

Black Rock: Routes through scenographic translation, from mountain climbing to performance

David Shearing

There are lots of things that really set you able to experience yourself, but they've got to be risky, if you aren't able to be scared, get past something and learn something and realise that actually, the potential of you is infinite.

Johnny Dawes

Orientation

Clogwyn Du'r Arddu, October 1986, the stage for one of the most daring mountain climbs in history. Johnny Dawes completes the first ascent of Indian Face and is given the technical grade E9 6c.[{note}]¹ The climb is a 160-foot route set 2,500 feet above lake Llyn Gwynant on the north flank of Snowdon. The north-facing black cliff rarely touches the sun. The cool, electric rhyolite is now the site of over 216 recorded climbs, a theatrical feast including the aptly named A Midsummer Night's Dream (E6 6a), The Rite of Spring (E7 6b) and Master's Wall (E7 6b). These climbs together with the vibrancy of the Welsh landscape, tangled in myths and legends, make 'Cloggy' -- as it's affectionally known -- one of the greatest climbing crags in Great Britain.

Over thirty years later, inspired by the anniversary of Dawes' now infamous climb, Black Rock (2017), an immersive multimedia performance event, was co-commissioned by Kendal Mountain Festival and Professor Jonathan Pitches (University of Leeds). Our aim was to use Dawes' death-defying Indian Face as inspiration to explore the wider context of climbing in the UK and research how live performance can be used to retell, inspire and inform audiences about such remarkable individual feats. This article traces the developments of Black Rock in order to offer insights into the core research question: To what extent can the experience of mountain climbing be translated to an audience on the ground?



FIGURE 1: Johnny Dawes looking up at the Indian Face climb on Clogwyn Du'r Arddu (Image: David Shearing)

The research project took place over a twelve-month period culminating in the live staging of Black Rock at the University of Leeds to an audience of over 200 people in November 2017. The purpose was to use performance practice as a method to reveal the subjective and shared aspects of the mountain climbing experience; to discover the ways in which performance design, the body and storytelling might capture, translate or represent this complex embodied pursuit.

My practice as an artist and academic operates at an intersection between immersive installation, performance, storytelling and film and I was well placed to combine these methods in the making of Black Rock; my experience of mountain climbing was far less advanced. The objective, however, was to draw different audiences together, to speak with climbers and non-climbers, to reveal an insight into Johnny Dawes' character and extraordinary climbing abilities, to illuminate climbing from the outside in. The intention was to draw on the collaborative nature of performance making by working with a team of informed mountain researchers, performance makers and climbers.

Over nine months we conducted a series of site visits to Snowdon, firstly with a team of artists, researchers, a mountain guide and Dawes himself. I subsequently made research trips with the creative team and solo. It became clear that it was impossible to separate the climb of Indian Face from a wider context of mountain climbing culture and the landscape it was situated in. We were drawn to the presence of the Dinorwig slate quarry, which sits between the towns of Llanberis and Dinorwig. The quarry represents over 170 years of mining history, of local people economically and physically entwined with the landscape -- the mining and decades of excavation have left the inside of the hillside exposed for all to see. The site, decommissioned in the 1960s, is now a playground for climbers, and was the training ground for Dawes' earlier fantastical climbs such as Quarryman (E8 7a) in 1986.

Black Rock

Black Rock was a fifty-minute experience designed around a central structural catwalk filled with over 4 tons of Yorkshire gritstone on one end, and a thin layer of water on a high-gloss black reflective surface at the other. At the foot of the gritstone was a fluorescent pink 1980s-style climbing rope salvaged from equipment left over from the old University of Leeds climbing wall. On top perched a small radio that projected the voice of Johnny Dawes into the space during sections of the performance. Surrounding the central catwalk there were eight large wooden benches for the audience to sit on, each one made of railway sleepers. At either end of the space were two panoramic projection screens, which worked to continuously shift the audience's attention between different perspectives. The screens displayed distant horizons and up-close surface textures gathered during fieldwork. Scattered around the space and surrounding the audience were twenty 6-foot-tall LED strip lights providing bursts of brilliant white light engineered by performance company Invisible Flock -- an image inspired by Dawes describing Cloggy in his 2011 autobiography as 'electric' (151--2).



