

Tenderness



TEN·DER·NESS

/'tendərnəs/

Showing concern or empathy; easy to cut or chew through; sensitive to pain; easily injured by severe weather and therefore needing protection; requiring tact or careful handling; young, immature, and vulnerable.

FOREWORD

Re Parsons, Editor

Tenderness has been stolen from us.

This was my reoccurring thought as the world reared its head again on the other side of its isolation, a further cause of trauma and oppression for many in and of itself.

Tenderness has been stolen from us, and care alongside it. It's been given a price tag, a few thousand new books, and a category on the Indigo website.

Self-help, self-care, self-obsessed; tenderness and its many labels have been seized and transformed into a neoliberal individualist's wet dream. What was once a serious opportunity for systemic change has been swallowed, digested, and excreted by the late-stage capitalist machine.

And yet, tenderness persists.

Where she is trampled, tenderness re-emerges tenfold, supported by a web of intimacy and empathy; supported

through recognizing and acting on the fact that our lives are necessarily interdependent; through emphasizing and learning from the often made-invisible radical care acts performed by oppressed folks; and through so much more.

This was my vision for this edition of Syphon: to contribute to the dialogues of radical softness by highlighting these acts alongside the often-made-invisible communities that materialize and integrate radical care practices into the everyday. In the spirit of interdependence, we wanted to reignite and refuel intimate creative processes both inside and outside of Modern Fuel.

The artists in this edition of Syphon highlight tender care acts that have survived the wrath of the pandemic. Julia Miranda's *Child's Play*; Nic Wilson's *Lube*, Natasha Jabre's *Tender Care*, and Kaya Joan's *The artist sitting on the floor in their room* gently expose

the tenderness that seeps into the cracks of our bodies and bedrooms; Meenakashi Ghadial and Megan Samms respond tenderly to lost traditions and cracked kinships. For some, tenderness implies weakness that requires tact and protection. For us, tenderness creates interdependent communities that build the foundation of what we want the world to be (see Nadine Nakagawa's *Moss*).

Although it may seem like tenderness has been stolen and conquered, the artists prove how she has been keeping us afloat all along.

Tenderness is where it all begins, dear reader. As you dive into this edition of Syphon, I encourage you to think about this, and leave you with a question that I still ponder myself: **in a society that often seems to commodify and exploit tenderness, how can you nurture and protect the radical softness that forms the foundation of the world you aspire to create?**

Modern Fuel Artist-Run Centre is located at Unit #305 at the Tett Centre for Creativity and Learning, 370 King St W, Kingston, ON
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www.modernfuel.org



SYPHON

Syphon is an arts and culture publication produced by Modern Fuel Artist-Run Centre that is meant to act as a conduit between the arts community in Kingston and communities elsewhere. It was created in response to the lack of critical arts commentary and coverage in local publications, and seen as a way to increase exposure to experimental and non-commercial art practices.

Syphon has a mandate to feature local arts coverage in conjunction with national and international projects, and an emphasis on arts scenes and activities that are seen as peripheral. It acts, in essence, as a record and communiqué for small regional arts communities throughout the country.

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LUBE

Nic Wilson

During the summer, houses on Vinalhaven are rented by the week. They range in size and taste, attracting families from suburban Boston, Albany, Portland, and beyond. Some families come lashed together in clumps of husbands, wives, aunts, uncles, children, and grandchildren. Week after week they pile into the slumped dwellings that once housed the lobster fisheries. Between each set of guests we come to clean and reset this little island's vacation cycle.

During one of these resets, I came across an unopened travel-sized bottle of Astroglide on a bedside table. The bottle was completely full and the room was tidy: the bed was made, the towels were hung on racks to dry, there were no socks under the bed. This room was a record of conscientious guests, which made the presence of the lubricant bottle seem more like a gratuity than an oversight. I picked it up and hefted the small plastic bottle. There was a swell of sadness in that unused bottle abandoned in the otherwise spotless bedroom. What chances were left untaken? What desires left in the dark? Too tired? Too sunburnt? Too much time spent arguing over the restaurant? Too many kids, or friends, or relatives? What ate up all the desire that left this bottle so full?

I like a steady draft of distraction while wielding my atomizer of vinegar and water – while spraying the slick porcelain, wiping away the wisps of pubic hair, and sweeping the growing dunes of sand down one step after another and out the front door. I like to borrow people's vacations based on what they take or leave behind. Empty bottles of liquor, the brands either

lavishly expensive or extremely cheap and never in between, are often piled up by backdoors. Plastic jugs of vodka with diffusers to stem the flow of alcohol into frozen mugs and oversized perfume bottles from Austria or Portugal sometimes sit half-full on kitchen tables. Packs of playing cards are common, as is the constant fluctuation of cutlery, beach towels, and toiletries. Every so often I come across something seemingly storied, like the Astroglide.

I like to imagine the delight and desire in the purchase of this small bottle of personal lubricant; the thrill of shame

“This bottle asks for pleasure on the part of the penetrated. Lubricant is comfort in the face of a difficult task: a gesture of support, a reminder that getting fucked is hard work no matter who's doing what.”

when placing it onto the conveyor belt; the flush of heat that arises when the intimacy of sex and the performance of shopping collide in public; the sheen of kink implied by lubricant; the questions unspoken by the other customers and the cashier.

Lubricant implies a kind of 'unnatural' sex that the body will not, under present circumstances, permit. This fluid of augmentation implies the unspeakable orifice and the time it takes to enter. It speaks for the filthy act and the stained sheets and the bent double, hands-and-knees animal posture of submission. It might also imply an unseen supporting player; a rubber appendage or a vibrating wand. There may even be a reversal in the mix. A husband and father grasping his ankles and melting into the ancient mattress as his wife of thirty years, mother of his three children, grinds a foreign object against his prostate.

