

Est.
1841

YORK
ST JOHN
UNIVERSITY

Walker, Nathan (2024) Skirting. 1 ed. LLANDYSUL, Broken Sleep Books

Downloaded from: <https://ray.yorks.ac.uk/id/eprint/9854/>

The version presented here may differ from the published version or version of record. If you intend to cite from the work you are advised to consult the publisher's version:

<https://www.brokensleepbooks.com/product-page/nathan-walker-skirting>

Research at York St John (RaY) is an institutional repository. It supports the principles of open access by making the research outputs of the University available in digital form. Copyright of the items stored in RaY reside with the authors and/or other copyright owners. Users may access full text items free of charge, and may download a copy for private study or non-commercial research. For further reuse terms, see licence terms governing individual outputs. [Institutional Repositories Policy Statement](#)

RaY

Research at the University of York St John

For more information please contact RaY at
ray@yorks.ac.uk

SKIRTING

Nathan Walker is an artist and writer from West Cumbria, UK. They work across and between performance art and poetry. Their other books of performance scores and visual texts are *Condensations* (2017) published by Uniformbooks and *Action Score Generator* (2015) published by If P Then Q. They are senior lecturer of time-based practices in Fine Art at York St John University.



© 2024, Nathan Walker. All rights reserved; no part of this book may be reproduced by any means without the publisher's permission.

ISBN: 978-1-916938-04-5

The author has asserted their right to be identified as the author of this Work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988

Cover designed by Aaron Kent

Edited and Typeset by Aaron Kent

Broken Sleep Books Ltd
Rhydwen
Talgarreg
Ceredigion
SA44 4HB

Broken Sleep Books Ltd
Fair View
St Georges Road
Cornwall
PL26 7YH

CONTENTS

skirting	9
an event	10
especially that grows	11
capable of treating	12
gut in saying	13
feelings are facts	14
the plate the mouth the family	15
a sharp that moves	16
supports	17
clothes	18
body roots	19
not rinsing	20
a hot sound	21
an impression spreads	22
turning	23
sip	24
devastating convinces	25
be less grateful	26
thought has thinness	27
an act	28
cross your voice	29
a touch	30
softness	31
surfaces imagining the body	32
well is unwell	33
more than that	34
an archive of forces	35
anticipating speaking	36
closing volume	37
comfort trembles and leaves	38
dealing as as ruptures	39
tapestry of experience	40
the dark mouth	41
the hand me down	42
Acknowledgments	45
Notes	46

A sentence is partly softly after they write it. What is the difference between a sentence and a sewn... They will sew which will make it tapestry... It is partly... Think in stitches.

— Gertrude Stein

Skirting

Nathan Walker

SKIRTING

I	imagine	these	engagements	as raises
they	raise	things	up until they	are less
visible or	no longer in	reach	they give them	the heat from
breath and they	are taken	up against	against	gravity
searching	to uncover	what happened	and also	to find
a	language that	embodies	the events	you are
reliving it	is breathless	search and it	turns	something
over	in	you	skirting	the edge of
the body	I imagine	much smaller	smaller than	sound

AN EVENT

an event

of thought

thought in

the form of

an event

ESPECIALLY THAT GROWS

I	pursue	ways to
accept	what	happened
then	especially	a
thought	that grows	still

CAPABLE OF TREATING

there was even a time	when I didn't	answer the phone
I would	let it	ring her
voice	reminded me	I was still
alive	and	able to
to access	the descent of the	present
the descent into	the night	into the night of
the night	of non-exposure	exposure
I soaped	his back	I soaped his back
at	the public showers	but it got too crowded
crowded and	when I had to leave	I slipped
scattered	skin touching	
imagining	how I	accomodate
for an event to	provide	a condition
generate	my own scaffold	with or without
outside	I become ballast	myself
a spat that gutters me	that gutters me	by othering my legs
my legs	as though they permanently	crossed and somehow
twisted or untrustworthy	queer	means to
to make possible	open swerve connect	embody
curves	organs that unravel via	the subject
capable of treating	some points of the world	occurs
the real	that summons	summon us
to the abruptness of	a decision	or an instrument
of equality	a traced line that misses me	opens
to a new	present	to a new present
thinking now I wonder	is it that the door didn't fit	or was left