FIGURE 2: *Black Rock*, full image of space, central catwalk, LED lights, benches with headphones. (Image: Tom Joy)



FIGURE 3: *Black Rock*, Performer walks across the rocks during the sequence Indian Face (Image: Tom Joy).

A newly commissioned sound score was created by artist and composer James Bulley. Eighteen channels in total were used to immerse the audience using audio recordings of streams, gates, climbing gear and other ambient sounds captured in and around Snowdon. Central to the spatial composition was the creation of a vertical ascent through space, marked by seven small handmade concrete speakers hung on ropes. This simple speaker array provided a way to project the flow of running water, the voices of different climbers recorded during interviews and the sound of Dawes' actual breath as he climbed Quarryman (E8 7a), taken from a video recording and used within performance. The piece did not aim to represent climbing through literal recreation, but to radically reconceive it through scenographic translation. The performance explored how we might create the sense of verticality without direct representation of vertical structures. Recordings of breath were used as metaphorical evocations both of a life and death pursuit, and the breathtaking effects of physical height.

Working with choreographer Carlos Pons Guerra and two dancers, Ariadna Saltó Mestre and Marivi Da Silva, we explored how we might translate climbing into a physical text. As part of our research process we invited climbers to create imaginary climbs with us in the studio, building short sequences that unpacked the embodied language of climbing. We gave ourselves permission to interpret and not to recreate, so each climbing move became a gesture for inspiration in our own performance vocabulary. We explored climbing on a physical indoor climbing wall, working with weight, balance, risk and support. We watched videos, read guidebooks and explored the essential nature of 'partnership' in mountain climbing.



FIGURE 4: *Black Rock*, performer marking through climbing routine (Image: Tom Joy).

Claire Carter, artistic director of Kendal Mountain Festival, was writer and poet for Black Rock. Carter wrote the expressive and poetic text with dramaturgical input from Jonathan Pitches. Structured much like an album, the piece journeyed through different movements: 'Orientation', 'Deep Time', 'The Call of the Mountains', 'Quarrying', 'Indian Face', 'Black Peak', 'Brilliance' and finally a coda end section titled 'Return/Parting' using the voices of everyday climbers discussing their own insights into why they climb: to broaden the scope of the project away from Dawes' elite endeavours. The narrative text -- sections of which are published in this article -- was spoken in three disembodied voices who aurally guided the audience through the performance. Dawes provided the first voice taken from interview recordings made throughout the project. He offered piercing insights that revealed a deep awareness and understanding of the body, a brilliance in decoding geology and profound observations into wider philosophies of climbing -- ultimately philosophies for living. Alongside Dawes' actual voice were two more theatrical voice-overs, conceived as male and female mountain guides. Our intention was to weave Dawes' voice with narratives of deep time, Arthurian myth and the hero together with concepts of

partnership and loss. The result was a meditation on climbing, a reflective journey attempting to open up multiple readerships and access points. We wanted to counterbalance the often masculine and singular narratives of mountain climbing/mountaineering, of figures such as Doug Scott, Joe Simpson and even Dawes himself, with a more plural and multi-perspective piece.

Next, I trace the intersections of this research project through what I am calling 'routes', each of which offers insights into the process of translating the act of mountain climbing to an audience on the ground inside a black box studio. The routes present a holistic approach to practice research that combines first-hand site-based research, historical research, performance theory, collaborator and audience insights and my own reflective insights as the lead artist. The routes offer small traces of ideas within the project, which are presented linearly in this document -- however, their emergence throughout was simultaneous and multifaceted, offering links and productive collisions. With each route I hope to offer an insight into the tricky act of translation from one mode of experience to another.

