

SYNCHRONICITIES



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[a display for a museum
of excluded contents]

Research project presented at the Summer
Academy in Salzburg, within the frame of
“Curating the boundary condition: encounters
with the outside”, workshop with
Nancy Adajania Summer 2014

SYNCHRONICITIES REFLECTS UPON A NEW EMPIRICAL CONCEPT that grew up in the first half of the 20th century from the progresses of modern physics and quantum mechanics. Since its premises, Western science has been based on the principle of causality, intended as the relationship between cause and effect. New concepts brought in the 20th century by physics theories – relativity, quantum mechanics, indeterminism and uncertainty principle – have broken the axiomatic, linear, truth of the cause-effect principle, opening towards an approach to natural phenomena and laws of universe which only predicts the probabilities of possible outcomes.

In the forward to the English translation of the **CHINESE BOOK OF CHANGES – the I CHING** – by Richard Wilhelm (1949), Carl Gustav Jung has compared this scientific approach to the one of Chinese philosophy, underlining that both approaches are governed by chance.:

“WHAT KANT'S Critique of Pure Reason FAILED TO DO, IS BEING ACCOMPLISHED BY MODERN PHYSICS. THE AXIOMS OF CAUSALITY ARE BEING SHAKEN TO THEIR FOUNDATIONS [...]. IF WE LEAVE THINGS TO NATURE, WE SEE A VERY DIFFERENT PICTURE: EVERY PROCESS IS PARTIALLY OR TOTALLY INTERFERED WITH BY CHANCE, SO MUCH SO THAT UNDER NATURAL CIRCUMSTANCES A COURSE OF EVENTS ABSOLUTELY CONFORMING TO SPECIFIC LAWS IS ALMOST AN EXCEPTION. THE CHINESE MIND, AS I SEE IT AT WORK IN THE I CHING, SEEMS TO BE EXCLUSIVELY PREOCCUPIED WITH THE CHANCE ASPECT OF EVENTS. WHAT WE CALL COINCIDENCE SEEMS TO BE THE CHIEF CONCERN OF THIS PECULIAR MIND, AND WHAT WE WORSHIP AS CAUSALITY PASSES ALMOST UNNOTICED. WE MUST ADMIT THAT THERE IS SOMETHING TO BE SAID FOR THE IMMENSE IMPORTANCE OF CHANCE. AN INCALCULABLE AMOUNT OF HUMAN EFFORT IS DIRECTED TO COMBATING AND RESTRICTING THE NUISANCE OR DANGER REPRESENTED BY CHANCE. THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF CAUSE AND EFFECT OFTEN LOOK PALE AND DUSTY IN COMPARISON TO THE PRACTICAL RESULTS OF CHANCE. IT IS ALL VERY WELL TO SAY THAT THE CRYSTAL OF QUARTZ IS A HEXAGONAL PRISM. THE STATEMENT IS QUITE TRUE IN SO FAR AS AN IDEAL CRYSTAL IS ENVISAGED. BUT IN NATURE ONE FINDS NO TWO CRYSTALS EXACTLY ALIKE, ALTHOUGH ALL ARE UNMISTAKABLY HEXAGONAL. THE ACTUAL FORM, HOWEVER, SEEMS TO APPEAL MORE TO THE CHINESE SAGE THAN THE IDEAL ONE. THE JUMBLE OF NATURAL LAWS CONSTITUTING EMPIRICAL REALITY HOLDS MORE SIGNIFICANCE FOR HIM THAN A CAUSAL EXPLANATION OF EVENTS THAT, MOREOVER, MUST USUALLY BE SEPARATED FROM ONE ANOTHER IN ORDER TO BE PROPERLY DEALT WITH.” (Jung, 1949)

Synchronicity is a term coined by Carl Gustav Jung from the 1920s to express the experience of two or more events as meaningful related – in opposition to the experience of events as casually related.

“SYNCHRONICITY TAKES THE COINCIDENCE OF EVENTS IN SPACE AND TIME AS MEANING SOMETHING MORE THAN MERE CHANCE, NAMELY, A PECULIAR INTERDEPENDENCE OF OBJECTIVE EVENTS AMONG THEMSELVES AS WELL AS WITH THE SUBJECTIVE (PSYCHIC) STATES OF THE OBSERVER OR OBSERVERS” (Jung, 1949).

