from 1998 until 2006 and included two out gay male characters (Avila-Saavedra, 2009:5). In my experience as a teenager, many TV shows which included queer male characters either removed any erotic and

intimate connotations or interactions between queer characters; or rather presented queer intimacies as nothing more than rough sex in a dark corner of a room, uninspired and without sensitivity. This is very evident in shows like *Will & Grace* and *Modern Family*. While these shows are praised for their inclusion of queer characters, they make little effort to dive deeper into the complexities of those queer characters and their relationships and intimacies. Avila-Saavedra (2009:5) notes that not once in the eight years that *Will & Grace* was on television did Will Truman, an out queer man, engage intimately with another man. Karl Schoonover and Rosalind Galt (2016), in their book, *Queer Cinema in the World*, offer a selection of reasons which seek to explain the lack of on-screen intimacy and representation for queer men. Schoonover and Galt's argument is that the heteronormalising of queer content occurs in media because of Rubin's (1984) 'hierarchies of sex', meaning that the media is governed by heterosexual standards and norms, which leads to queer content being filtered so that it is palatable for heterosexual audiences (the assumed majority viewership) (Schoonover & Galt, 2016:4). Their argument suggests that there is a system in place in mainstream media that deliberately seeks to dampen down queer content. Alfred L. Martin Jr notes the following regarding queerness in the cinema and television:

although no formal censorship system exists related to same-sex kisses in television, the ways camera angles and spatial relationships between gay characters are used suggests an industrial self-policing that aims to follow an unspoken code regarding homosexuality and its relationship to decency and decorum. (2014:154)

In his paper, *It's (Not) in His Kiss: Gay Kisses and Camera Angles in Contemporary US Network Television Comedy*, Martin (2014) writes about the manner in which mainstream television has directed and curated the manner in which we, as the audience, experience and view queer intimacies. He argues that by making use of specific filmic devices, directors can limit (and sometimes remove) queer intimacy to avoid disrupting their heterosexual viewers (2014:154). Martin gives an example in the frequent use of the over the shoulder (OTS) shots when filming queer kisses and embraces. This OTS shot (which usually has two figures, one with their back to the audience and the other facing the camera) is used to evoke a sense of perspective between two characters in conversation; however, when it comes to queer

intimacies, the OTS shot also obscures the touching of the lips or any detail of the affection being demonstrated, and thus renders this invisible (2014:159). Martin also speaks to the particular use of 'spatial relationships' when both queer characters on screen are within reach of each other. As an example, he uses the relationship in the final season of *Ellen* (1997-1998), where Ellen begins dating Laurie. During their on-screen relationship, they are shown kissing on screen twice. One of these kisses makes use of 'spatial relationships'. Ellen and Laurie kiss, both on the screen, but the space between them is large enough for the audience to see the bartender behind them and four candles. The kiss is only shown for a short while before they switch to an OTS shot. Using distance between the characters, any romantic or sexual developments are less likely because the intimacy of their actions is missing. It is just a chaste kiss.

Martin (2014:158-160) also examines how *Modern Family*, a show that is often praised for its portrayal of the modern queer family, privileges heterosexuality through the composition of their shots.² One scene that highlights their inability to properly frame queer intimacy and simultaneously highlight their ability to promote heterosexuality takes place in an episode in the first season titled, *Airport* (2010, ep22). In the episode, all the families go on vacation, but we see everyone except Mitchell and his brother-in-law, Phil, at the airport as they have gone back to fetch Mitchell's wallet. Upon their return to the airport, just in time for their flight, the camera shows Phil and his wife Clair engage in a celebratory kiss in the foreground of the shot, and in the background, we see Mitchell and Cameron hug. This scene from *Modern Family* serves as a great example of the sex hierarchies which Rubin writes about. The scene clearly prioritises the intimacy of the straight couple by placing them in the foreground and disregards the interaction between the gay couple happening in the background. When questioned on the lack of on-screen intimacy in a show that is praised for their representation of the modern queer family, show director Levitan, suggested that because they had two queer men on screen with an adopted child, he had succeeded in his mission to represent a healthy queer relationship. This, of course, is not true. Martin notes that queer relationships are more than two men with an adopted child, and while the portrayal of this queer family is admirable, it should not be

²The show includes the characters of two middle-class white men: Cam, who is extremely effeminate, outspoken and is a stay-at-home dad, while Mitchell is more reserved, and depicted as the more masculine breadwinner.

seen as an achievement when the same show cannot bring itself to accurately depict queer intimacies, not to mention the intimacies of a married queer couple (2014:159).

Given the difficulties in representing queer male intimacies, which Martin points to in his paper, is it enough to simply copy the prototype that is used for heterosexual intimacy? Bearing in mind that queer couples are likely to not receive as much screen time as a heterosexual couple, as proven by *Modern Family*. The continued perpetuation of outdated and harmful stereotypes (under the guise of ‘family friendly’ representations of queer intimacy and love) are not helpful in the promotion of queer intimacies. In combination with the sex hierarchy that is at play in many societies, this lack of sincere representation of queer intimacy promotes the idea that queer men are incapable of feeling and understanding emotions and exist simply as bodies. In Chapter Two, I will challenge the presentations and representations of queer intimacies using three case study films. Intimacy, as depicted in the case study films, is more than a physical act. These filmic representations of queer relationships also utilise more abstract signifiers, in addition to any physical portrayal of intimacy. These narrative devices point to a greater depth of feeling and the possibility of longevity in queer relationships, as opposed to quick, meaningless hook-ups. Attempts at sincere representations of queer intimacies and love should take time to explore the internal states of the characters’ emotional world so that the audience is given more context to build a more accurate perception. It must be understood that queer people are more than ‘just bodies’; but rather, they are a collection of complex emotions and much more.

CHAPTER ONE

Souvenirs, Mementos, and the Objective Correlative

1.1 The Objective Correlative

In 1919 T.S. Eliot published *Hamlet and his Problems*, an essay in which he offers a critique on Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1603), which includes the analysis that the characterisation of Hamlet is unsuccessful in portraying his emotional turmoil. In this essay, Eliot refers to J.M. Robertson, a writer who also offered critiques on *Hamlet*. Robertson concluded that the main emotion of the play "is the feeling of a son toward a guilty mother" (1919:3), with which Eliot agrees. However, Eliot does not feel that this emotion is the entirety of Hamlet's story. He goes on to argue that Shakespeare failed to bring to light a great deal of the hidden internal issues and emotions that Hamlet faces, issues that Shakespeare should have been able to mould into his art. Eliot points out that a lack of "skilful accumulation of imagined sensory impressions" (1919:4) is unlike Shakespeare, given that other works, e.g., *Macbeth*, are accomplished in their ability to demonstrate and exteriorise (using onstage objects or events) the interior emotions and motivations of the characters. Thus, audiences might better understand (and believe) what characters are feeling without this narrative being exclusively explicated through dialogue. It is in this paper that Eliot applies the idea of the *objective correlative* by providing the reader with a possible formula for representing the internal emotional state of a character:

The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an "objective correlative"; in other words, a set of objects, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.
(1919:4)

Eliot points out that the character of Hamlet is overcome by an emotion that he struggles not only to express but also understand. Because of Shakespeare's inability to relay this emotion to the audience using the *objective correlative*, the play as a whole is, according to Eliot, an artistic

failure. In conclusion, Eliot points out that the 'intense feeling', a feeling that cannot be put into words or action, is something that every person has experienced and is usually ignored by most people. However, the artist intensifies these emotions through their art to share these feelings with the world (1919:4-5).

Eliot had verbally distanced himself from this essay and gone as far as republishing a revised version of his book, which saw this essay and two others cut; however, the essay is kept alive by this phrase and the formula which Eliot provides (Greenburg, 2007:512). In her paper on Eliot and the *objective correlative*, Diane Brown (1973) traces the origin of this term to the *Imagists*, a group of artists and creatives of which Eliot was a part. The *Imagists* felt that discursive language could not express the intricacy of feelings, expression, and memory the way that an image could. So rather than describe a feeling, they would present an experience in such a way so that their readers would be able to gauge the emotion contained within that experience using a concrete object (Brown, 1973:8).

While the term has been popularised in the literary context, I will mainly utilise it to explore narrative in a filmic context and my practical work to further the narratives I have described and built based on my own experiences. The *objective correlative* adds depth to the audience's understanding of the on-screen thinking and dialogue by utilising an object, word, situation, or chain of events to symbolically present a character's internal emotions (Brown, 1973:9). Directors might use the *objective correlative* when the emotion or feeling they would like to show their audience cannot be shown in its raw form. This could be because the emotion has a complex abstract nature or because to describe or show this emotional aspect would appear false or forced.

A particular example of this use of the *objective correlative* can be seen in Netflix's *Sex Education* (creator Laurie Nunn, 2019). Gay teenager, Eric Effiong, collects broken pieces of crockery in his bedside table. Eric has a complicated relationship with Adam Groff since their brief, secret, sexual encounter before Adam was suspended from school and sent to the Army at the end of the first season. When Adam returns at the beginning of season 2, they secretly spend time together at an abandoned train yard, a site of significance to Adam, where he escapes his complicated family life. Adam and Eric sneak out of their respective homes after bedtime to meet each other at the train yard on several occasions, often spending hours there, smashing old crockery and talking till they walk home at sunrise. After their first meeting, Eric takes a piece of smashed crockery and places it in his jacket pocket, later he places this in his

bedside table drawer. When we next see the contents of his draw, Eric is adding another piece of broken crockery to a growing collection of broken pieces. In Eric's case, the first piece of crockery he pockets during his interaction with Adam becomes an *objective correlative*. We associate the object with the time Eric and Adam spend together and the value he places on this time is made clear by wanting to have a reminder of the particular occasion. This physical object thus becomes a signifier of special moments Eric shares with Adam, which helps the audience, without words, better understand the character's feelings or headspace. Brown explains that the *objective correlative* is not meant to "assert feeling or meaning directly. [Rather, the] form of the emotion is followed or embodied within the material but is never actually defined or stated" (Brown, 1973:10). Therefore, we can assume a multitude of nuanced reasons why Eric takes the broken piece of crockery because the *objective correlative* does not give us a definitive answer but rather leaves it up for interpretation. As the audience, one may imagine these associations and draw reference from our own experiences and motives for collecting souvenirs of a particular experience. Through personal reference, the *objective correlative* then awakens the possibility of empathy with a character's position and internal state far more strongly than if we are told expressly how he feels. The audience is encouraged to identify with Eric's need to memorialise his time spent with Adam and to secretly hold on to these moments through the object of the broken crockery: something fragile, broken and potentially sharp as the experience itself. It is important to note that the *objective correlative* as signifier can take on many forms and is not exclusively a physical object but could be a recurring place, phrase or even sound effect which will be explored later in Chapter Two. At present, the example of Eric is helpful to examine one of my other key themes: that of a memento or a souvenir, as explained below by Petrelli and Whittaker (2010) and Stewart (1992) respectively.

1.2 The Memento

Daniela Petrelli and Steve Wittaker (2010) conducted a sociological study in which they compare the collection, personal archiving, and display of physical and digital mementoes in the domestic environment. This study asked participants for a tour of their homes, in which they highlighted spaces they considered to be public spaces, family spaces, and private spaces. In each space, participants were asked to pick three physical objects and explain the importance of that object and how and when they acquired it. Petrelli and Wittaker observed the way participants interacted with these objects, their emotions, and the location of said objects in the home. For many participants, the bedroom was the most private space, and the living room or

lounge was the most public. This is important to consider because as participants moved from their most public spaces to their more private spaces, the objects they chose held more personal and emotional value (2010:157). Interestingly, 28% of the objects chosen by participants were mass-produced everyday objects but are considered of importance because they once belonged to someone special. In observing this, Petrelli and Wittaker have the following to say; "Everyday objects become mementoes by virtue of what owners have invested in them; be it time or emotion" (2010:159).

Petrelli and Wittaker note that multiple reasons influenced the importance of an object or memento for participants, namely, important events in the participants' life, a significant period, and/or whether the object was a gift from someone important (i.e., a significant other, or a family member) (2010:155). Petrelli and Wittaker also highlight that memory plays a large role in the creation of mementoes. Sometimes objects are kept as a reminder of something in the past, be it a person, moment, or emotion, and therefore can also be related to the collector's sense of identity. This was especially true for objects that reminded them of a moment that had a massive impact on their life (2010:158).

Looking at Eric's broken piece of crockery through Petrelli and Whittaker's lens, we see that the crockery, an inanimate object, takes on meaning for Eric because of the time he spends in the object's original context. It is not the time that he spends in the physical location that makes these objects unique, but rather that the broken crockery reminds him of Adam and their interaction. As a secondary action, the crockery (as part of a collection of multiple pieces) points to the number of times Adam and Eric have seen each other without having to portray each occasion. The crockery now also acts as a signifier of the space and the action that took place there, which through the narrative, is established as a place (and activity) Eric only explores with Adam.

1.3 The Souvenir

[The body as a standard of measurement] itself must be exaggerated into an abstraction of an ideal. ...it is an abstraction or image and not a presentation of any lived possibility. ...In contrast to this model body, the body of lived experience is subject to change, transformation, and most importantly, death. The idealised body implicitly denies the possibility of death — it attempts to

present a realm of transcendence and immortality... This is the body-made-object. (Stewart, 1992:133)

In Susan Stewart's (1992) book, *Objects of Desire*, she elaborates at length on the capacity of the object to serve as a reminder of experiences. Stewart writes that the body of lived experiences, the physical body, is unlikely to remain the same because the physical body changes, transforms and ultimately dies. To combat this, Stewart talks of creating the idealised body. This body is abstract because it is not physical but rather a body that is distant from the human experience and, for that reason, unrealistic. The lived experience deteriorates with the body and memory of the one who holds the experiences creating tension between the loved experience and the idealised body, which cannot wholly recapture the original but seems to tantalize us with the possibility of return which always remains at a distance. This creates a sense of longing and desire which leads to a critical search for 'authentic' experiences, events, origins, or objects; however, the 'authentic' experience is both "elusive and allusive" (being suggestive of return but always remaining out of reach) (Stewart, 1992:133)³. The notion of authenticity is one that is preoccupied with ideas of origin and originality. Yet the search for the site of 'origin', Stewart notes, is one "placed beyond the horizon of present lived experience, the beyond in which the antique, the pastoral, the exotic, and other fictitious domains are articulated" (1992:133). This place of origin then begins to function as both a 'lost' past as well as a fictive realm which is always tinted with the rosy lens of nostalgia. This potential romanticisation of the 'lost' experience is again reconsidered relative to the idea of Arcadia in Chapter Three.

Given that the 'authentic' experience is thus lost with the passage of time, and that our physical bodies are not able to hold onto 'authentic' experiences, permanently and accurately, the memory of the physical body may be replaced with the memory of the object, an object that from then on serves as a trace of the lost 'authentic' experience. In doing so, the memory is distanced from the physical body because the object exists outside the body's experience but

³ Authenticity in Stewart's writings here is complex as, with its ideal of a lost original, it almost takes on the opposite of what we might generally understand it to mean by carrying a sense of myth or a idealised past. The 'authentic' object or experience thus remains in the past as an exact genuine event but because time and memory might alter the context or experience one can never return to this 'authentic' moment as it is lost in time.

can still communicate the details of that memory through an accompanying contextualising narrative. Stewart writes that:

[T]his capacity of objects to serve as traces of authentic experiences is, in fact, exemplified by the souvenir. The souvenir distinguishes experiences. We do not need or desire souvenirs of events that are repeatable. Rather we need and desire souvenirs of events that are reportable, events whose materiality have escaped us, events that thereby exist only through the invention of narrative. (1992:135)

The souvenir, according to Stewart, is thus the perfect example of an object that could bear the memories of an 'authentic' or sincere (or genuine) experience through its trace reminders of its source of origin; however, the accompanying narrative that frames it may be subject to romanticisation and nostalgia. A souvenir is an object found, bought, or received to remind one of a particular person, place, or time. The souvenir, Stewart suggests, does not represent the "lived experience of its maker but the 'second-hand' experience of its possessor/owner" (1992:135). This means that the souvenir is created through the act of collecting because of an understanding that a particular moment is unrepeatable, and therefore because one cannot return, the souvenir is created as a solution to longing and as a response to anticipated nostalgia. The souvenir is considered a foreign object, given that it is part of a different remembered context and not of the possessor's immediate context. Stewart describes the souvenir as a sample of its original context, given its ability to represent itself as a part of that context through material trace reminders. The souvenir, though fragmentary, operates as a stand-in for the entire original context. As a synecdochic reminder, the souvenir is both a trace and a key to a larger picture, giving it a double meaning: as a material referent but also as a cue to the implied narrative of its context. Though only a partial remainder of the original experience, the souvenir can bring back a significant amount of information. Stewart uses the example of a ribbon, which once belonged to a corsage but is representative of more than the corsage. The ribbon is a reminder of the corsage, the dress, the dance, the occasion, the date, the spring, high school, etc. In turn, for the ribbon to remain a souvenir, it must continue to exist in this "partial", unfinished state so that the narrative of that event or experience remains imperative in the desire to return to that experience (1992:136). The narrative of the possessor is personal. The object outside of the possessor's context is simply an object, and for that reason, is only truly a

souvenir to the possessor. The objects used as souvenirs are sometimes considered of minimal material worth, as their value lies in their capacity as signifiers: the object is not kept because of *what* it is but rather because of *what* it represents (1992:136-139). The capacity of the souvenir to create a sense of longing and desire, Stewart writes, is created through a kind of double function of:

the souvenir which authenticate[s] a past or otherwise remote experience and, at the same time ... discredit[s] the present. The present is either too impersonal, too looming, or too alienating compared to the intimate and direct experience of the contact which the souvenir has as its referent. (1992:139-140)

By looking at Stewart's ideas on the souvenir, we may further grasp the complexities of Eric's thinking. The souvenir as a fragment must have been present at the site of, or in the space of, the original experience, so that the object as a trace, outside of the original context, will still allow the owner to relive that experience (or a part of that experience) whenever they interact with the object. Therefore, the first function of the souvenir is to authenticate an experience. Secondly, the souvenir is created out of a sense of nostalgia. The creation of the souvenir is rooted in the possessor wanting to relive or longing for the past while understanding it is unreachable. In some cases, the souvenir will help authenticate the past; however, sometimes, the souvenir is used as a kind of escapism when the present is not ideal or difficult.

