

## 'Leaning into the Wind': *Poiesis* in Richard Long

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My work comes from a desire to be in a dynamic, creative and engaged harmony with nature, not from any political or ecological motives. I believe if it is good enough, if a love and respect for nature comes through, if only indirectly, then that is my statement of intent. One of the main themes of my work is water, and water is more important than technology.

—Richard Long, interview with Mario Codognato, 1997

In this chapter, I take Richard Long's art as a test case for Heidegger's account of the relation between art (*technē*) and technology (*Technik*). What *technē* and *Technik* have in common, according to Heidegger, is that both are ways of 'unconcealing the Being of beings'; what sets them apart, accordingly, is whatever distinguishes them as ways of unconcealing the Being of beings. This turns on their respective relations to nature (*phusis*): where *technē* works in harmony with nature's capacity for both self-disclosure and self-seclusion, *Technik* seeks to overpower nature in such a way as to leave nothing concealed.

I consider the significance of nature – as opposed to natural resources – in Long's work in light of this distinction. By 'nature' in this context I have in mind: the sticks and stones that can be picked up, thrown, or turned along the way, and the water that can be carried, poured, or sloshed (without thereby ceasing to be sticks, stones, or water); the mountains, deserts, and streams traversed, and the wind, rain, and sun endured, and occasionally harnessed (without thereby becoming mere means); and the impermanent marks Long leaves on the land. Long distils these complex experiences of Being on the way, under the sky, on the earth, sometimes for extended periods, into compact, highly polished texts and pared down photo-text documents. I focus on the former.

In bringing Heidegger's thought about *technē* and *Technik* to bear on Long's art, I draw on his own occasional writings and interviews to bring out the remarkably Heideggerian thematics – of 'letting-be', 'earth', 'sky',

'footpaths', and 'place', not to mention the activity of walking itself – that underpin his practice. These commitments bring out the *modesty* of Long's practice – certainly by recent artistic standards – the parameters of which are determined by what is possible for one man working alone, carrying what one man can carry, often in remote environments, to achieve. Viewed through the optic of Heidegger's distinction between 'bringing forth' (*hervorbringen*) and 'challenging forth' (*herausfordern*) as contrasting modes of comportment towards nature, Long emerges as an artist who aspires to respond to, rather than impose his will upon, the natural environments in which he finds himself: as a result, his works allow the dust of the Sahara, the streams of England, the heat of Mexico, the clouds of the Loire, and the wind of Lapland to show up – in Heideggerian terms, 'shine forth' – as remarkable features of these environments, as if for the first time.

#### ***Hervorbringen* and *Herausfordern*: Heidegger on *Technē* and *Technik* as Modes of Disclosure**

Heidegger's major reflections on art and technology are the essays 'The Origin of the Work of Art' (written for the most part during 1935–36, with later additions, including an addendum) and 'The Question Concerning Technology' (initially given as a series of lectures under a different title in 1949–50, and expanded in 1955), respectively. I consider them together, despite the substantial interval between them, because I take Heidegger's claims about art and technology to be mutually implicating; I begin with the latter because doing so brings out these implications most forcefully. According to Heidegger, the most thought-provoking question about technology concerns its nature as a way of relating to what is as a whole, and how we might achieve a 'free relation' to technology so construed: that is, a relation that no longer so overdetermines our understanding of beings as a whole, ourselves included, as to preclude all other ways of understanding them. What makes these claims relevant here is the implication Heidegger draws in closing for a Greek understanding of art as *technē*: that, because art and technology are at bottom both ways of 'unconcealing' beings, art may harbour the prospect of a 'decisive confrontation' with technology:

Because the essence of technology is nothing technological, essential reflection upon technology and decisive confrontation with it must happen in a realm that is, on the one hand, akin to the essence of technology and, on the other, fundamentally different from it.

Such a realm is art ... the more questioningly we ponder the essence of technology, the more mysterious the essence of art becomes.<sup>1</sup>

What art (*technē*) and technology (*Technik*) have in common is that both are ways in which beings as a whole may be brought to light. What sets them apart, accordingly, is what differentiates them *as* ways of unconcealing beings. On Heidegger's account, this is the difference between 'bringing forth' (*hervorbringen*) and 'challenging forth' (*herausfordern*). Like *phusis*, *technē* is a form of what the Greeks called *poiesis* (or 'bringing forth'); unlike *phusis*, it is the bringing forth of that which does not have its power of disclosure within itself, but in another; it is an *assisted* form of disclosure: the artist 'lets what is already coming into presence arrive'.<sup>2</sup> So understood, *technē* remains responsive to nature's inherent capacity for self-disclosure.

*Technik*, by contrast, severs *technē's* relation to nature's capacity for self-disclosure: where *technē* respects nature's reticence, with which it works in concert, *Technik* constitutes a 'regulatory attack' provoking nature to give up its latent power. Heidegger's example of such 'challenging revealing' is atomic power: by comparison to wind power, which harnesses the power of the wind – but only when it blows – atomic power forcibly extracts the atom's latent power. Doing so maximizes nature's yield, but at the cost of transforming it from the highest form of 'bringing forth' into a mere quantum of resource. Under such conditions, nature is reduced to 'a gigantic gasoline station'.<sup>3</sup> Heidegger's term for nature's newly denatured condition is *Bestand* ('standing reserve') indicating something made to *stand by*, on call for further use or transformation. Treating nature as a resource in this way prevents its 'self-refusal', its recalcitrant materiality, from showing up *as* self-refusal. So understood, technology is at root a mode of unconcealing that covers over its own concealing of all other modes of unconcealing, and so too its refusal to allow anything to show up *as* concealed, as unintelligible, as resistant to human ends. In the terms of Heidegger's earlier 'Origin': *Technik* – by contrast to *technē* – refuses 'to let the earth be an earth'.<sup>4</sup>

It is because *technē* is at bottom an alternative mode of disclosure, capable of confronting *Technik* on the ground of what they have in common, that it harbours such significance for Heidegger. Against the 'supreme danger' presaged by the final triumph of a technological understanding of being, authentic art holds open a weak promise of redemption, the prospect of what Heidegger (citing Hölderlin) calls 'the saving power'; the promise of a non-domineering relation to what is as a whole.<sup>5</sup> But given that Heidegger understands art in terms of a Greek conception of *technē*, according to which the artist serves largely as handmaiden to nature's capacity for self-disclosure, the artist cannot be understood in any straightforward sense as the *source* of this 'saving power'. Instead, consistent with the later Heidegger's view of agency more generally, the artist's agency is recessed within a broader horizon of disclosure: in this case what it is to 'bring forth' poetically, rather than 'challenge forth' technologically.<sup>6</sup> By comparison to modern conceptions

of art as whatever artists produce or declare to be art, this reduces, even if it does not outright deny, the significance of artists for the creation of art.

On Heidegger's account, art is to be understood primarily in terms of the 'work being' of the work [*Werksein des Werkes*]. This consists in the tension or 'strife' [*Streit*] that the work initiates between the 'world' that it sets up [*aufstellen*] and the 'earth' that it sets forth [*herstellen*] within that world. As a first pass, think of these as the horizon of intelligibility that a given work of art establishes and whatever resists illumination within the terms of this horizon respectively. As a corollary, what makes something a work of art will be that it enables whatever it discloses to show up in the light of a particular conception of being, while making it clear that not everything *can* be understood in terms of this conception, by setting forward whatever cannot be so understood *as* undisclosed, hence as unmastered and obscure, within it. That art retains the capacity to tolerate obscurity in this way – 'to let the earth be an earth' – is precisely what distinguishes *technē* from *Technik*.

Of course, Heidegger's account is not as straightforward as this gloss suggests. Take 'world' and 'earth' in turn. The Greek temple, Heidegger claims, opens a world: it 'first gives to things their look and to men their outlook on themselves'.<sup>7</sup> That is, it determines how beings appear at a particular historical juncture. It is not an addition to what is already there, but the background that enables whatever is there to show up or matter in determinant ways:

It is the temple work that first fits together and at the same time gathers around itself the unity of those paths and relations in which birth and death, disaster and blessing, victory and disgrace, endurance and decline acquire the shape of destiny for human being. The all-governing expanse of this open relational context is the world of this historical people.<sup>8</sup>

When a work of art is active in this profound sense for a historical people or culture, then 'the world worlds'. It is only once the world opened by the work has waned, and is no longer authoritative in this sense, that the work *can* become an object of historical scholarship or aesthetic contemplation. Until that happens, works in which 'the world worlds' are historical in a much stronger sense: they are not *in* history but the ground *of* history, determining what shows up as possible for a given historical culture. Hubert Dreyfus has identified three senses in which a work may function as such a ground for Heidegger. A work counts as world-disclosive in the strong sense when it performs at least one of the following three functions: 'It *manifests, articulates* or *reconfigures* the style of a [particular] culture from within the world of that culture.'<sup>9</sup> That is, it makes visible, renders intelligible, or recasts features of historically or culturally specific ways of being-in-the-world that are so pervasive as to normally remain invisible as such, and does from within the culture in question.

