

*The following texts were originally created during the 2014 SPILL WRITING programme, facilitated by Diana Damian Martin. The texts shared here are extracted from larger bodies of writing made during the festival. They have been selected for inclusion here by SPILL Festival in 2021. Thanks to Diana and all contributing writers.*

## SPILL WRITING 2014

SPILL Writing in 2014 took that year's festival theme of *Surrender*, and its works, as a provocation to reflect on the possibility of collectivity and collaboration in critical writing about, from and with performance. The festival theme questioned physical surrender, surrender to law, sex, power, death and dying, religion, economics, the impact of mass culture, and more. But are giving up, giving in, or simply giving in really our only choices?

SPILL Writing 2014 was led by SPILL Writer in Residence Diana Damian-Martin, joined by six new writers, selected following an open call-out, who engaged, responded and developed their practice throughout the festival.

The writers were Jonathan Boddam-Whetham, John Bournell, Anna Mortimer, Natalie Raven, Carolyn Roy, and Kelly Will.

**30 October 2014**

### Anticipating

**By Diana Damian Martin**

Writing as a durational exercise; writing as a situated, located series of textual events; writing as embedded within temporary, ever-shifting communities. Writing as a strategy.

And to begin with, writing as a way to take (avoid) a stand-point (a stance? a stand-off?).

I arrive to this writing, crossing a series of landscapes both real and imagined; the dull, wet greyness of my journey, the displacement and the pull; the dirty green of fading fields and the bright silver of factory rooftops, cluttered housing, train tracks. The uneven speed of the train, and the expectation of the journey that awaits. The

dry cold of the air-con, the thick mist of rain in the background, the occasional interruption of trees, waiting by the side.

I begin again with thinking, as a process of interruption, and move to the idea of difference. To navigate through writing, to allow the language to spill into its own context.

I am moving through a Ballardian landscape, to arrive at a marina, to arrive at some form of old age.

I turn to the idea of surrender: as a task, strategy, lens, process; much like live art practice itself, surrender seems to encompass a resistance to its own connotation, when considered in this context.

Surrender pertains to both release and subversion, defined as the ceasing of resistance to an opponent or enemy's authority; surrender is also giving up, handing over, letting go. To surrender is an action, but not always a choice. And is this a proposition to consider surrender as the only option?

There is so much ambiguity about surrender, in its implication of a dialogue, or perhaps the very ceasing of one; distance and an appropriation, entanglement and confrontation. What might we make of surrender, then, as a quality? How might we conceive of this as a subversive acceptance or release? As a mode of participation, activation, collective performance and positioning?

Surrendering strikes me as an implicitly political, and sometimes embodied action; it can be violent, terminal, confrontational but also gentle, immaterial, slippery. It is always, in different ways, collective, and most often, a diagnosis too. Resistance has become the strategy of visibility in this political milieu; yet what might surrender offer?

**30 October 2014**

## **Six provocations on Surrender**

**By Natalie, Carolyn, Anna, Jonathan, John, Kelly**

[content missing]

- Natalie

\*

I am unable to surrender alone.

We must be in agreement, as one.

I surrender you surrender they surrender he surrenders. I am surrendering we are surrendering he is surrendering you are surrendering we are surrendering together we surrender with each other.

Surrender is not a solo practice. Solo surrender does not exist. I surrender with the other. We surrender with.

To surrender is to form an alliance. We listen, we wait, we meet in the space between, we yield, we merge, we give back more. I surrender together with you.

To surrender is to touch deeply.

Touching deeply. Yielding. Meeting the touch that reverberates deep in the body. As I move I move in the reverberations of the other moving as they move. Sounds enter, resonate and leave my body as breath. Breath enters, moves and leaves my body. I do not own my breath. I do not own my body. I am surrendering.

- Carolyn

\*

On Surrender: an encounter

To yield: dis/belief, emotion, ignorance, intuition, involvement, pain

To relinquish: comfort, familiarity, rationality, place, safety, voice

To abandon: anxiety, cover, fear, mask, mend, nurture, silence

- Anna

\*

To give, to offer, to sacrifice....

The German philosopher Martin Heidegger talks of the autarky of das Man – the sway of others – where we do as others do. Das Man is the general background of intelligibility, which is to say the general conformity of social norms. It is, if you like, an ontological gravity that maintains its effect upon our lives in everything we do. However, this is not a surrender as such; perhaps more a necessary complicity of existence. What is of importance here is that this everyday gravity can become aggravated by a person because it all too easily enables an aggravated conformism. One where a person completely surrenders to this gravity and to the others that share it.