The pieces of crockery which Eric collects are to him souvenirs and may be each representative of slightly different interactions and moments. As souvenirs, these objects represent to Eric these varied experiences he has had with Adam, because not only was it present at the site of their interaction, but also because it represents their actions there, the smashing of all the items but also the smashing of any insecurities, gripes, or past conflicts, the two might have had.

For the audience, this collection as a whole operates as an *objective correlative*, for it is a temporal shorthand to indicate the increased amount of time these two characters have spent together without needing to show each and every occasion. We are initially shown the importance of the first object when we hear Eric tell Adam that he is happy to have him back home. Adam's initial reaction leaves us confused as he is visibly uncomfortable and mumbles about having to leave while walking away from Eric, stopping suddenly to look back at Eric

and tell him, "I'm happy I'm back too" (Sex Education, 2020, s2e4, 41:23-41:57). It is at this moment that we see Eric pocketing the piece of crockery, giving us the impression that he also wanted to hold onto the feeling of having Adam acknowledge their relationship and their feelings for one another. This is especially important because Adam historically does not treat Eric like this and may be even more of a reason for Eric to hold onto the piece of crockery, as a reminder of a time when Adam once was honest, should he change his ways in the future. This is where this particular souvenir becomes an *objective correlative*, and now we might consider the collection of subsequent shards as equal indicators of profound moments shared even though these are not directly depicted. Stewart notes that objects can "serve as traces of authentic experiences" (1992:135). Arguably the moment that Eric pockets the broken crockery also speaks to his own understanding, at least the first time he meets Adam in secret, that this interaction is not usual given their differences. Eric might find this experience ideal and not physical, taking the crockery as evidence of their interaction, a literal piece of something they had both smashed and left behind.

Stewart notes that "Narrative is used to invent the symbolic" (1992:146). The narrative nature of the souvenir and the memento are mostly linked to a physical object as a signifier; this is not always true for an *objective correlative*. An *objective correlative* might appear in different scenes throughout the film, each time in a new context adding a new layer. Each new context is tied to the previous but might be explained slightly differently or contextualised through the characters' dialogue. This dialogue informs the audience of the original context while also revealing the character's feelings toward the object. Other plot devices or reveals may lend this signifier greater meaning as the narrative unfolds. When the *objective correlative* reappears in the narrative, it carries all this weight of significance which might only finally display its full significance when the story is finished.

CHAPTER TWO

Queer Intimacy and Love: Narratives Done Right

In Chapter One, I explored how the subtle but impactful censorship of queer intimacies in mainstream television is a misdirection of queer content with the intention of pleasing heterosexual viewers. Martin (2014:145) examines how directors and scriptwriters, through shallow presentations of queer male characters and specific filming techniques, have created representations of queer intimacies devoid of the depth and complexities that queer men face in their daily experiences and intimacies with other queer men. In contrast to these one-dimensional stereotyped representations critiqued by Martin, the films I have as case studies needed to take the necessary time to explore the main characters' identities and give the audience enough information to form multifaceted ideas and conclusions about the characters. Because a film is usually no longer than 2 hours, there is not much time to get to know the character through the narrative alone. However, using layered signifiers, more can be learned and gestured to about the character. This might include the environment they find themselves in, choices in camera angles, sound design, colour tones, and key repeating visual signifiers that seem to affect the character's decisions and behaviours. Brown notes that, in providing symbols as additional reference points, one can include more subtle information for a narrative because: "[t]he symbol is usually employed as a representation of a particular thought or feeling and may have many layers of meaning." (1973:9).

Specific signifiers may become *objective correlatives*, solidified through the narrative to further the audiences' understanding of a character and their circumstance (Greenburg, 2007:229). An *objective correlative* allows the audience to go beyond what the character is saying and doing, giving them access to an empathetic understanding of what the characters are thinking or feeling. Brown reflects on the particular use of the signifier as an *objective correlative* to evoke more complex emotions than can be verbally and convincingly expressed. She writes that: "[t]he correlative or the imagistic symbol is more concerned with presentation; finding means of realising feelings and emotions in a concrete way" (1973:9).

An *objective correlative* may at times take on the form of a souvenir so that the audience may understand this object as a kind of shorthand for specific events, persons, moments, or spaces that are important to a character. The repetition of particular signifiers, souvenirs, and the

objective correlative, creates a 'vault' of feelings and experiences which the audience can associate with the character. The emotions and experiences are always a reminder of what happened throughout the film and the character's feelings.

2.1 *Brokeback Mountain* (2006)

Brokeback Mountain (2006), a film based on a short story by Annie Proulx, tells the love story of two cowboys who meet while herding sheep during the summer of 1963 in Wyoming. Ennis Del Mar (played by Heath Ledger) is a quiet and reserved 19-year-old who is described by scriptwriters McMurty and Ossana as a compelling "high school drop-out country boy...brought up to hard work and privation" (2003:1). He appears as a man of few words when first encountered, barely even looking Jack in the eye when they first see each other. Jack Twist (played by Jake Gyllenhaal) is also a 19-year-old country boy, unlike Ennis in appearance and ambition (McMurty and Ossana, 2003:3). Jack is far more open to conversation and, as the film continues, is more intent on being honest about his love which develops for Ennis, attempting countless times to convince Ennis that they should start a life together.

Ennis and Jack's romance and intimacy originate on *Brokeback Mountain*, where they grow closer to one another, allowing Ennis the opportunity to remove some of the armour he has built up to hide from the world. Slowly unveiling his hidden self throughout their time on *Brokeback Mountain*, he and Jack begin an intimate physical relationship after spending a cold night together in a small tent. Unfortunately, the homophobic and patriarchal 1960s American society that both Ennis and Jack exist in pushes them to live their lives separately after leaving *Brokeback* in 1963. The new lovers' time on *Brokeback Mountain* is cut short when their boss asks them to bring the sheep back down as a horrible storm is approaching. This news and the sight of Jack packing up their camp upon his arrival prompts a fit of sudden anger in Ennis. When the time comes for them to leave, Jack must fetch Ennis from the top of a small hill where he has isolated himself. During Jack's attempt to playfully 'capture' Ennis with his lasso, they fall and begin to wrestle on the hillside, playfully at first until Jack knees Ennis in the nose, causing it to bleed. Seeing this, Jack attempts to 'fix' his mistake by wiping Ennis' blood away with the sleeve of his shirt. Their closeness and the intimacy of the moment suggests that they might kiss but, when Jack leans in for the kiss, Ennis (possibly upset, possibly uncomfortable with the intimacy of the moment) punches Jack giving him a black eye (*Brokeback Mountain*, 2006, 00:38:55-00:40:11).

After their wrestle and a silent trip down and away from Brokeback Mountain, the pair share an awkward final conversation (Brokeback Mountain, 2006, 00:41:12-00:42:44), highlighting their inability to vocalise their feelings toward each other. They stand awkwardly beside Jack's pickup truck. Ennis is still somewhat upset about his blood-covered shirt he claims to have left on the mountain. Jack moves on from the shirt, quickly asking Ennis if he would be coming back the following year, a possible indirect probe at continuing their newfound relationship. Ennis' rejection of Jack's attempt at an invitation is possibly rooted in Ennis' insecurities and fears. They are no longer under the spell of the mountain and aware of the reality of the situation they find themselves in. Lingering for a moment, both are possibly hoping that the other will bring up the relationship. However, both are painfully aware of the reality that they cannot be together, and so they awkwardly part ways.

Four years pass before Ennis and Jack see each other again. In these four years, Ennis marries Alma, and Jack marries Lureen as they attempt to assimilate into society as married heterosexual men with families. In these four years, director Ang Lee uses a selection of scenes from Ennis' everyday life at home to set up a distinction between the Ennis seen at Brokeback with Jack and the Ennis we see after he gets married to Alma. In the portrayal of Ennis' everyday life, Lee leaves hints to Ennis' unhappiness as he, over time, begins to unravel, having experienced such a high with Jack, something he experiences with Alma at the beginning of their relationship, but which ultimately fades. After their first child is born, the deterioration of Ennis' heterosexual marriage becomes visually apparent in the faded colours that we see in Ennis home and surroundings and in the chaos that is his household. Ennis begins to neglect his (masculine) stereotypical duties as a father and husband, leaving his wife to take on the responsibility of running the home while also being the primary breadwinner. The audience sees Ennis sitting on the couch with empty beer bottles beside him, while Alma attends to the children in the background.

At this point of the short story, Proulx describes Ennis and Alma's bedroom as "full of the smell of old blood and milk and baby shit, and the sounds were of squalling and sucking and Alma's sleepy groans..." (1997). In comparison, Proulx describes Ennis and Jack's time at Brokeback Mountain with positive adjectives describing their pure joy at being together and alone. Comparing Proulx's description of Ennis and Alma's bedroom with a quote that describes Ennis and Jack's feeling of being together at Brokeback Mountain, it becomes clear that the presentation of Ennis' two lives as dramatic opposites is rooted in the original short story.

There was only the two of them on the mountain, flying in the euphoric, bitter air, looking down on the hawk's back and the crawling lights of the vehicles on the plain below, suspended above ordinary affairs and distant from tame ranch dogs in the dark hours. They believed themselves invisible, not knowing Joe Aguirre had watched them through his 10x42 binoculars for ten minutes one day. (Proulx, 1997)

The description above from the short story (Brokeback Mountain, 2006, 00:34:13-00:34:34) makes it clear that both Jack and Ennis experience a sense of euphoria by not only being together but being together, *alone*. Proulx's description points out Ennis and Jack's belief that they were invisible to the world, emphasising that their behaviour was to some extent motivated by this fact. However, this was not always true. Their boss, Joe Aguirre, had caught them together and watched them from a distance, and while he did not react negatively in the moment, he does not allow Jack back to work on Brokeback Mountain when he returns the year after, looking for both a job and Ennis.

In 1967, four years since they'd last seen each other, Jack and Ennis meet again outside Ennis' home, overcome with emotion (Brokeback Mountain, 2006, 01:03:12-01:04:05). Ennis pushes Jack into what he assumes to be a hidden corner, and the two of them embrace, kissing passionately and caressing one another's faces. At this very moment, Ennis' wife Alma opens the door and sees them. Shocked, she turns away and closes the door. Ennis and Jack find a hotel and reconnect after four years, agreeing to take a spontaneous fishing trip together; the first of many. During their trip, Jack suggests they leave their wives and buy a ranch together, but Ennis quickly dismisses Jack's idea. Instead, Ennis tells Jack that his father had taken him and his brother to see the tortured and castrated body of a local man (Earl) when he was nine years old. The man was tracked down and beaten because he and a supposed male partner bought a ranch together, much like what Jack proposes. Here, director Ang Lee employs a flashback to communicate 1. a very early source of Ennis' struggle with his sexuality and 2. his inability to see past his fear of being caught out as gay. The flashback shows 9-year-old Ennis looking at Earl's beaten and tortured corpse. Based on this flashback, we begin to comprehend that Ennis's understanding of queerness and what it means to live publicly as a queer man is massively affected by the disturbing sight of a beaten and castrated gay man. Jane Rose and

Joanne Urschel, in *Understanding the Complexity of Love in Brokeback Mountain*, write that the harshness of Ennis's father's lesson taught him that "intimacy and love between two men is forbidden and may get one killed" (2006: 248). The audience understands that Ennis's closed-off nature is a form of protection because he has come to internalise society's homophobia and heterosexism, and therefore, not only suppresses but also rejects his queerness, along with other expressive orientations that might allude to his queerness (Patrick & Backenbach, 2009:53; Kimmel, 2007:64-66).

Despite having seen Ennis with Jack, Alma does not say anything about their affair. As Ennis and Jack continue going on trips, the distance between Alma and Ennis begins to grow until they eventually get a divorce. Jack is excited about the divorce; however, Ennis is still not interested in starting a life with Jack, choosing instead to live alone, only seeing his daughters now and then. Given that Ennis now lives alone, one would assume that the need to escape the urban space would not be as intense. Ennis and Jack, however, continue for years going on fishing trips. Because they cannot return to Brokeback, they "worked their way through the high meadows and mountain drainages...but never returning to Brokeback" (Proulx, 1997).

The trips Ennis and Jack take and the natural spots they explore become the only space in which their relationship and their ideal or sincere selves can exist. As their society is unaccepting of these ideal selves, they must leave behind the behaviours associated with the ideal self in those outdoor spaces. In these outdoor spaces, they are free to explore the parts of themselves that they choose to hide from society in nature. This exploration is seen for the first time in their behaviour on the mountain, in the way they interact with each other, particularly Ennis, who plays and laughs with Jack. In contrast to his growing relationship with Jack, Ennis loses his affection for his wife because of the façade he puts up around her and her distancing from him because she is aware of his secret. Stewart's observations about the nostalgia for past authentic or sincere experiences is useful when attempting to understand Ennis and Jack's constant return to nature. During their trips, Ennis and Jack were, to some extent, unconsciously seeking out the euphoria they experienced on Brokeback Mountain, where they first discovered their love for one another. However, this is not possible, and for that reason, Brokeback Mountain becomes a space and a memory that they, over time, begin to realise they can never get back (1992:133). Ennis and Jack's desire to return to their first authentic and sincere experience together is unattainable and somewhat unrealistic given their social constraints. This first blossoming of their relationship thus becomes synonymous with the space of the mountain. The unavailability of Brokeback and their growing distance from that experience in 1963

allows them to believe that Brokeback Mountain, as it was when they experienced it, exists in a distant past that they cannot get back. Considering the trauma, he experiences as a 9-year-old, Ennis may, in some way, be stunted from breaking free of his fear of being queer and the consequences of making his relationship with Jack public. As a result, he chooses to continue their fishing trips because being away from people allows him to be free from the pressures and standards he needs to meet in the urban space. Furthermore, because Ennis does not have a souvenir or memento from their time on Brokeback, he may be seeking out that experience more than Jack, who, it is later revealed, has a souvenir from their time on Brokeback Mountain.

After receiving a return-to-sender postcard stamped deceased, Ennis finds out that Jack has died (Brokeback Mountain, 2006, 01:52:15-01:55:16). Ennis immediately calls Jack's wife, Lureen, who tells him that Jack suffered a burst tire accident. As Lureen speaks and Ennis quietly listens, a flashback of a man being beaten violently to death plays. This flashback footage (Brokeback Mountain, 2006, 01:53:20-01:53:30) is somewhat reminiscent of the flashback Ennis has when he tells Jack about Earl. This might suggest that either Ennis fears that Jack suffered the same fate or that the story Jack's wife tells is not the truth. During this phone call, there is an awkward tension between Ennis and Lureen. While this may be because they know of each other but have not met, or it could be that they both know the story Lureen tells is not the truth. When Ennis asks about where Jack is buried, Lureen tells him that Jack wished to be cremated and to have his ashes scattered at Brokeback Mountain (another hint at the importance of Brokeback to the characters and the narrative). However, she had no idea where it was. Ennis visits Jack's parents in hopes of finding his ashes and taking them to Brokeback Mountain as per Jack's wishes. Mr Twist, however, does not allow him this. Mrs Twist invites Ennis to see Jack's childhood bedroom upstairs as a consolation of sorts. Once inside, Ennis wanders around, taking in a room that once belonged to a different younger version of Jack before Ennis met him. He notices the open closet door and walks over to look at Jack's cowboy boots sitting on the floor inside. To the right of the closet in the far back, Ennis finds a crevice, a small hiding place, out of which he pulls a stiff denim shirt. The cuff, stained with Ennis' blood - a trace reminder of their last encounter on Brokeback where the two ended up in a brawl. Inside this shirt of Jack's is hidden another shirt belonging to Ennis, the same shirt he thought he had lost. In Annie Proulx's original short story, she describes the scene as follows:

...stolen by Jack and hidden here inside Jack's own shirt, the pair like two skins, one inside the other, two in one. He pressed his face into the fabric and breathed in slowly through his mouth and nose, hoping for the faintest smoke and mountain sage and salty sweet stink of Jack, but there was no scent, only the memory of it, the imagined power of Brokeback Mountain of which nothing was left but what he held in his hands. (1997)

While written descriptions do not always translate to the visual, this is an accurate description of how the shirts appear to the viewer: two skins locked in an embrace and more than an embrace as the one is literally inside the other. Furthermore, Proulx's description of the scene and specifically her description of Ennis' interaction with the shirts confirms that when things cannot be said or shown in the film explicitly, they can be suggested using symbols, leaving the interpretation open to the audience. The short story describes Ennis' interaction with the shirts as he hopes for the smell of both Jack and the mountain. However, this is not spoken aloud in the film but rather *shown* in his interaction with the shirts (fig 1). In this moment, there is a mix of emotions that ultimately is left to the audience to decipher. Had Lee chosen to use a voice-over to explain what Ennis was feeling, it might have taken away from the scene. Instead, Ennis takes these shirts in both hands, holding the collar to his nose and mouth, pressing the shirt to his upper body. Whether Ennis finds a trace smell lingering or not is not important. The audience understands that Ennis' interaction with the shirts is his last attempt at reliving the past and getting closer to what he has now lost.

Before interacting with the shirts, Ennis experiences what Stewart (1993:139) describes as a present time that is impersonal and alien to him. A present in his childhood home which references Jack but not as the person Ennis knew. Instead, this space attempts to preserve Ennis's heterosexual identity and keep his homosexuality and its 'consequences' a secret. This present exists in contradiction to the Jack that Ennis knew, and because of the discovery of the shirts, Ennis can go back to the mountain and remember the Jack he knew and fell in love with, even if it is momentarily. This is the pinnacle point of the film where Ennis discovers the shirts. At this moment, all the narrative pieces come together to inform and enhance Ennis's experience when he finds the shirts. Jack must be lost in all but this souvenir of past experience for the shirts to carry the same weight. This scene highlights the absolute infatuation Jack had for Ennis. He, perhaps, had no intention that Ennis would discover this secret collecting.