For present purposes I shall bracket Dreyfus's contentious suggestion that works of art can 'manifest' the styles of alien worlds, *as they are from the inside*, to those who do not inhabit them, so as to focus on his two more illuminating senses.<sup>10</sup> 'Articulating' a world requires more than merely reflecting what is already there: it involves gathering, thematizing, and focusing the practices of a culture in such a way that they *can* become objects of attention and self-avowal for the first time. By doing so, works such as the Greek temple function as 'cultural paradigms' for those whose practices they thereby consolidate. But given Heidegger's claim that with each truly epochal work of art 'a thrust enters history', causing everything to show up in a new light, paradigmatic works must not only 'articulate' or 'configure' a world, they must also *reconfigure* the style of a particular epoch in order to do so: previously marginal ways of being must be set into relief, and what was previously central pushed down. 'Reconfiguration', so construed, makes possible a new beginning by securing future-oriented possibilities rooted in practices that have been quietly ripening on the margins of existing self-conceptions: a truly 'game-changing' work of art not only reconfigures the possibilities of a given culture; it also articulates and in doing so consolidates these new possibilities.

By contrast, Dreyfus has very little to say about 'earth', identifying it with whatever *resists thematization* within a given world: 'earth' picks out whatever resists being rendered explicit within the terms established by an 'articulating-reconfiguring' work of art in such a way that it could be held up as a paradigmatic; it denotes what is not only unthematized but also *unthematizable* within the practices brought to light by a given paradigm. But Heidegger's notion of earth is much less straightforward than this suggests. There are (at least) three senses of 'earth' at play in 'The Origin' alone, the differences between which Heidegger does not explicitly thematize. Note that on Dreyfus's account earth must be *historical*: what counts as 'earth' for a given world will be whatever cannot be thematized within the terms or practices of *that* world: it will necessarily vary with the worlds of which it is a function.

But consider Heidegger's examples. In the case of van Gogh's painting, *Erde* seems to mean, quite literally, the soil that clings to the worn boots and shelters the grain through the winter months: 'In the shoes vibrates the silent call of the earth, its quiet gift of the ripening grain and its unexplained self-refusal in the fallow desolation of the wintry field.'<sup>11</sup> However this is to be understood, note that so characterized earth cannot be taken as a property of the painting itself: it is a feature the world the painting discloses. 'Earth' picks out the impenetrable, 'self-secluding' ground that supports the world of the peasant; it is that on and in which the peasant dwells in the world opened by the work. In this first sense, earth is a feature of the *world disclosed*, not *that which discloses it*. By contrast, when it comes to 'the temple at Paestum', 'earth' picks out the materiality of the material that comprizes both the temple and its location:

Standing there, the building rests on the rocky ground. This resting of the work draws up out of the rock the mystery of that rock's clumsy yet spontaneous support. Standing there, the building holds its ground against the storm raging above it and so first makes the storm itself manifest in its violence. The lustre and gleam of stone, though itself apparently glowing only by the grace of the sun, yet first brings to light the light of the day, the breadth of the sky, the darkness of the night. The temple's firm towering makes visible the invisible space of air. The steadfastness of the work contrasts with the surge of the surf, and its own repose brings out the raging of the sea. Tree and grass, eagle and bull, snake and cricket first enter into their distinctive shapes and thus come to appear as what they are. The Greeks called this emerging and rising in itself and in all things *phusis*. It clears and illuminates, also, that on which and in which man bases his dwelling. We call this ground the *earth* [...] In the things that arise, earth is present as the sheltering agent.<sup>12</sup>

This magnificent passage captures, in a manner directly relevant to Long's practice, some of the ways in which works of art may enable the materials from which they are made to shine forth, rather than disappearing into use in the manner of equipment. By extending his analysis to the 'rock-cleft valley' that the work gathers and consecrates around itself, the temple, on Heidegger's account, draws attention not only to its own materiality, but that of the valley in which it is located and even the elements that take their appearance from the stoniness of stone against which they henceforth stand out. In doing so it turns the valley into what the later Heidegger would call a 'location', and what Long might call a 'place'. But pause to consider the relation of these claims to Heidegger's claims about the previous example. Although Heidegger's invocation of earth as the 'sheltering agent' 'on which and in which man bases his dwelling' may seem to recall his earlier account of 'the silent call of the earth' in the peasant world, note that Heidegger does not consider the materiality of van Gogh's painting in this sense – as enabling the materiality of the material from which *it* is made to 'shine forth' – despite his own account of the differences between works of art and artefacts. What the two examples have in common, nonetheless, is that both present earth as an impenetrable, sheltering ground on and in which man dwells, and upon which man's world is erected.

Neither as 'sheltering ground', nor 'materiality of matter', nor *phusis* as that which 'arises out of itself', however, is earth historical in the sense that Dreyfus's account of the relation between world and earth requires. Earth is, however, historical in a third sense: as whatever resists, within the world opened by a given work, that world's illuminating force. So construed, earth is whatever cannot be illuminated within a given world, yet is nonetheless set forward as *unilluminated* within it; it is whatever withdraws, or refuses to be mastered, within the self-understanding or practices of a given world. One may understand this claim, minimally, as picking out those features of beings pushed into shadow by those that are foregrounded in a new world – the

intrinsic as opposed to instrumental value of natural phenomena, say – or one may understand it, maximally, as picking out the entire worlds of previous works covered over by the incommensurable worlds of successor works. For, on Heidegger's account, every event of unconcealing is simultaneously a concealing that covers over other possible modes of unconcealing: to disclose the earth as sheer resource-potential for science and industry is necessarily to cover over it as sacred 'sheltering agent'.<sup>13</sup>

This overview of 'world' and 'earth' leaves us better placed to grasp the significance, for Heidegger, of what differentiates *technē* and *Technik* as modes of disclosure. What distinguishes an instrumental, technological understanding of Being from the poetic revealing of art is that the former is *all world*: it is a world in which, not only is everything illuminated, but in which everything is illuminable – a world in which the illuminable exhausts *what is*, and not merely *what is intelligible*. Nothing can be disclosed as undisclosed (hence as obscure or unmastered) given a mode of disclosure that tolerates no 'self-seclusion'. By contrast, because art works in concert with nature's capacity for self-disclosure and self-seclusion alike, because it tolerates Being's withdrawal, the poetic revealing of art harbours the possibility of a 'decisive confrontation with technology' as a way of relating to the world. *Technē* harbours a 'saving power' in the teeth of the 'supreme danger' of *Technik*, it turns out, because, by 'letting the earth be an earth', it demonstrates that not everything can be rendered intelligible by the mode of disclosure that characterizes any world: it thereby preserves what later Heidegger calls 'the mystery' that there is a world at all.<sup>14</sup>

'To create' on this account is to 'fix' the strife between world and earth, intelligibility and opacity, that every work initiates into some determinate form. By doing so, Heidegger claims, works of art set the fact that they have been created into relief: that is, not the fact of having been created by a particular artist, but the fact of having been created at all – the fact 'that such a work *is* at all rather than is not'.<sup>15</sup> Think of this as the requirement that an authentic work cannot be reduced to an act of artistic will. To see what createdness, so construed, might involve in a concrete case, I now turn to the work of Richard Long.

### **Scuffing, Stamping, Kicking, and Scoring: Throwing, Splashing, Pissing, Pouring**

Long came to prominence in the late 1960s, during the heyday of British Conceptual Art. Though clearly an artist whose work reflects the post-minimalist sensibility of the art world in which he emerged, Long rejects both 'Conceptual Art' and 'Land Art' as labels that describe what he does, preferring to characterize his work as sculpture in a realist vein: 'My work is

real, not illusory or conceptual. It is about real stones, real time, real actions.<sup>16</sup> That Long's work is 'sculpture' in an expanded sense of the term, oriented to the varied surfaces of the earth rather than the plinth, seems unproblematic, or at least I shall take it as such: a philosopher exercised by questions of taxonomy might balk at the idea that *walking*, as distinct from the stone circles and lines Long makes along the way, is sculpture rather than performance of some kind. But I defer to Long and first-order critical practice on this score: Long has always denied any interest in performance, claiming that the nature of his work lies somewhere between the monument and the footprint. Thus, with the exception of a single film made about his 1988 Sahara trip – and made not *by* but *about* him – Long has never documented the activity of *making* his works, nor exhibited them in ways that suggest they are to be understood as performances, or the residue thereof.<sup>17</sup>

So much for what makes Long's work sculpture: what makes it realist, given that it is not representational? By 'realist', Long means art that is direct, concrete, and straightforward and eschews all forms of allusion, illusion, or symbolism. Long's art is 'realist' in much the way that Carl Andre's is: it uses materials undisguised as to their real, material nature. 'Real' in this sense is an antonym for 'representational' (fictional, metaphorical, etc.) rather than a stylistic subset of the latter (the 'realist' as opposed to 'surrealist' novel, say). What is 'real' in Long's sense is whatever is presented as what it is, and not as a surrogate or stand-in for something else. As Long has often said, 'a stone is a stone'. There is nothing special about the sticks and stones that Long uses; they are simply what can be found along the way.