What they surrender is precisely that which they fear to lose in the first place, their 'I-ness'. Why, what is it that puts them in jeopardy? Quite simply, as for all existentialists, it is the phenomenon of death. There is an anxiety that tugs at oneself, that echoes through the cracks of one's existence. It calls, but no one knows from where. This is why it isn't a fear of some-thing, like a rabid dog, but is rather everywhere because this world and our existence matters to us and therefore so does a lack of it. At its apex this existential anxiousness discloses itself in all its radicality; it lays bare a person's very existence. Death opens a person up to their vulnerability, which says you are not a solitary 'I' that creates meaning and significance ex nihilo. Instead the person sees that she has been thrown into existence into an intelligibility that she didn't create; existence is for everyone and is shared out to anyone, there is no defining role that is her. Anyone can inhabit her role in the world. All she has is the potentiality of her death because it is the only possibility that cannot be anyone else's. It is a rather nihilistic weight to bear. When facing death she can either stand up to this realisation and become authentic, or she can flee and become inauthentic. If she does the latter then it is quite simply a decision that says 'if it is I that can be annihilated then surely it is better to be someone, anyone, else'; her 'I' is hidden through an illusory self, an appropriation of other 'I's'. In short she surrenders her I-ness to others in order to save it.

But then is the alternative another kind of surrender? Do I surrender to death? And if it is my own death to which I do it am I not allowing my I-ness to open up to existence? This is quite a different thing to giving up on life, anxiety does not allow that. Depression is an inwardness whereas anxiety for Heidegger is meant to open oneself up – to surrender to yourself. All this suggests that surrender is always an intrinsic condition of existence.

One could develop this further as Heidegger does. An authentic Other can help me to become authentic, can leap ahead of me and offer to make existence transparent. It is this introduction of a certain relationality that causes problems in because what does it mean, indeed what are the consequences, when someone says 'you must speak – speak without the power to do so'? This is a demand asking you to speak for me even though you are not me. But it is also an enigmatic call – you must speak, for I cannot, but you cannot speak as me. I surrender to that which makes me I, finitude, and yet it is another who potentially seems to open up this possibility. Do you speak my death? Can you? Surrender then suggests a potentiality that is a point of rupture, a moment that lays bare each Other, where death is between us.

- Jonathan

\*

"When I am not working I sometimes think I know something, but when I am working, it is quite clear that I know nothing."

[John Cage]

A good place to start from: a position of admitting to knowing nothing.  
I can argue for a writing informed by context, that accepts a certain subjectivity, acknowledges phenomenological intention, but I have no idea how to approach this.

- John

\*

Ipswich. A town renowned for pound shops and cafés, catering for the masses; they stroll on by, oblivious to its beauty. The potential in every window, every doorway; each and every cry of "a p'ahnd a bowl!" echoing through the Cornhill. The hustle and bustle of the moment shadowed on each frowning furrow, resonating between the cold hard pram wheels and the red brick road lining the high street. And suddenly, Spill. A National Platform for emerging artists, in Ipswich. Now, they will Surrender their town, to embrace the liveness of the artists, and experience that, which is overlooked always, until this moment.

As a practising artist who works in the town, I am curious to experience the reactions and responses from the town, will it a surrender itself, will I surrender myself, as artist, or writer?

- Kelly

**31 October 2014**

## When Bodies Gather

**By Diana Damian**

'Form is the end, death', he wrote. 'Form-giving is movement, action. Form-giving is life' (1973: 269)

The first Spill Salon foregrounded approaches to and understandings of risk in practice and its conversational routes, touching on questions of ethics and positioning, responsibility and context. The notion of risk, we argued, is grounded in different elements: in the self, the body, the public engagement, the mode and context of presentation, the anticipation of response; boundaries, edges and limits shape that understanding. And I consider the very notion of risk to be nomadic, yet grounded in the political; if we are to speak of writing as form, as position-taking as disclosure, then the risk is perhaps in forms of disappearance. And in the work that occupies these civic spaces, public squares, galleries and theatre, risk seems to be a currency with different inflections. I wonder, if surrendering is then a risk, and if its

political aesthetics allows for dialogue and visibility; after all, the relational nature of Spill's programme means that contrast, conflict and conversation are constant transactions.