Perhaps if Jack were still alive, Ennis would be less moved by the souvenir given his character, which seems less sentimental than Jack. It is only as a last trace of their relationship and a reminder, from beyond the grave, that this connection is not exclusively in Ennis's head that gives the object its power.

In their study on personal mementoes, Petrelli and Whittaker explain that the location or placement in a home of objects of importance, like souvenirs, is usually linked to their value, especially personal emotional value (2010:164-165). Objects that bring about nostalgia or certain private emotions are often hidden or put away, like the shirts in Jack's closet, because they are so significant to the owner that they need to be kept 'safe'. The location of the shirts in a remote part of the closet is a necessity that has kept this souvenir of their relationship 'safe'. However, it is also a metaphor for how this is a private part of Jack that must and can only be sought and found by Ennis, who also hides an aspect of his identity. Their relationship is thus literally and figuratively: hidden in the closet. Stewart notes that "[w]e cannot be proud of someone else's souvenir unless the narrative is extended to include our relationship with the object's owner" (1993:137). Ennis, who has no souvenir of his own from their shared time on Brokeback Mountain, can connect with Jack's collecting of these objects as this collecting and keeping affirms not only his part in the narrative of memory but also confirms to him that their relationship was more than casual sex to Jack (the "couple of high-altitude fucks once or twice a year" (Brokeback Mountain, 2006, 01:46:43-01:47:43) that Jack called it in a moment of anger).

At this point, the story of Jack and Ennis's relationship comes full circle as both the viewer and Ennis put together the complexities of Jack's feelings toward Ennis and his life as a young boy. The obvious connection to 'the closet' in which Ennis, more so than Jack, both live, pulls the entire scene together. Lee presents us with Jack's closet, the physical and the metaphorical, in his childhood bedroom. Ennis is allowed to step into that closet, a place he had been before, with Jack metaphorically when they were together on the mountain and found himself and Jack in the form of shirts. Jack's shirt wrapped around Ennis', their true vulnerable selves immortalised through the trace reminder of the shirts, and the memories of their experiences on the mountain, protected and still hidden in the closet.

Lee brings the film to a close with a medium close shot of Ennis in his trailer home folding a jersey left by his soon-to-be-married daughter. The jersey has possibly been left as an excuse to come back and see her father again. Ennis walks to his wardrobe and opens it, placing the

jersey there. He glances at the shirts which now hang on the inside of his wardrobe door. Ennis pushes the wardrobe door open further. This time Jack's shirt hangs underneath Ennis' as if to say Ennis now holds Jack. Ennis stares at the shirts before he begins to button Jack's denim shirt, and through teary eyes, he whispers, "Jack, I swear" (Brokeback Mountain, 2006, 02:06:44 – 02:07:54).

Above the shirts is pinned a postcard of Brokeback Mountain, which brings these two *objective correlatives* (the shirts and the place) into proximity (fig. 2). Ennis straightens the postcard of the dramatically rugged, snow-capped mountain as the camera pans out to the view of the contrastingly calm, flat farmland where Ennis now lives, quiet and alone.

2.2 *Call Me By Your Name* (2017)

Call Me by Your Name (CMBYN) is a 2017 romantic drama based on the 2007 novel of the same name by André Aciman. Directed by Luca Guadagnino, this film tells of a summer love between Elio Perlman and Oliver. 17-year-old Elio and his Jewish-Italian and French American parents spend every summer in their villa somewhere in Northern Italy, where this story takes place. Elio spends the summer of 1983 transcribing music, playing the piano, and reading until Oliver, a 24-year-old American grad student, arrives to live with the Perlman family over the summer to help Elio's father, a professor of archaeology, with his research.

The adaptation of a novel into a film is always complicated as the two mediums, text, and film, convey narrative in different ways. In the original novel, Aciman offers the readers a highly detailed and meditative description of Elio's complex inner world by having Elio narrate and remember his experiences with Oliver that summer in 1983. Guadagnino manages to translate Aciman's first-person narrative of Elio's memories into a third person outside viewpoint that could have failed for many reasons. Had the translation relied on a reminiscent narrative voice-over as a nod to the novel's first-person narrative, it might have fallen into the trap outlined by Eliot (1919) in his review of *Hamlet*: a final product that told the story to the audience rather than showing it to them. A failed adaptation might have given insufficient insight into Elio's interior world and led to confusion for the audience about Elio's internal struggles and what occurs between Elio and Oliver in their relationship. Guadagnino (and Director of Photography, Sayombhu Mukdeeprom) chose to draw links to Aciman's original story through specific choices in cinematography. These links to Aciman's original story are highlighted (for example) through the inclusion of scenes in which Elio writes notes as a means of working

through his confused thoughts. The use of various *objective correlatives* helps to signify the growing connection between Elio and Oliver, and ultimately Elio's heartache. These choices leave space for ambiguity and an opportunity for the audience to empathise with Elio and feel closer to his experience. In an interview with Hillary Weston, Guadagnino elaborates on their choices to minimise the 'distance' between the characters and the viewer (Weston, 2017). This includes using a single 35mm lens to mimic the experience of the human eye on film, which resulted in a simple filming setup. Guadagnino tells Weston, "All the usual tools were no longer there, so my focus was not on how to frame the shot but on what happens in front of the camera. The camera was like a person—the one lens was like one eye, not the multiple eyes you usually have when you shoot a film" (Weston, 2017).

The first hour of *CMBYN* (2017) is dedicated for the most part to establishing Elio's confused feelings about Oliver. Gradually one becomes aware that Elio is infatuated with Oliver and fears being rejected by Oliver (as opposed to fears or misunderstands his own queerness). This fear results in a display of confusion and frustration for Elio, which shows in his behaviour and leads to a hot-and-cold relationship between Elio and Oliver before they can admit their feelings to one another. The display of Elio's emotions, and at times Oliver's, is made possible through the director's use of *object correlatives*. Signs of Elio's interest in Oliver begin to show the day after he arrives when Elio notices the gold Star of David hanging around Oliver's neck shortly after offering to show him around (CMBYN, 2017, 00:09:30). The Star of David that Oliver wears is the first example of the various signifiers employed by Guadagnino in the shape of *objective correlatives* throughout *CMBYN* (2017) to point to the growing intimacy between the two characters. This signifier's purpose is highlighted in the following scene when Elio and Oliver sit outside a café in Crema later that day discussing the Perlman's summer activities in the villa and their lineage and heritage. The dialogue now picks up on Elio's first observation of the Star of David around Oliver's neck, giving it context. Elio mentions that besides his own family, Oliver is most likely the only other Jew in town, to which Oliver responds, "I know what it's like to be the odd Jew out." (CMBYN, 2017, 00:10:29-00:11:26). This is a possible hint at his own understanding of being what the majority might consider an outsider, something that he and Elio now have in common. Guadagnino uses this symbol of faith, not to point to their shared faith necessarily (Elio's family are not particularly religious) but rather to a shared feeling of being an outsider or not the same as others around them, a signifier of their growing intimacy and connection. Furthermore, Elio's thoughts, written by Aciman in the novel, further support the idea that the Star of David acts as their first common ground amongst their

differences and possibly the very moment that Elio begins his infatuation with Oliver.

Nevertheless, it was the gold necklace and the Star of David with a golden mezuzah on his neck that told me there was something more compelling than anything I wanted from him, for it bound us and reminded me that, while everything else conspired to make us the two most dissimilar beings, this at least transcended all differences. (Aciman, 2007:37-38)

A few days later, when Oliver attempts to massage Elio's shoulders next to the volleyball pitch near their home Guadagnino displays how actions and reactions can tell more of the story than what is at first visually evident (CMBYN, 2017, 00:15:07-00:15:36). As Oliver begins to massage his shoulders, Elio pulls away, but Oliver follows him, encouraging Elio to give into Oliver's touch. Elio is confused by this action as he seems to crave the touch and fears it is offered as some kind of ridicule. In the novel, his confusion is described by Aciman in the novel at great length, giving the reader a detailed account of Elio's feelings at that moment as he remembers it. However, Guadagnino offers us a quick but impactful exchange between Oliver and Elio, instead of Aciman's lengthy explanation, which leaves both characters' feelings and thoughts open to interpretation while still planting an idea in the viewer's mind that something might exist between Elio and Oliver. Throughout *CMBYN* (2017), Guadagnino offers a selection of hot and cold moments as if he were flirting with the audience, contributing to the growing tension between Elio and Oliver as we build-up to the film's climax.

Elio notices Oliver's unaccounted for absence at dinner that night, revealing a bit of disappointment through his body language when Mafalda (the domestic worker) removes Oliver's crockery and cutlery from the table. Elio may have been hoping to spend more time with Oliver, and so he takes this absence as a sign of non-interest and reveals Elio's fear of rejection. Elio attempts to brush off Oliver's absence by remarking on the arrogance of Oliver's typical parting statement, 'Later', making fun of it to his family at the dinner table. In response to Elio's remarks, Mr Perlman says that Oliver might not be arrogant but rather shy and that Elio might grow to like him, foreshadowing the oncoming love affair between Elio and Oliver. This also marks the beginning of Elio's somewhat disinterested, sarcastic behaviour toward Oliver in response to Oliver's behaviour toward Elio, which he perceives as confusing and

unclear. The minimal but positive dialogue that Elio's parents share at the dinner table that evening in response to Elio's comment about Oliver is the first of many hints at the immediate or home environment in which Elio's story is set. Professor Perlman and Annella, at no point in the film, show any resistance toward Elio's interest in Oliver. In fact, they are seen subtly encouraging Elio to pursue a relationship with Oliver. They are there for him when Oliver leaves (although the audience is not aware if or when Elio's parents figure out something is going on between them). The Perlman's liberal and open-minded attitudes toward not only sexuality and intimacy, but toward life in general, sets their villa and the surrounding area up as a space that affords Elio (and Oliver by extension) the freedom to explore his sexuality at ease without the pressures of a heteronormative society. For this reason, there is no real struggle for Elio in trying to understand his sexuality because there is no overwhelming pressure to perform or act in accordance with heterosexuality. Furthermore, Elio's parents, as seen in the film, on many occasions invite guests over to their home, including a queer couple of whom Elio makes fun. His father immediately reprimands him in a "you should know better" tone. He is suggesting that the Perlmans have not hidden queerness from Elio but rather have always left it as an open door for him to investigate if/when he wanted to.

The idea of the *objective correlative* is further pursued by Guadagnino in the following scenes using a notepad, where the audience can see Elio's feelings toward Oliver. Elio sits in the garden under a tree, his body framed in green, the camera looking up at him as he plays a piece of music by Bach on the guitar. When Oliver tells him it is nice, Elio quickly responds, saying, "I thought you didn't like it", a thought founded on no evidence (CMBYN, 2017, 00:21:49-00:22:23). Elio's response might hint at his frustrations with Oliver, as he possibly projects his own questions hoping that Oliver would hear, "I thought *you* didn't like me". This idea is further supported by a scene in Elio's bedroom (CMBYN, 2017, 00:24:29-00:24:54). The camera pans around Elio, sitting on his bed, writing on a paper pad, his face toward us. As Elio finishes his scribbling and gets off the bed, the camera continues to pan and move until we can see the writing on the paper. "I was too harsh when I told him I thought he hated Bach...". Wind from the window lightly lifts the page Elio has been writing on, and below, we see the words "I thought he didn't like me" (CMBYN, 2017, 00:24:49-00:24:54). The choice to include Elio's thinking with a notebook or diary is somewhat straightforward but serves as an excellent example of how Guadagnino uses everyday objects (and later, more significant *objective correlatives*) to tell his story and deepen the audience's understanding of the character and their experiences.

The use of *objective correlatives* and other non-verbal signifiers in *CMBYN* (2017) is crucial to the story and narrative because as the film progresses, the viewer can understand that Elio struggles to verbalise and share how he feels. To support this idea, we see the placement of a French story, *Heptameron*, in the film (CMBYN, 2017, 00:42:25-00:44:28), read one night by Elio's mother to the family as the rain pours outside and the unaddressed tensions between Elio and Oliver are beginning to peak. Elio's mother reads a German translation of the French book and then translates it into English:

A handsome young knight is madly in love with a princess. She too is in love with him ... though she seems not to be entirely aware of it. Despite the friendship that blossoms between them, or perhaps because of that very friendship, the young knight finds himself so humbled and speechless that he cannot bring up the subject of his love. One day he asks the princess point-blank: Ich bitte euch ratet mir was besser ist... reden oder sterben. 'Is it better to speak or die'. (CMBYN, 2017, 00:42:25-00:44:28)

The prince asks the princess, "Is it better to speak or die" to which Elio responds, "I'd never have the courage to ask such a question"(CMBYN, 2017, 00:45:03)—offering a clue to the puzzle that he is struggling to decipher. Elio wonders if he should act on his feelings for Oliver or suffer, never speaking, stuck in this in-between where he does not know if Oliver feels the same about him. Here, Elio's response to the story highlights his feelings of uncertainty, not because he fears that he will be persecuted for his sexuality but simply of his fear of being rejected and realising that his feelings were unrequited. This fear that stops Elio from telling Oliver about his feelings illustrates *CMBYN's* ability to universalise the emotions and feelings that Elio and Oliver experience. The presentation of the knight's story involves a heterosexual love story but is still relatable to Elio's situation, although his interest is queer. The translation of a heterosexual story into a metaphor for a queer couple highlights that there are many similarities in love and intimacy for queer and heterosexual couples and many relatable aspects. For this reason, the same can be said for Elio and Oliver's love story, which might be relatable to people regardless of their sexuality.

It is no coincidence that in the following scene (CMBYN, 2017, 00:44:29-00:45:16), Elio brings up the story of the knight and the princess with Oliver possibly as an attempt at admitting

his feelings, asking for Oliver's opinion on what the knight should do, but Oliver turns the question on Elio. Elio answers back, saying that the princess feels it is better to speak, but she fears there might be a trap. Remembering that this story serves as a signifier of Elio and Oliver's relationship, both Elio and Oliver could arguably fit the roles of either the prince or the princess, as they both find themselves in a situation where they are (for different reasons) afraid to pursue their feelings. Oliver might fear that advances on Elio are not appropriate given his relationship with Dr Perlman, but he might also share similar fears to Elio, the fear of rejection. Oliver suggests that they go to town, a suggestion that Elio seems more than happy to accept.

When they arrive at the piazza in town, Oliver goes inside the shop for a cigarette. As he disappears, a piano piece (*Une Barque Sur L'Ocean* by Andrew Laplante) begins to play while Elio waits alone but stops soon after when Oliver returns (CMBYN, 2017, 00:47:30-00:51:07). This music is a recurring signifier over the following few scenes, which at first only plays when Elio is alone. Considering the knight's story, in those moments alone, Elio might be building up the courage to "speak rather than die", meaning that the music could be representative of those feelings that only Elio is aware of; hence, the music only plays when he's alone. This is not the first time we hear this piece of music, though. One day when Elio is home alone, and he misses an appointment with Marzia (a local girl with whom he has been having a summer fling when Oliver arrives), he plays the piece in his solitude, as the audience is shown various parts of the villa, empty, highlighting Elio's loneliness. Elio and Oliver walk over to the war memorial in the centre of the piazza, where the metaphor that is the story from *Heptameron* continues to influence Elio's behaviour, as he persists in his attempt to 'speak rather than die'.

Elio looks at the WW1 memorial telling Oliver the history of the monument. "Is there anything you don't know?" Oliver asks to which Elio responds, "I know nothing, Oliver. If only I knew more about the things that matter". Referring to the fact that he does not know how to explain or profess his feelings to Oliver, who asks him, "Why are you telling me this?" "Because I wanted you to know," Elio responds. He puts his head down and repeats himself quietly, "because I wanted you to know" (CMBYN, 2017, 00:48:04-00:49:24). As Elio struggles to get his point across, he and Oliver begin to move around the war memorial on separate sides. As Oliver disappears behind the other side and Elio is alone, the music starts again, flowing in and then out as Elio approaches Oliver on the other side. Still repeating himself, Elio meets Oliver on the opposite end, "Because there's no one else I can say this to but you?" He says as he sways shyly, and Oliver asks, "Are you saying what I think you're saying?" Elio nods (CMBYN, 2017, 00:49:26-00:49:49). Oliver leaves again to fetch his papers from the printers,

and while he is gone, the music again begins to play until he returns. "It means we can't talk about those kinds of things," Oliver says to Elio when he asks about their conversation, suggesting that Oliver had understood what Elio was trying to tell him but was still afraid to pursue Elio's advances.

After their conversation, Elio and Oliver ride their bikes through nature with a specific green, yellow, and soft blue colour palette (CMBYN, 2017, 00:51:07-00:55:11). As they cycle down a long road with green pastures on either side and a row of darker green trees in the distance into which Oliver and Elio seem almost to disappear. This shot is accompanied by the piano piece again, playing for the first time while both Elio and Oliver are on screen. If the music represents Elio's loneliness, in this scene, the audience might be experiencing the very moments that Oliver falls into Elio's world, as he describes it himself. After stopping to get some water, the camera shows an open field and begins to pan to a dirt road as Elio and Oliver appear on their bicycles from the behind left and right of the frame, respectively. As the camera continues to pan, they ride on, and the music plays again. The music stops suddenly as they stop in the next shot in lush green grass on the bank of a stream where they drop their bikes, and Elio rushes off to the stream. "This is my spot. All mine," (CMBYN, 2017, 00:53:50). Elio tells Oliver as he stands in ankle-high water. Elio describes this spot in Aciman's novel as his 'escape' where he would come to seek a world of his' own invention'.