But what is the relation, if any, between claiming to be a realist and *denying* being a 'conceptual' or 'land' artist? Is there any reason to suppose that these terms are mutually exclusive? There is one respect in which being a realist, in Long's sense, is antithetical to being a conceptual artist in the strong sense that unrealized ideas can suffice as art. Though his work was included in several defining early conceptual art shows and is routinely included in historical surveys of the period, and though directly presented ideas do have an important place in his work – especially in the text works on which I focus here – *realizing* his ideas has always been central to Long's practice. None of Long's text pieces are ideas for works that 'may', but 'need not', in Lawrence Weiner's formulation, be built: they always present the ideas animating walks that have in fact been made.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, many of them *could not* have been conceived in advance of making them, given that they respond directly to variable features of the environments in which Long makes them.<sup>19</sup>

Further distinguishing Long's practice from conceptual art is the fact that all Long's works made in situ on his walks, and all the mud, lime, and chalk water-based works that he pours directly onto interior walls and floors, are made by Long himself. Indeed, Long often stresses the significance he attaches to the fact that they are, to his having *touched* the materials of which they are



made (and so the surface of the earth) in making them: 'It's the touching and the meaning of the touching that matters', Long remarked early on to Anne Seymour, while discussing his 1971 show at Whitechapel Art Gallery, which he described as 'A portrait of the artist touching the earth'.<sup>20</sup> Only his gallery-based stone circles and lines are installed by others to Long's instructions: but it remains important that they are realized, rather than merely envisaged. No work by Long consists of the mere *idea* for a given circle or line.

Long's decision to restrict the scope of his work to what it is possible for one man walking alone to achieve, suggests in turn a reason for resisting the term 'land art'. Unlike the work of many of his American peers who work on the land – think of Michael Heizer's *Double Negative*, Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*, or James Turrell's *Roden Crater* – Long's work has never required construction industry techniques or expressed a desire to impose his will on the landscape. On the contrary, set alongside the grandiosity of such projects, Long's work treads remarkably lightly. In many cases it only becomes salient in the photographs or texts through which Long documents it, remaining much less prominent, if not invisible, in the landscape itself. Despite this, there is never anything precious, genteel, or twee about Long's work: Long's art is always concrete, direct, and matter of fact.

Nor is there anything complex about Long's methods. Long's work is often made by nothing more substantial than scuffing or stamping his feet (*DUSTY BOOTS LINE, THE SAHARA, 1988; DUSTY BOOTS CIRCLE, THE SAHARA, 1988*), kicking stones (*CLEARING A PATH, THE SAHARA, 1988; A LINE IN BOLIVIA – KICKED STONES, 1981*), or scoring a line with the heel of his boot in various terrains (*FROM LINE TO LINE, ARGENTINIA, 1997*). Such works will be absorbed back into their environments over time, perhaps as soon as the next sun, wind, or storm; if they do endure for some time, they will survive as one more set of anonymous marks in the landscape. Sometimes, as with works made by splashing water onto hot surfaces (*BARRANCA DEL COBRE WATERMARKS, MEXICO, 1987; SHADOWS AND WATERMARKS, NEPAL, 1983*), they probably last little longer than the time it takes to photograph them. But this is true of all Long's works, including his more substantial pieces: in the larger scheme of things it is always a matter of more or less time.

Taken in its totality, Long's project can be seen as one of recessing his own activities as an artist within the broader rhythms and forces of nature, at both a local and global level: from the passage of day and night and local effects of the weather, through the cycle of the seasons, to the orbit and rotation of the earth and the glacial pace of geological change.<sup>21</sup> As Long has remarked, 'Stones are always moving along rivers and glaciers, being thrown out of volcanoes or clattering down mountains. Those works in which I move stones around are just another part of this continuum'.<sup>22</sup> Seen in this wider perspective, every time Long moves a mere handful of stones, his work draws attention to the significance of these incomparably vaster natural forces,

rhythms, and timescales. In doing so the *insignificance* of his own interventions in the landscape – where this is not to be understood pejoratively – is made apparent. Indeed, this insignificance is even thematized within the work: both by the mundane tasks that structure many of Long's walks and the climatic conditions to which they make him hostage.<sup>23</sup> Take these two features in turn.

The former typically take the form of variations on a small number of core activities, the gradual elaboration of which structures both his oeuvre as a whole and the individual walks that comprise it. It is fundamental to these activities that a good deal of energy is expended leaving the environment very nearly as Long finds it. Take the following examples. Each day, for 11 days, Long carries one stone to another with which he replaces it, thereby displacing 11 stones some 35 miles each (depending on Long's daily mileage) along a 382-mile walking line from Welcombe Mouth Beach to Lowestoft (*WALKING STONES, ENGLAND*, 1995). Each day, for seven days, Long moves the same stone a given number of steps in a given direction: 'FIRST DAY A STONE MOVED ONE STEP WEST, SECOND DAY THE STONE MOVED TWO STEPS NORTH, THIRD DAY THE STONE MOVED THREE STEPS WEST (...)' (*STONE STEPS DAYS, LONGSTONE HILL, SOMERSET ENGLAND*, 1985).<sup>24</sup> For two and a half days, Long throws the same stone 3,628 times, thereby returning it to where he found it (*THROWING A STONE AROUND MACGILLYCUDDY'S REEKS, COUNTY KERRY IRELAND*, 1977).

Long has done similar things with water. He has carried water from the mouth of a river back to its source (*CONTINUUM WALK, DEVON ENGLAND*, 1998). He has walked 349 miles from the Irish Sea to the North Sea pouring water taken from each river crossed into the next (*WATER WALK, WALES AND ENGLAND*, 1999) and carried salt water 473 miles from the Atlantic to pour it into the Rhone (*OCEAN TO RIVER, WATER TO WATER*, spring 2005). He has poured one waterline per day for each day of a 20-1/2 day, 560-mile walk from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean (*WATERLINES*, 1989). Combining water and stones, Long has carried 18 stones, one at a time, from each stream crossed to be dropped into the next (*DARTMOOR RIVERBED STONES, RIVER TO RIVER, STONE TO STONE, ENGLAND*, 1991), and traversed England and Wales, from East to West and back again, in order to swap a stone from Aberystwyth Beach with one from Aldeburgh (*CROSSING STONES, A 626 MILE WALK IN 20 DAYS, ENGLAND WALES ENGLAND*, 1987). He has thrown a stone into every river and stream intersecting a notional circle (*SPLASHING AROUND A CIRCLE, A WALK OF FOUR DAYS ENGLAND*, 1997) and into every river crossed while traversing Wales from North to South (*STONE WATER SOUND, A 161 MILE WALK IN 5 1/2 DAYS*, 1990).

Most of these walks are structured by mundane tasks keyed to the terrain on which they take place, thereby foregrounding its nature; other works foreground the climatic conditions to which they are subject. Again, here

are some examples. Long has drawn attention to the shining of the sun by listing the number of hours per day spent walking in the company of his own shadow on a 217-mile walk (*NOVEMBER SUNSHINE, ENGLAND*, 1991). And he has singled out the coming and going of rain by various means: a walk that lasts the 113 miles between one shower and the next (*DRY WALK, AVON ENGLAND*, 1989); a work that lists 13 separate clusters of miles walked in the rain on a 203-mile walk (*RAIN MILES, IRELAND*, 1989); and another that records the number of hours spent walking on rain-wet roads on a 591-mile walk across France (*THE WET ROAD*, spring 1990). He has drawn attention to the persistence of cloud cover on a 7-day walk across Ireland that afforded a mere 1-1/2 hours of sunshine (*A CLOUDY WALK*, winter, 1998), and to the relation between cloud, mountain, and altitude by documenting the three-quarter-hour spent walking through cloud while crossing Ben MacDui, the highest point on an 8-day walk across Scotland (*IN THE CLOUD*, 1991).

Such works allow the climatic conditions of diverse regions to show up with a new radiance by pointing up the wonders of sun, wind, and rain, mountain, desert, and moor. As a result, despite leaving the landscapes, he passes through much as he finds them, such works do not leave everything quite as it was. By framing the conditions under which he encounters diverse terrains in terms of a limited number of variables, his text works focus attention on particular features of particular places at particular times – the wetness of the tarmac, the presence of shadow, the occlusion of sky – that might otherwise pass unremarked. In Heideggerian terms, such works allow what is already coming into appearance to appear: by singling out such everyday conditions, these works suggest the possibility of a changed relation to them: that they might be received as sources of wonder in their own right.