GUT IN SAYING

it failed me	utterly	and a
feeling	ensues looking for	a thing
that you already	you	already
have it	can even be	in your hand
and yet you	you pursue it	as if it isn't
now believe	the	simple
facts	simple facts of my	life
are ones I	already held	hold but
keep searching for	and longing or long	to find
despite myself	for imagining	them dispersed
over	the land	on the
shores	of	beaches
and	estuaries	shapely lines
impressions made	of memories	and emotions that
are too	difficult to accept	a
piano	is an	ambulance
or	radiance is	dragging
your	self	through from the
interiority of	the gut in	order to
just	saying	say tell
telling	talk	talking
apart	all the pain	thought aloud

FEELINGS ARE FACTS

how do you train	desire to enjoy	the taste of
something too	thick	a thing can
happen	and you	find
you're the only	witness you're	on the other side of it
happening	turning back to	yourself
these events	events make	ruptures
fold	folds that	conceal and seams
seams that connect	in fragments	establishing rifts
in memory	that helps	doubt
rubbing	cream	into my neck
stretching to reach	between the shoulders	shoulder
blades	where	can we
deliver the trees	time played a	part feelings are facts
when art plays	against another	cultivating the terrain
is not as difficult	in my mind	but for the wind
I go outside	to find something	misremembered
something	else that happened	but kept it
to myself	the	mistake only
only	makes itself	known
when I speak	it out like	trying to continue
when you've already	you've already stopped	momentum is
tragic		a limb through a
a door I'm	gay I	whisper to myself
myself	quietly	in the
mirror	sob	into a
a towel	inhaling the	cotton
thread in	trails to my	stomach
a knot	precariousness	tum

THE PLATE THE MOUTH THE FAMILY

sing	sing it	man
but my voice	my voice breaks	a teacher no
a child a tiny	gelatinous	seed liquidising on the
tongue deaf	fear stung	the gummy
part of my	my hand irreversibly	talking
about	telling	a band is attached to
my wrist	control that takes	years
to detach	the plate	is carried in
the mouth	and by	a family
without	knowing	and then
when you	you get a	shock and jump
and your heart	rate	increases
immediately	and you	physically
jump	your body	up
in	surprise that	feeling but
stretched	over months	daily
weeds	an orchard the	reverend or
or	garden	again
there is	a garden	to tend
tenderness	in the hand	my hands

A SHARP THAT MOVES

holding	holding hands	in the dream	the dream was
erotic	but	then	so
is holding	hands	the relationship is	about
privacy	turned	turned outwards to	another body
the way a doctor	might speak	and does speaks	their
confidence and	and	ability to say	ability to say what
they mean and	what they want	and to suggest to	the suggestible
causes trust	and distrust for	me it is both	I concede
taking leave	a time	off that lies	that lies
fallow	pushed out	out to	a blindspot
malignant	shape across	my back two	circles
meet and even	though you know it	it is held	in
within	the body	as a not	known belief
restores	makes a	shape	like a spine
and somehow	caress	and covers	and covers tallow
split	coiled	gum	pearls
the tide	brings up a	line	towards
the feet	or up to the	neck	the neck
contains within it	little pieces	shards of	of oceans
limbs	of crustaceans	the estuary is	a field before
it is the sea	and after	when it gets	too much
give it	colour and	breath	the colour
out	when asked what	I remember	an immediate
quickness of	images	appear in my	mind at such speed
and in such	pieces that	order	semblance
detail	occluded	as if a book	is thumbed
open	its pages revealing	pages revealing	slips
glimpses of	the thing	shut	as soon as it is
it is open	hidden	whilst it reveals	nothing
but a	a sharp	intake	of air and
shimmer	that moves	that moves about	moves about me