This bottle asks for pleasure on the part of the penetrated. Lubricant is comfort

in the face of a difficult task: a gesture of support, a reminder that getting fucked is hard work no matter who's doing what. Lubricant makes getting fucked something someone does rather than something that is done to them. It's a love letter to reception, to opening up and enjoying it.

This bottle is a glimpse into someone else's pleasure—but also mine. At my most romantic, I think of it as something between two people. Perhaps a man with a goatee and a woman with a Pittsburgh Steelers handbag. It's an idea hatched through teasing. One

brings up 'vacation anal' as a joke and the other latches onto it as "something they've always wanted to try." "Why not give it a shot while we're on the island this summer?" There's something sweet about that bottle, the idea that buying it may have been the hardest thing they've ever done, but they did it and it was a thrill, even if they only got that far. This bottle was a deviant performance executed in a theatre of decency because this wasn't Gun Oil or Spunk or some other designer brand of lube from a specialty shop. This was bought-it-at-Walgreens Astroglide.

Would they ever feel the need to come out as someone who likes to get pegged, or likes to peg? Often at parties straight men in various states of intoxication will tell me in a tone that bares significant resemblance to a confession that they wish their wives would fuck them – or that they already do. The powerlifting barista 230 feet away? He's on Grindr because he wants to get fucked and his wife wants to watch. It amuses me to think about a world in which

this kink would constitute a sexuality. This lube, the imagined appendage, and the implied activity could be the

“This lube, the imagined appendage, and the implied activity could be the axis around which a group of people could gather an identity, a culture, a struggle for representation, and an implied discrimination.”

axis around which a group of people could gather an identity, a culture, a struggle for representation, and an implied discrimination. To me, the absurdity of such a world reflects sharply on the one we live in. The strap-on closet might be as absurd as any other. What are these untold perverse possibilities behind the eyes of the drugstore onlookers? And what are the illuminated inspirations awash on a sea of examples viewed with great patience and acuity? How long has this desire been stoked by online longings that might creep through the screen or leak out of gossip and erotic fan-fiction?

Maybe one or both are too tired or too afraid to ask. The idea goes sour, having never found the appropriate place to land. The moment was never right or never came. What were they thinking?

“The thought of their bodies disappearing into each other was one thing, but what could a small bottle of lubricant undo in just one week of summer vacation?”

Those 'other selves' were not the kind of people they could be, not even on vacation. Some are so emboldened by vacation that they feel they can be other people, stoking their personal mythology alongside a bonfire at the beach. Part of that mythology might include a small bottle of lube that has no use off-island. The thought of their bodies disappearing into each other was one thing, but what could a small

bottle of lubricant undo in just one week of summer vacation? How much could it loosen? How much could it let

flow, especially unopened, filled to the brim, bursting with disuse? Now that the other space of maybes is exhausted, toiled away on shellfish and cheap white wine, the moment for a different kind of excess is gone. The heated, dripping animals that they could've become grow distant and eventually disappear.

The bottle may have curbed some of my own insatiable longing – or maybe it was fueled by my speculation. Either way, it was worth the sadness that came with an afternoon of daydreaming this ideal domestic tragedy. Maybe it's due to my upbringing that I contemplate the existential horror of the upper-middle classes, pondering the secrets of the suburbs in film and television. From *Blue Velvet* to *American Beauty* and *Six Feet Under*, the march of white melodrama runs my mind on days that aren't spent

be peg boys, peg girls, or peg people standing century, waiting for the right moment and the right mix of desire and circumstance. I like the bottle and the faint liger of Acqua di Parma butted up against the sharpness of vinegar – the way that clean, fresh smells help recall the memories of the sweat and shit that they eradicate. I like the summer. I like some of the things that are imagined into the world through the crucible of silence, shame, or absence. I like vacuums and I like the vortex.



CARING

Frances Koziar

is how we spend our time
these days. I help you bathe
as the morning sun dapples you, spotting
you as age has spotted you, pinpointing
a face that is still the same even
when everything else is not. Bright star
of my heart, moon
of my night, first flower of spring
and fire-gold of fall, my words crumble
like the past before your miracle,
wash away smooth as river stones,
vanish like the details
of our story.

Medication is our new morning ritual
and our evening one, but I give it to you
thinking of years gone by
when I struggled to keep up with your
energy; you – like solar rays
on alabaster stone, and like the stone too,
holding up walls for a lifetime – somehow
it is you who stumbles
as you walk these days, hardly able
to see across a room, and it is I
who holds us together, carries
the memories like travel packs
slung over one aged shoulder,
as you forget what it took to get us here, forget
that hardship forged us like a blacksmith's
steel, forget that everything I did
was for you, forget that I chose this house
for you.

We were prisoners once, inmates
trapped behind bars forged
of life and the darkness
of people, clawing our way to the surface
to breathe, fighting
side by side as wayward
adventurers. Tendrils of hope
reached through that despondent dank
and touched us, and you – you

were part of it: you came and we went
together, following trails that didn't yet
exist, struggling for a freedom we didn't yet
understand, fighting for this:
a quiet home in a quiet life, a place
full of love, adventure left behind
for the young.

Your steps are slow and steady now
like an ageing stream no longer sure
that it's going the right way, wanting only
to sink into the soft moss of the riverbed
and sleep. Yet still,
you follow my voice: knowing it,
somehow, though you've forgotten
the years, knowing my smell
as I know yours, trackers
trained to one scent for decades, following
a light that has always led
to shore, following the fireflies in your laughter
that pierce the night like diamonds, even
as the world turns grey like the in-between
of dusk, blue fading
like clothing worn so long, bleached
by sun and water, worn thin
by life.