Moving to situatedness, I pause on the question of site and context. In its temporariness, its gentle occupations, its invitations and civic presence, public processions and gatherings, Spill engages with action as a way of constituting a (con)text for the work presented. Yet this is not simply architectural or curatorial; it is a question of register, scope, materiality and deliberate strategies of turbulent imbalance, and at times, striking shifts in register and contrast.

When bodies gather, routes emerge; I am thinking here of the development of the festival as a mode of discourse and presentation, and its situatedness in a specific place, with its own rhythms, boundaries and cultural practices. It seems Spill's embeddedness is more gentle, a caring temporary communities finding its way down the narrow block grey and wood brown cobbled streets, past the waterfront, into the neon-beige corridors of the former Police Station, walking up the stairs of the Town Hall, in brightly lit gallery spaces and black box studio spaces. The temporary community as an embodied, ever-shifting event. Forms of risk, spatialised, distributed, configured; but also gentle invitations, candid, intimate interactions. From noise to folk, action to spectacles – these nuances shift the direction of our encounters.

I recall:

The electric noise in John Bowers and Mehmet Sander's *Animate Objects in Sonic Action*, stripping bodies to shifting weights, mathematical scores and abstract landscapes – a pared down collision of immersive extremes.

The sharp softness of Jamie Lewis Hadley's blood-stained flag, icon and symbol of surrender, with its own inscribed poetics (and I recall that encounter with the white flag in a jamie's duo piece with Franko B : another flag stapled onto the body, whose blood red cross marks bear visible traces) This is a pause, I feel – a pause to remembrance, and a space to allow for the incoming moment.

Hardaker's *Plough your own furrow*: the labourer with grass, petroleum and cloth, expanded in a sea of material, dragged in careful ritual, the skin and the materials soaking into one another. The temporality is inscribed onto the body, and the viewer positioned in contained contrast, compelling and distancing. Who is this body, labouring at this organic costume, this constant shift in identity around an act of labour? And what is he doing in this journey of directed self-discovery, of playful futility, of non-repetition? The very strength of the smell of grass, the constant battle with agency, ground the roots of the work; it's an image both familiar and foreign; the rural, the oppressed, the territorial, the observer – a microcosm of references in the basement of a former police station, scattered on the floor, a body in their search.

Finally, I recall the series of actions that intervene into the body, they change its identity, they anonymise and shape, challenge and appear; Debbie Guinnane's Gastropoda as an inward intervention of clay and fluids, of an expressedly physical liminality; the sharp ritual of shifts from defacement to worship suggests a mode of improvisation of and with complicity – and makes visible antibodies as an embodied metaphor.

The sentences fall through the gaps.

**31 October 2014**

## **On Fables**

**By Anna Mortimer**

\*

### Little Pig

I stayed to the bitter end just to make sure that you survived! Not many of us saw it through from the beginning to end. Had we all gone would you have carried on?

Did we add to the weight of that great burden?

Did we make a contribution to your suffering?

You seemed to be in such a state...'a right two and eight 'as my Grandmother used to say. And what a damp old hole they had put you in, with its 'Warnings' on the walls, so hidden away and cold. But that is what 'they' do to those who are like you get in such a pickle...I recognise that place myself...you get shut away.

Suck, guzzle and binge.

Vomit, defecate and smear.

Throw, thrash and play.

Hold, rock and cradle.

Did you at last find comfort here? Once you are through do you find relief? The little toy pig a talisman safe in your pocket for you to hold and caress....but then aren't you back to square one?

Suck, guzzle and binge.

Vomit, defecate and smear.

Throw, thrash and play.

Hold, rock and cradle.

Suck, guzzle and binge.

Vomit, defecate and smear.

Throw, thrash and play.

Hold, rock and cradle.

[Debbie Guinnane: Gastropoda]

\*

Absent

The white feathers are not a flag of truce for the cruel hand that pushed meat hooks  
through tender flesh.

The white feathers promise no soft comfort for the nightmares of that obedient  
surrender.

The white dress hides a dark angel in its breast for one who flinches at her request  
but yields nevertheless.

That absent hand that played its part in this act of cruelty stays dumb.

No bandages bind her wounds.

And we as passive onlookers on her suffering are oblivious to the pain of the absent  
one.

[Amy Kingsmill: Journey]

\*



I

It is I who is subject of this text.

It is I who is the performer here.

