

**Here We Are, Let's Go: Dartington College of Arts, June 14th, 1997, Studio 11,
6.30 pm. A revision of Lone Twin's *On Everest*.**

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Preface: On The Swiss Army Knife

The word nostalgia, translating directly from the Greek as ‘suffering pain in return’, was first used in our understanding of the term by Swiss mountain soldiers describing their feelings after spending prolonged periods of time in the Alps. The Swiss Army Knife was first conceived by a corporal on extended mountain duty: the basic idea for the knife came to him as he remembered the dreams he had had as a small boy of becoming a soldier - those dreams were full of expensive and lethal equipment. As he sketched the first rough design of what was to become the world’s most useful knife a tear ran across his cheek; he began to cry for the little boy he used to be and for that little boy’s home, now gone and lost – we can only imagine - to time. From that moment on the Swiss Army Knife has always carried with it for the Swiss soldier not only a multi-faceted reliability but also a certain sensation of longing and a fundamental missing of everywhere, everyone and everything.

Parts of this ‘preface’ taken from Lone Twin’s *On Everest* (Whelan and Winters 1997) are factually correct, other parts less so. Swiss soldiers didn’t suffer pain in return, Swiss mercenaries did - an embellishment occurred to force a resonance with the military issue knife. Similar liberties are taken across this article: two texts meet here, one, this one, written in the now of 2018 and one written in the then of 1997, but also in the now of now - fiddling with the 1997 text occurred to force a resonance with the purpose of the article. This text does not formally distinguish between the two sources (some paragraphs are composites, some are more identifiable as belonging to one source or the other – the ‘chapter’ titles are taken without change from *On Everest*, as with that text some titles stand-alone, without any corresponding content). To some degree this continues the project of the 1997 text which frames itself as ‘made up’ from journals and diaries, from jokes and drinking stories, from information on computer screens, from

the dreams Gary has been having about our expedition, from myths, legends and fibs about this place and from ideas I've been having in my own head. *This place* refers to both the place of On Everest's performance - Dartington's Studio 11 - and the place of the mountain, Mt. Everest. The Gary referred to is Gary Winters, who appears as himself in both texts.

Introduction:

Good evening and thank you all very much for coming here. I appreciate that we have, under difficult circumstances, all come a long way to be here, and that many of us have left places of which we are very fond. I appreciate too, that many of us are already beginning to miss terribly the people we've left behind in those places, and later on tonight if things go our way, and the weather holds out, we'll be trying to do something - to say something - that might make that awful pain a little more bearable, or at least understandable.

To help with that difficult process and to mark the official launch of tonight's paper, later on we'll make available a glass of champagne to those of you who enjoy a drink. Now we only have the one bottle of champagne so that really will have to operate on a first-come-first-served basis and I'll apologise now to those of you sitting towards the back who might not get to the drinks in time.

PICTURE: WHELAN_A.JPEG. Caption: On Everest, Centre for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow, 2000. Photograph: Davida Hewlett

But with time pressing on and with oxygen precious, I'll make a start on this evening's paper while Gary Winters very kindly continues on our 5 and a half-mile ascent to the summit of Mount Everest. Thank you Gary. I've also asked Gary if he could help with some of tonight's reading. Gary will be reading all of this evening's quotations and then following each with the

relevant footnote or reference. On this it may be helpful to imagine two large floating speech marks either side of Gary's head, although as the piece progresses that might feel a little unnecessary.

Chapter One: On Folly - Don't Go Up There You'll Kill Yourself

Chapter Two: On Red Wine For Blood And Astro-Turf For Grass

Chapter Three: On Over There, Down There, Across There, Back There, Back There Back There, Back There (repeat until breath runs out) And All Of The Oxygen In Between