SUPPORTS

detached a	jaw groove	immeasurable
nothing to bite down onto	that would half the unfixed	memory that pains
the jaw	biting nothing	purchase muscle
into place	sad photographs	papery fools diffidence
my heart still floats	quickly going	inward to
the front	of the back	a groundless activity
a result of the action	what relies on the body	but a clearing space
the location for another	story	plants between
layer	licks	the lips
if	you go	I go
nude states	holy loyalty	smacks into front teeth
having warm hands	outside	discussing the sound
the sound of an organ	pointing to	the map
prone to	doubt in everything	but a silver
machinery	cast me	line drawn
i'm not sure	these lethal states	states were genuine
and yet	I climbed into	them
in order	to keep you	alive
too far	from being	an object of her
world	the body	appears
as a contradictory stance	that depends on	a minimal point
of inconsistency	and supports	the becoming
consistent	the embodiment	of such inconsistency
lets make a pact	lets touch our lips	against razors
lets hold	each other	last

CLOTHES

eventually	it becomes	a part of	you you know
not	the weight or	the memory	of lifting it
up	the blindspot	stops	you
from seeing	when looking for	for the sadness	you sense
carrying on	no one	stands behind	me
to	hold	my waist	or rest
their head	the space	that clears after	a loss
that is full and	empty taut	gathering	the neck of
a t-shirt	that was lifted	at the back	the kind
of friends that you	can kiss	on the	lips being
removed		returned	I find myself
close to	opening	to a friend	but
the thought of it	brings me to tears	not because	I cannot
say it	although	it is personal and	difficult and I am
rarely	able but	because I	cannot hear
myself speak	it aloud	I put my hand to	my chest
in order to	to steady	my breath	I am
reminded of	being	in another country	and
another friend		opening	to me
and	how	moved	I was
to feel	trusted	but how	I did not understand
understand	the courage it took	to hear themselves	say I was I
lead this	happened	being	removed and
returned to	an emotion	too	great to
be heard or	mouthed and	some days	even thought
it is	it still is		walking in to
the sea	like trying to put	clothe(s)	onto the body of the
of the dead	child struggling	with the sleeves and	the waist their
neck keep	your eyes	ears	mouth closed
breath through	through your	and carry it	put the body on
your back	back		without looking

BODY ROOTS

another	coercion	a
tooth	a fin a	tide
radial	orientation	turning the
key	I imagine he doesn't get	scared
opening the gates	shouts	out and
at		walked
the bridge	what about	my feelings the
event does not	transcend	what
happen to	the body	pulling up
grass the	roots between	between
fingers being a	carer is	one thing but
needing to	care for	for myself
another firm	altogether	connected heat and
shock	pissing down	the leg unlocking
the door waiting	for a body	a body to be
above me	to bear	down in
weight	and force but with	tenderness
and care	another opportunity for	and step
towards	disclosure because	of honesty and because of
transparency	friendship and	gratefulness
amends	to place me	located at the posh
end of	town away	tonight I want to
fight and have	older men	sailing
limbs	into	sea
bodies	wearing rose	sage and
fire	waking up	to an unfinished
motion		energy
still	residing	in the
arm ready	again recalibrated	courageous
tearful fast	no line can hold the	tension
tension collected within	queer hands	held

NOT RINSING

going	to	attempting to
trying to	speak and	tell makes the
jaw	heavy and shake the	the speaking
takes on a	circularity it	runs around
trying to settle to	direct	to land on the
thing	it avoids it has	clauses
pre-emptive	warnings	disclaim and
when it is	grasped	the speech is not
profound	but turgid	rinsing
the palate	of all	hope until the
runs	around	word
rush back in to	cover	silence