In twilight, I wake before you, remember
how much you were and how much
you have become, tenderness guiding
my hands, love like a bright spark
of electricity that I give to you even
when you don't want
your medication, even
when you stumble or look around
for what you heard, I am here –
care-taking, song-making, picking up
where you left off, taking your hand
as once you took mine, saving you
as once you saved me,
loving you through my care
like a campfire on a dark
forest night, flames
glimmering, heart
burning, shining
through the trees: a beacon
I will always give
to call
you home.



COOLING NONNI'S FEET
Alessandra Pozzuoli



PAIN
David



THE CHRONIC ILLNESS COMMUNITY GARDEN

Danny McLaren

we declare it a slow morning and arrive out of order, across the day. offering check-ins as greeting, enacting care as hello. we take work in shifts as we shift, in and out of capacity. of pain, pressure, and fatigue. breath and breathlessness. burst of energy, then rest.

seedlings go into the ground. slow, unwieldy, but they will take root in their own time and bear fruit in uneven bushels, weigh down stems and trellises in familiar forms.

I drink water to stave off the oncoming migraine. you bundle mint for loved ones. our abundance, always something to share with those who couldn't make it today. yard work and care work are one in the same.

I leave early, or perhaps right on time, according to our collective timelessness. veggies and herbs will grow; nourishment is on its way. like some kind of promised crip future.

mutual aid embodied in the first ripened tomatoes of the summer and fresh, ever-resilient mint that grows where it shouldn't. where we've desperately tried to curb it. but it doesn't die, grows sideways up the wall instead. sticks out in a way that is so familiar, we welcome it in.

we'll make soup when the weather gets cold and the crops begin to die. I look forward to our collective hibernation and our re-emergence in the spring, when our bodies allow it.

Artwork by Kelsey Newman Reed

- A. No children dig in the sand under the swings.

In the community gardens, cautionary signs appear.
This year's volunteers? Only an improvised sink
and bottles of bleach have self-seeded.
Pencil-thin fruit trees, when they gather, must
be planted with stealth. *No one was here.*

Stranger things emerge from her own soil,
turned by brittle red scoops. The glass gems
fail to germinate, irradiated by the late snows.
Long-extinct forms emerge instead:
apatosaurus, tyrannosaurus, triceratops,
and the resting tuatara, the one who has
survived everything, and still goes on.

- B. The dinosaurs are all sick. The apatosaurus especially
has a cough. *It's not a good cough,* she frowns.

Worse, her mother's ceramic owl has chipped its ear and
isn't getting better. She uses every tool in the plastic box:
Stopwatch. Nasal aspirator. Saxophone.
Her tenderest voice.

The thermometer clicks to the green smiley face, but
the crack is still there.

- C. *Stand on the green squares,
step only on the green.*

*All the ground all around
is lava in between.*

*Tip one domino
and all around the town,
clitter-clatter, click-clack,
we all fall down.*

- D. *I made a web,* she says. *It's only a decoration.*
It's a tangled geometry of wild red wool, warped across
mismatched chairs. *See? It's an X. And another X.*
That's a trap. Her inner logic satisfied.

The family cat falls easily for such bait; we keep her from ingesting it.
The plastic salamander is not so lucky. It hangs there, suspended
by its back leg, and cannot be helped. *It's the rule that cannot be*

broken, she insists. I dismantle it before I go, pocket the compacted tumbleweed
and walk home, into the web of my own knotted arguments.

- E. I cross to the other sidewalk,
watch them navigate the next approach.

They hug the snowbank walls, the three of them,
carefully filed. The retriever's on the lead.

The woman steers from the centre, her voice transparent acrylic.

Walk behind me. Behind me, Ashen. Do you hear me?

Til they pass us. And he does.
But what does he see through her?

Her body's maternal morphing
into a plexiglass shield.

- F. The rules she knows!
Recites by heart
woodpeckered
reminders.

*When we cross the street,
we hold hands, she says.
When I'm not wearing a mask,
I stay far away.*

Aloud, I agree. Under my frosty breath, I mutter curses
as I struggle to mould the cold cartilage of her ear
into the mask's loop. *Isn't this meant to be elastic?*

My attempts outnumber the mask's tyrannosaurus citizens,
compliant and well-spaced across its yellow fabric.

Now she's pirate-blinded and somehow still
exposed.

- G. Our breath catches: *Look!*
A glimpse of daffodils forced in isolation
behind municipal greenhouse glass, gleaming
in the afternoon sun. Imagine
the scent of them, with no body
to breathe it. A satin-soft humidity,
sneeze-sharp with force of life.

- H. We tuck apple seeds between
sheets of paper towel,
tape them to the window
to sprout.

In the frigid sun, she conjures images of fruit trees she's never seen.

Days later, we explicate their ingrown roots,
remove them from their plastic bags and transcribe
their tentacles into soil-packed yogurt jars on the sill,
a tidy dispensary row.

She bends over them and whispers,
Your home is the whole wide world.

- I. Newborn mud in her garden oozes a clutch of glass gems.
A blue mastodon emerges from the glacial melt, and
in the dry crux of the honeysuckle, it appears:
the green tuatara -
long suffering last of the dinosaurs, the one who has
survived everything, and still goes on.

MOSS

Nadine Nakagawa

When you shine a bright light, moss doesn't disappear. They don't love sharp sunlight, but they don't recoil. Moss holds their ground even though they prefer damp and shady spots. That's because moss is an infiltrator.