It never occurred to me that I had brought him here not just to show him my little world, but to ask my world to let him in, so that the place where I came to be alone on summer afternoons would get to know him, judge him, see if he fitted in, take him in, so that I might come back here and remember. (Aciman, 2008:161)

The inclusion of greenery and pastoral scenes, which lead to Elio and Oliver coming to the stream, along with a smooth flowing piano, suggests that the two are now entering a dream-like state or space. The combination of the dream-like, natural surroundings and the piano further supports the possibility that the music reflects Elio's loneliness. The journey that he and Oliver take while the music plays could represent the journey, they take to find one another as this journey leads them to their first kiss back on the riverbank. They lay beside one another, arm's length apart. Oliver turns and lifts himself to touch Elio's lips with his index finger. He

runs his finger along his jawline and pulls Elio toward him. Elio lifts himself, and the two are face to face, both in the shot. They playfully avoid each other's kiss before Oliver puts his hand on Elio's face, and they kiss until Oliver turns away and Elio lays back down, slightly shocked. "Better now", Oliver whispers. Elio responds by jumping to his knees, kissing Oliver before being gently pushed away and told to stop. "I know myself and we've been good, okay? We haven't done anything to be ashamed of and it's a good thing. I wanna be good, okay?" Oliver says, hoping to end things there, leaving the situation between them unfinished.

After their kiss by the riverbank, Elio and Oliver sit down for lunch with some of the Perlman's family friends, but Elio suddenly rushes away from the table because his nose starts to bleed. Oliver, who is concerned about Elio, runs in after him and searches for him, finding Elio sitting on the floor of the small bar area where he had gone to find ice for his nose. "Elio, are you alright?" Oliver asks. Oliver's need to care for Elio is interesting because in the scene before this, he almost brushes Elio off after they kiss, saying that he does not want to be bad. However, despite his want to be 'good', Oliver cannot stop himself from both literally and figuratively running after Elio and is concerned for him when his nose begins to bleed. Oliver fears that their previous engagement might be the cause of Elio's nosebleed, but Elio assures him that it is not, as Oliver takes Elio's foot in his hands and begins to massage it. Oliver rubs Elio's left foot roughly and with intent. Elio feels the pain, but he does not mind it, as he places his hand on Oliver's shoulder and slowly moves it to his chest, showing through his shirt. "I used to have one of these," Elio says as he touches Oliver's Star of David and tells Oliver that he doesn't wear it because his mother says that they are "Jews of discretion" (CMBYN, 2017, 01:00:29-01:01:32). Despite this position taken by his mother on wearing such signifiers, Elio decides to wear his Star of David the following day. Because we have been made aware of the family's relaxed attitude towards their religion, we can now see this signifier as less a sign of faith and more a sign of allegiance and connectedness Elio feels towards Oliver. This could also be seen as some sort of signifier for Elio's separation from his parents as he begins to develop his own ideas surrounding religion and what he likes and doesn't like, who he is as a person. The scene in the bar ends with Oliver massaging Elio's other foot as he brings it to his lips and places a soft kiss on his foot. Despite their previous discussion, the two share a great deal of intimacy in this scene, especially considering Oliver has initiated this intimacy. In the novel, Aciman chooses to place Elio in his bedroom after his nosebleeds, and Oliver sees him there. The two share a similar conversation, but as Oliver leaves, he tells Elio, "I'll stick around" (Aciman, 2007:178). This is a rather significant bit of speech from Oliver and informs the reason why

Elio, as seen in the film, waits on Oliver later that day, hanging around the villa, asking everyone if they have seen him. Elio expects him to be there because he said he would, but Oliver is nowhere to be found. Because Oliver's promise is left out of the film, the scene where they sit behind the bar suggests that there might be further development for them or at least further conversation because they have kissed and shared an intimate moment. Instead, Oliver disappears, grabs his bike and rides off, only returning after everyone has gone to bed. This sequence leading up to Elio and Oliver's lovemaking might hint at a possible caution in Oliver's thought process regarding Elio. This is understandable given that Elio is the son of his professor and their age gap. These scenes also foreshadow the end of the film when Oliver does not stick around, something Elio knows will have to happen at some point.

Elio finally leaves Oliver a note saying, "Can't stand the silence, I need to speak to you" (CMBYN, 2017, 01:10:11-01:10:33). They agree to meet up after everyone has gone to sleep, and they sleep together for the first time. Guadagnino's primary focus in this scene is not any overtly sexual aspect of their physical connection but instead lingers more on the minor details in their behaviour which highlights their intimacy in that moment: the more innocent caressing of hands or the tender touching of feet (CMBYN, 2017, 01:21:15-01:25:58). The display of queer intimacy here compared to heterosexual intimacy when Elio and Marzia have sex (CMBYN, 2017, 01:09:07-01:09:49) is far more romantic and softer. Guadagnino takes more time to show the moment leading up to Elio and Oliver's first time sleeping together. When Elio is with Marzia, there is no attempt to make it romantic. The scene shows them simply having sex, marking it as a physical act that lacks the emotional intimacy that Elio and Oliver share in their scene together. By inviting the audience into the most private intimacies, this representation of queer male intimacy moves away from the stereotypical idea that queer male sex is quick, rough, and without care. Oliver and Elio tease each other. Oliver smells Elio's hair, taking him in; Elio rubs his nose against Oliver's arm before softly biting him. The camera focuses on their feet: each in its pair next to the other. Guadagnino almost slows time down as he shares the minor details of Elio and Oliver's intimacy that night. We did not see these details when he was with Marzia, proving that for Elio, there is more emotional weight in his interaction with Oliver. The taking of time might also be in relation to the importance of this scene because the title of the movie appears in the dialogue (CMBYN, 2017, 01:26:22-01:26:53) and adds more significant meaning to the film's most notable *objective correlative*, Oliver's blue shirt.

When the audience and Elio first meet Oliver (CMBYN, 2017, 00:03:14-00:04:15), he wears

a soft blue shirt, information which at the time may not have been significant (fig. 3). The shirt does become important after Elio asks for it after they have sex for the first time. In this scene (CMBYN, 2017, 01:26:56-01:27:24), we see the shirt for the second time, but we also see the characters interact with the shirt, adding to the experiences that happen in the presence of the shirt. After they have sex, Oliver's blue shirt hangs on the end of the bedframe before Oliver's hand appears to grab it, and he uses it to wipe residue of their encounter off his chest before passing it to Elio, who does the same. Elio throws the shirt on the floor beside the bed and asks, "You wore that shirt the first day you were here. Can you give it to me when you go?" (CMBYN, 2017, 01:27:17-01:27:25). This demonstrates Elio's infatuation with Oliver, not only given what has just occurred but that it was there at the start as he remembers what shirt Oliver wore when he first arrived. The ambiguous behaviour between the two is now explained as romantic and sexual tension.

As observed in Chapter 1 by Stewart on the desire for souvenirs, there is an understanding that Elio's desire to have something of Oliver's is based in nostalgia. Elio is desirous of holding onto this experience and relationship with Oliver because he knows that Oliver's visit will inevitably end. Once Oliver is gone, Elio will have nothing to remember him by, so he asks for the shirt. To further this idea, Oliver and Elio use the shirt to wipe themselves clean after having sex, connecting themselves and the moment to the object even more. This action adds further meaning to the shirt for Elio because it now contains both their DNA, leaving the shirt as a souvenir of not only the moment there and then but as a reminder of everything between Oliver's arrival and the moments leading up to them making love. The shirt is given added meaning through dialogue between Elio and Oliver as they lay in bed. While tracing Elio's jaw with his thumb, Oliver whispers, "Call me by your name and I'll call you by mine" (CMBYN, 2017, 01:26:22-01:26:53). Each repeats their name to the other before Elio, as if overcome by passion, lunges toward Oliver taking his chin in his hand, and the two engage in a passionate kiss. The exchange of names between the characters highlights that they are lost in one another, even if it is just for that moment, so lost that they become one another, whispering their own names to the other. Elio also still wears his star of David, so does Oliver, a sign of similarity between them, visible in this moment where they become one through their intimacies. This is a critical moment in Elio's life and an even more crucial moment in the story because it places a spotlight on Elio's feelings toward Oliver and the inevitable sadness that he will face once Oliver leaves, a bittersweet moment.

A third moment that involves the shirt happens near the end of the film when Oliver leaves to

return to America. Elio wears the blue shirt at the train station when he says goodbye, a scene that does not include much dialogue at all (CMBYN, 2017, 01:01:51:17-01:53:09) (fig. 3). Oliver and Elio don't know what to say to each other and stand awkwardly, nodding at each other before hugging for an extended time. Oliver tries to move away, but Elio holds on until the last moment. In this scene, the choice to put Elio in the shirt that Oliver wore when he first arrived brings the entire story to a close. The shirt represents a lot for Elio in this moment, speaking first to the idea that Oliver came and offered him something, the very thing he arrived with he now leaves behind, with Elio, maybe his curiosity toward same-sex intimacies. Elio wearing the shirt underlines the passion he feels for Oliver, so much that he wants to become him, through sporting a necklace like Oliver's, by taking his name, and finally the shirt. The shirt not only holds the memory of Oliver's body, but it also holds the traces or evidence of their love, and now finally, it meets with Elio's body, a souvenir of their summer love. For Elio, saying goodbye to Oliver was inevitable, he knew it would happen, and in knowing he asked for the shirt as a souvenir, which, as Stewart writes, is created through a language of longing, and the demand for nostalgia, a need to remember (1992: 135). In wearing the shirt, Elio attempts to discredit the reality of Oliver leaving, using the shirt as a reminder and reference to a time that was not as 'looming' as the present. Elio can return to the time Oliver first arrived, or the time they made love, a time that he can never return to but can be reminded of through this souvenir which is also an *objective correlative*.

Through his interactions with Oliver, Elio in wearing both the Star of David and the shirt that Oliver gave him, mimics the sentiment of calling another by one's own name, that is: of the one becoming the other or becoming themselves through a merging with another. Elio cries in the car on the way home after his mother fetches him, and sometime later, we see him again. It is cold now and winter as the snow falls on the villa and the surrounding grounds. Elio receives a phone call from Oliver, who tells him that he is engaged to a woman and will be getting married the following spring (CMBYN, 2017, 02:04:20-02:06:58). This announcement upsets Elio, though he tries to sound encouraging in his reply. When the call ends, he goes to sit by the fire and stare, heartbroken into the flames. Guadagnino ends the film with a close up of Elio as he stares into the fire. This final shot allows the audience to take in the sadness and heartbreak in Elio's eyes. Though we do not expressly know his thoughts, this leaves space for us to project our own and empathise with his loss. We linger here, long enough to see tears form and fall, as the credits begin to roll over Elio's face.

2.3 *Moonlight* (2016)

Moonlight (2016) (directed by Barry Jenkins) tells the life story of Chiron, a queer black boy who grows up in Liberty City, Miami, in the 1980s. Based on an unproduced play by Tarell Alvin McCraney: *In Moonlight Black Boys Look Blue*, Chiron's story is told to the audience in three acts, each from a different time in Chiron's life. The first focuses on his adolescent years (aged 12 or 13), where we see a shy, young Chiron (or 'Little' as everyone calls him) meet Juan, a local drug dealer, who becomes a father figure to Chiron. The second part shows us Chiron's life in high school, where he is still bullied and taunted, shy, and passive. The third and final part focuses on Chiron after school, as an adult, a drug dealer now living in Atlanta who has built up a fearsome exterior and reputation.

When *Moonlight* (2016) begins, a black screen welcomes the viewer. The sound of the ocean running up against the shore and blowing breeze hints at the film's geographical setting. A story told near the ocean and through the ocean, as we will soon understand. Here in this moment of darkness, Jenkins gives us just a taste of what is to come.

Throughout the first act of the film, titled *Little*, Chiron's relationships with Juan and his mother are highlighted. The film starts with Juan, a drug dealer from Cuba who checks up on one of his salesmen. As he walks to his car, a group of boys run past him, chasing another boy, Chiron. The camera cuts to a shot of Chiron as the camera follows him from behind and shakes profusely, giving the audience Chiron's perspective as he runs from his bullies. This being the audience's first introduction to Chiron, the narrative's perspective is highlighted for the viewer using this shot from behind and the literal following of the character. He takes shelter in an abandoned apartment building, waiting there until the bullies leave. After a while, Juan arrives to 'save' him, breaking down the board covering the broken window. Juan takes Chiron to eat at a diner and then to his own home, hoping that Chiron might open up and tell him where he lives. The camera jumps between them throughout their interaction, never showing a continuous shot of their conversation; however, on the ride back to Juan's house, the camera begins to pan. When Juan's wife Teresa enters the car to talk to Chiron, the camera returns to jump cuts. The camera seems to play a part in sharing the characters' connection using different shots and editing. In the first few scenes, when Chiron is still unsure about Juan, the camera does not pan smoothly but instead jumps from one to another, symbolising their disconnection. Similarly, the same jump edit is used when Teresa gets in the car because Chiron does not know her. At the dinner table, the camera begins to pan as Chiron opens up to his hosts, and

after Juan's kind gestures and acts, Chiron tells them his name. The following day after Chiron stays over at Teresa and Juan's home, he finally tells them where he lives, and Juan takes him home to his mother. Chiron's mother is a drug addict who coincidentally buys drugs from Juan's guys, but because of her addiction, she neglects and abuses Chiron as her addiction grows worse. The film's first act lays the foundation of who Chiron is through the people in his life and the social constructs and environmental factors that keep him from being himself.

The more empathetic and soft presentation of Juan versus the first scene shows the audience that while Juan is perceived (and might come across) as a tough and rugged man, he can show compassion and empathy to Chiron by offering to take him home buying him food. There is no ulterior motive in Juan's compassionate acts; in fact, it could be argued that Juan sees in Chiron a bit of his younger self. The actor, Mahershala Ali, who plays Juan, speaks in an interview with Barry Jenkins and the cast for the Toronto International Film Festival about the compassion with which he needed to approach the character of Juan (TIFF Originals, 2016). Specifically, he touches on Juan's ability to see himself in Chiron because he is a dark-skinned Cuban man who doesn't fit in with light-skinned Cuban people but also attempts to pass as a black man in a black community. He notices in Chiron a similar feeling of being left out and alone but trying to fit in. Ali's comments on the character further point to the director and playwright's attempts to present a less stereotypical black masculinity. Black men are often presented as gangsters or thugs who are violent and harsh and lack any sort of empathy for others. This challenges these stereotypes by moving away from harsh, emotionless, and apathetic depictions of black men and, by extension, what it means to be a man in a society that finds value in a specific type of masculinity.

The pressures of toxic masculinity play a significant role in Chiron's life throughout the film. For example, a scene where Chiron or 'Little', as the other kids call him, is taunted with a soccer ball on the soccer field. The other boys gang up on him and push the ball toward him, taunting him in what is perceived to be a masculine space. In this scene, the camera is at Chiron's eye level resulting in a shot that removes the boys' identity around him to some extent and allows them to rather present as a force. The camera also switches to the boys' feet kicking the ball, giving the audience Chiron's perspective and drawing a parallel between how the boys roughly treat the ball and how they are treating Chiron. The boys continue to push and challenge Chiron until one boy runs into the group and takes the ball, saving Chiron and distracting the others from their hunt (Moonlight, 2016, 00:13:17 – 00:14:20). This is the audience's first introduction to Kevin, who runs back to Chiron and starts to chat after running away with the ball. "Why

you always letting people pick on you," Kevin asks Chiron. "All you gotta do is show these niggas you ain't soft". Chiron responds, "But I ain't soft". Kevin replies, "It don't mean nothing if they don't know it" (Moonlight, 2016, 00:15:10-0015:35). Their conversation highlights the social pressures put on them in their environment, as Kevin tries to tell Chiron that what he thinks does not matter. It's what he shows and what the others think he is that counts. Their conversation suggests that Chiron's lack of ability to stand up for himself might speak to the fact that he hasn't yet come to understand himself. For that reason, he takes on the persona of 'Little', the scared and timid boy everyone thinks he is, rather than showing them who he is. As a challenge to a fight, Kevin shoves Chiron as if to say, 'show me who you are', and the two begin to wrestle. In this scene, the first instance of intimacy between Chiron and Kevin is shown, although they are still kids at this point. A playful and non-sexual intimacy comes up between two innocent adolescent boys as they begin to wrestle and play-fight on the grass outside their school (Jerkins, 2016: i. 17: 23 – 43) (Moonlight, 2016, 00:15:36-00:15:57).

Throughout Chiron's story, his proximity to the ocean is marked by a breeze, which appears in the presentation of Chiron's most important life events. Jerkins chooses a Miami beach as the site of Chiron's most vulnerable and sincere moments. This is first established when Juan teaches Chiron how to swim at the beach in the film's first act. Chiron shows up at Juan's house after his interaction with Kevin, and Juan decides to take him to the beach, where the audience witnesses a father and son like moment between Chiron and Juan. At first, Chiron is hesitant to enter the water, standing at the edge and staring out before walking forward. In this scene (Moonlight, 2016, 00:17:21-00:19:25), the camera is at Chiron's shoulder height in the water, causing the camera to flow with the water, the lens sometimes getting covered by the water. Chiron appears and disappears behind and, in the water, as he walks further into the ocean until the water reaches his neck, and it looks as though Chiron might go under the water. Juan appears to 'save' him once again, saying, "give me your hand" (Moonlight, 2016). Juan takes Chiron's head into his hand and suggests a kind of baptism for Chiron, as though Juan is ushering him into a new version of himself by teaching him how to float and not sink in the vastness that is the ocean. This scene depicts Juan's attempt at teaching Chiron how to survive in the world. Having noticed the need for a guiding figure in Chiron, Juan attempts to help him. When Chiron first enters the ocean, he struggles to stay afloat without Juan's help, but Juan teaches and guides him to float and soon lets him go. Similarly, Juan spends this first act guiding Chiron, given that he does not have a parental figure that can do so.

Juan tells Chiron a story that teaches him the importance of deciding who you are for yourself and not letting others decide for you. This story echoes the previous conversation between Chiron and Kevin. This story marks the introduction of the moonlight as an *objective correlative* in the film. Juan tells Chiron about an old lady from Cuba where he grew up, who tells him, "In moonlight black boys look blue, so imma call you blue" (Moonlight, 2016, 00:19:42-00:21:16). This phrase contains the play's original title that inspired the film and is an essential metaphor for the film's overall narrative. In his video essay, Karsten Runquist (2017) relates the phrase to ideas of being more than what you are perceived as, given that in the moonlight, black boys change colour, and noting the fact that black men are not flat characters but rather people with layers, emotions, and feelings. Juan reveals his understanding of self and self-confidence as he points out that he is more than what the old lady saw him as; he is not just 'blue'. Juan attempts to teach Chiron that the labels others put on him do not define who he is. He tells Chiron that he needs to decide for himself who he is and not just be what others see. Juan has become Juan and not the person the old lady saw him as.