In effort to make a start on this paper I visited Falmouth University's library wanting to locate the bits of the Dartington College of Arts library that made the two-hour journey west in 2010. I joined Falmouth University to take up the position of Professor of Performance four years later, a role that largely keeps one away from libraries and had kept my mind well away from the possibility that Dartington's Charles Olson collection may have up-sticks and relocated. It had. There, on a bottom shelf, were a number of editions of *The Maximus Poems*, an epic 'poem of place' begun in 1950, written for, in and through Gloucester Massachusetts. I really liked the poems and still do - the complete edition is of considerable length, breadth and depth, dimensions I am still tackling. Many claims are made for *The Maximus Poems*, its place and influence on contemporary poetics, its problems, its difficulties, the contested figure of Olson - I identify these by only short journeys made into scholarship on Olson, which in its own considerable dimensions more than equals the challenge, for this reader at least, set by its subject, so I steer clear and stay

with the poems¹. The editions I find on the bottom shelf are the 1960 Jargon Corinth version, I opened a copy at the dedication, to Robert Creeley. Below the inscription were a further two lines, in pencil, of my own notes made – most likely – in the early spring of 1997 as I worked on what would become my final undergraduate submission to Dartington’s newly established field of Performance Writing. Thumbing further into the book I found a small ‘order number’ slip between pages 20 and 21. As an undergraduate I deployed these thin paper slips, collected from numerous visits to the Dart Café, to indicate the location of a passage to return to. The numbered slips were lucky, 100 the luckiest of all, this one - lost to Olson’s epic - was a nine. Reading the implicated pages I concluded I most likely used the nine to signpost back to a passage containing these lines

North 42° 37’, West 70° – 40’ It is enough Gloucester,

To say where it is (Olson 1960, p.20)

I had no idea, of course, in the Spring of 1997 as I returned the book to Dartington’s library, forgetting to erase the notes and retrieve the slip, that the signpost would stand, seemingly undisturbed, for quite so long and that there it would be, 21 years later pointing a way forward.

Chapter 4: On Being Here

We are 50.2 degrees latitude and 3.41 degrees longitude. We are Saturday the 14th of June 1997 and we are approximately 6:30pm. We are 25 meters by 10 meters, the average size of a council

¹ Although Olson’s relationship to Black Mountain College (visiting professor, rector) and Dartington’s relationship to the same institution, or at least to its pedagogic imperatives, ought really be mentioned here, if only in locating Dartington’s place among others who share a dynamic interest in the potentials of interdisciplinary arts teaching and practice.

swimming pool. We are balconies, we are the gods, we are the floating-up organs. We are Dartington College of Arts Studio 11.

So begins Chapter 4 of the text of *On Everest*, my final submission to Dartington's first graduating cohort in the field of Performance Writing and what was to become Lone Twin's debut work – we were, at that point, yet to adopt a company name or make the decision, though no decision was made, to spend the majority of our working lives together. Dartington's Studio 11 (formerly the Dance School and now, I think, Studio 6) has a shallow balcony on which stands a large organ of some notoriety – an audience listening to my reading of the 1997 text sat directly opposite the balcony, at the far end of the long studio space. A white line on the studio floor passed through the space and out through open doors at either end of the studio. The line is $\frac{1}{300}$ th the vertical height of Mt Everest, if traversed 300 times during the hour-long performance Gary, myself, audience, balcony, organ and studio would – as the proposition went – summit.

Saturday evening, June 14th, marks the first time Gary and myself perform together – we had just met, days earlier and Gary had generously agreed to help with what had initially appeared as a solo project. The performing of the performance was, at that point, the longest period of time we had spent in each other's company – it was a way of getting to know each other. There had been no rehearsal, only a series of short discussions snatched between Gary's commitments to his own graduating works, to be offered to the field of Visual Performance. This approach, of conducting a series of quick discussions, of making plans, persists; when working alone together we have (mostly) refrained from any discernible process of trying out the doing before doing the doing before an audience. Adopted by necessity in 1997, this approach meant the majority of the moments of doing in *On Everest* should be written into the performance text

and said out loud, as incorporated stage instructions, telling us what to do and when to do it. Say it, we decided, and it would be.