Moss leaves are only one cell thick. They aren't vascular, they don't carry nutrients to the outer bits, and they don't try to keep up with all the lichen and hornwort. They have other ways of nourishing with less effort. Moss just is.

Moss don't have seeds. They've ruled the earth since long before seeds were invented. While I'm very invested in planting idea seeds, moss is proof that it's not necessary. *Don't worry about it*, says moss. There's lots of different ways to get the job done, including just existing.

Often, I dream of having roots that dig deep into the earth, grasping everything from rocks and mycelium to the roots of trees and exoskeletons of long-deceased pill bugs. Moss says, *forget it*. You don't need roots to survive climate change. And moss would know. They've been around 450 million years and survived many drastic climate changes (some of which they may have triggered!). Moss was there in the very beginning, and will be there in the very end.

Moss has filaments called rhizoids instead of roots. They attach to everything from a window sill to a rock face. Moss sticks anywhere, grows everywhere. Wherever there's dampness, there's moss.

Moss can photosynthesize in a temperature range from -15C to 40C. They don't die; they're as resilient as our dreams. If you see a desiccated clump

of moss completely dried out in the hot prairie sun, know they're not dead but quietly and discreetly powering up. Shhhh. Don't give the secret away. You can take moss right down to -272C and heat them up to 100C. They'll survive.

Let our social movements be like moss. We know the fight for justice is ancient and yet, despite this, moss tells us that it's all made up. None of this is real, but just collective imaginings that we've somehow been duped into believing. Moss is real, gender isn't. The GDP is completely imaginary, as are dress codes.

Moss will outlast these unfair systems. Moss will see colonialism crumble like sandstone facing waves of land defenders. There are moments when we think we have to dig really deep, making it almost impossible for anyone to uproot us. Moss says, *no*. We tell ourselves that we need to consider planting seeds for the future. Moss shrugs their luminous green shoulders. *Not necessary*. Just use your capillary spaces to soak it all up, the rain and the hope. Attach yourself wherever you can and hold on, even if only with delicate tendrils.

Our mossy movement helps others thrive. When you soak up the raindrops, it creates a humidity that draws others near. Even though we don't have roots in the soil, we can help stabilize the ground so others can jump in. Like moss, we can make it a softer landing for those who have just joined the ecosystem.

How often do you notice moss? Or alternatively, how often do you not notice moss? Constantly. The answer is: constantly.

There's moss in the cracks of the pavement, and growing along a cinder block retaining wall. Check the north side of a tree. We couldn't get rid of moss even if we tried with all of our defoliants and agent orange and gaslighting combined. Moss is going to outlast us all. They will continue to grow whenever we turn our backs. Let's

follow their lead.

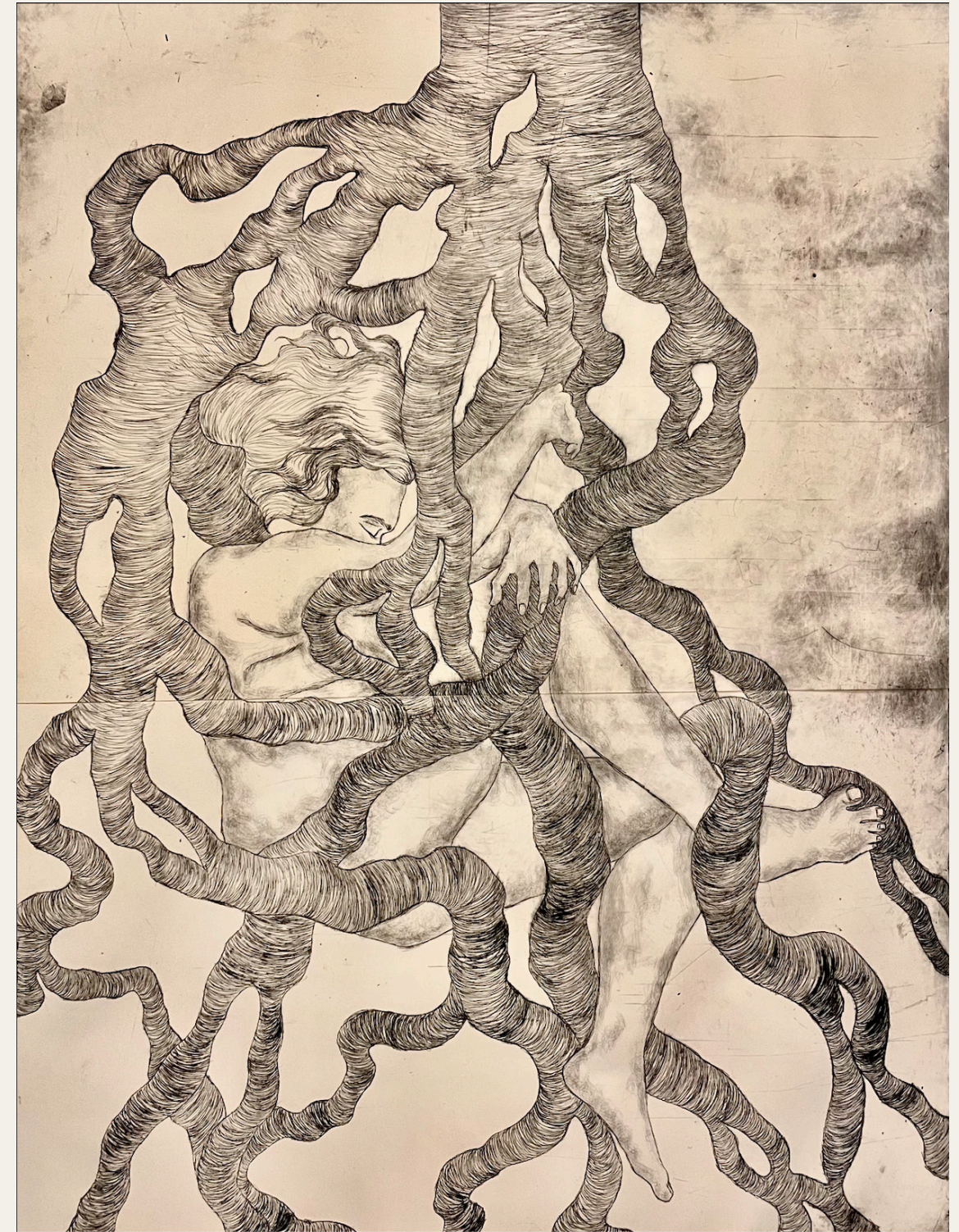
Poke one non-vascular leaf through a crack and take a look around. Settle in. Inch along a comfortable crevice, stretch out and relax. Roll your shoulders back and let the weight of the world fall off of them. This space is now ours. Look out for other moss clumps and reach towards them; eventually we will create an impenetrable wall of verdant green. This is how we change the world.