The monitor speaks to me, 'she' is mediated by camera.

It is I who is in the space, she is not here.

It is I who performs.

I recall memory.

I tell my sorry.

I recreate my past and form new traces. It is my voice that fills the space.

It is I who walks through the bluebell wood, my sister and I and dolls in hand. It is I

who is haunted by fear. No birds singing.

It is I who sees my mother, new memory fills the absent place.

It is I who picks flowers and presses them in a book.

It is I who receives a gift.

Thank you Ria.

Yet it is you who has a Name.

[Ria Hartley: Recall]

\*

(the fretted brow)

Why don't you ask for help?

Why is there no salve for your wounds; no water to wash you clean?

We are here to work with you...aren't we?

The fresh odour of hay wafting down the corridor promises a rural idyll amongst Ipswich's grim facades. But does this lone Christ in endless, hopeless toil, vulnerable and fragile bring hope of salvation?

Each catch and grab of grimy shroud; each wrapping and unwrapping; each gleaning and gathering tears at my soul. I can hardly bare to see that sticky itchy flesh. I long to swaddle you like a child, hold you like a child.

Mother. Mary.

Gather, gather, drop and gather (sounds like my knitting!) a perpetual unravelling, a thing of gaping holes. A futile, useless thing.

You are so absorbed, so alone, obsessed by your task there seems no place for us. Perhaps your company is Joseph Beuys with all his Apocryphal tales.

For I could not even stay the hour.

[Robert Hardaker: Plough your own furrow]

**1 November 2014**

## Siren

**By John Bournell**

A few positions.

I have great difficulty with the monumental in sound art. Massed banks of speakers, diffusion arrays; these live [in my head] in institutional electro-acoustic studios, in 'spectacular' festival showcases.

Sound art in churches often tends towards the choral, the sacral [or the suggestion of]. Site specificity is all very well [says the grumpy voice in my head], but if this is linked to the ready availability of empty churches as repurposed provincial art centres, then this might not be as meaningful as we might have assumed [continues my interior monologue].

Serious men - sometimes, often, wearing black - make serious adjustments. And we know they are being theatrical - "art diminishes as it approaches the condition of theatre" - because they are serious men wearing black. [And because I'm sure that they have sound-checked all this kit beforehand. This amount of electricity needs precision, for sure. The difference between transcendental drone works and

pedestrian noise is after all, tuning. I know this because a colleague once reverse-engineered one of La Monte Young's tunings.]

And yet.

[I am tired, and ill, and have had three pints. I am cold, and ready to get to bed. This might be contributing to my grumpiness.]

And yet.

[I've just seen two musical performances before this which I enjoyed immensely, so I'm not ready to have my mood spoiled. I am considering going to a club instead, or at least listening to some techno on my headphones.]

And yet.

Over forty five minutes, Siren spins up and out of the everyday, out of the spectacle, away from men in black and with an every increasing whirl of red circles, like the circles you get after pushing on your eyelids, like the spots at the corner of your vision when you stand up too fast to catch a dance for a tune you love, like clouds of sound, like shifting layers of the deep re-edit of that minimal house tune you heard that time at 5am, like the undulating serpentine lines of A Rainbow In Curved Air, like synchronised fighting football players, like some yes, heavenly voices, like the implied thump thump thump of an 808.

And one by one

the artists silence each circling oscillator

each circle darkening

each layer removed from your ears.

A rush in reverse

The skin prickling on your neck

Time returns to normal;

darkness.

-wonderful-

1 November 2014

## On Disagreement

By Diana Damian Martin

(Cultures of Consensus)

Canonically, the twentieth century was an era of wars and revolutions; of a re-consideration of violence as necessarily detrimental and actively silencing. I think we can reclaim the agency of strategies that are perceived as violent (do I mean violence?), in order to consider how contemporary cultural contexts construct their own values – the legislation of identities, the homogenisation of difference and the values that dominate and are applied. So let's think of live art as a series of events that interrupt (or attempt to) routines, procedures and landscapes of thought and representation, in the context of a politicised culture of consensus.

Declamation: we live in a culture of consensus; and when we speak of modes of production and sites of discussion, we tend to omit the role of disagreement, its difficulty and ambiguity. The conflation of judgment with position, and valuation with dissemination are strategies through which both artworks and texts are easily silenced, bathed in noise.