‘...It is enough Gloucester/To say where it is’ (Olson 1960) sits in Olson’s 5th letter of a series of correspondences The Maximus Poems move through and around. Rereading it now, as directed by the nine, I remember my initial proposal for On Everest. The idea was to write, to do, and to say out loud, two places *into* each other and for that to cause something of a meeting, a folding of one place into the other, a conceptual maneuver that doesn’t sound jolly at all, but somehow it was jolliness I was after; it felt jolly to be working like this, with a new friend, it was social – I wasn’t alone and many of those quick discussions with Gary had made me laugh very deeply about what I was trying to do with the piece. An early draft was academic, theoretical, dry. As my tutor, Brigid McLeer, carefully and brilliantly made clear, a ‘conference paper’ read aloud wouldn’t do much to hold an audience expecting a show (it doesn’t do much for an audience expecting a conference paper). In effort to hold at least Brigid I upended the academic tone, imagining it – with its assumed orthodox deadpan - as a joke of sorts, or at least the set up to a joke, and then attempted to cheer it further with elements that could make the rug, place the rug and then pull the rug from under its four feet.

Olson’s impulse to locate Gloucester by the geographic guarantees of longitude and latitude is countered by proposing *saying it* alone is enough, in terms of locating the idea of it in time and space. It is a proposition I was taken by, and so did the same for my text’s performance location, offering longitude and all. I hadn’t remembered, until reunited with the nine, that I had so clearly lifted the tactic from Olson’s 5th letter.

Dartington College of Arts Studio 11 used to be called Dartington College of Arts Dance School. The shape and length of the dance School has a story about it. I'm not sure when the story takes place – or when the change in name occurred, but it goes that a dance teacher here at the time was asked on the specifications ideal for a building in which dance could be taught. The story has it that the dancer walked over to the proposed site of the Dance School and took a run and a jump. The points at which she began her run and finished her jump are now marked by the opposite doors of Studio 11. Which works to explain why the doors aren't exactly opposite each other – she fell slightly off course. Until asking Gary to do this - Gary, take a run and a jump - I believed the story, only now I realise for those speed and distance calculations to be correct the dancer must have been taller and longer-limbed than Gary – which is hard to imagine.

It is hard to imagine and it's incorrect. The story belongs to the arrival at Dartington of Ballets Jooss and the jump was almost certainly made by the company's joint-master Kurt Jooss. A recent and remarkable history of Dartington offered in *A History of Dartington Hall in Twenty-Three Moments* gives context to the ballets' arrival in a timeline entry for 1935:

Totalitarian persecution in Germany and Russia leads to an inrush of European talent. The Elmhursts acquire the ballet Jooss; Kurt Joos invites Rudolf Laban and Lisa Ullmann to join the company at Dartington; Michael Chekhov's Theatre School opens; visits from Bauhaus fugitives Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer... (Mount 2017, p.61)

In photographs Kurt Jooss doesn't appear to be overly tall, in comparison to Gary, but it's hard to tell. In my experience the reading of one's photographically rendered dimensions depends entirely on who one is standing next to.

A number of elements, introduced to me by Performance Writing at Dartington, combined to suggest building a performance around the attempt to write, to fold, one space into another. I was taken, and still am, by the proposition from many fields of spatial inquiry and discourse that places are, in concert with their physical realities, imaginary, dreamt of - thought and practiced into our lives by the happenings and happenstance of our lives - and that these dimensions are a true part of any physical reality (certainly that would be true of any account made of the place of Dartington College of Arts). The proposition goes that a narrative space is the only space we can stand in, the only space we can stay in. This resonated with the various bits of curriculum on Performance Writing charged with prompting questions on where work comes from and where work goes – *where* is it placed, *where* is it received and how might asking those questions shape the thing worked? Much is made, and rightly so, of Dartington’s dynamic take on the opportunities and possibilities of hosting a number of disciplines under one institutional roof, and asking, quite simply, what is (a) discipline for. Alan Read is to the point on this, Dartington was

...an educational institution that understood ‘instituting’ something was a responsibility and a commitment to equality among practiced disciplines, not an excuse for the hollow promise of an infinite interdisciplinary liberty. (Read 2011 p.8)

This approach was hugely generative in terms of allowing, of supporting, practices of making. From my own experience the placing of a *where* next to a *what*, *why*, or a *how*, was equally generative and it came with a doubling of sorts, because the place of Dartington – in this case the studio itself, the location of the performance – had already been very many places.