Moss is useful as well as wise. They can control the temperature of the soil and shade tree roots from overexposure. You could do that. You could shade me when I'm facing the brunt of the storm, protecting my most tender spots. Moss can be used for bandages, for cleaning wounds. They can even be used for diapers. Our movement could bandage us up and take care of us too, if we choose to let it. We could choose to take care of ourselves first, to brace our pain with springy support. We could choose complexity, choose greenness, choose us. Moss takes nutrients from dew, fog, and rainwater. We take nutrients from elders' stories, collective wisdom, and empathy. Relax your mossy self in that space between. Luxuriate.

Moss may be the biggest ally we have in the fight against climate change. All the moss in the world provides more carbon offsets than all the trees. No surprise, true co-conspiring so underappreciated that it's made almost invisible. It charms my heart to no end that moss leaves very little fossilized record of themselves. So many of us just want to do the work and be part of something. We don't need to be hardened in order to be remembered.

Moss can absorb up to twenty times their weight in water. They grow on trees but are never parasitic to the tree. Does any of this sound familiar?

It should, because there is a crack in everything, that's how the moss gets in.



TO HOLD / TO BE HELD

Mara Bureau



MOURNING WISHES, GASOLINE KISSES

Meenakshi Ghadial



TENDER CARE
Natasha Jabre

IN FLOWERS THAT ARE OFTENTIMES DOUBLE

Ioana Dragomir and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

In flowers that are oftentimes double, petals opening around a centre that is tucked away and secretive. We run our fingers along their delicate ridges, petals like blotting paper, we pluck them and dab them against our cheeks, impregnating them with our own oils and other times, if the flowers are yellow, we pluck those too and hold them under our chins, saying “this means that we like sunlight,” and it means we wish we could eat it like manna from the heavens. To not rely on the crudeness of food, molars rubbing against molars to break it down in our mouths, but to feel food that is light enter our body through our pores, to taste food with no genetic material, so entirely alien and other as it sublimates us. We want to imagine the light tasting us in return, stroking our bodies with its tendrils, blushing as it hears the thoughts we have about it, flattered at our rapture. We lick our lips and find them covered with the dusty yellow of pollen and that, too, tastes like sunlight, tastes like lying entirely naked in the grass on a summer day, like a deer in its bed, skin star-warmed and tender. And around us the world harmonizes with itself and we suckle on the tiniest petals of honeysuckle and they taste sweet and we run our tongues down the bark of trees to drink of their sap and this is sweet too and we push our tongues through the vortex of petals, parting them to reach the very centre, and this, too, is sweet. That this juice is a fertilizing fluid, as yet imperfect and not fully determinate, and when we break the surface of our tongue with its taste all of the flowering trees in the world shudder and from their limbs alight birds of all colours. Our tongues – seeking like a hummingbird’s bill, vibrating with delight even as it drinks its fill, even as it flies away, never not vibratory. For this vibration, this alchemy of tongue and sugar, is what love is. Its wings beating like the shy flutter of eyelashes against the tops of cheeks, shaking off the damp of morning, catching droplets like the silk of a spider’s web. If we could not play the spy on nature we would not notice how like our own delight is the impulse that pulses through the petal of a peony, how it be-pinks the flower like the blood that brings a blush to our own cheek and elsewhere. How when a peony droops its head it does not do so out of shame but because it is so overwhelmed that it must prostrate itself before the world, which is so wondrous and vast. And how when ants crawl out of it and into it, that is not so different from us either, so entirely penetrable are we both, blindfolded and doubly aware of the feather-light touch of ants like hesitant fingertips dancing across the surface of our skin. Each ant following another, each finger following another, as they wind their languid way to the parts of us that are completely coated in bright yellow pollen and when they get there, we stain their feet with this dust and make them carry us in this way, to tell of what they have found and to herald our missives. For how exceedingly delicate and capable of the most refined filtration must vessels invariably become when, as we have seen above, they are closely crowded and pressed against each other. We are a vessel too but we do not yet know what we carry. Our womb that is a world contracts in on itself and it expels forward not red blood but yellow, golden and glowing and smelling like a gasp. We smear it against our cheeks in masks of pure elation, colour our eyelids with it so that we smell enticing to each other and every pollinator in our vicinity, who is drawn to this yellow as if it were a beacon, shining straight and so strong into the sky, announcing our ripeness. We crowd and press each other as they make their advances. Honeyed words made sweeter still by the knowledge that we are seen in our so-much-ness, not two but infinite, each grain of pollen, of blood, a fractal winding down into forever. Our fingertips dance in front of our eyes, buffeted by the wind that carries our scent, these fingers less infinite but they too may branch. And we graze with our hands our navel from which we began and feel the radial power of its connectivity, this space of us where we first burst open and grew forth. Indeed, it must occur here, for the delicate parts are pressed together in the center of the flower and they can thus associate most intimately. We weave our legs together, the skin of all four of our legs precisely the same temperature and firmness so that it is impossible in this figure of us to tell what used to be me and what used to be you. It does not make sense to say that we lose ourselves; we become impossibly dense and humming with energy. Our legs, a tangle of roots rooting us to the ground, turning earth to nourishment. We call to us the worms so that they may create around us an infra-thin film where everything of use in the ground may be absorbed. They press their smooth wet bodies against us and we do not flinch away. We are buried in this earth at the same time as we reach out above it, our body kept alive by the way that the soil continues to become something else. It is well known that such a bud greatly resembles the ripe seed but we have always seen you everywhere, been unable to distinguish between where you are and where you are not. The film on our eyelashes is a filter and it is attuned to you so that when we wake and rub the sleep from our eyes, it is you writhing in the haze of blurry morning. And when we draw shapes in the condensation of our bedroom window as we greet the day, we realize that the only thing we ever draw is you. It was clear when you first appeared how beautiful and wonderful you would become because from the very beginning you already contained all of your beauty and wonder inside you.