Route One: Personal Mountains

Landscape theorist Simon Bell (1999) proposes how the perception of landscape, which he argues 'is the field of our present actions' (1999: 66), is more than mechanical reception of data, but a subjective process in which we project our feelings and preconceptions (42). In exploring mountains, specifically Snowdon, the vastness of its scale, its time and its magnitude, we are dealing with the overall conception of a mountain as both an 'environment', a much broader concept, and as a localized field of action: the 'landscape'. The cycling between the conceptual (environmental) and perceptual (landscape) offers significant implications for aesthetics and embodied performance practice. An embodied approach to making sense of the experience of mountains needs to combine our perceptual engagement -- (bodily) processes associated with senses of touch, sound, sight, movement and the feelings of weather in the mountain landscape -- with an abstract imaginative (cognitive) process combining the mythological and metaphorical conceptions of the mountain environment. Black Rock cycled between these processes in order to position the spectator within a shared larger metaphoric conception of mountains as a place

representing life and death, together with an intimate bodily and sensorial participation in the performance design.

In the section of Black Rock titled 'Deep Time', the audience are invited to hold a piece of slate that was placed underneath the benches. As they take hold of their piece of slate, they are offered these simple instructions by the voice of our male 'mountain guide':

You close your fingertips over it.

How much does the time of this object weigh?

Does it wreak violence as it holds stillness?

Does it mark you, or do you mark it?

Do you keep it, or do you let it go?

('Deep Time' -- Claire Carter)

This simple gesture invites the audience to begin navigating their own bodily engagement with the performance -- a personal tactile element that brings the visual imagery presented on screen and the location of the slate mines literally close to hand.

The slate's form invites the participants to run their fingers over its ridges; its smooth surface and jagged edges protrude like tiny arêtes. In the epic and almost incomprehensible time and scale of the mountain, the touch of the slate offers a tangible grasp -- solidity and weight. It has a vibrancy that can be held. According to Johnny Dawes, slate offers a code in which we can productively engage with its surface: it 'is like HTML' he says, 'it just tells you what to do' (interview with Dawes, 2017). Slate affords tactile engagement.

During one site visit our artistic mentor, Louise Ann Wilson, invited us to look at the landscape with closer eyes through a small magnifying glass.



FIGURE 5: Slate wall in Dinorwig quarry and magnifying glass (Image: David Shearing)

Held deep within the surface of slate is a mirror image of its large scale. In perceptual terms James Jerome Gibson refers to this phenomenon as 'nesting' (1979: 9). Through touching and seeing the nested materials we come to understand larger frames of reference. Scenographically, this offers a powerful frame through which to conceive of a haptic intimacy. 'Haptics' comes from the Greek haptain, meaning 'to touch'. Martin Welton examines this etymology in relation to performance (2007). He states how haptics is an 'active or movement-reliant sense' (2007: 153--4). In Black Rock the participant has to work to constitute the impression -- it is an active process. The touch of each shard is intimate -- it belongs to the participant. Participant reflections identified this perceptual intimacy. One audience member commenting on

their most memorable element noted, 'I loved holding the slate while watching as it connected me to the harsh, sharp edges, the texture of the mountain'. The haptic intimacy framed within the wider imaginative possibilities of the mountain and its deep time invites us to become close at hand with the landscape. The small tiny shard reveals how we might connect personally with the mountain through performance.

Route Two: The Gesture of a Line

At the foot of Indian Face high up on Snowdon -- thirty years since the first ascent -- I invited Johnny Dawes to draw the route in my sketchbook. His bodily knowledge produced on the rock was remembered and expressed in charcoal on paper -- a spatial-bodily impression. Tim Ingold asserts that 'every hand-drawn line ... is the trace of a gesture' (2013: 126). In Black Rock that gesture, Dawes' own interpretation of the route expressed as a fragmented jagged line, was articulated in various spatial and scenographic forms throughout the performance.