For Jung, the principle of synchronicity was descriptive of a governing dynamic that underlies the whole of human experience and history – social, emotional, psychological and spiritual. His first ideas on synchronicity evolved during the 1950s – and have been stated in his essay *SYNCHRONIZITÄT ALS EIN PRINZIP AKAUSALER ZUSAMMENHÄNGE* (SYNCHRONICITY – AN ACAUSAL CONNECTING PRINCIPLE) of 1952 – following exchanges with Albert Einstein and Wolfgang Pauli outlining parallels between his synchronicity theories and the ones of relativity and quantum mechanics.

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IT'S A POOR SORT OF MEMORY THAT ONLY WORKS BACKWARDS.

EVEN IF SYNCHRONICITY CAN BE INTENDED AS A KIND OF SIMULTANEITY, THE EXPERIENCE OF EVENTS AS MEANINGFUL RELATED OFTEN BRING TOGETHER – IN THE PSYCHIC EXPERIENCE – EVENTS FROM THE PAST AND FROM THE PRESENT AND THEIR COMPRESENCE ALLOWS TO THINK ABOUT POTENTIAL FUTURE SCENARIOS. THUS, SYNCHRONICITY CONTAINS ANACHRONISM IN A SENSE THAT IT GOES IN BOTH WAYS, TOWARDS PAST AND FUTURE:

'THAT'S THE EFFECT OF LIVING BACKWARDS,' THE QUEEN SAID KINDLY: 'IT ALWAYS MAKES ONE A LITTLE GIDDY AT FIRST —'
'LIVING BACKWARDS!' ALICE REPEATED IN GREAT ASTONISHMENT. 'I NEVER HEARD OF SUCH A THING!'
'— BUT THERE'S ONE GREAT ADVANTAGE IN IT, THAT ONE'S MEMORY WORKS BOTH WAYS.'
'I'M SURE MINE ONLY WORKS ONE WAY,' ALICE REMARKED. 'I CAN'T REMEMBER THINGS BEFORE THEY HAPPEN.'
'IT'S A POOR SORT OF MEMORY THAT ONLY WORKS BACKWARDS,' THE QUEEN REMARKED.

Lewis Carrol, *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871)

In her analysis of museums experimenting new forms of presenting their collection – forms that are not merely chronological or thematizing avant-gardes and movements, but presenting multiple narrations and art histories –, Claire Bishop describes the concept of anachronism as looking to the past as a mean to “mobilise a different understanding of today” (RADICAL MUSEOLOGY, 2013). Theorising the notion of today, or contemporaneity, Bishop reveals two forms about it: presentism and dialectical contemporaneity. If presentism is “THE CONDITION OF TAKING OUR CURRENT MOMENT AS THE HORIZON AND DESTINATION OF OUR THINKING [...]; UNDERPINNED BY AN INABILITY TO GRASP OUR MOMENT IN ITS GLOBAL ENTIRETY”; THE DIALECTICAL CONTEMPORANEITY “DOESN’T DESIGNATE A STYLE OR PERIOD OF THE WORKS THEMSELVES, BUT AN APPROACH TO THEM”. This approach is essentially based on an anachronistic approach to contemporaneity, in order to ask “why certain temporalities appear in particular works of art at specific historical moments”. Thus, dialectical contemporaneity “becomes a method or practice, potentially applicable to all historical periods”.

In this way, synchronicity as the concept for a new display in the Museum of Excluded Contents becomes a way to reflect about the anachronistic relationships between art histories and histories, geographical spaces and different temporalities, works of art and their references; and their possible evolutions as concepts of thoughts, new artworks, etc. Modern physics have influenced many artists in their approach to different temporalities in their works. Works presented reflect these different forms of temporalities and how they act on the space: chance-related process, or regulated by natural laws, by a cyclical-rehearsal movement, by arithmetic and geometric laws, etc.

Each artwork presented reflects its own contemporaneity intended as an anachronistic process that relate it to other temporalities by the way of its references. But almost all, the display presents artworks as manifestations of synchronicity. As outlined above, synchronicity in Jung’s theory is an experience which requires the presence of the subject. The different experiences that each artwork contains are the result of a personal artistic experience of the reality and the world, where the coincidence of events becomes an entanglement of personal background and the reality as seen and perceived by this background. Each artwork is a synchronic world. Synchronicities is a collection of these worlds.