### **'The Right Thing in the Right Place at the Right Time': Poetic Revealing in Richard Long**

Taken together, the walks canvassed so far also bring out a feature of Long's practice that I take to be fundamental: its *responsiveness* to the conditions, whether climatic or topographic, in which he finds himself. Such conditions, to take only the climatic – hours of rain, sun, wind, or cloud – are sufficiently variable in most terrains to preclude forward planning. Some of Long's best works take advantage of this fact by responding to whatever strikes him as most salient about a particular place, having spent some time in it, rather than being executed in accordance with a preconceived plan. In this respect Long evinces a willingness to suspend, if not agency per se, then at least his own *wilfulness*, in the service of a deeper responsiveness to what manifests itself about a particular place at a particular time. The way in which he makes work is as receptive to peculiarities of terrain and weather as it is spontaneous in

acting within them, if not more so, putting pressure on standard assumptions about the respective roles of activity and passivity in human agency. All the works Long made on a walk in Mexico's Sierra Madre Mountains, for example, were made by pouring water onto hot desert rocks, because once there it turned out that staying close to the river was necessary, both to survival and to finding a path through the mountains – whatever intentions Long may have set out with. It is characteristic of Long's practice that all the works he made on this walk acknowledge this decisive, life-sustaining feature of the environment. Remaining not only open but responsive to such features requires a conception of what it is to make art attuned to what presents itself. Consider, in this spirit, *A CLOUDLESS WALK* (1995) (Plate 4).

Though not strictly impossible, it is hard to believe that a walk like this was planned. How could Long have known the walk would remain cloudless for long enough to set out to make a walk of this nature? How could he have known that this is what would strike him as the most salient feature of walking in France before setting out? This has always struck me as self-evident, but if confirmation is needed it is provided by Long himself in a talk given in Japan in May 1997: 'I started this walk with the idea to walk across France, but I noticed that it was completely blue skies each day, so I decided to finish the walk when I saw the first cloud. ... The walk started at a very solid geographic place, and ended, by chance, with an ephemeral phenomenon like a cloud. One of the things I like about walking is that just the simple and very normal act of days of walking can carry quite interesting ideas.'<sup>25</sup> To my mind, one of the finest examples in Long's oeuvre of a work arising out of such a spirit of responsiveness to the circumstances of a particular walk is *WINDSTONES* (1985) (Figure 6.1).

In Lappland the wind turned out to be especially prominent and as a result, according to Long, the idea of harnessing the wind to make a sculpture emerged from the experience of walking there. What bears remarking about this is not only that the work arises from the experience of walking in a particular place, but that it is almost entirely dependent on factors beyond the artist's control: 'there would be some days when there was no wind at all so I did not move the stones. Or there would be maybe some parts of the walk where the wind was so strong or the snow was so deep that it was impossible to move stones. So the actual conditions of the place may really dictate how [the works] are carried out'.<sup>26</sup> Even without Long's comments, something like this can be inferred from the fact that 207 stones were turned in 15 days. Why 207? Why not more or less? What were the circumstances of time and place that made just that number feasible in just that number of days? The significance of harnessing the wind to make art – but only when it blew, and only when Long came across stones that could be turned by hand by one man working alone – may be understood in terms of the distinction between wind and atomic power that I used to explain the difference between

## WIND STONES

### LONG POINTED STONES

#### SCATTERED ALONG A 15 DAY WALK IN LAPPLAND 207 STONES TURNED TO POINT INTO THE WIND

1985

6.1 Richard Long, *WIND STONES*, 1985. © Richard Long. Courtesy of Richard Long and the Haunch of Venison Gallery

'bringing forth' [*hervorbringen*] and 'challenging forth' [*herausfordern*] as modes of comportment that respond to, or seek to master, the earth's self-disclosure and self-refusal respectively.

As an artist, Long clearly responds to, rather than seeks to impose his will upon, the natural environments in which he finds himself. Long attributes such letting go of wilfulness (what Heidegger would call *Gelassenheit*) to the alignment of natural and human rhythms that the rhythm of walking affords: rising with the sun, sleeping with the stars, walking in the cooler hours of the day, eating and resting when necessary.<sup>27</sup> Because Long does not aspire to impose his will on the terrain, his works allow what distinguishes different environments – the dust and stones of the Sahara, the coasts and rivers of England, the clouds of the Loire, the wind of Lappland, the parched rock of Mexico – to shine forth as remarkable features of these environments all the more clearly.

Sometimes a work will celebrate an unexpected gift from nature. Walking in the Sahara in 1988, Long was able to access the Hoggar, a region that lack of water would normally render inhospitable to a walker dependent on finding water along the way. It was Long's great good fortune that just before he arrived the first rain in five years had left small pools in the mountains capable

of sustaining Long while walking: 'I was able to walk from pool to pool, and each day the pools got smaller and smaller, until the sixth day when they had all dried up, so that was the end of the walk. For me that had a kind of beautiful and poetic logic.'<sup>28</sup> It is precisely this 'beautiful and poetic logic' that I am trying to bring out. It requires remaining open and responsive to all these variables without which the walks in question could not have been made. Long celebrates this particular gift, the gift of rain, in *TWO SAHARA STONES* (1988), a work that conveys his profound gratitude for finding himself sitting where he could otherwise have found himself, sitting alone on a mountaintop in the Hoggar (Plate 5).

This same year, Long described his conception of the relation between himself, his work, and its location to Richard Cork in terms that perfectly capture a work like this: 'A sculpture in a landscape, when it happens well in a good way, is like a celebration of the place and my feelings of me being there and having the right idea at the right time and everything coming together in a good way. For me, that is the perfect way to make a good work.'<sup>29</sup> *TWO SAHARA STONES* celebrates – literally, gives praise or thanks for – Long's pleasure at finding himself alone in the wide open vistas of the Hoggar by clapping two stones together a sufficient number of times for the gesture to take on meaning. It is 'the right thing in the right place at the right time', something the work conveys with minimum fuss and a complete absence of gush.<sup>30</sup> What the best of Long's hard, bright, polished text works have in common is this uncompromizing *reduction* of the multifaceted experience of walking, including the sublime feelings in Long it induces, to a few simple activities keyed to weather or terrain, expressed in as cool, pared down, and compact a form as possible. Take *WATERLINES* (1989) (Figure 6.2).

Pause for a moment to consider everything else that must have happened during those 20½ days that did *not* make it into the work, a pattern repeated across the text works, and the single-minded, uncompromizing nature of Long's project comes into view. This reduction of experience is mirrored in his work's presentation: its visual impact, especially when installed at wall-size, is a function of the graphic economy (typically comprising a few lines of text in one or two colours, sizes, or weights of capitalized san serif font) with which Long presents them. If such reduction and brevity go some way to explaining the formal impact of Long's work, what if anything explains its content, the activities it records?

One can view such seemingly bizarre undertakings in quite antithetical ways. Understood instrumentally, as attempts to accomplish anything beyond the task itself, they seem idiotic. What goal could be served by carrying 11 stones the distance of a day's walking with the result that there is one stone less on Welcombe Mouth Beach and a stone lost to the sea in Lowenstoff? What reason could there be for walking 626 miles to swap a single stone from Aldeburgh and Aberystwyth beaches, or to return to same spot each

## WATERLINES

EACH DAY A WATERLINE  
POURED FROM MY WATER BOTTLE  
ALONG THE WALKING LINE

FROM THE ATLANTIC SHORE TO THE MEDITERRANEAN SHORE  
A 560 MILE WALK IN 20½ DAYS ACROSS PORTUGAL AND SPAIN

1989

6.2 Richard Long, *WATERLINES*, 1989. © Richard Long. Courtesy of Richard Long and the Haunch of Venison Gallery

day for seven days in order to shift a single stone four paces northeast of where it started? What explanation can be given for carrying salt water 473 miles to pour it into fresh water, or – seen from a certain perspective, the very epitome of pointlessness – from the mouth of a river back up to its source? Why walk until the first cloud or the next shower and then stop, irrespective of the intentions with which one set out, or spend those days on which the wind blows turning stones into the wind?

One may ask a question of this kind of all the acts documented in Long's text works, and no rational explanation can be given if rationality is understood solely in goal-oriented terms. Indeed, the futility of these acts, *understood instrumentally*, ought to direct our attention elsewhere: activities like these are not undertaken to realize any goal beyond themselves; and the walks are not done 'in order to' move a few stones or a little water from one place to another by extravagant means. The walks are made for the simple pleasures that making them affords, and Long's various activities frame the walks in such a way as to distinguish art from non-art. Think of all the steps that Long must take before or after a walk begins or ends: why are these *not* part of the work? And if these are part of the work, why isn't every step Long takes part of one ongoing work? The activities dissolve these worries by individuating

particular walks: it is only once the first stone is picked up or thrown, the first water taken on board, that the walk is underway: as such, the activities serve to distinguish the work (walking as art) from the world (walking as walking).