FIGURE 6: Johnny Dawes sketches Indian Face route (Image: Jonathan Pitches, Sketch: Johnny Dawes)

As the audience enter the performance space, they are given a map, on the centrefold of which was an illustration of the crag with Dawes' line drawing of Indian Face layered on top -- a reimagining of a climber's topo. A topo is a graphical representation of a climbing route; often drawn and presented in guidebooks, it gives an approximate outline of a route, usually accompanied by descriptions of important rock formations and details of the grade and protection needed, in order to communicate the route to another climber. As a non-climber I was fascinated by how these topos were constructed and then read -- they appeared to be like a hidden language layered on the surface of the rock, each one concealing a personal journey, a time, a place, a mood, a feeling.

The topo map for Black Rock was not an accurate representation but a poetic interpretation. I wanted the audience to have access to methods of reading and interpreting a climb, whether they were climbers or not, and to apply that as a method of reading and interpreting the performance through the map. Dawes' line drawing provides a space of interpretation that is extended into the audience reception of the piece. The map was based on an Ordnance Survey map, layered with a detailed sketch rendering of the crag, illustrated by artist Tessa Lyons. Layered on top was Dawes' charcoal drawing together with text written by Dawes about his climb (figs. 7 and 8). It was an expressive tool, giving a sense of guidance and layered readership of the piece.

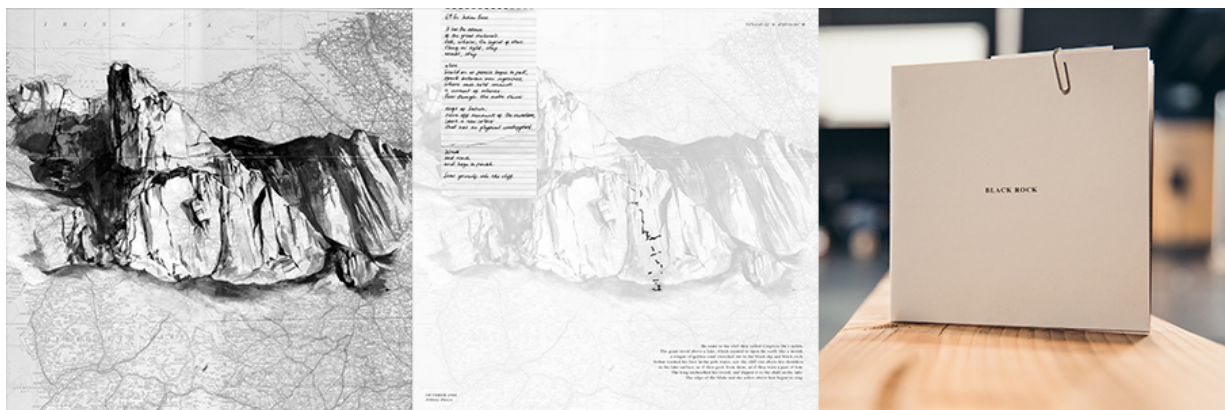


FIGURE 7: Left: Illustration of Clogwyn Du'r Arddu on top of Ordnance Survey map. Middle: Dawes' Indian Face sketch layered on top of the map. Right: Final handout of folded map and illustration given to audience. (Illustration: Tessa Lyons, Image: Tom Joy)