Chapter Five: On The Border Between Asthma And Stitch

Chapter Six: On Lucky Charms, Pockets Full Of Marbles And Fingernails Stuck Down With Glue

Chapter Seven: On Neil Armstrong - No Questions About The Moon Please

Chapter Eight: On Using Emptied And Washed Fairly Liquid Bottles To Express The Inexpressible And Using Duvets To Do The Same.

Chapter Nine: On The Possibility of Failure

There is the very real chance that time will run out on us tonight - that we'll reach the end of our programmed hour and we won't have reached the summit. This would be nothing to be surprised about. Only 16% of attempts by westerners on Everest have been successful since records began in 1924. Two of the more daring and spectacular failures are remembered as group leader Rainer Hoister's expedition in 1951 with his young team of Adventure Scouts on a sponsored relay race to the summit - with the baton being dropped at a very early stage - and Michael Stones' solo attempt on the mountain in a barrel. Of a failed attempt in 1952, a year before the mountain was finally conquered a climber stands at the foot of the mountain - at much the same altitude as we are now and considers turning back.

Gary: If a man feels he is failing to achieve this stern standard he should perhaps withdraw from a field of such high endeavour as the Himalaya. Tilman, H.W, Nepal Himalaya, Cambridge University Press: 1952, page 241.

Myself and Gary both enjoy that quote for its stiff-upper-lipness, it's something we'd very much like to replicate. But at this point - as we complete the 9th chapter, the first 20 minutes and

approximately the first 400 meters of our ascent, I'll ask Gary if he would be kind enough, the next time he passes, to switch on our oscillating fan; let's try and get some air in here.

Chapter Ten: On Persistent Folly - Don't Go Up There You'll Kill Yourself

Chapter Eleven: On Statistics, Damn Statistics And Stats

Chapter Twelve: On Nuts For Energy And Bananas For Fun

Chapter Thirteen: On Kaleidoscopes, Geography And George Everest And The Colonial Naming Game, With The Preface: Oh Look, A Mountain

Chapter Fourteen: On What's Going On

I am working through On Everest, not because it merits attention in and of itself, but because it seems an adequate example of something that exploits an offer, an opportunity, made by Dartington. John Hall's citation given in conferment of an Honorary Fellowship awarded to Lone Twin in 2007 puts it like this:

In honouring Lone Twin, Dartington celebrates itself, the way it has been able from time to time to permit unpredictable value by having in place conditions of provocation and permission. The Field of Theatre at Dartington proposed a fellowship for a collaboration born out of two different fields and invited someone outside their own field to read the citation. (Hall 2007)

Working with On Everest also roots things, pragmatically, in a studio space, in a space built of, and for, doing. The focus on a studio acts too as a tethering device, I would otherwise wander off and get lost in the gardens.

Chapter Fifteen: On remembering, remembering, remembering, remembering (repeat until breath runs out) – And Then Just Forgetting

Alongside a discrete visit to a library I brave the contents of a boxed archive of materials gathered from studying and teaching at Dartington. I pull out an undergraduate brief for a unit delivered by Brigid McLeer and myself to Performance Writing students across March 2000. It describes an activity I very likely undertook as a student, and if not this one others very much like it certainly were undertaken, and perhaps enjoyed:

Writing Practice: Semester 2, Brief:

Block 4 (Weeks 16 – 20) Solo texts: generation, transformation, editing and redaction

- Develop a written text in eight sections.
- Each section must contain a quotation from at least one other section. The first section is not an exception to this requirement.
- At least two of the sections must contain passages of a conversation heard by you between the start of this brief and its completion.
- At least two of the sections must contain quotations or allusions on a principle decided by you.
- You should decide on form and genre (poem, story, script or anything else of your devising)

- You should decide on what constitutes a section. The sections should have some structural, shaping, or organisational feature in common.
- The first line of the first section and the last line of the last section should be identical. (McLeer and Whelan 2000)