I am thinking about language, specifically, and the ways in which it contributes to modes of production (and reception). In this morning's Salon, The Safe Word Is, Heather Cassils foregrounded the question of structures of power and production, and the ways in which they impact on an artist's work, making a strong argument for a constant re-consideration of one's register, strategies and scope: 'punch fist, limp wrist'. Larger systems press not only on our bodies, but on our voices, and with ease, re-contextualise and silence conversations that are attempting to shape, by constantly erasing commonality and meaning. It's a powerful thing, meaning, as is visibility.

[Intervention: 'Nothing means something means nothing'. Ron Athey']

Criticism; critique; criticality- contributors to these power structures or strategies of their re-configuration and dissemination? If we think of language as problematically entrenched in fiscalisation and corporatisation, then these questions of providing visibility, of site and access become a lot more complex.

Boundaries, edges, delineations – it's not simply a matter of diagnosis. If we were to speak about accessibility of work in terms of its content and demands we make on difficult, challenging or marginal work, then we'd find ourselves in a redundant position (against a demand of justification); so thinking through problems of access and context in writing should move beyond common understandings of cultural journalism. Because we know by now that visibility isn't everything: it takes strategies, and forms too.

Language needs to be exorcised; otherwise we're just reproducing the systems that we're trying to delineate. And let me complicate that further: there is a referent in any form of critical writing; so position-taking and tension are productive processes in this instance (and importantly, language is not everything).

[Intervention: 'A monstrous assemblage of noise, image, pain'. John Bowers]

So I do have an agenda here, and it pertains to a re-thinking of processes, practices and relationships that mean we resist the institutionalisation and legislation of discourse, be that what we do with our bodies, or how we speak, and who we speak to: a kind of political and aesthetic disagreement. Or: on failure.

During The Safe Word Is, ideas around the production of meaning and questions of agency were discussed in relation to registers, contexts; Sander's work was discussed in relation to notions of rigour, awareness, manifestation and formalism. And the issue of specificity – what happens when our bodies are othered and objectified – returned the conversation to the dynamic (and difficulty) of relinquishing vs resisting. Who needs balance, anyway? Balance is consensus.

**1 November 2014**

## Reflections: On Retreat

**By Natalie Raven**

The art works at Spill are connected thematically in their relationship/s to notions of surrender; I see this as a mode through which to interrogate acts of retreat.

Jamie Lewis Hadley's piece *We Will Outlive the Blood You Bleed* prompted me to consider such a nuance - the fluttering white flag, moving in front of the fan, as a symbol of surrender.

Who exactly was the surrendering party?

Who was in retreat?

Was it Hadley, surrendering himself to his audience, bleeding for us, hanging the bloodied cloth before us, removing himself from the frame as a considered act of retreat?

Or was it us, his audience, surrendering ourselves to a position of complicity as we sit, stand, kneel and gaze upon this bleeding body and its bloodied remains, flickering in the wind?

This sense of conflict raises itself in other works. In Robert Hardaker's *Plough Your Own Furrow*, the artist retreats to a futile position, surrendering himself to the continual act of trying to adorn himself with the entirety of the materials in the space. He makes and moulds, bundles and bails, slips and sways. He exhausts himself, constantly attempting to swathe his body in grass, Vaseline and cloth.

In Amy Kingsmill's *Journey*, the artist is at the mercy of a large, metal fence which she attempts to pull across the tarmac of a car park, using ropes attached to hooks which are pierced through the skin of her back. Kingsmill wears a white lurex dress which is spotting at the back; leakages of crimson blood darkens its pristine brightness. Her feet are contorted and bound in shoes that make her walk on tip-toes. Slightly off balance and pausing at times, Kingsmill subtly adjusts her suffering body in order to tighten the rope and increase tension between her body and the trailing object - heavy, burdensome and non-compliant.

*She Was the Universe* sees Hellen Burrough standing before us in a long red dress, arms bound by an excess of pearls are draped along her back. The performer journeys along a path through which she attempts to cleanse and free the body of the archetypal adornments weighing upon her form.

However the newly naked body is never quite freed from these archetypal implications; it surrenders itself to a position of suffering which it must continue to endure. The cracking and crunching of sparkling, crystal-like glass under bare foot is a visual treat, even if many members of the audience wince in empathy.

The questions that keep appearing are:  
Who is surrendering in the performance space?  
And  
How is retreat navigated?

Maybe what it comes down to is a distinction between positioning and action.