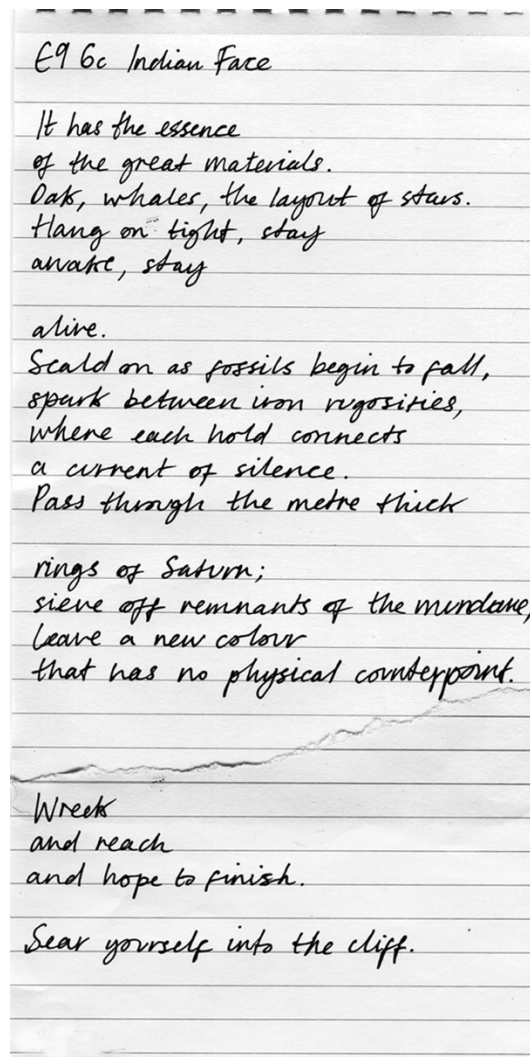


FIGURE 8: Paperclipped note inside the map, a poetic account of Indian Face as described by Dawes in Facing the Indian (2013)

In addition to its use in the map, the line drawn by Dawes was mapped on the floor in rehearsal using masking tape. Over time it eventually became just a singular line of gritstone and water -- in the shape of a 10-metre-long catwalk. In contrast to the overwhelming environment of Snowdon, the sketch became a focused motif that inspired various compositional strategies. Through a conversation with the composer James Bulley, the line drawing inspired the placement of the seven concrete speakers that hung above the centre of the space -- it provided a spatial dynamic that attempted to express the movement of an ascent. The sketch was a gesture that translated an embodied history of a climb, that was then interpreted by the creative team through the spatial design and the map. The process captures how embodied expression can

be translated into other artistic mediums, reimagined and reinterpreted by an audience.

Route Three: Language and Movement

This is a slate quarry.

A playground, a torture hall, a havoc.

Your fingers must learn a new language here.

Nothing will blur.

The rock has a locked syntax.

Be articulate, know every angle.

Smear, crimp

palm the heart line

then the fate line

to the blank rock face.

Tilt a collar bone

to balance the pelvis.

Flag a leg deeply

below a hip,

let it swing like a bell

sounding out the move.

('Quarrying' -- Claire Carter)

Black Rock sought to find a new language, balanced between established terminology, visuality and movement. Carter's poetic writing drew on different approaches that fuse text from Dawes, her own knowledge as a climber and poet, geology and myth -- the challenge was to invite the audience into the embodied world of climbing. Myth was used partly as a metaphorical device enabling the epic nature of mountains to be conceived in human scale. The landscape revealed these myths in abundance, of kings and queens, heroes and quests, adventures that had been playing out for hundreds of years.

Long ago

He came to the cliff they called Clogwyn Du'r Arddu. The giant stood above a lake, which seemed to open the earth like a mouth, a tongue of golden sand stretched out to the black sky and black rock and his black boots, begging for salt. He unsheathed his sword, and dipped it into the shaft in the lake. The edge of the blade and the arêtes above him sung.

('Indian Face' -- Claire Carter)

The myth of King Arthur is used to frame core sections of Black Rock. Arthur is closely associated with Mount Snowdon, where he reputedly killed the mountain's most famous giant, Rhita Gawr. Arthur is an archetypal hero used as a vehicle to express risk and more personal quests in dealing with your own demons. Using the figure of the hero allowed us to open up spaces in order to interpret why some climbers take epic risks in pursuit of individual goals. Myth is an imaginative space of projection for the audience, a space that connects the personal with the epic through the vastness of the mountain landscape. The hero in Black Rock is a threefold conception comprising legend, Dawes the climber and the spectator.