This brief is usefully typical, and although many other approaches to working with text were explored on Performance Writing, common to many was the very clear proposition that the *where* and the *how* were necessary elements of any *what*. Of course a *where* may not be placeful, in geographic, terms at all - the political, the anatomical, the etymological, the critical, the subjective etc. were all, and always, vibrantly present in responses to such prompts. Looking at this brief and other materials in the box the range of organisational strategies worked across different writerly forms is notable; lexicons, indexes, taxonomies, lists, sections, are expanded and exploded many times over. Organisational principles read to be key, particularly their use as a generative tool. In one folder I found notes on Borges' fourteen animal classifications listed by the *Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge*, a copy of John Hall's *Thirteen Ways of Talking about Performance Writing* and a photocopy of Stevens' *Thirteen Ways of Looking at Black Bird* – the two came to me in that order. On Everest is organised into sixty so-called chapters, mercifully this article borrows only twenty-one of them.

Chapter Sixteen: On Oxygen Tanks, Crisp Packets, And Dog-Ends.

Chapter Seventeen: On The Old Land, The Old Country, The Old House, The Old Gang And All Of The Old Things

Chapter Eighteen: On Altitude Sickness And Its Symptoms

If we were suddenly placed on the summit of Mount Everest right now, three quarters the way up through the Earth's atmosphere, five and a half miles above us here and bang in the middle of the jet stream we would survive for a little under two minutes. After that the decreased atmospheric pressure, pushing only one third the amount of oxygen needed for breathing to keep us alive, suffocates us. As the level of available oxygen falls the body responds by increasing the blood flow to the brain, causing the brain to swell. In extreme cases the brain is squeezed out of the skull and down the hole for the spinal cord. The increased blood pressure causes leakage from the blood vessels and the lungs begin to fill with liquid. We effectively would drown standing on the highest place on Earth.

Altitude sickness in its earliest stages - experienced initially as a feeling of slowing down both mentally and physically, is suffered by even the most acclimatised of mountaineer. Aside from the very physical effects of the condition comes a more gentle symptom; nostalgia. Climbers suffering from only mild altitude problems have spoken about a sense of nostalgia for past events creeping into their thoughts and then eventually obsessing uncontrollably on them for days at a time. Thanks Gary -

Gary:

I remembered a place where my family used to visit each summer, a place with a great beach, I made a friend, and he was there again the next year, I must have been 8 or 9, and we kept meeting up like that. That's all I could think about, one foot after another - that place and my friend - the higher we got, the worse it got, until I became dizzy almost from the memory and had to stop and sit. I managed in the end to get my mind away from it - I realised I could easily lose the group, so I started on again. Burlson, Todd, May 1997 at <http://www.everest.mountainzone.com/everest.stm>

The sickness allowed to run to its fatal end, with its internal drowning, is said to cause a similar sensation to the more common notion of drowning where the mind is pushed through a series of hallucinations on past life before eventually giving in and shutting down.

That a journey made to the extraordinary outer-reaches of the planet would do its level best to take you back into remembered, forgotten and imagined places of everyday life was more than useful in trying to open-out On Everest's attempt to do something of the same; a way of thinking about, writing and performing about, where we – the *we* performing, and the *we* watching – happen to find ourselves. *Here we are, let's go* was something I wanted the performance to say, and to do. In 1999, two years after leaving Dartington we returned for a short artists' residency, where we would develop a new project, *The Days Of The Sledge Hammer Have Gone*. The job of the residency was to find a way of working together in rural spaces – we had made various projects in urban contexts and wanted to shift focus. Writing about that process we described wanting to find a way that '...we and our work could somehow become the places we found ourselves in' and that 'We worked to find actions that would put us in a meeting with the geography of our circumstances' (Whelan and Winters 2001). We tried to achieve this, or a version of this, during the Dartington residency with this relatively short effort, titled *Dart Action*:

Wearing a tracksuit and a sports hat: run from the Yew tree in Dartington Hall's graveyard, Devon, England, through the Dartington Hall estate and into Totnes. Follow signs for Bridgetown and find the left bank of the River Dart. Run the full length of the river path. At the path's end continue into the Dart until about knee deep. Take off your sports hat and with your hands on your knees wait for sweat to drip into the river'. (2001)