TO SKIP YOUR HEART LIKE A STONE

Michael Casteels

There was that time you were the rain
on undiscovered streets.
Your heavy rumble of thunder
rolled in as the storm reached through you
to breathe. I glanced over your shoulder
to the remains of the rippling sky.
The long seconds encroached
but the lake didn't wake.
And between each second,
a constant state of tomorrow,
reminding me that you were the clouds,
though you started small, not yet
a thunderstorm, but a sigh barely begun.



APRIL 14, 2023
Kathleen Sellars



MY BROTHER USED TO SHAVE MY HEAD ON THE PORCH

Kellyann Marie

OUT

Kait Allen

slowly
i am learning

to unhinge fear
from my jaw

wrestle the shame
from my shoulder blades

crack open my ribcage
and exhale the pain

slowly
i am learning

to inhale
permission to love myself

and forgiveness

for taking so damn long
to get here

THIS IS HOW WE CAN VISIT

Megan Samms

And every day, as it dies and light leaks, I think of you.

While I was there at the Icelandic Textile Centre, so far from our home but steeped in familiarity and similarity, I finally responded to you. My call-back found its tender shape in a partner textile to one of yours. I speak back to your hand-woven work. I don't know how or when you learned to weave, maybe from one of your parents. I don't know your story, but I know that I learned a lot by spending time together, with you, that way.

I found your weaving in your old home; each piece of the house and the textiles returning to the land – your home long gone. I found your hand-built loom there too, your initials carved deep in the grain. I found pieces, parts, and tools from your life that helped you make it, helped you make other lives, and which helped to make that house a home: your circular, hand crank knitting machine, jars of buttons, kitchen wares, photographs, glasses, a loom, a single, carefully hand-woven curtain. I thought then – a curtain is usually one piece of a pair, just as a person is one piece of a family collective. I looked around in the mould and the dust and the garbage – I unlocked old trunks and pulled open drawers stuck together with paint, opened up old closets and inspected water pipes – but I couldn't find the other part. I haven't always been able to find you either. But here, in carefully making a new curtain, to pair together

with yours and to be together through time, you reach me and I reach you.

That gesture of weaving, such old movements, of light moving through cloth and space is intergenerational making with a very, very long thread, a thread held softly between space. What you've left behind, intentional or not, weaves us together to us. What you've left, and what I've found, reminds me of who I'm from, it lets me talk to you without words, in untouchable and simultaneously tactile ways. To respond to you in this woven forward way lets me (re)imagine and maybe supply your love forward. I think that you left a fire that was unkindled for a little while. But you left tinder.

I have wondered this:

What would it have been like if intergenerational love and caring were cultivated in my own family network?

What if my great-great-grandmothers' makings were carefully passed between our family network and we had handmade things and maintained shared practices to know our kin and our place?

What would it be like if the opportunity existed to have loved my blood kin fiercely in day-to-day life?

How different everything might be.

These are questions I have, and the only way I can get near to answers is

through making. But I haven't reached any resolution. And, I guess I don't really have to – I guess that I won't. The asking, making, and moving is enough for me. Embodying that love, care, and forward passing; that fierce love is enough.

I can't help but think of my great-great-grandparents, MJH and her parents, every day – I live across the road from where they lived, I walk past the old stone foundations of their home and buildings every day; I am part of this place and their makings just like them. I think about making and weaving like a time-stamp and a place-map. By making a response-based paired curtain to MJH's woven work, I'm working and weaving to make a circle complete again, or at least partially. Though I didn't know MJH, she is someone that I come from and one to whom I owe my care and attention.

Making, for me, in any capacity, is a thread wound through my evolving understanding of life. Making with my hands is a footer for experiencing the world and allows for continual, specific, and personal meaning-making and (re)construction. So, necessarily on the way, I must deconstruct and rearrange containers that feel safe but limit me as I make my way through; replacing restrictions caused by lost love with tender conversations and visiting, with soft making and strings,

and sometimes with broad movements. Maybe instead of hard walls for containment, I'm working on something more of a membrane or soft tissue that

wraps around and through life and practice. Like cloth. Like a shroud. A web through which all things pass, make their impact, leave parts of themselves and take parts of me while they're at it, all for better or worse.