A HOT SOUND

for Linda Kemp

daily	living	with dread
tighten until	shaking	books unpick
a traumatic	event from when	we were
young or	before (we)	we were
born	a trans	generational
haunt	growing	for
fun two of	them	one in the back and
one	in the	belly
past and	future	seizes
powders	into	gut acid
this morning	morning	was
was easier because a	spasm	in my back distracted
a tension	folded between fingers	between a
a cuff	and a	wrist
slightly uncomfortably	repeatedly	checking I don't
want to lose	in the background a rising	note another
another frequency for most	people if	I turn my head
to the side	I can hear it	differently
pitched	somewhere	between the
fridge and	a hot	plug
what happens when the	sound enters	not just
when you hear it	but	when it touches
goes between	the layers of skin and	fascia
muscle	and organ	how does it
spill	does it spill does it	stay does it seep

AN IMPRESSION SPREADS

the	opening lets	lets
light	slip	into the
back a bruise	radiates	below
feeling almost as	if a strap of	arms
by any means	a	length of
weight has	either rested	or pressed and
not just	left	an impression
but stayed even	when removed a slowness	spreads
bleeding below	the	leather
crease of the	shoe	speaks as does
the wooden	joints of	the chair watching
birds	stutter in	the sun brings me
more	joy I had never imagined	despite the
day often	the riddled	soil still
contains the smallest	remains	a little
is needed	to encourage those	weeds little
lighting	little	rain
every	year again	my
effort	is left	bedrid

TURNING

enact a	drawn	breath	as writing	with the
voice	what is formed	rises up warm	if i'm holding	your hand
are you writing	threads	thread	my voice	resides
in		tensions	a circle	stains
the skin	with another	circle	exceeds	the adult
body	amorphous and	grows draws	and holds a	rupture
within that	exceeds the	dimensions of	room	an event
is a cut	turning	turning	differently	turning your
hands	out to receive	and turning	your ear	to it
tuning	tuning	structures	tuning	your throat
and	turning	your neck	radically	potentially
a reflected	torsion a	a privacy	emerges as	a slowness
a shape for	language	write along	the edges	caress
vibrate	enable a	transformation	held	with your
neck held in	force and	in truth a	powdery	meaning that
gathers	a	concertinaed	collapse	a young
voice is	small	when	positioned	next to an older
older	voice	kindness	as a fact	is a lie

SIP

it	happens	that something	happens	touch
your throat or	speak with a	with a cut	throat like	a beak
or	incision	a hole	that	bleeds seeping
through	go to make	a sound	that is an	edge what is
the edge of	a sound how	can I open	open	
heart to it	to	it or find	its shape	between
the legs of		disruption	is a tone	I hear
it	as it is invented	it gestures	and is	dispersed
in a dash or	a spray	or	a pressure	repeatedly
drawing	a letter	as a procedure	to follow but	not grasp
procedure for	for an event	is a cut or	a little	sip
against	the	mouth	sharp	air belly
fuller	cushioned	no	swarmed	by
speech the	warmness of	the body comes		breath and
so to	speak is	to give	heat	to a matter
enliven it	with	actionable	tones	that radiate

DEVASTATING CONVINCES

sometimes	it can be devastating	to say
the tide of the sea	convinces me and	makes
you lower	your formation with	the door
the belt	an opening as eyes close	touch the wet stones
every memory a room	holds a breath	to preserve
to persevere	and perceived	an everyday dread
false presence	between	lightens hairs in summer
across his fingers	let's sit down together	and listen