VINCENZO AGNETTI

PROFEZIA

1970, oil on canvas

MURO DEL BENESSERE



YES

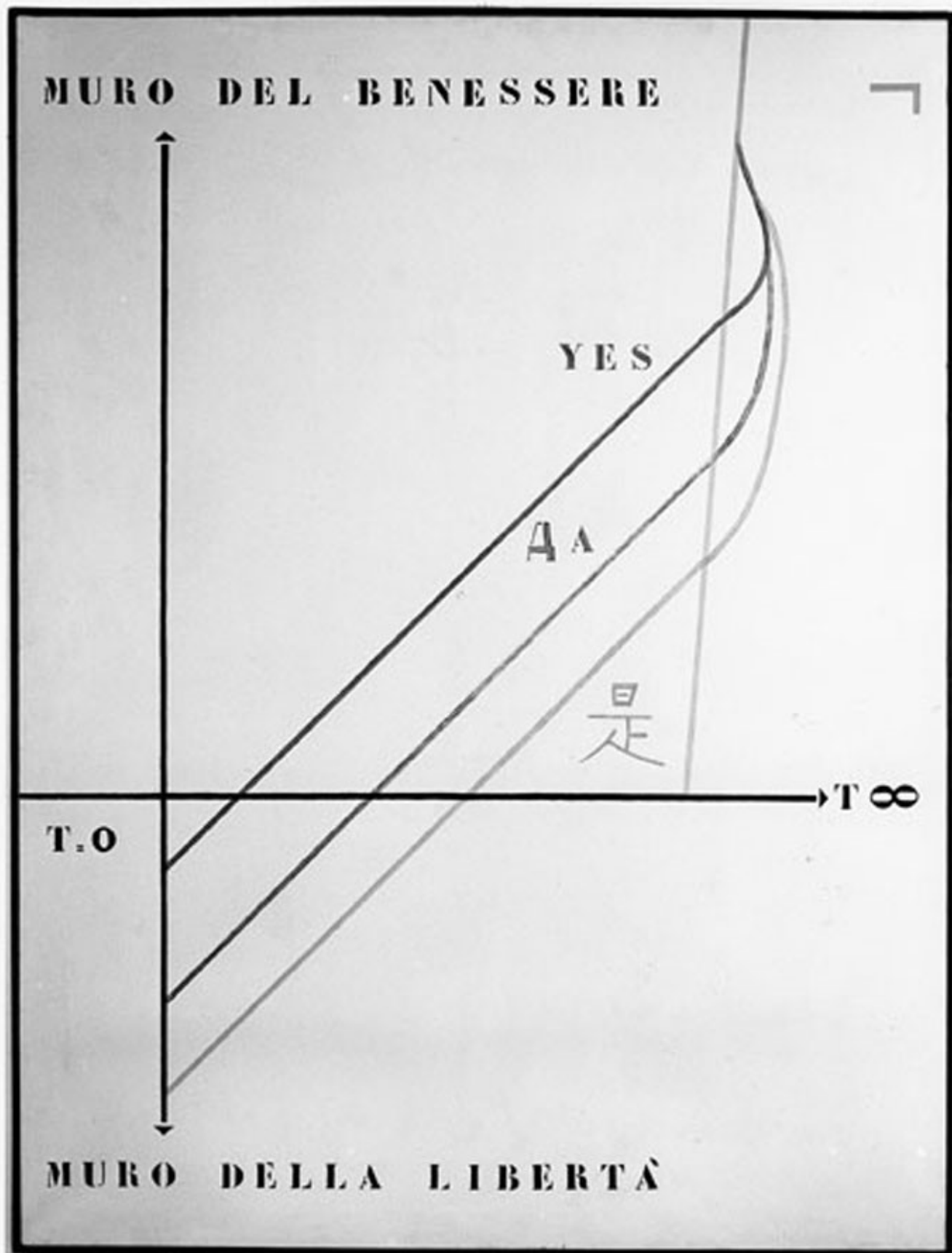