A few weeks ago in April 2018, we were working at Dartington Hall again, to contribute to the excellent Dartington Live season, a series of events and shows presented by ‘...artists and thinkers from around the world to tackle some of today’s very real challenges...’ (Dartington.org 2018). Ahead of our show, a new ‘dance’ work, we were visited, in Studio 1, by our friends filmmakers Christine Molloy and Joe Lawlor (Desperate Optimists). We initially knew Christine and Joe (both Dartington alumni) as theatre makers and their work, which toured regularly through Dartington, had been important to us. The four of us were a little spun out to find ourselves together again in a Dartington studio, it made us laugh. The next day Joe and Christine interviewed us both on camera for a documentary essaying, among other things, acts of radicalisation in rural environments. We did our best with the questions - ‘how did you find Dartington, how did you know it was here? What did you expect? How was it to live and work in the country? Is this place a rural idyll? What is a rural idyll? Was there a Dartington way? Why did your pants in the show last night have a union jack on them?’

Was there a Dartington way? There was – students would discuss work as being ‘very Dartingtony’, suggesting that ‘Dartington stuff’, the work produced, had a particular character, an identifiable shared set of qualities. I think that had to do with two interrelated imperatives. During my time at the college there was a clear pedagogic emphasis on process, one that encouraged the developing and sustaining of an ongoing practice (rather than a fascination with a singular outcome, object, production etc.) and this would often create work (to see, as an audience) where a process was shared, revealed, inhabited though perhaps not overly developed into something *worked*, produced (I am generalising, I can think of many examples where the reverse would be true). Secondly there was something important going on around how the ground of specific disciplines would be mapped onto particular taught fields. The fields of Performance Writing and

Visual Performance, for instance, shared performance as a named element and used performance as way to create work. Both fields approached performance and both approaches were open to influence and shaping by the other. This could mean, and very often did mean, an undergraduate pathway with writing in its title would also, alongside its focus on textuality and performativity, be alert to the visual arts, visual cultures and critical discourses born of the image. Each field also had an expansive and interrogative sense of its own territory, each seemed to locate itself in an ongoing act of defining – each field title was in effect a question; Theatre? Music? Visual Performance? Performance Writing? Canonical approaches to practice and training didn't completely work at Dartington, the emphasis on process was holistic; by what process of being together, of thinking and doing together, can we construct a working agreement on what constitutes, say, theatre?

Joe and Christine's questions questioned the relationship between the place and the ethos of the college and its training. Joe asked if the training experience at Dartington amounted to a form of radicalisation. If it did, we suggested, evidence of it was perhaps most visible in those who resisted than in those – like a Desperate Optimist or a Lone Twin – who gave in. Many of course resisted – of course because institutions of all colour energetically engender resistance. This was particularly true of Dartington and it should be stated here, in this edition of this journal, that real frustration and disappointment with a (or the) *Dartington way* would feature equally, and often unequally, among positives, in terms of experience. With Joe and Christine we agreed that radicalisation wasn't the correct term but many of those we knew who hadn't connected with the offer felt they were resisting something of force, and many encounters in subsequent years would regularly feature comments along the lines of *I don't do any of that Dartington stuff any more*. None of which would be totally unique to Dartington or anywhere else that instituted with intent.

But we agreed that Gary and I sought a meeting with the geography of our circumstances, because, as it became clear from Joe and Christine's questions, Dartington did the same.

Chapter Nineteen: On Drifting Off And Losing The Plot

Chapter Twenty: On Nearly, Nearly, Nearly, Nearly, Nearly (repeat until breath runs out) And Not Quite

Chapter Twenty-One: On The Summit

I think for all of us a very emotional moment. We have come along away, and what's more we have come a long way together. It is hard to know exactly what to say at a time like this, I'm sure - and I know it's true of Gary and myself - that our thoughts are by and large a little bit muddled and confused, but nevertheless charged with a great sensation of achievement, or perhaps its opposite, either way there is, I think, little else to say, unless Gary has something to add?

(Gary has nothing to add)

So as Gary prepares the drinks, and before this evening's paper is passed over to you, I, on behalf of us both, would like to thank you all for coming here and hope that along the way something was said that made things just a little easier, and although at times the going was tough and often painful - you feel it was, in whatever way, worth all the bother.