BE LESS GRATEFUL

for Amy McCauley

be	less	grateful	a threshold
a law	putting my whole	hand inside	mouth
or not	not	inside it	is common
to have a	a feeling it	being	found
out	battling to find	an internal	agency or
at all costs	feeling	acceptance can be	capricious
can be	misguided	metallic	and
cold it	swerves as I	try to open	my mouth to it
it the new leaf	open(s) slowly	whilst	at the same time
the previous leaf	begins to die	a kind of shame	beyond
sentience	an account	where surviving	becomes
a marker	of period of	time I am speaking	speaking
with such	intensity	of thought	that I have to
close	my eyes and	and place	place my
hands	on the sides	of my head like	blinkers and
usher the	the thought	out into a	sentence of a
body into	an inadequacy	inadequacy that	compress
a compound	the feeling of being	believed to the	point where I
roll my	eyes at my self	self	am sweating and
tearful only when	I imagine one	one day	being able to
both	accept and	articulate	to formulate and
accept and	articulate	to formulate and	build a sentence
build a	sentence	one that sets	out all of the
individual	parts of	the body and my	lived experience
free	of liquid and	residue	free of grammar
a structured set	of linguistic	arms that	congregated
around	me	where I am	like a group of
ancestors	that protect like	salt lift up like	hope
carry like	horses	a burden	I hear it
in mornings	before	I wake	its sound
far off	a paper sound	not unlike a	jaw
opening	or the	spine of	a book
breaking	being or	being held	open
by its own	weight	something	fall from
great	height and	making a	sound just by itself
without	coming into	contact	with any other
surface without	needing	to	despite size or
scale	it	is humming	it
is volume	it volumes	volumes	is volume

THOUGHT HAS THINNESS

memory is	is spatial	both	embodied and
disembodied	like	a stomach of	my shoulder
and	the small	of	my back
on my	tongue if you	dropped	it takes
over this	event I have	thought has	a silky
patina	bitter	thinness and is	built
slowly over	years I make	no	noise and
I keep it	on the	peripheral	moving it
there without	touching	without touching	how do I
trust	an	officer that	charges or
is in	charge	pulls the	sides into
view	by	funnelling even	the list of
memories	names of	rooms	rooms that
contain	events	I minimise	the flashback
by calling	it	little but in	reality
these rooms	are stacked on	my back	and yet
porous	is	porous	means seeping
does	and collides into	the present	never
is an	an aside but	incriminates	pulls me through
or	pulls	away	unable to
touch on	the inside	and	clear
on the	outside	everything is	one
place	until it	atomised and	and dispersed and the
made less visible	less visible	when moved to	edges
or seen	through	heat	haze
refracted over	long time	a short	distance a
glass of	water an at the	side	sight that is
felt wrap around	collars and	throats I	mean
they are throats	joined with a	press	it is always
with me	not at	the back	of my
mind but	at the top of	of my throat the	procedure
is to polish	so as to make	reflective or	shine
this thing	this thing which	which as	an
object	is dull	and a shape	sharp

AN ACT

speakers	well	placed
clearly	a verbal	description
before there	can be a	justification for
tension	between two people	the generality of
words slow things down	and sound dissolved into	a given place
coeval	light shines through	land holds
surfaces are covered	an act is adopted	the act of
happiness	and a personal	blind spot is
created as if from	thin	air that I keep with me
carrying	unsaid and unfelt notions	thoughts sadnesses
lowness	pushed just out of reach	but
how do we	reclaim	years or
even	exalt	growth that happened
without light or	dampen	remembered
sound	soak	uneven routes
strip	strip	coated
roots blades of	grass	are still blades in
my opinion	reaching for	my ground

CROSS YOUR VOICE

embodied	densities are	high being
about	interaction	covered by
an extension	a 'love' is	what dad says
to mean	an embrace	the idea of holding
as close to loving	captures	it
an engagement is	the support	it is the
privilege	of	being
looked	after	and not being asked
to explain	your body or the way you	cross
your legs	or the sound of	your voice
your voice because	it	is queer
you spit	hits	it is aimed

A TOUCH

the body organises	organises	against itself
sometimes	sometimes and	and other times
a bird	stammers	glass
the rock is flat	its not even rock	but bone ledges
all creams	a battle that looks for	time less
and more	the air	what are they trying to prove
I watch them walk through	leather	from a hill above the street
a fir tree beside the curb	a butch arm transmits a touch	without contact
even the skin is softened	by the transparency	when the heart is disrobed
an adjustment that considers	how taste entitles	those leaves

SOFTNESS

an equivalence	of	appearance
flinching at	the slightest	movement or
fawning at any	act of	care shows
softness	for	and hope
to a	softening	future self where
the nervous	system is	intact and
gender	has no	body and the mouth
is a space for	planting	shining
seeds	or	eating
raw	something	and forming a
clench	or resistance in any	case
letting	roots rest	on
my	wet	tongue
even if	simply to	take a
photograph then	to keep it	hidden

