

FRONT DESK APPARATUS

Patricia L. Boyd

Me, not, not-me

November 13, 2019–January 31, 2020

There are things here that have been dug up.

My mother is a gardener. She plants damask roses, peonies and magnolias in her soil. Also hellebores, camellias and irises. She favors rare species. She calls them by their Latin names. *Rosa centifolia*, *Campanula latiloba*, *Paeonia lactiflora*. She breeds her own new hybrids from cuttings and seeds. They grow in small plastic pots in her greenhouse. In the winter, my mother covers the roots of her more sensitive plants with thick brown hessian. She scythes the long grasses so that they will grow back stronger when the next spring comes.

Lactiflora, from lac, milk. With milk-white flowers.

Plants are propagated, fertilized, trained and clipped. They need care and attention. Adverse conditions or the wrong soil type cause a shock to the system that could lead to disease, even death. For my mother, weeding is a constant preoccupation.

Weeds and cultivated plants compete for the use of sunlight, water and nutrients in the soil, each organism sucking greedily at the source of its survival. Weeds are often robust, able to tolerate difficult conditions and quick to spread. They clamber, creep, put down quick-to-grow rooting stems. They eject explosive seeds that are then disseminated by the wind. Some plants are considered to be weeds simply because their capacity for reproduction is so great that they can take over large areas of land in a short amount of time.

Convolvo, to twine around. *Convolvulus arvensis*: a bindweed that grows in fields. Stems climb by twisting round other plants in a clockwise direction, strangling and choking them.

In September, I asked my mother to save some of the weeds she had removed from her garden and send them to me. We discussed ways of concealing them so that they would pass unnoticed through U.S. Customs. The weeds arrived in a package, surrounded and padded by photographs stuck onto sheets of yellow card. For her purposes, these yellow sheets were just discarded materials used for the conveyance and concealment of something else. My mother had covered the weeds with photographs of flowers in bloom.

Flowers need to be pollinated in order to reproduce, and for this they must open themselves to chance. Inadvertently, an insect — thinking only of feeding itself when it burrows down between spread petals—might carry pollen from the tip of the stamen to the pistil, where the grains can travel through a tube-like passage to fertilize the flower's ovules into seeds.

Taraxacum officinale, dandelion. Hermaphroditic. A weed. Oozing from its cut flesh, a bitter, white, sticky latex that has medicinal properties. A powerful diuretic. Each flower has both male and female reproductive organs and is able to self-reproduce. Mature seeds are attached to delicate parachutes that detach from the seed head—dispersed, who knows where, by the wind.

The word *pollen* comes from the Greek *palynos*, meaning dust. Dust brings new life, and dust is what's left of dead things. When an object is moved out of its usual place, there is an unveiling of whatever has been accumulating out of sight behind or underneath it, especially if it has been in that place for a long time. The absence of care and attention has a form. Sunlight moves differently across the room. Missed deadlines. Timekeeping. *Boil chicken, more socks, pay apt + studio rent, quote for heat press, ~~call Steve.~~*

PLB, 2019

Patricia L. Boyd (b. 1980, London) lives and works in New York. Recent solo exhibitions include: Christian Andersen (Copenhagen, 2019), Cell Project Space (two-person w. Rosa Aiello, London, 2019), Potts (Los Angeles, 2018), 1856 (Melbourne, 2018), 80WSE (New York, 2017), 3236RLS (London, 2017), Modern Art Oxford (Oxford, 2014). Group exhibitions include: Francesca Pia (Zurich, 2019), Simon Lee (New York, 2019), Secession (Vienna, 2018), The CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts (San Francisco, 2017), Steirischer Herbst (Graz, 2015), the 12th Biennale de Lyon (Lyon, 2013).