There is of course now the matter of our descent, but I think it's best to find our own ways down, at our own speed and in our own time. The average person walks roughly a mile and a half a day and so our full descent of Everest's five and a half miles should be complete by early

Wednesday afternoon, the more leisurely of us should arrive back at sea level just before teatime. I'd very much like you all to take a copy of tonight's paper with you on your journey, and although we won't all be together, perhaps we could on Wednesday of next week, all share a thought for each other. I know that Gary and myself will be thinking of you all at that time, wherever you are.

I'll bring this paper to a close now and allow you to begin on the first few meters of our descent. For those of you who enjoy a drink along the way - please feel free to stop and have one with Gary and I, and don't forget on your way out to pick up a copy of this evening's paper.

I'd like to thank everybody involved with tonight's expedition. I'd especially like to thank again Humpty Dumpty Under Fives Nursery for the loan of these paddling pools and their generosity therein. But special thanks must go to Gary Winters, for without his commitment, mathematical ability and sheer strength, we wouldn't be here now. So, Gary, thank you very much. And once more thank you all for coming here with us. Thank you and good evening.

PICTURE: WHELAN_B.JPEG. Caption: On Everest, In Between Time Festival, Arnolfini, Bristol, 2006. Photographs (video stills): Lone Twin

Afterword:

Gary and I shake hands throughout the performance, to mark Gary setting off again on the climb. As we summit, in wild escalation of the hand shake, we embrace, losing our cups of champagne in the process, one over each shoulder. Audience members are encouraged to pick up a copy of the text, in book form, on their way out of the space. The books, and champagne, have been

carried in two large rucksacks throughout the piece, making each bag – particularly Gary’s - relatively heavy. The book contains a further note of thanks on its back pages. This from the most recent running of the piece in May 2018, as a contribution to Performing Mountains Symposium, Leeds University:

‘On Everest was originally made for Studio 11, Dartington College of Arts and shown as part of Zero Degrees in June 1997, the first Performance Writing BA (Hons) degree show. We would like to thank Brigid McLeer for her help at that time, also other members of the Performance Writing staff team, especially, John Hall, Caroline Bergvall, Ric Allsopp and Alaric Sumner, for their support. (Whelan and Winters 2018)

In the audience on the evening of June 14th 1997 were a number of curators and programmers, Lois Keiden, then of London’s Institute of Contemporary Arts invited the work to be shown there later that summer. We ran from Paddington Station to The Mall by way of a warm-up and, running straight into the ICA, began to traverse the line again, this time up and down the ICA’s steep stone stairs.

In the same archive box that I find the Writing Practice Brief I also find a conference paper by John Hall, titled ‘Interdisciplinarity: ‘disciplines’ and contemporary practices’. The paper lists a series of guidelines created ‘When a few years ago at Dartington we were trying to re-plan all our degree work in such a way that the relationship between disciplines could be activated...’ (Hall 1995) The first two are:

- i. Ensure that the disciplinary boundaries are seen as historically and culturally specific and therefore subject to change

- ii. Establish a continuing debate, across subject lines, about the nature of performance and composition in such a way that the debate can influence student (and staff) practice. (1995)

Reading these in the now of now it is explicitly clear that the conversation across subject lines Gary and I began with *On Everest*, and have continued by continuing *doing that Dartington stuff*, is of Dartington's approach to practice so fundamentally that John's full set of guidelines reads as a recipe with the only missing ingredients being a taller one and a shorter one or put another way, one of regular height and one of irregular height. And although it is difficult, in contexts such as this, to be uncritical of uncritical appraisals of anything, let alone ones' alma mater, I am unable to resist stating, for the record, my profound gratitude that an educational institution saw fit to draw up a set of guidelines that produced a place in which Gary and I could take a run and jump.

The steep stone steps of the ICA were cruel, the attempt to summit punishing. For reasons not entirely clear we swapped the celebratory cups of champagne for two menthol cigarettes smoked in the venue's bar. During the ascent we discussed the performance at Dartington a few weeks earlier. We asked that audience to be conscious of their collective decent, and to reconvene once at sea level. In the ICA, midway through this second attempt, we decided that we were not, in all good faith, duty-bound to come back down.

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6050 Words

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