SURFACES IMAGINING THE BODY

because	I want	to live
I worried	worry about	dying
without having	lived	as
close to	a secret	that
saturates	oily	spaces
between soft	surfaces imagining	powder plumes
gas leaves	the body through	speech after
being shaped	inside	the mouth

WELL IS UNWELL

seeing	a figure	every
every day	that	triggers
an internal event	event and	is tethered to
or	or	tethers as it
moves	beside a feeling of	being
a child	again or of	having
the	younger	feelings cast
cast over	over me	the youth
is never	well	and so the
meeting	is unwell too	a
poor	child	in
sound as	a hollow	pit
dragging	through every	breath
the	figure now	close and couldn't
touch	doesn't look	even
and yet	a power	fastens
fast	against	my chest

MORE THAN THAT

what happens
for
body
unable to
speak and
sound and
from below
and out
through
another
to

when they
me my
standing as
grieve but
more than that
to usher
and
and to remove
the mouth
body is
bare

come
misgendered
witness
able to
to make
it
bring it up
it through
until
visible
witness

AN ARCHIVE OF FORCES

putting a	body	on
putting on	a	body
a court	an archive	offset
to soothe pieces	of forces	moves a
stick in the	mouth	tastes low
care homes	memory	conceals a gentleness
I cannot locate	an apprehension	for trans
forming	the mirror dance	I see myself
without my	body	and float
beneath	a new	attempt at saying

ANTICIPATING SPEAKING

keeping	a razor	blade between
my lips	and the wall	everything
gently	touching	waiting for violence
anticipating	painfulness	cutting
speaking	away with	pressure
saying my	my own	name aloud
to myself	hello	my name
is	Nathan as if	meeting myself
pushing but	pushing	back
the	only	way to
remain	whole is	to stay
still	or	to imagine
the force	as a bleeding	gentleness

CLOSING VOLUME

sounds	sound has	memories
that	spread and	and
open	from a single	point
until a kind	kind	of touching happens
and multiple	places are	pressed or
activated	activated	the door
closing	a bad	song a
volume	torture	a gay
voice	another person	tells
their story	and you hear	your
own	waves of	sound becomes
water	water	and fear

COMFORT TREMBLES AND LEAVES

you cannot	comfort	me my	nervous
my nervous system	trembles and	I have	crossed
wires ability	leaves	numbness that	feels like
distance	another	grows	inside me it feels
as I feel	or	more	precisely
it can effect	my feelings	so that I can	feel without
touching it	sounds like	like the skin on	your neck
trying not to	turn turning	your	head
to resist	the	fear that	someone is
behind us and so in	response and as	a performance	I push at
my throat	a swallow	my voice	slightly
choking myself	my body	body is	as much
outside	itself as	in itself	my adams apple
pressed like	a button and	I cannot	somehow
get it	back it has gone	through I have	gone through
and now	unburying disclosure	is a way of	drawing
a thing	in relief but	you	cannot unlearn
this and	speaking now	feels impossible in	the way only
possible	tasks can seem	approaching	speech
quietly so not	to wake	it	from sleep

DEALING AS AS RUPTURES

perhaps	the point	is not
understanding	at	all
at least	not	not in the
sense	of grasping	dealing as
I am with	events that occur	as ruptures
things that have	happened but	then afterwards are
stretched into	flattening	compressions
pressing	a kind of tape	that can be
fed into	spaces	a long
attack	extended	impact
repeating	only	the worst
parts but	incomplete	and
yet complete	enough to become	all consuming
the	power	these
small moments gain	across a	life
	inestimable	those hours
years	child	it is slow work
to begin	to repair	to repair