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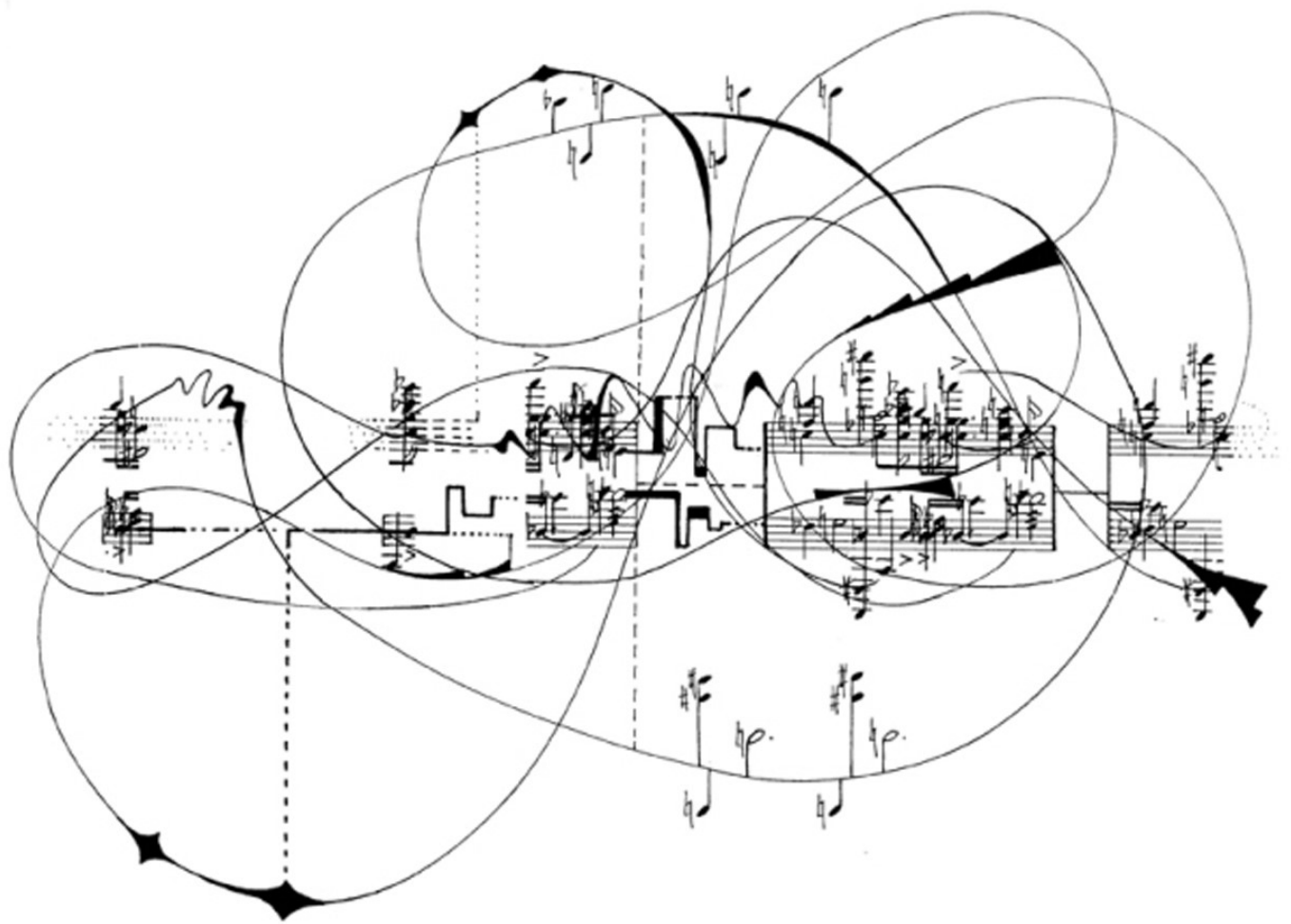
MURO DELLA LIBERTÀ