But are we any closer to understanding the *meaning* of such a project? Why expend so much effort to leave things, to all intents and purposes, very much as they were? For Long, the energy he expends on his walks is its own reward. By reducing life to a few fundamentals – walking, working, making camp, cooking – Long’s walks afford him the pleasures of unalienated labour: the authorship of one’s own actions, a satisfied tiredness at the end of the day, an untroubled sleep. This is not a high-flown interpretation, but nor is the work high-flown; Long’s project really is as basic (in the sense of fundamental) as this suggests: *it offers a model of living well*. The works he makes along the way celebrate these simple pleasures. The kind of activities they draw on – pouring, piling, carrying, kicking, throwing, counting, and plashing about with mud – tap into the ludic pleasures of childhood. Bully for Long, one might think, but why should anyone else care? Because by making such pleasures foundational, Long’s work takes a stand against the instrumentalized reason that pervades a technological world: notably the assumption that an act *could* only be rational if directed towards some utility-maximizing goal beyond itself, rather than undertaken for its own sake. Were acts more often their own reward, the environment would show up less often as sheer resource, enabling it at least in principle to show up as a source of value in its own right.

Taken as a whole, Long’s project shows up the hubris of man’s attempts to stamp his authority on the globe without accommodating himself to its underlying rhythms. These predate man’s custodianship of the earth, and will outlive it in turn. Viewed in this light, the modesty and tact of Long’s practice has considerable bite, implicating much of the work with which it has been wrongly aligned over the years. Rather than trying to impose his vision on the landscape, Long’s work communicates that it is but a tiny fragment of incomparably vaster, natural cycles of regeneration, of coming into presence and passing away, in the scheme of which it amounts to no more than moving a few grains of sand in the desert. Nonetheless, by documenting what he does, Long puts his actions on record as so many acts of commitment, even defiance, of what is considered valuable in our day.

### Earth, Sky, Gods, Mortals: The ‘Four-fold’ in Heidegger and Long

What has all this got to do with Heidegger’s theory of art? Long’s art clearly fulfills Heidegger’s basic requirement of authentic *technē*, that it ‘let the earth be an earth’ by respecting – unlike *Technik* – nature’s capacity for self-disclosure and self-concealing alike. Those walks that depend on the weather are a perfect embodiment of this: Long harnesses the wind, but only when it blows,



the sun, but only when it shines, the rain, but only when it falls, the clouds, but only when they appear. In all these cases, Long's walks both respond to and respect this rising up and fading back into itself of *phusis*. Indeed, this is true of Long's art in general: these works simply make it explicit. Nature is never reduced to mere resource in Long, it is never challenged to make itself available or to standby: it remains a gift upon which the artist waits, and for the bestowal of which his work gives thanks.

Grant that Long's art respects *Erde*: what is its relation to *Welt*? Given my earlier characterization of a technological relation to Being as 'all world', because it reduces what is to what is intelligible (and so utilizable), it is tempting to think that Long's art must be its antithesis: that the poetic revealing of Long's practice pushes back against the challenging revealing of technology insofar as it is *all earth*. But this would be too quick: If Long's art really does propose, even if only implicitly, a model of living well and an associated rationality, then this would be part of its world. It would be what his works 'set up' (*aufstellen*); that within which we are able to encounter the earth as earth. Insofar as this is what Long's work suggests is important but neglected, if not repressed, in *our* world – Long evidently finds it necessary to remove himself periodically from society in order to make it – this would cast his project as a marginal practice *within* the world of our culture, a poetic rejection of the balefulness (or what later Heidegger would call the 'godlessness') of modern urban life perhaps.<sup>31</sup>

Even so, there is clearly nothing in Long's project to rival the high-flown terms in which Heidegger discusses the Greek temple as founding the destiny of an historical people. But then nor should this surprise us: in Heidegger's own mid-1930s account of 'great art', it is an open question whether such art is already a thing of the past.<sup>32</sup> Nonetheless, I believe that Long's art retains a twofold relation to world: an indirect or 'negative' relation best understood in terms of the relation between world and earth in Heidegger's mid-1930s theory of art, and a direct or 'positive' relation best approached via the displacement of such grandiose terms in favour of the more modest, local conception of world implied by Heidegger's later notion of the 'four-fold'. Take these 'negative' and 'positive' relations in turn.

Recall the terms in which I discussed the relation between world and earth. Works of art are 'world-disclosive' in a number of senses, with varying degrees of foundationalism. They serve as 'cultural paradigms' (in Dreyfus's sense) when they articulate – gather, focus, and thematize – the practices of a culture in such a way that its inhabitants come to see themselves in the light of those practices for the first time. They serve as 'origins' insofar as they reconfigure a culture's self-understanding by drawing on possibilities quietly ripening on the margins of existing practices. Truly epochal works of art transform our established relation to what is by articulating such reconfigurations in ways that make new cultural self-understandings possible. Long's art is clearly at

odds with dominant Western self-understandings, especially of man's relation to nature, and I shall come back to what would be implied by understanding his project as a 'marginal practice' in this sense.

But first consider how earth, as it shows up in Long's work, relates to middle-period Heidegger's conception of world. I distinguished three senses of earth: the (native) soil or 'self-secluding' ground that nurtures the ripening grain and supports the world of the peasant; the materiality of material from which the Greek temple is hewn and which it allows to shine forth; and whatever cannot be rendered intelligible within the framework of a given world, and so resists thematization within it. What distinguishes the first two senses from the third is that they render earth non- or a-historical in the strict sense that they show it to be *prior to* world on the Heideggerian story: if incommensurable worlds are the *ground of* history (understood as epochal and discontinuous) rather than *being in* history and are erected in turn on earth, then earth must be prior to history. Only in the third sense of what cannot be rendered intelligible within a given world does earth become – seemingly at odds the first two – a function of world and hence historical. It is in terms of the first two senses that one can locate what I am calling Long's indirect or 'negative' relation to world.

Seen in this light, Long's project might be understood as one of trying to get back behind competing worlds so as to show their disavowed dependence on non-historical, self-secluding earth. So understood, Long's work serves as reminder of what sustains world. More specifically, against a world – our world – that aggrandizes itself as the totality of what is, against a world that could almost be defined in terms of its forgetfulness or denial of earth, Long's art reminds us of the material stuff that subtends *all* worlds, our own included. This may even be the deepest sense of Long's 'realism', a realism that is incompatible with treating earth as mere material because it requires that earth be accorded the utmost respect. Though not an artist given to high-flown theorizing, Long writes about his work and methods, on the rare occasions that he does, in ways pregnant with Heideggerian themes. Consider the following remarks, extracted from 'Five, Six, Pick Up Sticks/Seven, Eight, Lay Them Straight' (1980), one of Long's rare formal statements about his work:

My art is about working in the wide world,  
wherever, on the surface of the earth. ...

The natural world sustains the industrial world.  
I use the world as I find it. ...

I like common materials, what is to hand,  
but especially stones. I like the idea that stones  
are what the world is made of. ...

The creation of my art is not in the common forms – circles, lines – I use, but the places I choose to put them in. ...

My outdoor sculptures are places.  
The material and the idea are of the place;  
Sculpture and place are one and the same.  
The place is as far as the eye can see from the sculpture.  
The place for a sculpture is found by walking. ...

A good work is the right thing in the right place at the right time. A crossing place.<sup>33</sup>

'The natural world sustains the industrial world': earth subtends world, and Long's work brings this sustaining role to our attention. Or, as he has remarked in a different context, 'Nature is the same ... it is our material, political and idea worlds which are so changed'.<sup>34</sup> In sum, worlds differ – both geographically and historically – but earth, which grounds and sustains such worlds, endures: 'I like the idea that stones are what the world is made of.' Long's work foregrounds this primacy of nature and our disavowed dependence on it.

For all Long's emphasis on 'nature' as what grounds competing 'idea worlds', the thought that his works in situ are places is also central to his practice. This brings me to the 'positive' sense of world in his art; which can be seen most clearly in relation to Heidegger's later theory of art. By elaborating variations on a small number of core activities, Long's walks draw attention to what marks out the terrain on which or the weather under which they take place, rather than what marks out those activities themselves. Analogously, by installing variations on a small number of forms in diverse locations, Long's sculptures point out, away from themselves, to whatever distinguishes the locations in which they are installed, rather than in, towards those repeated forms themselves: 'The creation of my art is not the common forms I use ... but the places I chose to put them in.'<sup>35</sup> The point can be put even more forcefully, in the terms proposed here: Long's works in situ *constitute* the places in which he installs them as places, much as the temple gathers and consecrates the valley, or the bridge pulls in the banks and landscape around the stream.<sup>36</sup> If 'the place is as far as the eye can see from the sculpture', then it must be *the sculpture* – together with human capacities and their limitations – that determines what constitutes the place in question. By gathering, focusing, and thematizing what would otherwise remain an open expanse of landscape around itself this way, the sculpture transforms it into what Heidegger would call a 'location' or what Long calls a 'place'. In sum, Long uses sculpture to light up locations.

