

I'll start at the end, which is to say I was home by 7pm, full of duck fat roast potatoes, cheese and lemonade. This is from the same pub where I was once so overwhelmed by how good the roast was I all of a sudden had to leave, walked home, and cut all my hair off. When I more recently cut my hair short again it felt different, I guess because, like text, the body changes meaning over time and when placed in new contexts, so that the same act repeated becomes totally new.

I was halfway through H. Gareth Gavin's *Never Was* when I left for the CCA, its salt/snow conundrum becoming muddled in my head so that when I left the house I found myself thinking that the utter cold that has finally dropped was somehow caused by salt, salt like on the roast potatoes, like the grit on the footpath, yum. Against the cold I was wearing layers of Ragland cut t-shirts and jumpers, and a black cap with half my hair tied up and pulled through the hole in the back, crucial for the moment when I hit my head on a mirror suspended by chains with a spotlight shining on it in front of the entire room, while trying to sneak back to my seat in the front row.

Rooting, Rubbing, Pouring, Dancing, Treading, Clenching: Bodying Libraries was an afternoon of film and performance curated by Jessa Mockridge, your local horny librarian, co-organised with Beth Bramich and the Feminist Duration Reading Group, who are current residents at Goldsmiths CCA. Jessa's project *Spivak_Rub* (yes, previously published in our own *Nasturabitory Reader*), has been developed into an 18min film, and was shown situated amongst other work which "touch on libraries through language, gesture and sound." If you've seen Jessa do a reading of *Spivak_Rub* you might wonder how it could possibly get any better, but the film really made the most of being a film, like Jessa's live readings always make the most of being live readings, in both instances activating the qualities specific to each medium. You could tell watching that a lot of the other films had been influential in the development of *Spivak_Rub*, the creative decisions within it, and the whole event had the air of someone showing you something they love, the generosity of sharing with you their bibliography. Instead of at all undercutting Jessa's film, this only thickened, deepened it.

Spivak_Rub as a text is made up of fragments from an annotated book on Feminist Theory, mixed with the internal thoughts of a librarian erasing these annotations from the book with

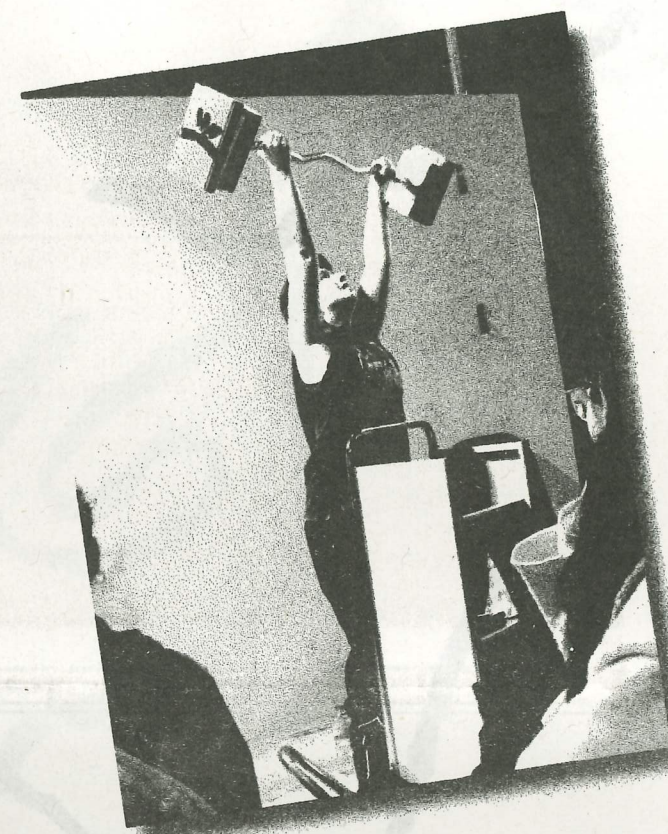
a rubber. This repetitious rubububing, brushing, page turning, is then reenacted, sans-book, by the same pair of hands, over a duvet. Wiggly eraser shavings cast across a blue surface, looking like waves in the sea viewed from an aeroplane. Here, the erotics of the speculative relationship between the reader and the librarian are mused upon, luxuriated in.