Maybe surrender is the position, and retreat is the action. Maybe in the process of performance, artists and their audiences are flirting between various surrender/positions and retreat/actions in a complex set of relational encounters.

Yet what ties all these performances together is the will of the body.

All these bodies suffer, whether from exhaustion or pain. What these bodies also do is surrender themselves to this, and continue de/in/spite of it. Maybe then, the act of retreat is a movement inward toward the body, toward the pain, the uncomfortably and limitations of its form. Maybe we accept this retreat in order to experience and feel the world around us, in all its grotesque beauty.

**1 November 2014**

## **Siren (II)**

**By Kelly Will**

[Afternoon]

I walk into the church filled with tripods of varying sizes, propellor blades balanced on top.

The curtain is closed once everyone enters. We are contained in the space, with nothing but a thin rope to separate us from the artist and his installation.

The artist steps forward, switching on each propellor using what looks like a screwdriver; they're lit red, projecting a sound resembling an air raid siren.

The sound is slow and charismatic, evenly distributed around the church - taking advantage of the bold acoustics.

Keeping my eyes open, I discreetly inspect each tripod. Each propellor is slowly spinning in unison with the resonating hum, that could be mistaken for the sounds of nature singing, despite its mechanical and robotic source.

Each time a propellor is switched on, a siren sounds, provoking an internal feeling of solemn panic.

What is happening?

The juxtaposition between the air raid alarm echoing throughout the holy building and the words painted around a large stained glass window, above the sanctum suggests a need to surrender...

The audience seems unaware of what is happening, unsure of what to expect - do we need to surrender ourselves to the artist, or to the location?

"Christ in you, the hope of glory  
Which hope we have as an Anchor of the soul"

[Midnight]

Standing in a church at midnight is something in itself - throw in some mechanics and loud noises that's a new level of majestic bizarreness.

As the sounds begin, everyone freezes, watching the installation being awakened.

Watching the artist, I remember what he said this morning about the dangers of these props (the broken piece during the trial run).

There aren't many occasions in daily life that you aren't allowed to speak, to photograph, and to look at your phone.

Until now - you must live in this moment.

Do the people in this room appreciate the moment that we are all now living in and experiencing?

Do they realise how important this is?

**6 November 2014**

## Pareidolia (II)

**By Carolyn Roy**

This room is a temporary archive of atrocities, documented but mostly forgotten in the west, though Britain, America and Australia were all complicit in this anti communist purge. 500,000 people massacred. Executions, imprisonments, disappearances were accelerated and condensed into a period of three months. The exhibited reports of this historical cleansing have, like our collective memory, been partially erased, edited so rigorously that their words cannot make sense.

e e d b e g g 350 de ed 17 b ed

Inserting letters into these skeleton texts in an attempt to read their meaning is a game that threatens to revise rather than reconstruct the truth. I cannot reform these fragmented words any more than I can revive the missing or retrieve their lost histories.

Today we are left with a sonic alphabet, A B C D E F G. What remains of these reports are musical scores. Their broken words become notes, absence and silence are transposed as rhythm, space or duration. Played together these overlapping scores create a narrative more complex than the individual texts could have been. I guess we only read one text at a time but can hear several simultaneously.

Competing, dense and conflicting sounds are held in a tight structure that acts to render them spacious, a structure that opens a channel through which a thousand stories reverberate. The rationale of this work's process is transparent, its meaning easily read, but as the sound resonates in my body it is through my body I feel I am participating in a reconstitution of memory.



[Pareidolia: Sikarnt Skoolisariyaporn]

**6 November 2014**

## Toward (JLH)

**By John Bournell**

He is a super hero, actually, I think.

He is [Hollywood actor] in inscrutability, but better;  
actually present, not wooden, not furniture, not vacant;  
no winces, no blinks:

I saw the left hand go; once, twice.

A super-hero, because this is a simple gesture.

Because this is heroic:

clean, arm raised, flag raised.

Surrender and triumph.

Heroic poses all;

Superman, arm aloft, cape billowing.

Spiderman, legs akimbo, web slinging.

Batman, hooded, mammal ears, kapow.

Pacman, mouth agape.

But then

amplified gestures and poses become unreal;

honest music becomes the stadium drummer with his hand two metres above the  
snare drum.

The rotating stages, the wirework, the fireworks.

White flag.

What is the role of simplicity vs. slickness?

Honesty vs. artifice?

[are any these things mutually exclusive?

I don't think so.