Heidegger distinguishes sharply between 'locations' and 'spaces'. Spaces are dependent upon, because 'cleared by', locations. Locations are constituted in turn by the 'things' – including, but not exhausted by, buildings – around which they gather in such a way as to create sites for what Heidegger calls the 'four-fold': 'only something that is itself a location can make space for a site'.<sup>37</sup> Heidegger holds that the locations constituted by buildings, things – and, I suggest, works of art such as Long's – 'create space' in the double sense that they 'admit' and 'install' the fourfold, by providing a site for 'earth and sky, god and mortals' to inflect one another in a particular locality.<sup>38</sup> Like the Greek temple, 'things' in this expanded sense determine what is salient for a culture; unlike the Greek temple, this is now understood in much less grandiose terms as focusing what is significant in a particular locality at a particular time. For the later Heidegger, there is a multitude of local worlds gathered around such 'things', rather than a single overarching one. It is in this more modest sense that Long's work, which by the lights of Heidegger's earlier essay on art, seemed to be *all earth*, may turn out, in the terms of his later writings, to be *all world*.

What is this 'four-fold' in terms of which Long's works may be 'all world'? Heidegger characterizes it as follows: 'Earth' is what rises and blossoms in plant and animal, and spreads out in rock and water; 'sky' is the passage of sun and moon, day and night, the vault of the stars, the cycle of the seasons, the clemency or inclemency of the weather; the 'divinities' or 'beckoning messengers of the godhead' are whatever is most sacrosanct and authoritative in the heritage of a given culture; 'mortals' are those beings who are not only finite but aware, or at least capable of becoming aware (unlike animals) of their finitude.<sup>39</sup> Prima facie, it seems as though 'earth and sky' and 'divinities and mortals' substitute for 'earth' and 'world', respectively, in Heidegger's earlier model; instead, we are told that *all four*, taken as mutually inflecting, constitute world: 'The appropriating mirror-play of ... earth and sky, divinities and mortals, we call the world. The world presences by worlding.'<sup>40</sup>

This is hardly transparent; what does it mean? We know what it would mean for the 'world to presence by worlding' in the earlier 'The Origin of the Work of Art': there, the 'world worlds' when the world founded by the great work of art determines what is intelligible and what matters for a particular people, culture, or epoch. But what does it mean to redescribe this in terms of a fourfold of 'earth and sky, divinities and mortals' – and as *a* rather than *the* world worlding? This is the later Heidegger's way of characterizing the structure of man's authentic, if disavowed or forgotten, relation to the world in terms of 'dwelling': that is, preserving or caring for the local worlds in which human beings find themselves – a mode of belonging foreclosed in advance by treating such worlds as sheer resource. We dwell insofar as we orient ourselves to the fourfold 'admitted' and 'installed' by particular locations.

The fourfold only presences, is only actively (in the manner of *technē*) 'set free', or passively (in the manner of 'preserving') 'let-be', to presence insofar as human beings make themselves responsive to the 'presencing of what presences' in a particular location. This is what it means to dwell. 'Dwelling' in this sense requires more than simply living on a particular planet in a particular climate, with a particular people guided by a particular set of values. It requires, in Julian Young's words, that human beings 'take over' these structural features of their being-in-the world in such a way that they 'show up poetically'. When this happens, such features are transformed from mere facts about man's existence into features of his dwelling pregnant with 'the mystery' that we inhabit a world at all.<sup>41</sup> One dwells to the extent that the world *lights up as sacred*: then a mere planet becomes the Earth, mere sky becomes the Heavens, mere men become Mortals, and mere cultural authority becomes what is most Holy. Only then does one 'save the earth, receive the sky, await the divinities and escort mortals'.<sup>42</sup> This is what it means to say, with Hölderlin, that 'poetically man dwells'. And this, I suggest, is what Long's best works achieve. Throughout Long treats the presencing of what presences in the fourfold as sacred in this sense: 'I believe that if [my work] is good enough, if a love and respect for nature comes through ... then that is my statement of intent. One of the main themes of my work is water, and water is more important than technology.'<sup>43</sup>

It is surely notable that Long's superb 2009 retrospective at Tate Britain was called 'Heaven and Earth' rather than, say, 'Land and Sky'. Though the latter would already have said a lot about how Long understands his place in the scheme of things, it would have failed to convey the extent to which his project embodies something like an ethics of dwelling. To the extent that it does, Long's practice does indeed constitute a 'marginal practice' within a technological understanding of Being: though the works I have focused on distil the complex experience of walking on diverse terrains under diverse conditions to a few key features, they do in a way that consistently presents the fact that there *are* clouds and rivers, mountains and desert, wind and rain as a gift of nature worthy of wonder.

### **What the Pathway Says: Footpaths and Fieldways in an Age of Planetary Technology**

Footpaths and fieldways of various kinds play a pivotal role in gathering the fourfold for both Heidegger and Long, so I will close with a few words about paths. In later Heidegger, fieldways and forest paths gather worlds around themselves in such a way as to allow things that show up there to come into their own:

The pathway gathers in whatever has its coming-to-presence along the way; to all who pass this way it gives what is theirs [...] But the message of the pathway speaks just so long as there are men who, born in its breeze, can hear it. They are hearers of their Origin and not servants of machination. In vain does man try with his plans to bring his globe into order if he is not ordered to the message of the pathway.<sup>44</sup>

Had Heidegger been more attuned to the art of his own day, rather than a selective group of modern painters of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century painting, he would have recognized in Long a *paradigmatic* case of an artist who, 'born in its breeze', hears what the pathway says.<sup>45</sup> Paths made by, and followed on, foot have been central to Long's practice since his breakthrough 1967 work, *A LINE MADE BY WALKING*. Take *BRUSHED PATH A LINE IN NEPAL* (1983), one of a series of works from a 21-day Himalayan walk that Long made by stitching together various existing paths. Viewed prosaically, in the instrumental terms canvassed above, one could say, like so much of Long's work, that it consists of little more than clearing a path. Perhaps not even that since, in this case, Long merely renders an existing path newly visible. But how is it, viewed poetically (Figure 6.3)?

Of this work, Long has commented, 'There was a footpath that went between villages and I just brushed it with sticks. [...] I brushed away all



6.3. Richard Long, *BRUSHED PATH A LINE IN NEPAL*, 1983. © Richard Long. Courtesy of Richard Long and the Haunch of Venison Gallery.

the leaves and stones. [...] The idea about that was that the sculpture was absolutely on the line of people's everyday walking'.<sup>46</sup> Or again, 'With a leafy branch I cleared maybe 50 yards of the footpath of all leafs and twigs and everything so it was just a bright earth image. [...] that's a work which is right at the centre of the social life of the place, it's not a work which is removed from the people of the area, people will be passing and walking over that work as they go on their way'.<sup>47</sup> I single out this work – which because atypical sheds an interesting light on Long's practice as a whole – to raise the question of what it might mean to make a work along which local people will walk every day, in such a way that it becomes incorporated into their daily routines. Long has observed that in remote regions footpaths are often the most significant sign of human habitation. By opening terrain that would otherwise remain impassable to human beings, they make it amenable to human habitation. In such environments footpaths are not only necessary for survival, they are the point at which man and beast, mountain and sky, converge: as such they pull in around themselves the conditions for dwelling in such localities. The delicacy of Long's act of brushing away leaves and twigs to make the footpath newly radiant, 'a bright earth image' – thereby both 'letting it be' and 'setting it free' – thematizes this fact, as does the lightness of Long's footprint more generally.

Of paths, Long has written,

A footpath is a place.  
It also goes from place to place ....  
Any place along it is a stopping place. ...

A path is practical ...  
Sometimes it can be the only line of access through an area.  
Paths are shared by all who use them.  
Each user could be on a different overall journey ...

A path is made by movement, by the accumulated footprints of its users.  
Paths are maintained by repeated use, and would disappear without use.  
The characteristics of a path depend upon the nature of the land, but the characteristics can be universal. ...