Life does not get easier for Chiron in the second act as we see him struggle through his teenage years after the death of Juan, his mentor. Several years have passed since the previous act, and a different older actor now plays Chiron. Chiron's mother neglects him and mistreats him because of her downward spiral into drug dependency. In one scene, we see her forcibly take money from him, which she uses to buy drugs. It is apparent that she has much resentment toward Chiron. While it is unclear what causes it, she suspects Chiron is queer (Moonlight, 2016, 00:27:56-00:29:55) and understands that he is bullied because of his expressive orientation. She does not attempt to help him through this or encourage him to take pride in his queerness. Because his mother struggles with drug abuse, Chiron's life at home is unstable, complex, and unpredictable. He often spends time away from home trying to escape his mother and the expectations and pressures that face a teenage black boy growing up in 1980s Liberty City. At high school, Terrel, who continuously challenges him with homophobic slurs and threats, confronts Chiron. Terrel's taunts are egged on by his peers, who laugh at Chiron when he speaks. This further contributes to Chiron's silence and anxious nature, as he internalises the words that Terrel throws at him daily. Chiron begins to internalise Terrel's and his environment's homophobia and heterosexism, forcing him to build up an even higher wall of silence, which ultimately contributes to Chiron's struggles with intimacy later in his life (Patrick & Beckenbach, 2009; Szymanski & Hilton, 2013).

After an altercation with his mother and his bully Terrel, Chiron goes to the beach. Chiron sits on the beach and thinks, the script describing him as being "lost in it all, releasing his troubles in the presence of this nature" (Jenkins, 2017: ii. 52:8-10) (Moonlight, 2016, 00:49:27-00:49:39), further supporting the idea that the ocean is an important symbol and space for Chiron. During this moment, Kevin shows up unexpectedly to join Chiron. The two share a joint, which lowers both of their inhibitions as Chiron and Kevin begin to talk about the ocean breeze's effect on them and their community when it passes through their neighbourhood. This conversation gives the audience an idea of the ideal that Chiron and Kevin see for their neighbourhood, whose toxic masculinity and homophobia affect them both, and that they find peace in similar things. The mention of the breeze also highlights its importance to the story. Through this dialogue (Moonlight, 2016, 00:49:49-00:55:49), Kevin and Chiron begin to settle and open up to one another until they both tentatively lean in to kiss each other. The contrast between Chiron and Kevin's characters at school and in the neighbourhood versus the people they are on the beach is heightened through the delicacy of this scene, particularly when Kevin places his hand on Chiron's neck and rubs it before kissing him (Moonlight, 2016, 00:54:37). Kevin begins to unbuckle Chiron's belt. The camera switches to a shot where we watch from behind as Chiron lays his head on Kevin's shoulder, giving them some sort of privacy in the moment and highlighting their connection and vulnerability rather than the physical act in which they are engaging (fig. 4). The camera moves up and down Kevin's arm, which holds Chiron as he finishes, in Kevin's hand, and they separate. Kevin cleans Chiron's semen off his hand in the sand, almost connecting Chiron to the ocean further through DNA, imprinting the memory of what they shared into the sand.

The main *objective correlative* in Chiron's story is embodied by the ocean and its incumbent sea breeze. The ocean symbolises freedom from the pressures and harassment Chiron faces in his neighbourhood and home. He comes to the ocean (and the moonlight) multiple times throughout the film to escape and have new experiences that would not otherwise occur in the space and mindset that runs his neighbourhood. In the ocean scene between Chiron and Kevin, they are lit by the moonlight, and at some point, the camera shifts to show Chiron and Kevin from above, as though the audience is the moon shining down on them, giving us the moon's perspective. Through these experiences and interactions in the presence of the ocean and the breeze, the ocean becomes the site of Chiron's sincerity. The presence of the moonlight suggests the removal of layers, as we see a different, softer, less defensive, and vulnerable side of him when he is near the ocean or in the presence of the moon. While the *objective*

correlatives in *Brokeback Mountain* (2006) and *CMBYN* (2017) are predominantly physical or at least visible signifiers, Jerkins' use of the ocean as a signifier extends to the aspect of sound. This is used at the beginning of the film but is also used to reintroduce Chiron's genuine self toward the film's end (Moonlight, 2016, 01:39:05-01:39:45).

Throughout the film's first two acts, Chiron's life is told with the support of a particular selection of music and sounds that heighten the viewer's experience as they watch the film. After Terrel and his friends beat up Chiron, he sits in the principal's office as she attempts to find out from him who beat him up. When she comes closer to talk to him, Chiron begins to switch off, turning away from her as her voice fades until it is completely gone, and everything is silent (Moonlight, 2016, 01:02:30-01:03:31). Jerkins uses sound to show us that Chiron has mentally switched off from the world, taking in nothing and hearing nothing. He has reached his breaking point. Chiron begins his descent into a breakdown, which culminates when he breaks a chair over Terrel's head (Moonlight, 2016, 01:03:40-01:05:45). Chiron is pushed into a cop car after he assaults Terrel, and this is the last time Chiron is seen as a teenager before the transition into the third act of the film.

The film's final act shows Chiron, now living in Atlanta. He is known as 'Black', a drug dealer top dog, much like Juan. Black is played by a significantly different looking actor, who is far bulkier and tough-looking than Chiron or Little, suggesting that since his breakdown, Chiron began to bulk up physically and mentally by building a wall around himself (Moonlight, 2016, 01:00:27-01:01:50). This 'tough guy' facade goes so far that Chiron wears gold plates on his teeth, hiding his teeth. He also drives a bulky masculine black car (Moonlight, 2016, 01:06:59-01:07:12).

Once Chiron transitions to Black, he is an entirely different person, so much so that Kevin doesn't notice him when he shows up at Kevin's restaurant for the meal he was promised over an earlier phone call (Kevin calls Chiron unexpectedly one evening). After eating the meal Kevin makes him, the two sit down to share a bottle of wine. Chiron doesn't open up much until he tells Kevin that he's a drug dealer and shares the story of how he got caught up in drugs as a teenager when he went to Atlanta. When we see Chiron interacting with Kevin, there's a certain heaviness to him, which is highlighted in contrast to Kevin's light-hearted and soft energy. Kevin eventually confronts Chiron, saying that this hard-man image is not who he really is. As Kevin walks away, we begin to hear the distorted sound of the ocean breeze return, as Chiron sits in silence (Moonlight, 2016, 01:33:16-01:33:40). This reappearance of the ocean

sound happens for the first time since Chiron and Kevin were intimate on the beach, representing the beginning of Chiron's journey back to the version of himself he was as a child, learning to swim in the ocean with Juan.

Chiron and Kevin leave the restaurant and drive to Kevin's house, where we see Chiron park his car, and as the two get out of the vehicle, the sound of the ocean returns, clear this time, suggesting that they are near the ocean again. Chiron stares as Kevin walks out of the frame toward the audience, and the shot changes to a scene of trees and a pathway leading toward the sand and the waves (Moonlight, 2016, 01:39:05-01:39:45). A cello begins to play as the wind blows through the scene. Chiron stares, lost in thought, in memories. When they enter Kevin's house, the sound of the ocean is still present in the silent moments between their dialogue, suggesting that Chiron might be in a vulnerable headspace. Kevin leaves the room and returns in a blue t-shirt indicating that he might be ready to reveal a more honest version of himself to Chiron. Kevin takes the opportunity to ask Chiron who he is, suggesting that the person he looks like doesn't fit the person he is on the outside. Chiron is taken aback and remains silent, while Kevin talks about being happy without the pressures of a life that revolves around being someone you're not. Again, the camera uses jump-cut edits in this conversation, going from Chiron to Kevin as they share how they became the people they are. Kevin asks Chiron if he's 'hard' now, referring to his supposed hard and rough exterior, but also references the conversation they had as kids, where he tells Chiron not to be 'soft'. This question highlights that Chiron had taken to heart what Kevin taught him and what Juan said about showing people who you are. Chiron puts forward this persona to block people out, but he begins to break down his walls through his conversation with Kevin. Chiron is still silent for a while until he admits to Kevin, "You the only man that's ever touched me. You're the only one. I haven't really touched anyone since." (Moonlight, 2016, 01:44:23) The sound of the ocean and breeze rising over the intimate silence between Chiron and Kevin. This is a moment of honesty for Chiron. They stare at each other for a moment as the camera shifts to frame them standing together in the kitchen, as opposed to the previous cuts between their faces (Moonlight, 2016, 01:44:26-01:46:22). The camera changes to a shot of Kevin and Chiron sitting on the bed, Kevin with his arm around Chiron's shoulders, holding his head. Chiron's head is resting on Kevin's shoulder, a position like the way they sat that night on the beach, only this time the camera is in front of them, showing the audience the emotion in their faces (fig. 5). The sound of the ocean rises to the loudest it's been the entire film and the shot changes to the waves in blue

light. Little stands at the edge of the water under the moonlight. The camera moves toward him as he turns and stares down the lens at the viewer.

2.4 Nature and Colour

A reoccurring signifier in all three case study films is the use of colour, nature, and other natural elements in the narrative to further enhance the experience and understanding of the viewer. Three colours stand out across the three films: light blue (or blue), yellow, and green. These colours are significant because they underline the recurrence of nature as a theme in all three films. Youtuber, Nerdwriter, in his video, *The Movies that Influenced Call Me By Your Name* (2018), discusses the use of nature and colour in Elio and Oliver's story, referencing James Ivory's *Room With A View*, as one of Guadagnino's influences. Guadagnino, like Ivory, uses nature as a symbol of freedom and the desire for summer afternoons, which is paralleled with Elio's desire for love and intimacy, along with a sense of freedom (Nerdwriter, 2018). Many scenes in *CMBYN* (2017) take place outdoors. We often see Elio and Oliver dressed in swimming shorts, as they spend most days draped over the side of the pool or walking or cycling around the area with a clear sense of ease and comfort. While this presentation of Oliver and Elio might be somewhat romanticised and idyllic, the use of nature as a backdrop and a recurring colour scheme hints at a kind of Eden-like, first experience of love, highlighted by presentations of natural greens, yellows and light blues throughout the film (fig. 6). Stewart's writings on nostalgia and memory discuss the need for the authentic experience to be placed beyond the horizon in an unreachable space. At the beginning of the film, the audience is not given the villa's exact location but rather a more abstract, "Somewhere in Northern Italy", highlighting the irrelevance of the villa's exact geographical details. The existence of the villa in a space devoid of norms such as specific geographical details and the irrelevance of these details proposes the idea of an endless summer, endless days, and for Elio, the hope of infinite love. This leaves room for Elio and Oliver's experience to be seen as a flashback memory, given that the exact details are somewhat hazy.

The placement of nature as a significant influence in *CMBYN* (2017) is an essential and practical decision that notably increases the film's viewers' experience. The vibrancy of the colours adds to Elio and Oliver's love story a sense of youth and hope, which is also found in Ennis and Jack's moments together in nature. In *CMBYN* (2017), the use of greens, light blues, and yellows evoked not only a somewhat seductive atmosphere but also emit a feeling of nostalgia and memory, as though you were looking at a saturated film photograph, which

further contributes to the idealised visual nostalgic experience (iamthatroby, 2018). This idea of recollecting a memory is put forward by Guadagnino himself, who says that film is meant to feel as if you were recalling your own memories. Nature provides an organic backdrop to an organic and natural journey through love and further supporting the idea that *CMBYN* (2017) is a kind of retelling of the summer in 1983 from Elio's perspective. The colour palette stays within the green, blues, and yellows until the end, when the season shifts. The villa is covered in snow now, and the area is cold and barren. Elio walks into the villa dressed in winter clothing, and the atmosphere is different. The summer greens and yellows have been swapped out for cold blues and whites. The change in atmosphere is in part due to the absence of Oliver and, by extension, the absence of love and infatuation, given that Elio and Oliver can no longer be together. The lack of this love and idyllic time is highlighted through the eventual nostalgia Elio experiences in winter as the audience watches him cry in front of the fireplace after his phone call with Oliver.

Brokeback Mountain similarly tells its story largely through nature. It uses nature as a backdrop to the love affair that Ennis and Jack share and rekindle their relationship even when they can no longer return to the mountain where it all began. Nature is portrayed as a site of freedom for Ennis and Jack to be themselves, particularly when compared to the drab and grey urban locations when they are apart. It serves as a reminder of the space that Ennis and Jack once had access to and now cannot go back to, as opposed to a memory suggestion. For Ennis, there is a search for the ease with which characters like Jack, Elio, and Oliver can approach their sexuality, which happens only momentarily for Ennis when he is at Brokeback Mountain. However, it seems he can never find that peace he looks for and refuses to settle even when he has the space and privacy to do so in his own home. This leads to these short stints in nature, as opposed to Elio and Oliver's seemingly endless summer in nature. Ennis and Jack's moments seem like stolen moments because their relationship must remain a secret.

In *Moonlight* (2016), nature plays a significant role, given that the two primary signifiers in the film are the moon or moonlight and the ocean or beach. The film starts with a blank screen, the sound of waves crashing against the shore, highlighting the importance of the ocean to this story as both a signifier and a location. For Chiron, the ocean shore is the site of his first swimming lessons with Juan; the audience is visually introduced to the ocean for the first time. In this scene, the camera starts in the water as Chiron enters and sways with the waves. The movement gives the audience the feeling that they might be overwhelmed by the ocean, along

with Chiron. By using immersive camera-work, this scene highlights Chiron's attempts to float in the ocean that is the world, something he struggles with until Juan helps him and teaches him to swim. When they are out of the water, Juan tells Chiron a story introducing the moon and moonlight into the narrative. As Juan explains to Chiron, the moral of the story is not to let people define who you are, but rather to decide for yourself who and what you are. The lady in Juan's story calls him blue because that is what she sees; however, what she sees is only her projection of Juan, and so Juan denies this name because he is not Blue. He is Juan.

While the other two films used blue, green, and yellows, *Moonlight* (2016) focuses on the colour blue. When the audience first meets Chiron, he is dressed in a white shirt and wears a deep blue backpack. This outfit becomes his uniform as a young, innocent boy who spends most of his time trying just to make it through the day. As the film progresses, the audience might notice that blue begins to appear in specific spaces at specific times. When Juan and Chiron drive in his car after he finds him in the abandoned building, we see that the interior of Juan's car is blue. Later, when Chiron is asleep at Juan's home the bedroom, he sleeps in is covered in blue light. He is not who the lady thinks he is because she only sees him in that blue light and not in a different light, both figuratively and literally. Given this moment between Juan and Chiron, the colour blue might be seen as a colour with negative connotations, however through his relationship with Juan, the meaning of the colour blue changes for Chiron.

Compared to other scenes, the inclusion of blue concerning specific people and spaces in *Moonlight* (2016) is rather significant. Put simply, the presence of blue might indicate that Chiron is presenting a sincere version of himself that is at ease and comfortable: the opposite of the old lady's projection. Given the moment shared between Chiron and Juan regarding the name Blue, one might think that the colour would take on a negative connotation in the film, however it does not. Rather as explained, the colour blue becomes a colour of comfort. It could be argued that the lighter shades of blue that appear throughout the film for Chiron is a different kind of blue to that which the old lady saw on Juan. His connection with Juan is shown to be stronger in the car, as noted previously in this chapter, using smooth camera shots between the two rather than jump cuts. Similarly, when Juan takes Chiron home, the car itself is shown to be blue on their drive home, giving further evidence that the colour represents sincerity and comfort for Chiron. In the last-mentioned scene, the audience sees Chiron with his head out the window, simply being a child, enjoying the wind. When Chiron is dropped off at home by Juan, the audience meets his mother dressed in blue; however, when she reappears in the other

chapters, she is seen wearing red, showing that she is not herself, her life taken over by drugs. When she returns in the third chapter, she again wears a light blue shirt, apologising to him. The colour blue continues to appear in the film, taking on different meanings but still leading back to the idea of a genuine self-presentation or a sign that the character is in some way important to Chiron. After Juan's death, his wife Teresa is always shown wearing shades of blue as she represents a mother figure to Chiron. She also offers him a place to stay and food when his mother is not able to. This fact is highlighted when Chiron's mother in the previous scene places her needs over his and demonstrates her inability to care for him. The colour blue plays a final role toward the film's end when Chiron and Kevin are in Kevin's kitchen. In the final chapter, the colour blue is completely lacking from Chiron's wardrobe because he does not have a sincere self-presentation. Instead, we see a colourless presentation of someone that Chiron thinks he needs to be. This façade is shattered by Kevin, the same person who is also somewhat responsible for the façade in the first place. Before Chiron tells Kevin about his feelings, Kevin changes and comes back in a light blue shirt, meaning that 1. Kevin is comfortable with himself, and 2. in that space, between those four walls with the ocean crashing in the distance, Chiron felt confident enough to reveal to Kevin his true feelings.

2.5 Conclusion

Having watched and analysed all three films multiple times, the incredible selection of thoughtful moments that each film presents become more apparent to me each time. All three films have deeply affected me as a viewer. After this analysis, I must further note my appreciation of these films, not only as major films in the history of queer cinema but also as stories that share far more sincere and emotionally rounded presentations of male queerness and intimacies. These narratives are evidence that the emotional range is possible in queer onscreen relationships and are not limited to secret sexual acts or physical desires. While the case studies do in places include secret and quick physical intimacies between the queer characters, these are used as critical narrative points that lead to a far larger emotionally significant moment for the main characters. What is essential in these physical moments is the sensitivity with which they are shown, which underlines the emotional aspect of what these characters share with one another. In *Moonlight* (2016), the camera moves behind Kevin and Chiron as they share their first physical interaction. The focus is on the tenderness of their embrace and their hands in the sand, not on the act. This discretion lends the moment a tenderness which a more graphic representation would lack.