Noticeable across much of the video work in the programme was the use of experimental closed captioning, particularly in *Black Poirot* by Rosa-Johan Uddoh and Jessa's film itself, both of which were worked on by Collective Text, a Deaf & Disabled artist-led access project. In both these works the captions not only transcribed audio, but used methods of moving typography to further their communication. The short sharp movement of 'rub' back and forth as a hand erases the pencilled annotations in a library book, the vibrating 'ooo's of Whitney Houston's *I Will Always Love Yo(ooo)u*. This is access as a medium, as a material, with its own poetics.

Black Poirot was certainly a highlight, and I think a lot of people will be re-reading Édouard Glissant after watching it, Glissant who Uddoh proposes would make the "ideal candidate" for Black Poirot, and whose right to opacity "reveals the 'Western epistemological project' a.k.a. the insistence on constantly asking 'Why? What? Who? Whodunnit?' of every individual as a colonial plot".

After the interval, we all kind of pivoted our chairs to face the aforementioned mirror and other set pieces by Lucy Nunberg - including a weight lifting bar with books, not weights, bolted onto its end, and a wheeled library trolley piled with titles from Audre Lorde, Susan Stryker, and a banana amongst other things - to watch D Mortimer & Prinx Silver's live performance. *Between the Stacks* was a zine the two made when they were kicked out of their studios in Stoke Newington, above the public library. While the zine was made up of two stories by D Mortimer and photographs by Lydia Garnett "that portray Mortimer and Prinx Silver reading tenderly together," here these scenes are brought off the page, restaged and developed amongst Nunberg's set. The text from the zine itself played prerecorded, interrupted with live vignettes, exchanges, reenactments by the two, checking out each other and the books which littered the set, as we listened. Towards the end of the piece it transformed into a film, and the audience took their cue from the performers sitting down and facing the projector screen to pivot back around in our seats. Set five years in the future, the video used audio and captions to tell the story of someone being shown around the mouldy ex-studios by an embarrassed estate agent, full of excuses about the mould, and the tantalising promise of artists having worked there.

At home, I finished *Never Was* while snacking on burnt toast with oil and salt



salt salt. The main character Daniel is given three chances to tell their story, one for each petal of a mystical flower in the strange and shifting place that the book is named after. These three attempts are kind of like the staging and restaging of the same work over and over again, in that while each time it may be made up of the same stuff, each time it is transformed. I thought about the character Daniel losing the 'a' that had been on the end of their name without anyone noticing, letting it just drop, and the friend I'd gone to the event with quietly crying at D Mortimer & Prinx Silver's play fighting and laughter as they piled on top of each other on the floor.

On the shores of *Never Was* gathers all the potential that was never realised in the 'real world'; snow which never fell, and isn't really snow but instead is a soft powdery something else, the 'a' from the end of a name, and maybe inches of hair, and roast dinners.

In 'Revolutionary Letter #3' Diane Di Prima writes:

"store food - dry stuff like rice and beans stores best goes farthest. SALT VERY IMPORTANT: it's health and energy healing too, keep a couple pounds sea salt around..."

these lines validating both my mild prep-er tendencies and the fact that I carry a small container of salt in my bag at all times. But more than that, they're about how to prepare for surviving; how to practice, to stage and restage, attempt again and again, and that an action, *Rooting, Rubbing, Pouring, Dancing, Treading, Clenching*, when repeated, becomes totally new.

-KW

rooting, rubbing, pouring, dancing, treading, clenching: bodying libraries

SUN 7 JAN 2024
2.30-5PM

A screening bringing together artists' films that touch on libraries through language, gesture and sound curated by Jessa Mockridge.

Co-organised with Beth Bramich and the Feminist Duration Reading Group as part of their current residency at Goldsmiths CCA, London SE14

2:45-3:45pm First Half

Welcome

Katie Hare *Skip 2015* (7 mins)

Rosa-Johan Uddoh *Black Poirot 2019* (20 mins)

Elizabeth Price *A Gothic Choir, Part 2: Plans and Elevations 2020* (17mins 36 secs)

break 7.15 mins

4-5pm Second Half

D Mortimer and Prinx Silver live reading of *Between the Stacks* with set design by Lucy Nunberg (35 mins)

Jessa Mockridge *Spivak rub 2023* (18 mins)

Onyeka Igwe *No Dance, No Palaver*

Her Name in My Mouth 2017 (6mins) and *Specialised Technique 2018* (6mins)

Abri de Swardt *Ridder Thirst 2015* -18 (13 mins 36 sec)