Around the world in different cultures, paths are marked in many different ways, with cairns, signposts, milestones, prayer flags, shrines, menai walls, and other sacred or cultural markers.<sup>48</sup>

'A footpath is a place', it is not a mere space or set of map coordinates. By gathering the landscape around itself it becomes a location, a location that joins and thereby brings other places close to one another. Because the footpath as a whole is a place, anywhere along it is a place – not a mere space – for rest and refreshment, 'a stopping place'. 'Paths are practical': they mould themselves to

the contours of the land that they follow, just like Long's art; Long's boot-heel marks, like paths in this respect, allow the precise contours of a particular place to emerge. Sometimes, as 'the only line of access through an area', footpaths are all that stands between life and death. As such they focus what is most important to the dwelling of those who use them. 'Paths are shared by all who use them' – man or beast – though only humans are capable of using them for journeying. 'A path is made by movement': they depend for their continued existence on the coming and going of humans and animals. Those outside the daily round fade back into the landscape: as such paths mark out the routes of most importance. Though the nature of a given path will depend on the terrain it traverses and the climate to which it is subject, the significance of paths as such transcends these differences. Though marked in various ways, they are all marked nonetheless – often with shrines to placate or honour the gods. Man or beast may perish along the way, but only mortals are capable of dying there: pathway shrines acknowledge this fact.

The affinities between Long and Heidegger on this score are notable. Heidegger called the collection in which 'The Origin of the Work of Art' was first published *Holzwege* [forest paths]. It carried the epigram,

'Wood' is an old name for forest. In the wood there are paths, mostly overgrown, that come to an abrupt stop where the wood is untrodden.

They are called *Holzwege*.

Each goes its separate way, though within the same forest. It often appears as if one is identical to another. But it only appears so. Woodcutters and forest keepers know these paths. They know what it means to be on a *Holzweg*.<sup>49</sup>

As an artist attuned to what that the pathway says, Long also knows what it means to be on a *Holzweg*. In German, a *Holzweg* has the double meaning of a forest path leading to a clearing in which timber is cut and, having now fallen out of such use, of a dead end. It has thus acquired contrasting implications: for the woodsman at home in the woods it suggests knowing one's way about as one goes about one's daily business; otherwise it has the idiomatic sense of going nowhere, being on the wrong track, or – as its English translators render it – 'off the beaten track'. What is off the beaten track is untimely, and Long's walking art is certainly untimely, being 'off the beaten track' in more senses than one. But what Heidegger's epigram and Long's remarks about paths finally share is that both draw attention to the beings who depend on footpaths and forest paths in finding their way, both in the prosaic sense of going about their daily round, and in the more profound sense of living meaningful lives – what Heidegger would call 'dwelling' rather than merely existing. As such, both point up the *social* significance of paths for those who dwell, in Heidegger's sense, nearby.

This is especially true of *BRUSHED PATH A LINE IN NEPAL*: a path that, by Long's own account, is situated at the heart of a social world. As such, it is a



work that stands out as atypical in Long's oeuvre. This brings me to something I am unsure about, something that, as Heidegger might say, raises further questions for thinking. Should this work be taken as a 'key' to understanding Long's other works? Should it be seen as a work that makes plain what Long is happy to leave implicit elsewhere – namely, the social significance of paths, their role especially in remote environments of bringing one place close to another, in Heidegger's sense of what is 'nearby' or of concern to one's dwelling, rather than merely proximate in space?<sup>50</sup> Or does it instead point to a fundamental problem for the account I have offered here?

For a tough question that might be raised from a Heideggerian perspective about Long's practice as I have presented it here is whether it can genuinely be said to 'clear space' for the fourfold. Though it is not difficult to see how Long's work 'saves the earth' and 'receives the sky', in Heidegger's sense, it is much less obvious how it 'awaits the divinities' or 'escorts mortals'. Other than in such a seemingly exceptional case as *BRUSHED PATH*, by allowing the fact that footpaths 'escort mortals' both literally and metaphorically to come into view. The worry is that insofar as Long makes work all over the globe, his works are, of necessity, made by a visitor who could not possibly appreciate *from the inside* the gods (what holds greatest authority) for those mortals through whose worlds he journeys.

In Heideggerian terms, one cannot be at home all over the globe. To be 'at home' in all worlds is to be at home in none: it is to live in such a way as to betray that no world is near. Indeed, such homelessness is a defining feature of the godlessness and rootlessness of modernity – the fleeing of the gods and corresponding absence of meaningful authority – on the Heideggerian story. From a Heideggerian perspective, one can only dwell locally, by embracing the ethos (the gods) of a particular location. There is no such thing as a universal dweller: to think otherwise is to demonstrate how fundamentally we have lost sight of what it means to be at home in our day. From such a perspective, Long might appear a nomad or, worse, a mere 'adventurer' in foreign climbs, free of commitments or ties to any. Is this criticism fair? If it is, it will be very hard to sustain the interpretation of his work that I have offered here.

Long, as if anticipating this charge, has often cautioned in interviews against understanding his activities as those of a nomad. Rather, Long claims, he leaves that place where he *is* at home to walk in various climbs. Against construing what he does as in any way nomadic, or as an expression of rootlessness, Long has often remarked that were he to find himself unable to travel, as he one day presumably will, he could continue doing what he does in the immediate countryside around Bristol, where he was born and has always lived. Long's art is fundamentally rooted in the coasts, rivers, moors, and highlands of Britain. More narrowly, its *source* is the River Avon, on the tidal banks of which he played as a child and the mud from which he has since carried to exhibitions the world over in order to make large-scale wall

paintings. Were one so minded, one might make the case that Long's art is rooted in the Avon (or the rivers and streams of England) in ways akin to Hölderlin's relation to the Rhine (or the rivers of Germany) on Heidegger's reading of the hymns.

There is certainly something to this. If I have stopped short of pursuing such a line here, it is because, articulated without care, it too easily falls prey to a Manichean distinction between the godless modernity of (say) airplane travel, and everything that is said to entail on the Heideggerian story, and the folksy homeland of native soil. But that is precisely *not* to achieve the 'free relation' to technology that Heidegger always claimed to be seeking; it is to remain enslaved in its rejection. Although one arguably finds this tendency in Heidegger at times, he recognized a distinction between being so governed by technology that it overdetermines our relation to everything that is, ourselves included, and having a sufficiently free relation to technology that we can as easily take up what it makes possible as set it aside.<sup>51</sup>

With this in mind, consider something that may, *prima facie*, seem a million miles from Long's concerns: the exploration of space. Seen from a certain perspective, it looks like the fruition of Heidegger's worst fears about the rootlessness, godlessness, and destruction of locality in an age of planetary technology. Certainly Heidegger sees it that way when, in the *Der Spiegel* interview, he expresses the profound disquiet that NASA images of the earth seen from space occasion in him.<sup>52</sup> In this context it bears remarking, against any interpretation of Long's project that would too quickly *reduce* its significance to its rootedness in the coasts and rivers of England – something I am not denying – that there has always been a strain in Long's practice that acknowledges time and space at a planetary, solar level. It ranges from early works keyed to solstices (*ON MIDSUMMER'S DAY*, 1972) through works oriented to eclipses (*WALKING TO A LUNAR ECLIPSE*, 1996; *WALKING TO A SOLAR ECLIPSE*, 1999) to more recent works indexing the time it takes Long to complete particular walks to the speed of the earth's rotation, the distance travelled in its orbit, even the movement of our galaxy (*SPEED OF THE SOUND OF SILENCE*, winter 1998; *HIGHLAND TIME, SCOTLAND*, 2002; *ENGADINE WALK, SWITZERLAND*, 2004).

Though I have not considered such works or Long's interest in the theory of relativity here, this increasingly apparent 'planetary' dimension in Long's practice suggests a possible response to Heidegger's worries on this score. By indexing the unfathomable enormity and mystery of the cosmos to the fragility of his own capacities and concerns, his allotted time and space on the surface of this earth, Long manages to convey both the insignificance of human beings in the face of such forces *and* their implication and participation in them.<sup>53</sup> Such work is the very antithesis of the delusion, against which Heidegger inveighed, that human beings are masters of technology, directing its forces in the service of ever greater efficiency and flexibility. As an artist

who hears what the pathway says, Long is no 'servant of machination': yet precisely insofar as he does hear what the pathway says, Long need neither reject nor condemn what technology – airplanes included – makes possible.<sup>54</sup>

In itself, this does little to address the serious question of 'locality' in Long: that is, how being grounded in one local enables him to work meaningfully in others, across the surface of the globe. But it may help. For it seems plausible, though I have not tried to argue the case here, that if Long did *not* have a profound relation to that locality – the Avon and its surrounding regions – with which he is most intimate, he would be incapable of having a meaningful relation to *any*. How could he recognize, absent one such relation, what any such relation requires? But if having a profound relation to one place is a precondition of having such a relation to any – just as having a profound relation to one thinker or problem is a necessary condition of having an authentic relation to any – it suggests the beginning of a reply to the worry that Long's journeying may itself be symptomatic of the general rootlessness of modernity. Insofar as Long has a profound relation to one place, he possesses at least one requisite of having such a relation to any. If something along these lines is correct, Long's relation to the Avon should be thought of as the *ground* of remaining open to the 'presencing of what presences' in foreign climbs, rather than as precluding it. Making good on such airy claims may put pressure on aspects of Heidegger's antipathy for modernity in turn.