The language of climbing is similar to dance notation; it includes: styles of climbing, equipment, hold types, moves and experiential terms used to describe the experience of climbing rock. A crimp, for example, is a hold described on the British Mountaineering Council website as 'a small edge that is held with fingertips, with the fingers bent to bring the hand closer to the rock. Larger holds can be crimped by using the same hand shape' (Harris 2006). To flag means to dangle or stick a leg out to improve balance and is incorporated into the choreography of Black Rock. A single word represents an embodied experience that is shared knowledge among climbers, a form of movement notation.

At times the language of rock climbing can appear impenetrable; we wanted to offer a sense of movement, tactility and shape, without losing our audience to the jargon specific to climbers. The process of climbing is about finding the language of a

particular climb; it is a vocabulary of bodily engagement mined out of the hills. In many ways it is a deeply personal experience through which climbers build and construct their identity; it is a process of doing language. In the section 'Quarrying' subtitled 'finding a new language', the verses are onomatopoeic and kinaesthetic, allowing the words to pull people into the embodied experience of climbing. Language is expressed in what Hans Thies Lehmann might call a 'scenic poem' (2006: 26), and in many respects could read as a 'landscape' (26), where text is lyrical with a dominant 'atmosphere'. In Black Rock, we drew on the atmosphere of the Dinorwig quarry, a place of contemplation, discovery and learning. The combination of the visual language of dancers, responding to the physical moves of climbing notation, with the spoken words aimed to fuse together the physical and verbal to create a sense of understanding for the audience. Thus, a new language is formed through an artistic interpretation of established forms.

Route Four: Crafting Atmosphere



FIGURE 9: Black Rock, Brilliance sequence, low rolling mist creating a cloud inversion effect. (Image: Tom Joy)

In order to orient the audience to Snowdon we invited them to navigate their way through the space, to explore and position themselves in a set of shifting atmospheric conditions. Atmospheres, as Gernot Böhme suggests, are constituted in the 'in-between' of environmental qualities and human sensibilities (qtd in Welton 2012: 150). Atmospheres combine the transient sensibilities of climatic conditions with feeling, mood and place. Rather than attempting to recreate or represent the mountain environment, the intention was to place the audience in-between scenographic materials, allowing the scenography to form its own logic and sustain its own world. We wanted to provide an essence of Snowdon, through video imagery, site-based sound recordings and their spatialization, and the conditioning of the air through wind, haze and the smell of natural materials such as the wooden benches. The intention was not to saturate the audience in an abundance of design materials but to subtly direct the senses towards the performance -- scenographic gestures for the audience to construct their own world. Scenographic atmosphere in Black Rock is a triangulation of the place of Snowdon, the mood of the dramatic text and the here-and-now experience of the design. Subtle shifts in atmosphere throughout the piece aimed to encourage a reflective sensitivity.

Sensitivity is brought about through a merging of the body with the rhythms and aesthetic sensibilities of the environment. Philosopher Drew Leder provides an example of this in a description of walking through a landscape -- an experience I am sure is familiar to many outdoor enthusiasts. Leder documents a process of what Richard Coyne calls a 'temporal spatial adjustment' (Coyne 2010: xvi), or tuning with his surroundings. As Leder slowly walks, he becomes aware of the rhythms of his body; gradually he notices the details of the environment, until eventually his awareness extends beyond himself to the whole landscape. Below, I reproduce Leder's experience in the forest in full, his account shares many similar perceptual processes I felt as a scenographer engaged with the landscape of Snowdon and became central to my translation of atmospheric conditions:

My relaxation is the smell of pine needles and the warmth of the breeze; self and Other can only be artificially disentangled. It is by this bodily chiasm that I realize the height of a distant tree. That I am planted here in my puny frame, I am there too at the peak, towering one hundred feet high. I am likewise with

the bird's graceful flight, the brook tumbling over logs and stones. This is an experience of bidirectional incorporation; the world comes alive empathically within my body, even as I experience myself as part of the body of the world. (Leder 1990: 166)