The 'two slits' experiment shows us light is waves.

Photovoltaic cells only work if light is particles.

Both, rather than this or that.]

The stage is limited and described by the lights.

Our gaze.

His gaze.

**6 November 2014**

## Final Fragments

**By Anna Mortimer**

Text: meaning, (mis)interpretation.

Bone Library asks of us to be guardians and trustees of an inscribed bone. We are given a responsibility; a duty of care. Sarah-Jane Norman asks us to respond; to be informed; to face up to history and her own story.

I need to tread lightly and cautiously here. There is a lot at stake, there is a lot to take in. Much information- text, sound, odour, smell, colour, and touch.

I sense many layers and nuances of meaning. Despite the outward signs of control - indexing, categorising, labelling and placing - there is accusation, loss, remorse, rage and sorrow.

I am faced again with my own fear, fear of mis-understanding, of being stupid and naïve, of offending.

Yet I chose my bone with sincerity, thinking about the site of her body and mine. I chose it for its shape and the shape of the letters inscribed.

I watch her tie up my special parcel and hand her my name. I give her a hug at the party after she has finished her labours. She has taken love from me.

I take it my parcel home carefully and place it still tightly wrapped.

I face the conflict of my questions. But I will care for this picked clean object even though I do not know its meaning or name.

[Sarah Jane Norman: Bone Library]

\*

Staying with/ Stepping away

I attempting to gather some thoughts and pick up threads, to process what I have seen. Perhaps inevitably, perhaps with some honesty without the weight of years of viewing or knowledge of the 'canon' I have come back to my own body as 'site' of response. A visceral place.

Avert eyes, look back.

Check

Check

Check

Hold breath...breathe deep.

Check

Check

Check

Keep watch. Keep still.

Check

Check

Check

Keep silent. Pause. Think. Question.

Check

Check

Check

I choose to stay.

Stark naked body set in spare space.

Careful, chosen, simple objects; fat, straw, flour, water, buckets, bricks, bones, food ,  
text, hooks, flowers, blood, flag, gloves, sheets.

Half-light. Natural light. Still light.

Sounds from the body through the mouth, hiss, sigh, grunt, tut, cry, voice, breath.

The body under endurance, pulling, pushing, crawling, holding, carrying, waiting,  
eating, stuffing, sweating, rocking. I in special intimate relationship, caught in,  
complicit and involved. I am immersed.

Gaze. Smell. Touch. Hear. Taste.

Ahhh! For there's the rub, that tricky word taste! Creeping in. An effrontery.

Just step away.

6 November 2014

## Boundaries / Context

By Natalie Raven

Thoughts are slippery during this festival - a slipperiness of bodies and boundaries, signifiers and skins.

In Poppy Jackson's Television Lounge, the nude performer stands tall, upright, facing the corner of the room whilst what appears to be menstrual blood trickles down her legs. Her body sighs and sways as it stands, (un)still. This isn't a statue, cast of bronze or iron, but a living, breathing entity; gentle muscular movements appear with each breath. Similarly, in Ciara McKeon's Going Without, this gurgling, guttural, breathing body before me expels strings of saliva and spit onto dusty bricks. Squatting low to the floor, the performer's relationship to the bricks in the space is inquisitive, loving and somewhat unnerving. In both performances I note that

what was once inside, was now appearing out.

In Hellen Burrough's She Was The Universe, the temperature of the site affects the boundaries of the performer's body. As Burrough stands before us unclothed, steam from the warmth of her nude body begins to curl and caress the cool air in the cold, concrete space, whilst goosebumps prick her skin. Her body is delicately emanating outwards, extending its presence in the space; a presence that isn't restricted by the boundary of her skin.

The boundary of my own body seems to be slipping in certain performances. In Nick Kilby's The Hidden Stones (That Break All Hearts), I am asked to consent to my bodily fluids being taken and my voice recorded. I give. I go through a guided process of meditation and contemplation, before offering sacrificial blood which is used to decorate a sigil, drawn by Kilby. My sigil was then placed with consideration within the installation space, and linked systematically to other items there. I note that even after my skeletal form leaves the space, my bloodied mark is still there. That part of my body that was once comfortably contained by my skin, has oozed out and is now absent from me, but present in that space.

The question is;  
Where are the boundaries of the body?

\*

'I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage' – Peter Brook, 1968.

'I can take any naked body and call it a nude' – Natalie Raven, 2014.