In *Brokeback Mountain*, Ennis and Jack's first sexual experience together is rough and quick but is represented in such a way as to underline their desire for one another. This desire is not just based on their physicality, as the act itself does not dispel their continued attachment to each other once the sexual urge is spent. This moment between Jack and Ennis ultimately brings them closer and is the beginning of a nearly lifelong love affair instead of a quick hook-up that becomes nothing more than a one-night stand. After these points in the films, we are not shown repeated sexual moments. Instead, the connection between the characters is referred to in more subtle displays of affection and mutual understanding. Ennis and Jack often stand one behind the other, Jack's arms wrapped around Ennis's shoulders and chest as they embrace. Chiron and Kevin share a similar pose at the end of *Moonlight* (2016) when they sit on Kevin's bed, and Chiron lays his head on Kevin's shoulder. These two sets of characters stand out as positive representations of queer male intimacy in demonstrating tenderness and emotional sensitivity, which is far more than physical desire. Both films have also steered away from a stereotypical casting of queer men as overtly effeminate. Instead, the audience is challenged with more masculine cowboys and two black men, one a drug dealer, the other a father. Both representations of queer intimacies present masculinity in softer settings and attempt to challenge the perception that masculinity is devoid of empathy and often lacks emotional depth.

All three case studies are nothing without their *objective correlatives* who, throughout each narrative, have helped to get across three incredibly important stories in a sincere manner. Interestingly the *objective correlatives* are similar in some ways. For one, two films include nature-related *objective correlatives*, which take the form of the mountain in *Brokeback Mountain* and the ocean in *Moonlight* (2016). Similarly, *Brokeback Mountain* (2006) and *CMBYN* (2017) both use shirts as signifiers, and objective correlatives employ human DNA to further raise the garments' importance. In *Brokeback Mountain*, the shirts are only revealed as *objective correlatives* at the end of the film and, in doing so, points out that Jack himself was not ready for the relationship to end when it was supposed to. This points out that Jack had wanted more than just what happened at Brokeback Mountain, and at the time, there was a large likelihood that they might never see each other again, giving Jack even more reason to take the shirt. Jack does not wash either of the shirts, not wanting to clean off their blood or any remnants of the mountain. Ennis finding the shirts to some extent brings their relationship to a close and tells Ennis and the audience exactly how much those moments on Brokeback Mountain and, by extension, every minute Jack spent with Ennis meant to Jack. Ennis takes the shirts and hangs them in his cupboard, where he can see them every day along with a

postcard of Brokeback Mountain (fig. 2). The shirts now take on a new meaning, representing a part of Jack that Ennis can still physically hold, given that Jack is no longer. The two signifiers, the shirts and the postcards hung as a memorial of a sort, form the closing for the film, as Ennis reminisces on those moments with Jack.

Similarly, *Call Me by Your Name* employs a shirt as the signifier of Elio's feelings toward Oliver and is seen as one of the main *objective correlatives* in the film. Much like Jack, Elio wants the shirt to keep as a reminder of his lover, Oliver, and their time together. However, Elio is bolder in his approach asks for the shirt. The shirt finally appears worn by Elio as the two say goodbye at the train station (fig. 3). This final appearance of the shirt represents the closing of Elio and Oliver's chapter as the shirt finally ends up with Elio, who is left without Oliver. In wearing the shirt, Elio communicates his own intention to hold onto Oliver or the memory of him for as long as he can. At the end of the film, Elio tells Oliver, "I remember everything", confirming not only that he did hold onto those memories but also that the footage we saw was a memory or a recalling of the events that transpired between them. Another signifier of Elio's feelings toward Oliver is the Star of David that Elio begins to wear after seeing a similar one on Oliver's neck. This signifier of Elio's feelings for Oliver is used to show Elio's attempt to mirror Oliver, catch his attention, and gain his validation. Given that Elio does not verbally acknowledge his feelings for Oliver until later in the film, the necklace is the audience's first confirmation that Elio is trying to get Oliver's attention.

Finally, in *Moonlight* (2016), we have the ocean, which presents itself as a signifier in two forms, physically as *space* and in the form of *sound*, waves crashing or the breeze that Chiron and Kevin talk about. At first, the ocean is used as a signifier when Juan teaches Chiron to swim; here, the ocean signifies the troubles that Chiron currently faces as a young child and will face as a teenager. Chiron struggles to stay afloat, but Juan teaches him how to keep his head above water, both literally in the water and metaphorically when he tells Chiron the story about the moonlight. When Chiron is a teenager, the ocean shore signifies an escape for Chiron where he can calm down. On the night that he is joined by Kevin, their physical distance from their neighbourhood frees them of their stereotypical societal expectations, and Kevin and Chiron feel safe enough to engage in intimacies. Using the beach as the scene for their interaction writes it into the narrative as an important site for Chiron and appears again later in the sound form when Chiron and Kevin meet as adults. When the film ends, the audience's final image is a younger Chiron staring out into the ocean and just before the scene cuts, he

turns back and stares the audience right in the face, confronting them, letting them know he's finally who he's supposed to be.

CHAPTER THREE

GROWING THE GARDEN: THE CONSTRUCTION OF MEMORIES AND THE DREAM-LIKE ATMOSPHERE

I stand at the end of the garden

Looking at my work

My love

Alive

As a teenager, I never had the emotional or physical experiences depicted in these case study films. Being secretly queer and, as a result, struggling with self-confidence, I had never seen or understood what intimacy should look like for a queer person like myself. I was under the impression that the presentation of queer intimacies I saw in films and television series was what society expected of me as a queer person. Shows like *Will and Grace*, *7deLaan*, *Modern Family*, and movies like *Inxeba*, where queer intimacy was either not shown and merely alluded to, or where there was something secret and potentially shameful about its presentation. In my experience, as discussed in the first chapter, queer men tend to steer toward a culture that values emotionally unavailable sex, sometimes with unknown partners and away from intimacy and monogamy. While I believe that casual sex has its place, I feel that this societal tendency has stunted the ability, for myself and possibly other queer men, to experience a genuine connection of queer intimacy the way we see it displayed in these three films. A presentation that is somewhat romanticised but presents the beauty of love through a queer lens.

When I had my first moment of physical intimacy with another man, like Ennis and Jack, it was a secret hook-up that took place behind closed doors. An intimacy that was so shameful to the other man that he threatened me into keeping quiet about it because he was afraid of being judged. This first 'relationship' continued in secret and never saw the light of day. However, I had experienced genuine emotions in the situation. Unfortunately, because our intimacy was secret, I never had proof of this relationship. When I tried to further our connection, he repeatedly shut down my attempts because our intimacy was premised on its secrecy. Desirous of some kind of record of this relationship, I began to write about it, bringing together fact and

fiction. In doing so, I was hoping to overcome and work through my feelings and grow the seeds that had been planted but never watered.

I have since had many other experiences with other men, which I regard as intimate, although they did not look like the intimacy seen in the films. Instead, these have been a hidden, silent intimacy that exists only between the other person and me in that moment. Many of these moments took place in bars or clubs, where I found myself engaging in conversations with other men, conversations that were so intense and intimate that it felt like we were alone in the space. It was as though I was the main character in a movie and the man across from me was my love interest, a man who was there simply to see me. I began to write down these experiences and record my feelings to preserve these memories (see Appendix A). Given my lack of experience with queer male intimacies and my romanticisation of intimacy, I wanted to assure myself or prove to my future self that I had experienced these moments. As a result, I have built up a collection of notes, scrap papers, letters, stories, and journal entries that depict my experiences with intimacy and other interactions with men.

One specific piece of writing, comprised of about 24 parts, speaks of weekly interactions with different men as though they are one. Through these collated interludes, one can see different experiences, ranging from glances across the room and simple conversations to intense emotions after a passionate kiss. Many of these recollections are incomplete or unfinished. As a result, one could say that I hold a collection of open tabs for men that I knew only for a moment. I needed a place to put all these stories, a place where I could preserve them and revisit them. The conversations and interactions shared in these moments have stayed with me. They lingered in my mind, growing, and connecting, building new stories, taking fact and mixing it with the fiction I found in films and other media formats until a garden of unfinished stories and unrequited feelings had grown.

3.1 Et in Arcadia Ego

In his 2000 paper, David Bell says queer men might feel the need to take their sexual interactions and intimacies to spaces outside of the urban because they fear that people in urban areas might not accept queer exchanges and intimacies. Bell notes that in most cases, the connection between rural and "uncivilised" is not considered good, however in the queer context, nature (or the rural) arouses a sense of (sexual) freedom that is contained and regulated by the presence of homophobic people and systems in "civilised" spaces (2000: 552). Henning Beck (1997), who Bell frequently quotes in his paper, points out that we must not associate

queer men with a lack of civilisation. Instead, we should understand that queer men are civilised people who, in this case, are forfeiting the luxuries of civilisation in return for the freedom of expression. What both Bell and Bech refer to as the "countryside" or the "rural" can refer to a selection of locations for different queer men in different contexts, and often is nothing more than "the country of the city", a space as simple as the "botanical gardens or public toilets" (Beck, 1997: 149).

As previously established, *objective correlatives* and souvenirs help an audience further engage with the emotional world of specific characters in a filmic narrative. Similarly, based on Bell and Bech's arguments, nature has three functions in the three case study films: 1. a guide to the character's mindset, 2. a stage or haven for queer love and intimacy, and 3. a representation of sexual freedom. All three case studies use the contrast between nature and another less organic space where one finds the main characters boxed in or feeling constricted and isolated. So, the organic and natural space becomes a space that allows the main characters space and freedom to experience their queerness. For both Ennis and Chiron, it was necessary to escape the confines of their everyday lives for them to express their queerness. *Brokeback Mountain* (2006) and *Moonlight* (2016), place Ennis' and Chiron's respective queer relationships in and amongst nature to create comparisons between the rural or countryside (nature, organic, soft, green) and urban or city (unnatural, rough, rugged, dark, grey) spaces that are less accepting of queerness. As mentioned in the second chapter, the space Ennis shares with his family is dark because of a lack of light and because the colours are drained and dampened. Ennis's home life contrasts with the bright greens and yellows of *Brokeback Mountain*, which visually alert the viewer to the change in Ennis' mindset apart from his behavioural changes. Similarly, in *Moonlight* (2016), the audience notices a shift in Chiron when he comes into the vicinity of the ocean. This change is highlighted near the film's end when he returns to his hometown to visit Kevin and confess his love for him. All to the sound of waves crashing in the background.

For Elio, nature seems to surround him, as most of the film takes place outside and in nature. Bearing in mind the three functions of nature, in Elio's case, nature firstly plays the role of informing the audience that Elio is confident and equipped to explore his sexuality, rather than feeling insecure and therefore uncertain and afraid. Secondly, nature is the backdrop for Elio and Oliver's encounters, especially their first kiss, where they roll in the grass after Elio takes Oliver to his private nature spot. Thirdly, the ongoing presence of nature reassures the audience that Elio is given the space and freedom to explore his sexuality and is not confined to a heterosexual perception of love. This freedom of sexual exploration is exhibited through Elio

and Oliver's countless interactions outdoors and similarly with his parents. In general, the Perlman's do not limit Elio as the audience sees that he is allowed to smoke in front of his parents and comes and goes freely. The audience may assume that Mr and Mrs Perlman do not want to stop Elio from learning more about himself, given their liberal parenting style and interactions with queer people shown in the film. The relationship that Elio has with his parents is notably different to the other case studies. Ennis and Chiron use nature as an escape rather than it being an everyday space, as Bell (2000) and Bech (1997) speak of it, never engaging with other people (besides their love interests) when they were in these spaces.

Through the films' narratives, spaces like Brokeback Mountain, the Italian countryside, and the beach in Miami become heaven like spaces for the characters to freely express their love for their respective partners and not feel the need to hide any parts of themselves. However, Bell says that the idea that queer people would need to take to nature to express their queerness is not a new idea or phenomenon; it has been used for years in erotic literature and popular culture as a site for queer love. Bell observes that:

The dream of a sexualised Arcadia or Eden where nature rules has a long tradition in erotic (and especially homoerotic) literature and popular culture (Fone 1983; Woods 1995) as a precultural site for "free love," a place to "cast off the yoke of civilisation" and to be "naked and in contact with nature" (Bech 1997: 148) In the lesbian and gay imaginary, such a mythic place construction frees up sex from social norms, marking same-sex desire as "natural" and even as spiritual... Eden becomes a safe space for same-sex desire away from the prying eyes of "civilisation" (always coded here as *urban*). The countryside thus forms the perfect backdrop for the unrestrained passions of "[redacted] love" to flow. (2000: 522-533)

In the quote above, Bell speaks of "Arcadia or Eden" and what the creators of erotic literature and pop culture might imagine rural spaces to look like. Art historian, Erwin Panofsky, dives into the meaning and origin of Arcadia in his 1955 book. Panofsky tells how Arcadia, a region in Greece, which dates back to 8AD, became a universal literary and artistic symbol and a reference to what he describes as an "ideal realm of perfect bliss and beauty, a dream incarnate of ineffable happiness, surrounded nevertheless with a halo of "sweetly sad" melancholy"

(Panofsky, 1955: 297). Famous roman poet, Virgil (70 BC – 20 BC), had merged what truly existed in the Greek region of Arcadia with a selection of fictions, including luxurious vegetation, eternal spring, and "inexhaustible leisure for love" (Panofsky, 1955: 300). In doing so, Virgil manages to merge two realities into one, the reality of an existing place and the realities of his imagination. Creating a space that feels unreal and far off but communicates a specific visual explanation to his readers so that they might understand Arcadia (or Arcady as Virgil called it) as "an imaginary realm of perfect bliss" (Panofsky, 1955: 299-300).

After Virgil's death, Arcadia lost popularity but returned as a cultural symbol later in the European Renaissance. The more modern mind had, however, come to a different understanding of Arcadia: "it developed into a haven, not only from a faulty reality but also, and even more so, from a questionable present" (Panofsky, 1955: 303). The Renaissance understanding of Arcadia or Arcady bears several similarities to Stewart's (1992:139-140) definition or function of souvenirs and nostalgia as something which seeks to "authenticate a past... experience and... discredit the present". This comparison highlights that in both cases, the primary function of nature as a symbolic device and the nostalgia object (the souvenir) is to transport the characters and the audience to a figurate Garden of Eden. Given this, Arcadia becomes an agent of nostalgia, activated, or travelled through engagement with memory or souvenir. Similarly, while it does not exist physically, Arcadia becomes a very real place for the characters in the case studies. Each character has their own version of Arcadia, which they visit when the present becomes too much to bear. However, sometimes throughout the films' narrative, the characters cannot access these spaces and must rely on souvenirs to revisit the memory of that space. This inaccessibility is best shown in *Brokeback Mountain* when Ennis finds the shirts and presses them to his face. His attempt to envelop his senses in the shirts might represent his own attempt to remember Jack, with whom he can no longer physically be.

Considering this idea of the unreachable and unavailable, I would like to argue that queer intimacies exist for some people in that unreachable and unavailable space that Stewart speaks about. I think, for example, back to my own experience before coming out, where I found myself (the physical body) in spaces where I would not be able to present my true queer identity. In these spaces, I was a) not comfortable with my queerness, and b) queerness was demonised and marked as taboo in that space. For that reason, it became clear that queer intimacy was not possible and therefore existed in an alternative, unreachable, and at that time unavailable world I could not physically access. When I did access that world, it was in secret, and I felt as though I had used my ideal body to do so because I had believed that this experience

was so distant. However, when I had to return to the physical or tangible without any record or evidence, it left me to question the reality of that experience and further demonise this intimacy by perpetuating this idea that it should be a secret. By contrast, my heterosexual peers were able to far more easily access and confidently partake in heterosexual intimacy and, in my opinion, did not experience the need to separate their physical selves from their ideal selves. Furthermore, because there was far less shame surrounding heterosexuality, my peers could publicly engage in heterosexual intimacies and discuss those intimacies freely without judgement.

3.2 A Distinctly Utopian Face

At first, I struggled to understand the effect watching the case study films had on me, not only the first but every time I watched them. A sense of longing hung over my shoulders. These feeling of loss that was present in a large majority of the films reminded me of my own intimate experiences and interactions with men, even though the only actual similarities between these experiences and the films were the themes of love lost. It was as if the film had drawn me in so deeply that I began to experience the very sadness that overcomes Ennis when he finds his shirt wrapped in Jack's. When Oliver calls to tell Elio he is getting married, Elio's tears seemed to become my own. I realised that my sense of empathy here was more complex than a mere reminder of my own experiences. Instead, this romanticised vision of intimacy and love created in me a sense of nostalgia for what could have been but never was.

Stewart's description of nostalgia as a form of narrative sums up acutely this sense of longing I feel. She says:

Nostalgia, like any form of narrative, is always ideological: the past it seeks has never existed except as narrative, and hence, always absent, that past continually threatens to reproduce itself as a felt lack. (1993:23)

Stefan Baschiera and Elana Caoduro's (2015) paper titled, *Retro, Faux-vintage, An Anachronism: When Cinema Looks Back*, gives readers insight into the romanticisation of the past that takes place in films as well as the recurrence of that past in the present, focusing on the way films rework the past (2015:143-144). Baschiera and Caoduro note that one might expect vintage cinema to refer to a film made in the past, a work of classic cinema

contemporary to its time of production. However, they point out that the term has come to represent a particular stylistic trend across a range of media which utilises signifiers of the past (clothing styles, colourised filters, obsolete film technology, e.g., Super8, VHS, set dressing, musical scores). This trend, which began in the world of fashion design, initially utilised original objects from a previous time but has increasingly included newly made items fashioned in the style of the past. Baschiera and Caoduro note that “vintage is also used as a general appellation for various forms of nostalgic film that recreate a highly aestheticised version of the past” (2015:144). They argue that a desire for a presumed authenticity of the past has led to the nostalgic representations in these films, which paint the past with a kind of rose-tinted romanticism. It is essential to note that there is always a subtle difference between genuinely old products or films and what Baschiera and Caoduro refer to as 'faux-vintage' products or films. Baschiera and Caoduro describe 'faux-vintage' as “[t]he pursuit of authenticity through the imitation of a style from the recent past” (2015: 148). The most common modern example (outside of film) of this imitated authenticity can be seen on photo applications like Instagram. Here users are given the opportunity to edit their photos to emulate an aged image taken on an analogue camera. These emulations over photos of past holidays and lost moments with friends seem to push the memory and the moment even further into the past. But why is there such an affinity for the past, not only for creatives but also for the everyday Instagram user? Baschiera and Caoduro answer this question by arguing that as the world advances and we move away from analogue technologies, our nostalgia for those analogue technologies grows. They argue that modern technology, while impressive, does not deliver the ‘soul’ (what I would call the authenticity) of the analogue process, and so there is an attempt to recreate that ‘soul’—the ‘soul’ of a time that continues to move away from us.