## Notes

- 1 Martin Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 35.
- 2 See Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. 1, *The Will to Power as Art* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979) 80–82; 82. See also Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', 10–11. On *technē* and *phusis* in Heidegger, see Bruce Foltz, *Inhabiting the Earth: Heidegger, Environmental Ethics, and the Metaphysics of Nature* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1995), chapter 1.
- 3 Heidegger, 'Memorial Address', from *Discourse on Thinking* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 50.
- 4 Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 46.
- 5 Heidegger takes this idea from Hölderlin's *Patmos*. See Miguel de Beistegui, 'The Saving Power of Art', in *The New Heidegger* (London: Continuum, 2005) and Otto Pöggeler, 'Does the Saving Power Also Grow?', in *Critical Heidegger*, ed. Christopher McCann (London: Routledge, 1996).
- 6 For this 'recession of agency', see Heidegger's discussion of fourfold causality in relation to the silversmith's 'bringing forth' of a silver chalice in Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', 6–11, and rejection of the artist as sufficient explanation of art in the first paragraph of Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art'.
- 7 Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', 43.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 42.
- 9 Hubert Dreyfus, 'Heidegger's Ontology of Art', in *A Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Hubert Dreyfus and Mark Wrathall (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 407.

- 10 I bracket this because I find the claim that works of art could 'manifest' the style of one culture – as it appears from the inside – to inhabitants of another incoherent. This would require that the terms in which things show up in one world could be translated into the terms in which they show up in another, which would entail, in turn, a 'trans-worldly' background against which how things show up in competing worlds might be compared. This is something that Heidegger's epochal history of incommensurable worlds rules out in advance: conjectures about 'what things are like' in alien worlds must take place from within the terms of our own, which we cannot transcend in order to compare with those of another, as if from outside.
- 11 Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', 34.
- 12 Ibid., 42.
- 13 Space precludes considering here whether the circularity evinced by Heidegger's three senses of 'earth', when taken together – worlds emerge out of/are grounded on earth on the first two senses of the latter term; earth emerges is out of/is determined by worlds in the third sense of term – is virtuous or vicious.
- 14 Heidegger, 'Memorial Address', 55.
- 15 Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', 65.
- 16 Richard Long, 'Five, Six, Pick Up Sticks/Seven, Eight, Lay Them Straight' (1980), in *Richard Long: Selected Statements and Interviews*, ed. Ben Tufnell (London: Haunch of Venison, 2007), 16.
- 17 *Stones and Flies: Richard Long in the Hoggar*, a film by Philip Haas, Milestone Films, New Jersey, 1988.
- 18 Unlike Lawrence Weiner's work, an artist Long admires, Long's works *do* need to be built. Unlike Carl Andre's work, another artist Long admires, his works are always made from *non-machined* materials in their natural condition.
- 19 At least this is true of the works I focus on here. There is another strand of Long's practice, based on maps, in which he makes works in accordance with a preconceived plan. But even here, though Long *could* present mapped out ideas for walks that have not been made, he does *not* in fact do this.
- 20 Cited in Anne Seymour, 'Walking in Circles', in Richard Long, *Walking in Circles* (London: Hayward Gallery, Thames & Hudson, 1991), 17.
- 21 *NATURAL FORCES, DARTMOOR*, 2002, is one example of a work that explicitly acknowledges processes of natural transformation at the geological level. But I take such acknowledgment to be implied throughout Long's works: the Himalayas, for example, continue to rise by a few millimetres per year. As Long moves, so too do the mountains, albeit at entirely different rates.
- 22 Richard Long, 'Notes on Works, 2000–2001,' in Richard Long, *Walking the Line* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2002), 69.
- 23 On the question of structure in Long's walks, see Ben Moorhouse, 'The Intricacy of the Skein, the Complexity of the Web: Richard Long's Art', in Richard Long, *Walking the Line*.
- 24 An obvious inspiration or analogy for Long's activities with stones is the 'sucking stones' episode from Samuel Beckett's 'Molloy'. See *The Beckett Trilogy* (London: Picador, 1979), 64–9. But this warrants its own essay.
- 25 Naoshima Contemporary Art Museum, May 25, 1997, in Richard Long, *Walking the Line*, 147.
- 26 'Richard Long Interview with Martina Giezen (1985–86)', *Richard Long: Selected Statements and Interviews*, 70.
- 27 On *Gelassenheit* (letting be' or 'releasement') as a secession of willing and a waiting on what presences, see 'Conversation on a Country Path', in Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*.
- 28 Naoshima Museum talk, *Walking the Line*, 146–7.
- 29 Interview with Richard Cork, in Richard Long, *Walking in Circles*, 251.
- 30 'A good work is the right thing in the right place at the right time', from 'Five, Six, Pick Up Sticks' (1980).
- 31 On 'marginal practices' see Hubert Dreyfus, 'Heidegger on Gaining a Free Relation to Technology', in *Heidegger Re-examined*, vol. 3, *Art, Poetry and Technology*, ed. Hubert Dreyfus and Mark Wrathall (New York: Routledge, 2002), 105–6.

- 32 See Heidegger, 'Epilogue', in 'The Origin of the Work of Art', 79–80, and *Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, vol. 1, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 10–11.
- 33 These remarks retain Long's formatting, but not his ordering.
- 34 See 'Interview with Maria Giezen', 80.
- 35 This is arguably a legacy, generally not remarked, of minimalism in Long's work.
- 36 Heidegger, 'Building, Dwelling, Thinking', in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971) 152. 'Building, Dwelling, Thinking' and its companion piece, 'The Thing', are contemporaneous with 'The Question Concerning Technology' (all were first given as lectures 1949–51).
- 37 Heidegger, 'Building, Dwelling, Thinking', 154. 'Things' and 'things thinging' take on a significance in Heidegger's later philosophy akin to 'worlds worlding' in his middle years.
- 38 Authentic buildings, Heidegger claims, 'receive the directive for erecting locations from the fourfold.' See 'Building, Dwelling, Thinking', 158. Applied to Long's sculptures that pull in the landscape around themselves in such a way as to make it a location, this requires that Long remains responsive to what holds sway in terms of earth, sky, gods, and mortals in a given place.
- 39 Heidegger, 'The Thing', 178–9; see also Heidegger, 'Building, Dwelling, Thinking', 149–151. My account of 'the gods' in Heidegger is indebted to Julian Young. See 'What Is Dwelling? The Homelessness of Modernity and the Worlding of the World', in *Heidegger, Authenticity and Modernity: Essays in Honor of Hubert L. Dreyfus*, vol. 1, ed. Mark Wrathall and Jeff Malpas (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000) and *Heidegger's Later Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), chapters 7–8.
- 40 Heidegger, 'The Thing', 179.
- 41 Heidegger, 'Memorial Address', 55. See also Julian Young, *Heidegger's Later Philosophy*, 99, and 'What Is Dwelling?' 201–2.
- 42 Heidegger, 'Building, Dwelling, Thinking', 158.
- 43 Richard Long, 'Interview with Mario Codognato' (1997), in *Richard Long: Selected Statements and Interviews*, 109.
- 44 Heidegger, 'The Pathway', trans. Thomas O'Meara and Thomas Sheehan, in *Listening: Journal of Religion and Culture* 8 (1973): 1–3.
- 45 Julian Young, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), chapter 4.
- 46 Richard Long, 'Interview with Martina Giezen', 83.
- 47 Richard Long, 'Interview with Richard Furlong' (1984), *Selected Statements and Interviews*, 62.
- 48 'Notes on Paths' (1999), in Richard Long, *Walking the Line*, 247.
- 49 See Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
- 50 For instances of what is 'nearby', see the account of the 'old bridge at Heidelberg', in Heidegger, 'Building, Dwelling, Thinking', and the jug in 'The Thing'.
- 51 In 'Memorial Address' Heidegger asks, 'But will not saying both yes and no this way to technical devices make our relation to technology ambivalent and insecure? On the contrary! Our relation to technology will become wonderfully simple and relaxed. We let technical devices enter our daily life, and at the same time leave them outside, that is, let them alone, as things that are nothing absolute but remain dependent upon something higher. I would call this comportment toward technology that expresses "yes" and at the same "no," by an old word, *releasement towards things*.' [*Die Gelassenheit zu den Dingen*] See, *Discourse on Thinking*, 54.
- 52 'Only a God Can Still Save Us', *Der Spiegel*, 193–219; published May 31, 1976, conducted September 23, 1966.
- 53 Consider MEGALITHIC TO SUBATOMIC, AUTUMN 2008, a 603-mile walk from the Neolithic standing stones at Carnac to the Large Hadron Collider at Cern.
- 54 I thank the editors for prompting me to think further about this.