While I'm working, specifically with MJH, I notice my thinking-time to be of intergenerational knowledge, transmission and translation, care, and love – but also negative space, emptiness, and loss. I find myself thinking about putting life pieces together somehow, complete with 'gaps-and-holes', just like the way cloth is made. I'm not trying to fill gaps-and-holes, but trying to see them fully. A look toward specific cohesion. The gaps-and-holes in my family sometimes feel like gorges – like impossibilities. Working with my hands helps me understand that they're not necessarily something to be solved, or even found.

I have a deep respect for work made with hands. When I use my own hands to work and make work in the way that my ancestors have, toward makings for people and places I love, I'm moved beyond respect and into an embodied honour-state. Story and meaning carried in a bundle from person to person (in)directly in place *must* be an act of love: love for those ancestors, for those future relations, and relations who won't ever be known; love for place in the world. This action reaches around time-place to action the words "I love you". This making says "I haven't forgotten, I won't". To make is to materialize potentialities and to touch time. To make, is to architect toward – to imagine and contribute to laneways for unconditional love for us (t)here, just as we are, in a softly revived world.

What we make and then leave behind (for a time anyway) is, in the same breath, how we reach around us and ahead of us, how we stretch behind and above and beside. It's a deep time entanglement: a plying-together; a

coming-to from the before, over and over again.

This textile-talk with MJH feels like somewhat of a beginning but is truthfully, a very small filament in a very large web. That's the point of intergenerational knowledge, care, and love transmission after all – to engage, to generate more of it, in all directions, in all ways, always. I'm not

having children, so I know that this making won't be transferred directly in that way. But long-view, long lasting yet ephemeral makings have a way of gentle impact beyond the life-span of a/my body. I hope my relations have and make life and works that continue reflecting us back and forth and toward.

I think that I'm holding your hand MJH, and I'm looking forward.





THE ARTIST SITTING ALONE ON THE FLOOR IN THEIR ROOM

Kaya Joan

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR AMAZING CONTRIBUTORS FOR MAKING THIS ISSUE POSSIBLE!

ALESSANDRA POZZUOLI

is an emerging new generation artist and educator based on the traditional territories of many First Nations, including the Petun, the Haudenosaunee, the Anishinabek, and the Mississaugas of the Credit, otherwise known as King Township, Ontario. Her interdisciplinary practice explores how sacred meaning is communicated through gesture, objects, and narrative. Inspired by the material languages of generations of Italian immigrant women, Pozzuoli's work highlights women's labor as caretakers and keepers of cultural knowledge within the context of devotion, family, and death.

DANNY MCLAREN

is a queer, trans and non-binary writer and poet living in Katarokwi, what is colonially known as Kingston. They are neurodivergent and have chronic migraines, and it is their radically loving community who have taught them the definitions of tenderness and care. They have an MA in Gender Studies from Queen's University, with research focusing on trans and queer world-making in video games. They write about living queerly, loving their friends, and their own trans body. Their second poetry chapbook, titled *The Enby Manifesto*, is forthcoming from Porkbelly Press later in 2023. Keep up with them on twitter @dannymclrn.

DAVID

has been on and off of the streets for the majority of his adult life. He initially began painting out of necessity to create an income, but as the years passed painting has become a part of his daily routine as well as a cathartic outlet. David experiments with different mediums and techniques in a consistent effort to improve his art. A classic artist's tale; David is rarely

satisfied with his pieces, and lives in constant conflict that his pieces never feel complete. David believes that there is no fate but what you make for yourself from the hand that you are dealt and attributes his past trauma and suffering as necessary growing pains to create the strength he has now. At 16 years old, he wandered in and out of a library a dozen times, each time realizing he had no place to go. He cites this day as the moment that he realized he needed an escape, which he found through painting.

FRANCES KOZIAR

has published 160+ pieces of prose and poetry in over 100 different literary magazines and outlets, including in *Best Canadian Essays 2021*, *The New Quarterly*, and *SubTerrain*. She is a young (disabled) retiree and a social justice warrior, and she lives in Kingston.

IOANA DRAGOMIR

is an interdisciplinary artist and writer currently based in Montreal, Canada. Her artistic practice combines her interest in writing, literary analysis, and curation with drawing, printmaking, textiles, ceramics, and installation. In particular, poetic methodologies of juxtaposition, metaphor, and slippage are important to her practice. Her collaborator, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, has been dead for 191 years. He was a writer, too.

JULIA MIRANDA

is a writer, musician, multi-disciplinary artist, and educator. Her work has appeared in *Edible Ottawa* and includes commissioned pieces for local businesses and non-profits including Kitchen Table Seed House, Go Green Baby, and Mulberry Waldorf School. Her life and work are deeply rooted in the neighbourhoods and natural spaces

of downtown Kingston, where she has resided for 15 years.

KAIT ALLEN

is (or isn't)?

KATHLEEN SELLARS'

artwork had been exhibited nationally for over 30 years. She has received a number of creation grants through both provincial and federal arts councils, as well as Queen's University. She currently lives in Kingston where she teaches Sculpture and New Media in the Fine Art Program (Visual Art) at Queen's University.

KAYA JOAN

is a multi-disciplinary Afro-Indigenous (Vincentian, Kanien'kehá:ka, Jamaican, settler) artist born, raised in T'karonto, Dish with One Spoon treaty territory, currently based in Prince Edward County. Kaya's practice explores their relationship to place, storytelling, Black and Indigenous futurity and creation stories.