To be absorbed through an aesthetic sensitivity is to be swallowed into a larger body (165). This is an example of a mindful engagement, whereby the individual embraces concepts of possibility and where they empathically experience the environment from multiple perspectives. In the section 'Brilliance', the audience perspective is shifted to the top of a dramaturgical and figurative peak; through the use of low rolling mist that slowly covers the floor and the gritstone shards, their view is altered without moving position. Through a crafting of scenographic atmosphere, shifting perspectives, drawing attention towards the air through haze, listening outwards towards the soundscape, touching the rock, the up-close video and the distant horizon, the intention was to build a compassionate sensitivity -- an empathic engagement with the performance 'in-between' the scenographic manifestations of climbing, the dramatic text and the mountainous landscape of Snowdon.

Route Five: Breath

What struck me most about observing climbers in Dinorwig quarry was the quiet, contemplative nature of the space. The infrequent mutterings of groups and pairs of climbers, the sound of the rattling nuts and climbing equipment, and the faint and focused breaths of the climbers. Climbing is a process in which the individual is deeply aware of their body, the tiny holds, crimps and pivots of the feet. For some climbers that I interviewed, climbing was about simply and precisely mitigating risk; it is thoughtful and strategic. There was a clear link between mindful meditative practices and the act of scaling walls. A cycling of mind, body and environment. The breath emerged as a recurring theme in Black Rock. In the video recording of Dawes as he climbs Quarryman (Hughes 2006) the breath is visceral and powerful. It is as if it is propelling his body upwards or seems to conceal a fear -- it is communicating, an externalization of his feeling.

The breath in Black Rock is a direct metaphor for life and death and is deployed throughout the piece in various ways: the ghost of Dawes' breath is used during the ascent of Indian Face, and the sound of him blowing chalk off his hands is used as the final cut of the lights; the sound of the dancers' breath as they moved through the space; and finally, our mountain guides invite the participant to contemplate their own breath particularly during 'Dark Peak', when they are invited to breath in, and during 'Brilliance', when they are instructed to breath out:

'Dark Peak'

Breathe in.

Feel slate fall in the quarry of your stomach.

Feel grief catch a hold in your throat,

it tastes familiar,

You try to swallow it down, a reflex,

like the way one reaches for the light-switch in the dark.

Loss continues to course through your mouth.

Let bitterness run over your teeth,

Accept this.

You are suspended

Everybody else is beneath you

You are naked.

You are alone, perhaps even lost

This is the edge

And you have untied.

'Brilliance'

Breathe out.

From here you can see how far you could go.

You can see the height you could fall.

You can feel the edge of your self.

You feel the weight of a partner,
even if the rope now hangs slack.

The rock jostles with minerals in the gold.

Elements of glass and bone converse.
remembering the shape of the sea

Although they are now dead,
the Giants opened their heads here.

Those summits are their dreams,
that lake their last drink.

In this light the ground is not solid
And neither are we.

('Dark Peak' and 'Brilliance' -- Claire Carter)

Mindfulness theorists Eleanor Rosch, Evan Thompson and Francisco Varela suggest the focus on the breath is often thought of in relation to mindful meditative practice, mainly because it is an ever present object of attention (Varela et al. 1991: 24). In drawing attention to the breath, we become aware of the boundary of external and internal relations, where the two merge and fold into one and other: 'You can feel the edge of yourself' (Carter 2017). Discussing breathing, Leder notes that 'Physiologically, respiration stands at the very threshold of the ecstatic and visceral, the voluntary and involuntary' (1990: 171). In controlling and drawing attention towards the breath, we become mindful of the 'presence of a natural power' (171) within us. The focusing of the audience's breath alerts the participant to a voluntary ecstatic and visceral awareness. In offering permission to breathe, the breath becomes a flow of

air into the environment, creating a cycling of air, body and space. Drawing attention towards the breath was a way of establishing breathing as a process of audiences becoming aware of their experience but at the same time going some way to embodying a philosophy of climbing and metaphor for living.