In the first chapter of *Screening the Past: Memory and Nostalgia in Cinema* (2005), Pam Cook writes: “One of the most significant developments in film studies over the last fifteen years or so has been the growing preoccupation with memory and nostalgia” (2005:1). Cook tributes the growth in interest with memory and nostalgia to the “... dramatic impact of global technologies on thinking about personal experience and identity” and further explains that global technologies “have focused attention on the dismantling of traditional power relations between producers and audiences” (2005:1). Guadagnino puts into practice Cook’s writing by removing the complicated film gear and editing from his film to bring the audience and characters closer together. *Call Me by Your Name* was shot with only one lens on an old film camera, an intentional aesthetic choice by the director and director of photography.

Guadagnino's and Mukdeeprom's choice to use old technology to recreate a specific visual aesthetic from a particular period in history falls in line with Baschiera and Caoduro's writing where they state that "[f]aux-vintage films are generally set in the recent past and present to be contemporary to the historical setting of their narratives by using outdated technologies" (2015:149). Had the director and DoP used modern cinematic cameras and complicated editing, the film would have lost its overall simplicity and might not have had the same look and feel film cameras produce. Using a film camera, Guadagnino adds a 'faux-vintage' aesthetic to the film, which further motivates the idea that the film is not only set in the past but also is a visual representation of Elio's memories. The use of a single camera could even reference a single-family camera used to record those moments of intimacy between Elio and Oliver that summer in 1983.

In addition to this visual filmic quality, the film also uses period relevant props, furniture, and clothing and 80s pop songs, which further adds to the illusion of 1983 Italy. Furthermore, the more realistic the illusion, the easier it is for the audience to connect with the character's souvenirs. The audience has now experienced the original context of the souvenirs and, more importantly, an idealised, produced depiction. When the character interacts with the *objective correlative*, the audience will remember that very idealised memory, representative of the real-life experience of nostalgia. This would explain why films like *CMBYN* (2017) have such an intense effect on their audiences because the illusion that Guadagnino immerses the viewer in is incredibly effective. *CMBYN* (2017) is set more than 30 years ago, but I still relate to the emotions, feelings, and situation Elio found himself in. However, it must be noted that this film did not need to be set so far in the past. *CMBYN's* (2017) narrative could have taken place at any point between now and 1983. While the narrative would still make sense, it might not have had the same impact and might've lacked the 'soul' that Baschiera and Caoduro speak of. By placing the narrative in the past, the writer provides literal time and space between the happening and the audience. The distance between the narrative and the audience is where, according to Stewart, "[t]he nostalgia of the souvenir plays" (1992:23). This is to say that if the film was set closer to the release date, the short distance would result in less nostalgia and, therefore, a failed attempt to present Elio's memories of his summer with Oliver, as opposed to any other love story. The success of *CMBYN* (2017) lies in this distance between the *objective correlatives* or souvenirs which Guadagnino employed and the audience. Furthermore, the distance and romanticisation of Elio's memories promotes the idea of a utopia or unattainable Arcadia, in which Elio and Oliver's seemingly perfect love affair exists, and

similarly, Jack and Ennis', Chiron and Kevin. "Nostalgia wears a distinctly utopian face [and conjures] ... a past which has only ideological reality" (Stewart, 1993:23). The representation of Ennis, Elio, and Chiron's respective intimacies and memories can be seen to some extent as utopian: an idealistic and aestheticised retelling of their past. Through the lens of Bachiera and Caoduro's 'faux-vintage' ideas and Stewart's ideas on the 'utopian face', the case studies could be read as romanticised versions of the main character's nostalgia. Nostalgia which is brought on and experienced through their interactions with the respective *objective correlatives*.

3.3 Only a Dream of the Past.

Stewart (1992:150) writes that the souvenir is destined to be forgotten because memory might, over time, die or fade away. The metaphoric death of memory is ironic, considering that the moment was so important that a souvenir was made and taken to remember. Now it is forgotten and lost. Over time, the physical souvenir ends up in an attic or the back of a cupboard, forgotten. The lost or forgotten souvenir is no longer connected to its original context because the owner no longer interacts with it, or the memory has faded. As a result, it loses value and is no longer of use for the owner. To avoid the souvenir's metaphorical death, one might put the souvenir together with other souvenirs and create a collection. In contrast to the souvenir, Stewart describes the collection as "an example rather than a sample, metaphor rather than metonymy" (1992:151). Stewart (1992:151-152) distinguishes that the souvenir serves as a sample of a more significant idea or context. In comparison, the collection might bring together several contexts and provide a fuller idea of context. However, this is only possible if the parts that make up the collection presents obvious or easy to understand narratives so that the audience can connect the dots between the various objects and use their imagination to put together the overall narrative. The sample is only of significance to the owner of the souvenir because they hold the memory of the original (unreachable) context; the collection can offer multiple examples of a particular context, and in return, help the viewer put together a fuller picture or story. The shirt that Elio keeps, for example, is only a souvenir of the experience with Oliver. While it represents their relationship, it does not fully articulate Elio's entire experience with Oliver. The shirt does not mean anything to Elio's parents; while they might recognise that he once wore it, they have no idea of the secrets it holds and the meaning it has to Elio. Though the shirt represents their relationship, it does not present enough evidence of Elio and Oliver's time together on its own. The shirt needs to be presented along with the rest of the souvenirs or *objective correlatives* (the entire collection) for the audience to put together a narrative of what happened between him and Oliver. Furthermore, as Stewart describes it,

the souvenir is used to authenticate past experiences, i.e., Elio asking for Oliver's shirt to remember him once he returns to America. The collection, however, is authenticated by the past that the souvenir represents. Using Elio's collection of souvenirs and *objective correlatives* as evidence, the audience can validate his feelings for Oliver. As they watch the film, the objects serve as reminders of those specific significant moments that come together to form the entire story.

Looking at my collection of notes, scrap papers, letters, stories, and journal entries through the lens of Stewart's writing, I would argue that the short few sentences would not mean much on their own. Many of these written pieces were put together haphazardly on a whim in the moment, and many are incomplete. For this reason, it would also be challenging to understand their origins and original contexts. However, the writing still exists as a reminder and a record. Putting my pieces together into a book form as a collection of poems, to some extent, would satisfy an attempt to pull together a series of incomplete experiences. The only issue with this is that because the experiences exist in various written forms, they do not present themselves as souvenirs that could be part of a visual collection. Sure, a collection of poems in a book might bring together an overall narrative, but in no ways would it be able to articulate the experience that I want the viewer to have when revelling in my collection of intimacies.

Looking at my written reflections on my experiences with intimacy, I found plenty of references to nature, using the garden, flowers, light, and other organic elements as symbols in my writing. For this reason, I wanted to plant and grow real plants to bring to life the physical labour that one goes through when trying to tend to a memory based on something as small as a seed but still managing to end up with a metaphorical garden full of flowers. I had hoped to use these flowers as my *objective correlative*, given that I did not have a physical object or symbol to take away from my experiences with intimacy. However, given the onset of a new socially distant lifestyle, I decided to move my presentation to an online space and use Photoshop to build my own virtual space. Not to mention that plants would inevitably die and would require constant attention, while virtual plants might last inevitably. The exhibition of my collection of intimacies borrows from the villa in which Elio spends the Italian summer as a starting point. The villa houses an extensive garden and orchard and noting that Elio found the most freedom in this space, I began to experiment with ideas relating to the construction of some sort of garden attached to a home or building. My searching led me to the grand gardens found around large estates in the Victorian era until I came across the Royal Botanic Gardens in southwest London, commonly known as Kew Gardens, one of the world's largest and most

diverse gardens (Kew, 2021). Kew Gardens is home to many plants and trees, a research and educational institute, and a botanic garden. A botanic garden is an institution, like Kew Gardens, that holds an extensive collection of living and dead plants for scientific research, display, education, and conservation (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2015; Willoughby, 2019). Specifically, a botanic garden needs to meet a list of criteria, including but not limited to a scientific basis for collections, documentation of collections, labelling of plants, open to the public, and communication of information (Willoughby, 2019).

Comparing the criteria for the botanic collection and my intentions for my collections, one might find some similarities. Most notably, I want to create a space that will hold a collection like the botanic garden does, my collection of queer intimacies (see Appendix B). The space will be open to the public and communicate information regarding queer intimacies through a collection of experiences. Like the botanic garden, the presentation of my collection aims to bring light to queer intimacies that some of the audience might never have experienced.

Due to the modern urbanisation of many parts of the world, botanic gardens have become natural environments that offer mental and physical escapes from the pressures of the modern world (Willoughby, 2019). The need to escape is arguably similar to the escape the case studies characters needed away from their own societal pressures. Botanic gardens usually range from a few hectares to nearly 1000. The garden is split into sections, allowing the visitors to select different plant exhibits. Gardens are generally laid out according to plant groups and scientific relationships with each other, as opposed to a layout that favours recreation or aesthetics (Willoughby, 2019). Botanical gardens often keep plants in conservatories or glasshouses where the conditions can be controlled and monitored. The plants and trees found in conservatories are not in their original contexts. They are brought from other parts of the world and kept alive in conservatories where the plants' climates can be recreated and controlled. This context of climate-controlled conservatories seemed an appropriate metaphor for the preservation of some of my sampled memories as many are so fragile and fleeting that they require such fragile care.

The garden in my work represents my personal Arcadia, a haven or dream-like fictional setting for my personal collection of intimacies. The title, *I Want You to Hold me but I'm Afraid to Ask*, speaks to feelings that I experience when I find myself in an intimate moment with someone or in the moments leading up to intimacy. The moments where my actions can make or break the furthering of this relationship, leaving me in a position that asks me to let it go.

Often, I am afraid to open myself to the possibilities of intimacy as a queer person, possibly because I fear the backlash that might come from queer intimacy. Yet the desire to hold onto this moment, despite the fear, has led me to articulate the experience in my own words when no other potential souvenir was available, or I was too afraid to ask for something more substantial. The first part of the title speaks to that intense want to be held, mean something to someone, and feel the warmth of intimacy in more than just a physical sense. However, this also speaks to the other side of the story, the possibility that the men with whom I interact and engage intimately might face similar concerns and feelings and mind find themselves speaking to me in hopes of understanding their frustrations or confusion. The dream-like space, in reality, of course, does not exist in the same way it does in the films and my exhibition; however, the walls that we put up as people to protect ourselves from whatever we are afraid of can often keep us from entering the dream-like space. Often when people are intoxicated, they are more honest with themselves and might act on their impulses with more confidence, as though their intoxication has allowed them to open the gate into the dream-like space. For many queer men and men who are questioning their sexuality, there are still many stereotypes and stigmas around what it means to be a queer man. It is therefore understandable that fear plays a large part in whether impulses are acted on.

Youtuber, 'Like Stories of Old', in their review of *CMBYN* (2017), points out that the dream world that Guadagnino creates requires a similar sort of agreement or consent from his characters, pointing out that both Oliver and Elio voluntarily entered a relationship with each other (Like Stories of Old, 2018). Although their relationship grew organically, it was able to do so because they had opened themselves up to the potential of their relationship. The space in which the story takes place supports this potential and helps it unfold by providing an un-intimidating space that is organic and natural. In contrast to *Moonlight* (2016) and *Brokeback Mountain* (2006), the dream-like atmosphere or space is frequently contrasted with spaces that take on an opposite atmosphere, placing the characters in spaces that opposed the potential that the characters' relationships had. For example, Chiron and Kevin are not allowed the space, time, or privacy to explore their relationship further until they are on the beach.

Similarly, Ennis and Jack do not explore their relationship unless they are in the presence of nature. The one time that Ennis breaks away from the façade of a heterosexual married man outside of the dream-like space, his wife sees him and becomes a force of resistance against his relationship with Ennis. In all three films, the characters enter the dream-like space at their own will. Oliver applies to be Mr Perlman's research assistant. Ennis and Jack apply for work

on Brokeback Mountain. Chiron looks for an escape and finds his way to the beach despite the distance. Kevin invites himself to sit down beside Chiron. The choice or decision of the characters to engage and enter these dream-like spaces lead to the unexpected arrival of an opportunity to explore their sexuality. For Elio, the dream-like space is his everyday experience because the house he lives in is the centre of his dream-like space and does not offer any threats to his own discovery of self and sexuality.

Inspired by the various settings of the three films and the specific intentions to present the viewers with a visual set in the past, I decided to base my garden in a Victorian/Edwardian era or 19th century (fig. 7). The TV mini-series *Brideshead Revisited* (1981), set in part at Sebastian's large family estate that was incredibly expansive and served as the backdrop of their blossoming intimacy, primarily inspired the decision to base my garden in this specific period. There are, of course, other notable romantic period films or series which use expansive gardens and stately manners as their backdrops. Films like *Pride & Prejudice* (2005), *Maurice* (1987), *Little Women* (2019), *Kill Your Darlings* (2013), and many more make use of this period as the time-setting for their various romantic films. While some of these films and the case study films were produced and released in the last 20 years, the films still managed to achieve an overall visual aesthetic that leads the audience to believe that the actors were really in the 19th century. The 19th and early 20th centuries are popular background settings for many romantic films, whether these are based on the heterosexual romances of Jane Austin or the queer intimacies of Evelyn Waugh.

Based on the layout of the botanic garden, my garden splits the natural exhibits into four attractions or spaces commonly found at botanic gardens (figs. 8-11). A) the rose garden – a showing of the best and most beautiful moments of intimacy. B) the conservatory – intimacy sustaining, conservation and cultivation. C) the maze – a collection of confusing moments. D) the lake and folly – the forgotten moments, looking back at what is now in the past. These four areas or spaces each hold a series of collections that speak to the space's specificity and function in a traditional botanic garden or stately manor house garden. Remembering Virgil's creation of Arcadia, the garden merges my imagination with existing spaces and buildings as a reference. In doing so, one could argue that I am, in part, also following Virgil's approach to creating my "imaginary realm of perfect bliss" (Panofsky, 1955:299-300).

a) The Rose Garden

Known in the plant world as the ‘queen of flowers’, the rose typically only blooms in summer. Roses were grown initially throughout Asia before they were brought to Europe by explorers and fanatics. Josephine Bonaparte, for example, the wife of Napoleon, was highly passionate about roses and built a rose garden that contained around 250 different roses from all over the world. The American Rose Society classifies roses into two groups: old garden roses and modern roses. Up until 1867, roses were cultivated in distinct classes until the debut of the hybrid tea rose, leading to new rose types (Chicago Botanic Garden, 2021).

While my collection of roses does not rival Josephine Bonaparte’s in the least, my rose garden is based on the various ideas that roses have come to represent, mainly love and romance. Like the various types of roses, the pieces that relate to this space are various blooming moments. Moments that could be described as show-worthy, romantic, idyllic. Much like the rose, these memories are beautiful and come in various colours, but they are few and far between which, like the rose, only blooms in the summer months. This speaks back to the idea of climate-related desire carried through *CMBYN* (2017) by the presence of nature and warm weather. However, much like the romance with Oliver, the rose’s bloom does not last forever.

b) The Conservatory

Originally conservatories were constructed of stone and served as food storages; however, in modern times, it is constructed of glass and steel (Oak Conservatories, 2021). The conservatory is sometimes also referred to as a glasshouse or a greenhouse. In 1844 the Palm House, a conservatory that still stands today in the Kew Gardens, was constructed by Richard Turner and is known today as the most important surviving Victorian glass and iron structure. My conservatory’s design is based on the Palm House, which recreates the rainforest’s climate as it is home to a collection of global tropical plants (World Heritage Journeys, 2021). A lot of the research and conservation happens in and around the various conservatories and glasshouses in the space. These spaces allow scientists the opportunity to collect and access plants that would otherwise be in other parts of the world. In many ways, the conservatory, or its contents, mirrors the souvenir and the *objective correlative*. Removed from their original contexts, the plants in these conservatories now serve as samples of those contexts and their larger species. The plants are also held in collections to tell a story. In conservatories like the Palm House, plants are arranged in collections according to their origin countries. This

arrangement allows you to walk around the space and travel from country to country, exploring their plants. Like the collection, the conservatory presents a fuller story.