KELLYANN MARIE

is a transient seeking a life in the in-between by creating pockets of home, and through honoring the community found there. She works to connect life-art-home-godliness. Navigating a life spread from the Southern U.S to the island of Ktaqmkuk, Kellyann embraces oversharing and honest tenderness to honor the struggle of poverty as divinity with making as an inherent prayer. The resulting works are paintings layered with personal narrative – always centering the mark of the hand (to be thankful to have hands and that they would be so sweet as to leave a kiss on everything they might touch).

KELSEY NEWMAN REED

is an artist, published poet, and has always been passionate about the arts.

She has spent many years crafting poems and illustrations that tell stories of the trees, the moon, (our) hands, and the water. If she isn't able to write about nature or draw it, Kelsey will often spend time taking photos of the shadows the sun makes, and how the plants dance within it. Her work often attempts to feel serene, calm, and soft.

MARA BUREAU

is an emerging Canadian artist and a 2023 graduate of the Honours BFA Program with a minor in Art History from Queens University. Bureau specializes in drawing and intaglio, as well as oil painting. She has worked as a fabrication assistant with numerous accomplished artists, has exhibited her work in many galleries, and is a published illustrator. Bureau puts emphasis on subverting the austerity and expectations of fine art by focusing on a more intuitive way of handling traditional mediums that feel authentic and natural.

MEENAKASHI GHADIAL

is a visual artist from Brampton, Ontario currently based in Katarokwi/Kingston. She has a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours) and is currently completing her Bachelor of Education at Queen's University. Her current work focuses on figurative oil paintings that explore themes of marriage, love, intimacy, and queerness. Her inspiration draws from her experience navigating her queer identity as a second-generation immigrant in her family. Through the use of current documentation as well as archival family material, Meenakashi creates narratives that explore the particularities of intergenerational experiences.

MEGAN SAMMS

is an L'nu, Nlaka'pamux, and mixed settler interdisciplinary artist and farmer cultivating an ancestral and place focused practice. By thinking intergenerationally, Megan hopes to create tactile works that simultaneously serve then, now, and

yet-to-be relations. Megan explores decolonial values, perspective, care, and love by unearthing story-in-place, by questioning sufficiency while respectfully troubling traditionalism. They work with varied media including fibre and handweaving, natural dyes, paint, words, growing food, and tending to bees.

MICHAEL E. CASTEELS'

most recent work are the collage Westerns, ONDO (nOIR:Z, 2022) and The Man with the Spider Scar (Puddles of Sky Press, 2020). His first collection of poetry *The Last White House at the End of the Row of White Houses* was published by Invisible Publishing in 2016. He is the editor, publisher, designer, and bookmaker at Puddles of Sky Press in Kingston, Ontario.

NADINE NAKAGAWA

is an organizer, activist, intersectional feminist, creative writer, social justice fairy, and city councillor. She co-owns a consulting business called Ablaze Services and is the co-founder of The Feminist Campaign School. When not working on community projects, Nadine prances with delight towards patches of wildflowers, wears flower crowns and dresses that encourage twirling, and can be found hugging trees and embracing whimsy. Nadine identifies as a queer, mixed-race woman of colour who is a settler on the territory of the hən̓qə́m̓iḱəḱ̓ speaking peoples. She is currently learning from and about plants.

NATASHA JABRE

is an artist and teacher who works in painting, photography, drawing, printmaking and ceramics. Jabre received her B.F.A. from Concordia University in Montreal, Canada, and her M.F.A. from The University of Massachusetts in North Dartmouth. In 2021, she also received her Bachelor of Education. Jabre is an active part of the local art community. She is a board member with Organization of Kingston Women Artists (OKWA), a

member of Modern Fuel, and Kingston Photographic Club. She currently lives and works in Kingston, Ontario.

NIC WILSON (HE/THEY)

is an artist and writer who was born in the Wolastoqiyik territory known as Fredericton, NB in 1988. He graduated with a BFA from Mount Allison University, Mi'kmaq territory, in 2012, and an MFA from the University of Regina, Treaty Four Territory, in 2019 where he was a SSHRC graduate fellow. Wilson creates videos, performances and artist books, and texts. Their work often engages time, queer lineage, decay, and the distance between art practice and literature. In 2021 they were long-listed for the Sobey Art Award and their writing has appeared in *Peripheral Review*, *NORK*, and *Border Crossings*.

RE PARSONS

is a dancer, visual artist, teacher, and scholar with a background in contemporary dance, literary theory, and dance pedagogy. Born and raised in the Rocky Mountains, Re's journey led them to attain a dual BA in English and Dance from the University of Calgary and are currently pursuing their Masters in Cultural Studies at Queen's University. Their artistic practice draws heavily on phenomenology and embodies research-creation through a decolonial lens. Although constantly shifting, Re's most current research endeavors involve their passion for teaching and explore how facets of radical pedagogy can transform not only the dance realm but also infuse its revolutionary spirit into other artistic and cultural spheres.

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KINGSTON SCHOOL OF ART

& Window Art Gallery



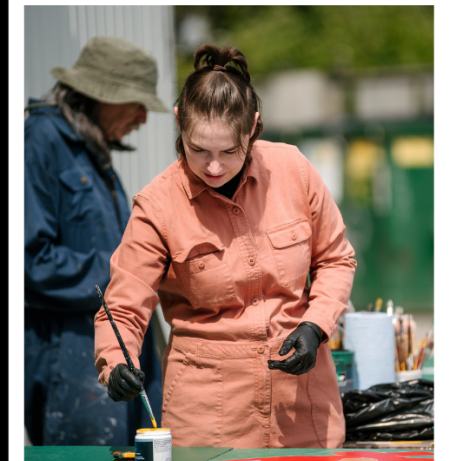
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