Translating Experience

When we began the research for Black Rock there was an overwhelming sense of magnitude in the attempt to grasp the epic nature of the mountain environment and Johnny Dawes' technical feats. With this project I did not want to recreate situations but to trace routes through the original source materials, some of which have been presented here. The word 'translation' is somewhat problematic as it suggests the creation of performance is beholden to the aesthetic potential of the original source. What this article offers is an insight into the poetic and creative potentials of live performance to offer immersive relations between participant, the dramatic text, scenography and source materials. Through the five routes outlined above: the tactile qualities of how slate combined with visual images might afford the formation of a more personal mountain; how a hand-drawn gesture might invite three-dimensional spatial and interpretational strategies; how the mining of a new language through a visceral, aural and bodily fusion seeks to pull the audience into the embodied experience of climbing; how the crafting of atmosphere might place the participants 'in-between' a triangulation of place (Snowdon), the mood of the dramatic text at any given moment and the here-and-now experience of the design; how the physical, conceptual and metaphorical use of the breath can bring the participant towards a mindful experience that is emblematic of climbing itself.

In translating mountain climbing to an audience on the ground, Black Rock was not an attempt to preserve the 'organic unity' of the 'original text'/source material (Carlson 1985: 6), where the performance inhabits a minor position in relation to the original. The challenge was to develop an experience born out the qualities of climbing and the mountain landscape of Snowdon. It could be argued that what was created was an outcome that is not inferior to the original, nor was it an attempt to recreate the particular climb or mountain conditions. It was, instead, an experience that develops its own language. Robert Laport's interpretation of Derrida's 'supplement' (Laport in

Carlson 1985: 10) as an adjustment in perception to the original offers a productive way to conceive how performance can work in conjunction with the original. Black Rock can be seen to correspond with the original source materials, drawing influence, developing motifs and placing the audience in relational encounters with the source materials and their artistic developments. Dawes' charcoal line drawing taken at the foot of Indian Face is not a direct translation of the climb, but a gesture that supplements the original, offering something new -- a gesture that affords further supplements and articulations.

The question of translation suggests a one-way process in which the original defines the parameters for the performance. In the routes outlined above, there are creative gestures developed by the artistic team, and extended by the participation of the audience. Black Rock is a co-collaboration between artists, climbers, scenography and audience -- not a translation but a supplement to the historical narratives, stories, climbs and landscape of Snowdon, a process that invites not a directional translation from one form to another but allows for a bidirectional reinterpretation of events.

Note

1 The adjectival grade (E9) gives a sense of the overall difficulty of a climb, the second (6c) is the technical grade that gives an indication of the hardest move to be found on the route. E9 6c is rated in the UKC Logbook description as 'Exceptionally Severe (Excessively so)' (UK Climbing n.d.) and the first of its grade in the UK.

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Captions

Figure 1. Johnny Dawes looking up at the Indian Face climb on Clogwyn Du'r Arddu. Photograph: David Shearing.

Figure 2. Black Rock, full image of space, central catwalk, LED lights, benches with headphones. Photograph: Tom Joy.

Figure 3. Black Rock, performer walks across the rocks during the sequence 'Indian Face'. Photograph: Tom Joy.

Figure 4. Black Rock, performer marking through climbing routine. Photograph: Tom Joy.

Figure 5. Slate wall in Dinorwig quarry and magnifying glass. Photograph: David Shearing.

Figure 6. Johnny Dawes sketches the Indian Face route. Photograph: Jonathan Pitches; sketch: Johnny Dawes.

Figure 7. Left: Illustration of Clogwyn Du'r Arddu on top of Ordnance Survey map. Middle: Dawes' Indian Face sketch layered on top of the map. Right: Final handout of folded map and illustration given to audience. Illustration: Tessa Lyons; photograph: Tom Joy.

Figure 8. Paper-clipped note inside the map, a poetic account of Indian Face as described by Dawes in 'Facing the Indian' (2013).

Figure 9. Black Rock, 'Brilliance' sequence, low rolling mist creating a cloud inversion effect. Photograph: Tom Joy.