JOHN CAGE

IMAGINARY LANDSCAPE N°1

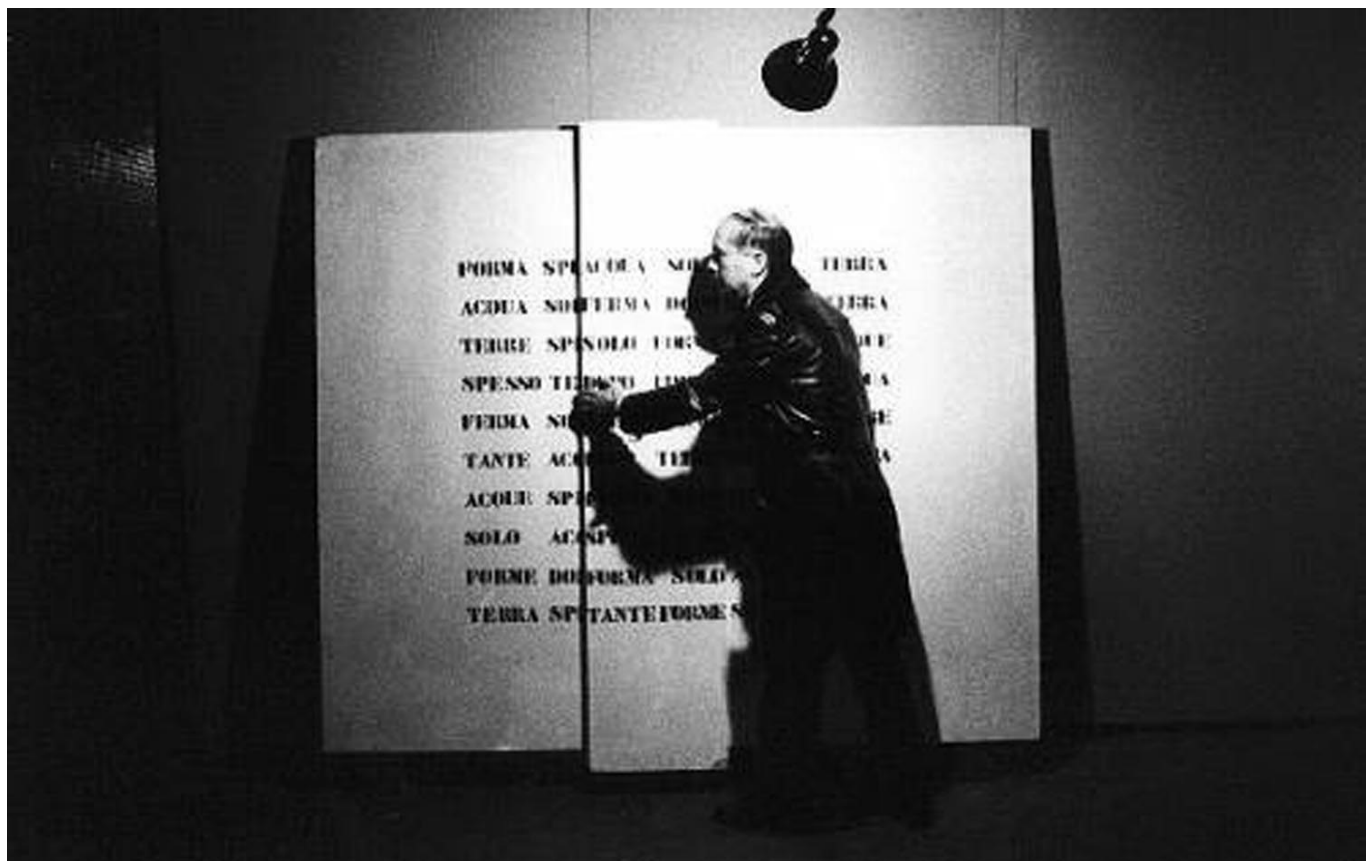
1939



GIORGIO COLOMBO

PHOTOGRAPH OF VINCENZO AGNETTI WITH HIS WORK PRINCIPIA (1967)

1973



BRUCE NAUMAN

WALKING IN AN EXAGGERATED MANNER AROUND THE PERIMETER OF A SQUARE

1967-68, 10 min, b&w, silent, 16 mm film on video



SAMUEL BECKETT

QUAD I

1982, TV play



ALIGHIERO BOETTI

OGGI È VENERDÌ VENTISETTE MARZO MILLENOVECENTOSETTANTA

1970, action



YVES KLEIN

MONOCHROME BLEU SANS TITRE (IKB 1971)

circa 1960

STÉPHANE MALLARMÉ

UN COUP DE DÉS JAMAIS N'ABOLIRA LE HASARD

1897

LE NOMBRE

EXISTÂT-IL

autrement qu'hallucination épars d'agonie

COMMENÇÂT-IL ET CESSÂT-IL

sourdant que nié et clos quand apparu

enfin

par quelque profusion répandue en rareté

SE CHIFFRÂT-IL

évidence de la somme pour peu qu'une

ILLUMINÂT-IL

LE HASARD

Choit

la plume

rythmique suspens du sinistre

s'ensevelir

aux écumes originelles

naguères d'où sursauta son délire jusqu'à une cime

flétrie

par la neutralité identique du gouffre

MERCE CUNNINGHAM

performing *ANTIC MEET*