TAPESTRY OF EXPERIENCE

I	wrap	a large	boulder
inside	a towel	the hard	stone pushing
at the soft	wrapping	something	sharp enough
to split	through	not dissimilar to the	pressure on
my	chest when I go	inward	and scan
myself	I do not	feel I	always know
what it is but I	know that a	feeling	is a
kind of	of knowing the	external	merges with the
internal night and	day and I	can speak	not
what I was	seeing	or looking	at but
my body's	memory	as a	latent
image	printed	onto the	underside of
my lungs	I awoke	coughing and	suddenly
seeing	internally	this new image	within me and
transcribed onto	my	bedding	luckily I had taken
pencils to	bed with	me	and drawn on
the	sheets	in my sleep	a map of my
body	my	naked	legs and
back creating a	tapestry of	text	and textile a
nightmare	experience	experienced when	waking

THE DARK MOUTH

the neck	has	a distortion that	connects to
the	thighs it	aches	and cries
a pulling	happens	beneath the	arms
that is	like getting out	of the	bath and
waiting	sadly and	exposed for	an event
to skirt	your	edges	
and be	forgotten	these	associations are
animations that	move	very	slowly but
cannot stop	stop looking for a	small	opening
that can speak	a	filled in	part(s)
forcing	something	into the	mouth
replays now	as a	dark	cartoon a
bad	play sometimes a	mouth can	sound
like a	collapse	shuttered	between
a story and	feeling		some stories
make	less	sense	the more
you remember	today	remembering	happens in
the throat	and trails	itself	to broken skin
skin	taste	glisk	in lines

THE HAND ME DOWN

looking	at	a picture	that has
forgotten its	its own	history	a lookout and
useless bits of	space	buildings sit	and a mans hand
a childs	hand thought	I	would die
shin	cloth	burnt	sleep and
clenched	teeth recently	I catch	her sons back
a splint	beneath	new gender	sleeping
holding	a wrist	and letting go of	my friend
regathering	a rope that	once had shape	was talking of
stains	the hand	I feel it	to mend
they're holding	me down	I premonition	them
holding me a	collar around	them	a rag
amongst the	passes	waiting to understand	gay courage
glass wall	but no one is	is holding	I thumb
myself her hand	on his shoulder	is black and white	Annes photograph
is a support	for seeing	a child and adult	slips
a touching	incapable of looking	building	an island
engenders	feeling and a	a glass	neck so we
are submerged	it does not bend	in my hand	my physical
hand is	everything	bad the	history
in their mouths	is broken	in places	you cannot see

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Skirting was written over an extended period of time from 2020-2023. Many of these poems were initially drafted during isolated periods of living alone during UK lockdowns. I am so very grateful to Linda Kemp for our long-distance support bubble; our lengthy phone conversations on poetry, class and queerness were grounding and kept me writing and striving for new forms.

There were also a handful of early readers I would like to thank: care and encouragement from Roy Claire Potter, joyful responses from JR Carpenter and Andrew McMillan, close readings and generous feedback from Amy McCauley. Thank you dear ones.

Love and thanks to my chosen family, El Stannage, Russel Carr, Gaia Blandina and Georgina Cherry, your continued love enabled me to skirt the subjects contained in these poems with safety and support.

My heartfelt thanks to the editors of the following publications where some of these poems have been previously published:

devastating convinces was published in JARG Magazine Issue 3 (2021) Madelaine Kinsella & Matthew Thomas Smith. *turning, not rinsing* and *gut in saying* were published online at Babel Tower Notice Board (2021) edited by Richard Capener. *a sharp that moves, feelings are facts* and *a touch* were published in Pamenar Online Magazine (2022) edited by Ghazal Mosadeq. *surfaces imagining a body, an archive of forces* and *cross your voice* were published in Prototype Anthology 5 (2023) edited by Jess Chandler. *a hot sound* was published in Poetry & Audience 51:1. (2023) edited by Jon Gilbert and Blaise Sales.

NOTES

The full Stein citation from the epigraph is as follows:

A sentence is partly softly after they write it. What is the difference between a sentence and a sewn. What is the difference between a sentence and a picture. They will sew which will make it tapestry. A sentence is not carrying it away. A sentence furnishes while they will draw. A sentence is drawers and drawers full of drawings. A sentence is an imagined masterpiece. A sentence is an imagined frontispiece. In looking up from her embroidery she looks at me. She lifts up the tapestry. It is partly...Think in stitches. Think in settlements. Think in willows.