The plants kept in the Palm House collection are rare or endangered, and some are extinct in their natural habitat. I have attempted to mirror the plant collection in the Palm House in my conservatory so that both spaces host tropical plants. However, the plants are not the focus of the space, but they are an essential part of any conservatory and add to the illusion of reality that I am trying to create in these self-made spaces. The focus of the space is the wooden wardrobes and chest of draws that are very obviously out of place in the conservatory (fig. 9). These wooden pieces of furniture would eventually decay in the damp environment of the conservatory. Ironically, no matter how carefully the furniture is preserved, it will eventually, like memory, decay. The decision to include the furniture comes from the need to protect the memories or souvenirs in this space because they are considered precious. To further push the theme of the conservatory, the collection of souvenirs on display in this space will speak to intimacies or experiences that might be somewhat foreign, moments that might be exotic in that they are otherworldly, or simply just new experiences. The conservatory furthermore speaks to ideas of cultivation, conservation, and sustainability. The conservatory holds a collection of poems that deals, for the most part, with my attempts to sustain, conserve, or cultivate moments of intimacy with other men. Attempts that would hope to keep alive any spark but in most cases failed to do so. The conservatory is still filled with plants because even though things might not often work out, the people we meet stay with us. Many of the men I've engaged with intimately, especially when things were more serious, have lingered in my mind, and to some extent, I could argue that I still feed those lingering persons with thoughts and ideas about them, things they'll never know. The conservatory is that space where these thoughts and memories of important people go, not to die, but to live on.

c) The Maze / Labyrinth

Mazes and Labyrinths are often assumed to be the same thing; however, they are not. The labyrinth is a single pathed collection of curved passages that lead in from the outside. While a maze is a collection of paths, some of which lead to dead ends (National Building Museum, 2014). The maze offers more of a challenge as it is more difficult to navigate given its multiple paths changing directions. At the same time, the labyrinth encourages a more relaxed experience, given that there is no problem solving or intricate navigation involved (Lower, 2017). The space that I have created in my garden borrows from both the labyrinth and the

maze. Specifically, the design refers to hedge mazes that became popular since their debut in the 16th century as royal entertainment (Lower, 2017). The collection on display in this space speaks to the confusion and navigation difficulties one might find in the maze. It is representative of moments of intimacy that were either difficult to navigate or maybe left me uncertain. Furthermore, the collection also might speak to the fact that sometimes partners might be walking two very different paths, or there might be misdirection from a specific party. The maze space attempts to display these thoughts and ideas while still creating an experience more like the labyrinth and not disorientating like the real-life maze experience.

d) The Lake and Folly

Garden follies are said to have a kind of magic to them, often standing out in their landscapes with no clear path leading to them or any clear idea of their function. Garden follies began appearing in English and French gardens around the 18th century, at first as an extravagant decoration and a sign of wealth. However, they soon began to “symbolise the romantic traditions of landscape architecture” (Dimarco, 2010). Garden follies have appeared in many iconic romantic films’ landscapes, including *Pride & Prejudice* (2005) and *Brideshead Revisited* (both the 1981 TV mini-series and the 2008 film). The folly, as a monument that is constructed as a faux historic signifier, is essentially already a ruin from the moment of its construction and could be considered a waste of money and time given that it is essentially a dysfunctional building. As a signifier in my work, this space contains memories of experiences long lost to history or were already in their beginning destined to become ruins, a folly or fool’s errand before they even began. The folly is constructed of various parts taken from other follies to further the idea that various realities or contexts are at play in the space. The folly sits at the end of the garden on a lake, providing visitors a moment to reflect not only on their journey through the garden but also on their own intimacies in the past—a moment of nostalgia (fig 11).

Considering the four areas I had planned out; I employed the faux-vintage methods and ideas to put together realistic spaces set in the Victorian era. The decision to place the garden within the Victorian era might seem unnecessary; however, it further promotes the idea of an ‘unattainable past’ (Stewart, 1992) by existing in an inaccessible time. This is similar to the choices made by the directors of *CMBYN* (2017) and *Brokeback Mountain* (2006), where the film is created in recent years, but the setting is distant to highlight ideas of nostalgia and memory. Placing the garden in the virtual space creates physical inaccessibility meaning that

visitors cannot walk through the garden, but they can still experience the garden virtually through the souvenirs. The virtual garden's construction included using a collage technique to take parts of buildings from images of Victorian glasshouses or garden follies and build my own from those existing pieces.

Similarly, the furniture and décor that appears in some spaces were chosen because they fit the overall Victorian aesthetic that I wanted to achieve. Finally, the sky in each of the four spaces is used as an indicator of time. The lighting in each scene changes to match a different time of day. Starting with a clear blue-sky morning in the conservatory, the rose garden shows a midday sky with shorter shadows. The sky behind the maze is tinted in sunset colours, while the lake and folly show a darker blue sky with a small moon to signify the end of the day.

The real challenge came in trying to create souvenirs that not only looked aged but looked genuine in that they might have come from the back of someone's cupboard, long forgotten. The souvenirs are created and inspired by my collection of poems and illustrate the situations described in writing. This has proven to be the most difficult, trying to not only create souvenirs that might tell a story of love lost and intimacy but a souvenir that does so convincingly. What was also important was that the souvenirs I created spoke not only to my own experiences but also to the audience's experiences. My intention is to create a souvenir open-ended enough to allow others to transfer themselves or their memories into those souvenirs so that they might be able to experience similar emotions.

Given that my writing was only in the form of letters or journal entries, it made sense to try and recreate collections of letters, photographs, postcards, and other paper-based souvenirs with my writings on them as though they were a tangible collection built up over time and put away in a memory box. This meant that a lot of my work included writing out these poems onto an actual piece of paper to scan later and use in Photoshop. After that, an image would need to be found, edited, and adjusted or redrawn and then the two would be married under a collection of faux scratches and burns, or grain and grit, to age the image (fig 12). In some of the images, the age is referenced using a specific frame or clothing piece, while other times, it might be that the text appears on paper aged with folds and turned up edges (fig 13). Other images might have yellow filters or sepia tones over them to play up the past time. There is, of course, a certain irony to these souvenirs that I have created because while they are supposed to look aged, they are not old objects or souvenirs. Instead, they are manipulated into looking a certain way using faux-vintage techniques and modern technologies.

In each of the four spaces mentioned, there is a selection of objects. In the rose garden, there are six different coloured roses encased in glass domes (fig. 8). In the conservatory, there are six wardrobes/draws (fig. 9). There are four statues in the maze (fig. 10), and near the folly, there are four objects on the lake (fig. 11). Each of these objects are clickable on the site and takes the viewer to a new window. The clickable items will be highlighted using various methods; for example, the wardrobes in the conservatory open when a mouse is dragged over them, and the encased roses light up. These small changes in the scene will alert the view to the object and allow them to click. Once they've clicked, a new window will open, and one of the collaged souvenirs based on my writing will appear in a new window. The new window can be reminiscent of the thoughts that pop into our heads when we think about someone we haven't seen in a while, or even the tabs or space we leave open for people. Once the viewer has clicked on all the clickables, their screen will be filled with a collection of souvenirs as though they were looking into a drawer of old postcards, love letters, and images from a garden they visited a long time ago.

As I mentioned, my original intention was to create a self-immersive space; however, this is not possible given the socially distant lifestyle we have become accustomed to. While this might be a downside, it has interestingly made me more aware of the importance of intimacy and the sort of access we used to have to that intimacy as not only queer people but people in general. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has, in my experience, further highlighted the need for intimacy as many people were forced to spend weeks and months with minimum contact. The same experiences I had been documenting in my writing have now become entirely inaccessible, further separating me from those experiences while further supporting the existence of my garden as a memory of what once was and now no longer is. This also highlights souvenirs' essential role in our lives, as things like intimacy might not be the easiest to access and navigate. Another positive is that because my garden is virtual and exists on a website, it can travel across the world without the limitations of being fixed to a specific space as a physical exhibition might.

Conclusion

In researching, writing, and creating the final outputs for this MFA, I have come to understand that the lack of interest I had in one-night stands and quick hook-ups was in no way something of which to be ashamed. I have learned that while this might be how other queer men interact, it does not mean that the experience of queer intimacy needs to be the same for all. Furthermore, I have come to understand the various politics at play in producing a film or tv production that hopes to feature queer intimacies. While this might not be as much of an issue in recent years, there has certainly been a great deal of misrepresentation of queer intimacy in modern media. Not only because of heterosexist behaviours and norms, but also because very seldomly was no attempt to investigate queer intimacy honestly. Looking at Eliot's *objective correlative* and Stewart's writing on the souvenir and the collection, I have been able to investigate the meaning of objects in relation to nostalgia and memories and the role these phenomena play not only in our everyday lives but also in the telling of queer stories. In this thesis, my focus was on proving that realistic, if romanticised, relatable presentations and representations of queer intimacies were possible. Through an in-depth analysis of three case studies, I concluded that this was indeed possible, given that the creators of the film can make use of *objective correlatives* to reveal further the inner working of a character's mind and emotions. In previous attempts at queer representations, the lack of *objective correlatives* led to characters lacking substance. Furthermore, the queer characters require a different kind of emersion that fully envelops the audience in the character's world. The use of nature, colour, music, sound, camera angles in a way that adds to the overall narrative is essential in the telling of queer stories.

Using the themes, aesthetics, theories, and ideas I explored and discussed in this paper, I have put together a virtual installation experience, which takes the form of a virtual botanic garden of remembrance. The use of faux-vintage methods and a 19th century / Victorian era should convince the viewer that they are in a different world altogether. Through their garden investigation, they will find souvenirs, love letters and old images of loves gone by and moments in the sun. The garden aims to represent the nostalgia that comes from intimacy regardless of your sexual orientation. In doing so, I hope to highlight similarities between what we consider queer love and heterosexual love. When love comes around, we are happy to have found it, and when it has gone, we are broken. I hope that the audience might find a story of their own in the exhibition, or maybe the love they had thought they'd lost forever.

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Appendix A

Poems during editing and selection.

CONSERVATORY	
	collection, display, record/records, specialist (collections), preservation, cultivation, conservation, sustainability
1 026	amongst flashing lights safe enough to kiss me
2	maybe tonight might be the night you'd understand what I have been waiting for
3 029	I had not yet realised that I'd fall for you
4	how I wanted more than anything to take you home and hold you.
5 109	every time our hands touched you woke the butterflies in my stomach
6	why do you look so good dancing in the distance
7	and just like that we're here again thighs rubbing under the table
8	close enough to feel // your breath on my lips // as your hand rubbed the crevice of my back.
9	you smelled of comfort in pocket I could place my hands into my heart spilled onto my shirt.
10.	remember you had asked me "kiss (me) you"
11.	

ROSE GARDEN

present and grow, open to view, on show, special awards, best,
most beautiful, again

1 Wednesday
halfway through the week
half way through waiting to see you again
waiting at our place
although you don't know it as that.

2 ~~might~~ your eyes found me near the bar
and your arms
wrapped themselves around me
and for a moment
I knew what it meant to be missed
maybe that's what I've been looking for
all this time.

~~wasn't~~
3 you were honest

4 you met me at the edge of town
where I found the courage
to sing every song
my heart has sung
for you

move to a new section

5 digest what you could never bare to
swallow
neck stained with imagined kisses
my heart dried out on the bedside table

6 watched me fall for you
whispered sweet nothings in
my ear at 4 am
shove me to secrecy
forced the details of our intimacy
down my throat
where it would bubble and boil
and make me yearn for more
until I was yours
made up of you
consumed (by you)
and stuck.

"Still got your things here
and they stare at me like souvenirs
don't wanna let you out my head."
— Arveon, "Heartbreak Anniversary"

7. Back and forth
between loneliness
and wanting you to hold me
and not knowing
how to tell you.

8 I wanted you to know me,
down every isle of my heart
in every room.

MAZE

Confusion, puzzle-like, difficult to navigate, choice of pathways
misdirection.

- | | | | |
|---|--|----|--|
| 1 | I didn't know I'd find you here again
this time seated next to you
while you counted
the teeth of a friend with your tongue | 6 | I wasn't good enough
but like a fool I'd brush it off
(and) tell you "It's okay to hurt me". |
| 2 | ^(fall) I fall asleep hoping that this would mean
than 10 teeth against your tongue.
and a 5am goodbye | 7 | I went to look for you last night
my mind clouded with uncertainty
as I searched the room for a familiar
face, open arms |
| 3 | turn to the girl next to me
and choose her
over and over and over
and leave me with broken hopes | 8 | 026
a double gin and tonic for
for a single |
| 4 | the illusion
wasn't died as they turned on the
lights and swept away the night, leaving
with whatever hope I'd brought
from home in my hip flask. | 9 | 002
I had invited you to hold me
when I knew you couldn't. |
| 5 | I never expected to (once again)
be convinced of my feelings for you
as you hugged me with
me I jab at you
with (an unintentional) dagger of the past
you removed it gently
with
I felt the way you ignored me again
every other time | 10 | fuck you
fuck you for grabbing my attention
swooning me with quiet touches
and now
now that I'm here
you're nowhere to be found
hiding with someone else
who grabbed your attention
from me. |
| | | 11 | hungover from building up the
courage to ask you
to try love ^{me} one last time. |

LAKE AND FOLLY

ruins, gardens past, ornamental, ^{MOVIES} our minds wander, the after/end

1 speaking to you that night
019 reminded me
of something
I can barely begin to remember.

008
8 I used to stare into your eyes
hoping there'd be more focus
than 20 minutes at 3am
your hand in my hair.

2 ⁰⁰⁶ moments between hearing your name
and leaving
without saying goodbye

9 I never cried over you but
it's rained so many times since

3 ⁰¹² stuck somewhere between
hands wanting to remember
and struggling to forget

~~with the wind~~
019 breathing in the ocean
waiting. what a waste
of time. waiting
for a love that couldn't
even risk the wind.

4 see these scars/scabs on my palms
from holding onto the thorns
hidden among the roses
you gave me.

5 I am just another boy
who fell too far

ww ~~Erwan~~
m.m Erwan Gasco
Erwan Gasco

6 love you feel distant
020 like the soft faded blue
of the far away mountains

7 no matter how many times I write about
it // I can't seem to forget.

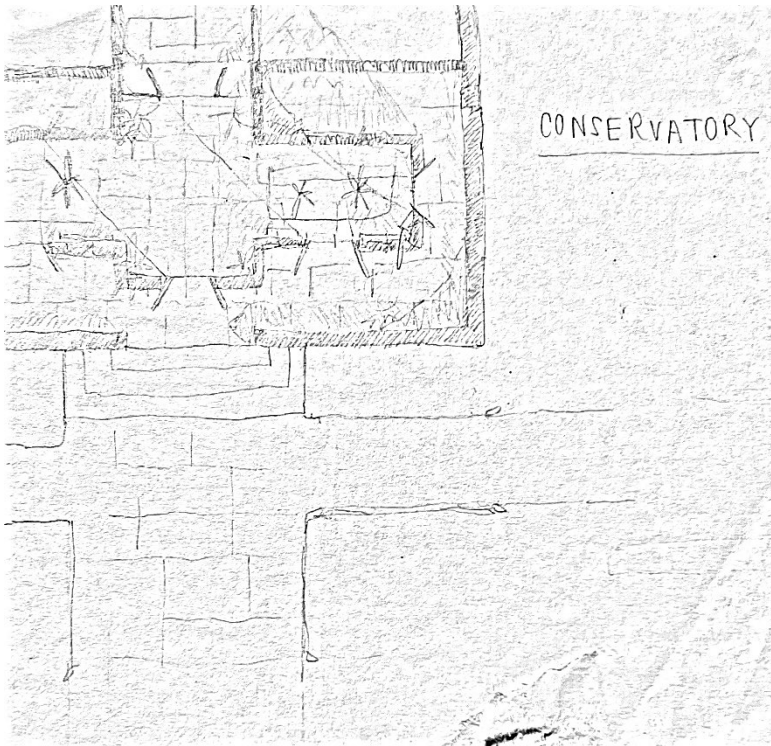
10 I stand at the end of the garden
looking at my work
my love;
alive.

Some where
before now
beyond the flowers
behind your eyes
between the ^{full} moon and ^{setting} sun
beneath ~~the~~ ^{shooting} stars
below the clouds
beating like your heart
by
an empty ^{hand} ~~heart~~ open to yours
" bodies bearing the see "

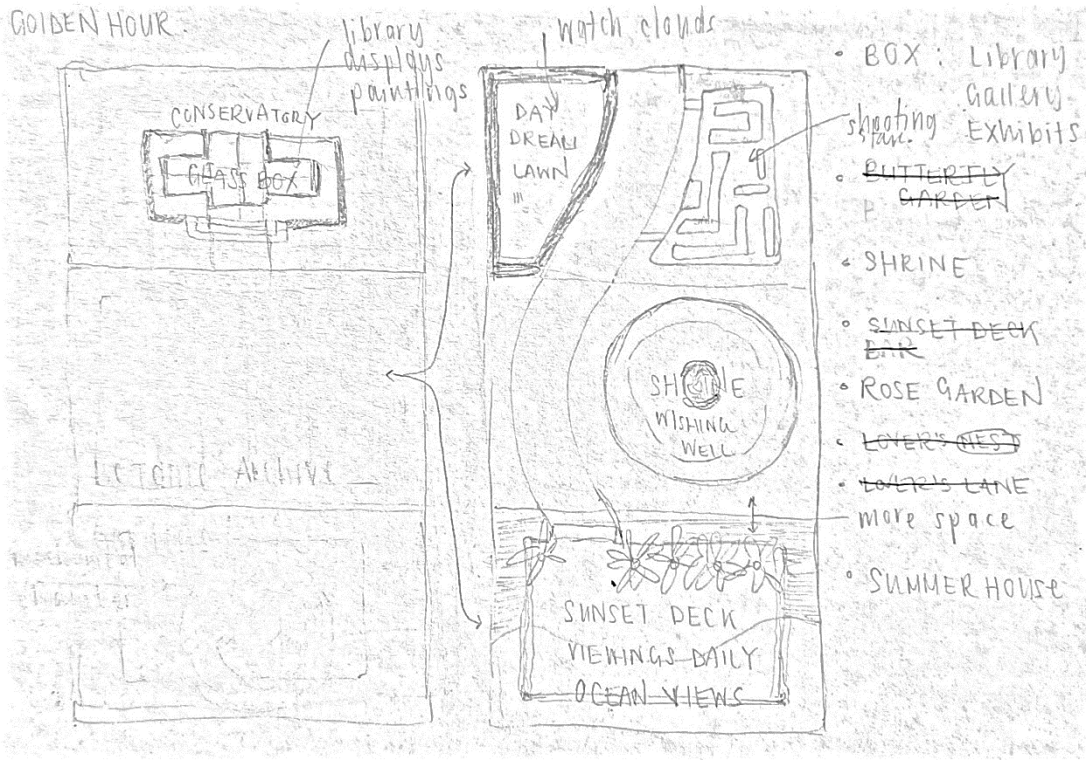
i wait for you
beyond the flowers in your eye
between a full moon
and the setting sun
bathed in golden light
blue because i miss you
some where before now
beneath the shooting stars
beaten
" at the end of light."
" night endless
in all directions"

Appendix B

Drawings and sketches of garden ideas.



GOLDEN HOUR



- BOX: Library Gallery Exhibits
- ~~BUTTERFLY~~ GARDEN
- SHRINE
- ~~SUNSET DECK~~ ~~ENTR~~
- ROSE GARDEN
- ~~LOVER'S NEST~~
- ~~LOVER'S LANE~~
- more space
- SUMMER HOUSE

SOME-
WHERE
a garden utopia park

OASIS
sanctuary