— Gertrude Stein from her notebooks entitled ‘Sentences’ (1928-1929) cited in Susan Howe’s ‘Spontaneous Particulars: The Telepathy of Archives’ (2014) p.19

The phrase ‘feelings are facts’ is borrowed from Yvonne Rainer’s book of the same title (2006).

turning was written following an untitled performance (7 hours) by the artist John Court in Sweden 2016.

In *gut in saying* the line ‘the piano is an ambulance’ is a reference to Joseph Beuys’s artwork *Homogenous infiltration for grand piano* (1966). This work is a grand piano covered in a large felt cover with a red cross on the side, it was first presented as a performance by Beuys during the Fluxus festival of 1966 at the Academy of Fine Arts in Düsseldorf.

In *supports* and *anticipating speaking* I reference to the performance artwork *Thriller* (28 March 1979) by Danny Devos. Devos describes the work as follows: ‘I stood facing a wall. A razorblade was pressed between my lips and the wall. I stayed as long as I could’ (see <https://www.performan.org/performances/thriller/>).

capable of treating contains an excerpt from an Alain Badiou chapter entitled ‘What is a body?’, the full citation reads:

...a body is this very singular type of object suited to serve as a support for a subjective formalism, and therefore to constitute, in a world, the agent of possible truth...It already appeared, at this pre-analytical stage, that a subjectivizable body is efficacious to the extent that it is capable of treating some points of the world, those occurrences of the real that summon us to the abruptness of a decision.

— Alain Badiou ‘Logics of Worlds: Being and Event II’ (2019 [2009]) p. 389. Emphasis in original

the hand me down mentions a photograph by the Belgian artist Anne De Gelas, ‘My hand on Max’s shoulder’ (2011) published in ‘L’Amoureuse’ (2013).

the hand me down contains a citation from Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, the full citation is as follows:

When you go to look don’t try to move your muscle or your bones, but let the eye respond to the light that’s being reflected. Once you become receptive to that phenomenon let go of the reception as your purpose, and let that become the support for seeing

— Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen ‘Sensing, Feeling, and Action: The Experiential Anatomy of Body-Mind Centering’ (2012) p. 120

dealing as as ruptures contains an excerpt from Joan Retallack in which she explains:

One might ask how to understand forms whose pleasure it is to violate or exceed generic expectations. Perhaps the point is not understanding at all, at least not in the sense of grasping. Essays, like poems and philosophical meditations should elude our grasp just because their business is to approach the liminal spectrum of near-unintelligibility—immediate experience complicating what we already thought we knew. In this case “to write” means to engage in a probative, speculative projection of the often surprising vectors of words as they graze the circumstances of ongoing life

— Joan Retallack ‘The Poethical Wager’ (2004) p. 48

comfort trembles and leaves contains two citations:

a body is as much outside itself as in itself

— Seigworth & Gregg ‘An Inventory of Shimmers’ (2010) In *The Affect Theory Reader* (2010) p. 3

and excerpted from Brandon Taylor the full citation reads:

it feels impossible in the way that only possible tasks can seem, when you know that despite the scale of what you must do, its not really beyond the realm of possibility to do it, and so it feels impossible because you know you must

— Brandon Taylor ‘Real Life’ (2020) p. 69

tapestry of experience contains an excerpt from a citation from Carolee Schneemann, the full citation reads:

what my films show me is not what I was seeing, looking at or into. And this is exactly my need — to find what the film itself makes perceptible.

— Carolee Schneemann ‘Instrumentality / Invisibility (1976) published in ‘Carolee Schneemann: Uncollected Texts’ (2018) p. 120)

the dark mouth contains a citation from Noreen Masud:

some stories make less sense the more you remember

— Noreen Masud ‘A Flat Place’ (2023) p. 24

LAY OUT YOUR UNREST