

DA CAPO

A SPHERICAL, NON-LINEAR TEXT, AN INSTALLATION
OF WORDS AND CONCEPTS ON A SPACE MADE OF PAPER

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[1]

Art is necessary because reality is not enough.

Heard or read somewhere between 1967 and 2000

In a lecture given in 1981 at the Tate Gallery in London entitled “Art and Biology,” in which he quotes Donald Winnicott at length, Peter Fuller says the following: “The infant makes its first contact with reality through ‘moments of illusion’ that the mother provides. For example, such a ‘moment of illusion’ might occur when the mother offered her breast at exactly the moment the child wanted it. Then the infant’s hallucinating and the world’s presenting could be taken by him as identical [...]. In this way [...] the infant acquires the illusion that there is an external reality that corresponds to his capacity to create.”

The process of progressive separation between infant and mother consists precisely in “disillusioning” him, to which the infant responds by creating a space of intermediary experience, controllable by him through creative play, the manipulation of symbols and all that is eventually constituted and socialized as cultural life. The dichotomy between infant and mother, which the intermediary symbolic space undertakes to minimize, is reproduced between child/adolescent and family, and finally between adult and world. This potential space is where cultural experience is located. According to Winnicott, Fuller writes, “This intermediate area is in direct continuity with the play area of the small child who is lost in play. He felt it was retained in the intense experiencing that belongs to the arts and to religion and to imaginative living, and to creative scientific work.”

I wonder if to this grouping one shouldn’t add nationalism and political ideology, judging by the amount of mythological hallucination, cultural construction and filtered reality they contain.

The adult, in accordance with Winnicott/Fuller, never manages to free himself of the yearning to create a world of his own anew (or to give meaning to the one that surrounds him) by means of an act of imagination, and this seems to be the ideological basis of all cultural activity from late Neanderthal and early Cro-Magnon man to our own time.

An evolutionary reading of artistic behavior leads one to situate its development on the mid-ground between play and necessity, between learning and the pressures of the natural environment. Enough evidence exists to deduce that the extraordinary plasticity of the proto-human brain, in short its ability to assimilate and be assimilated in unknown situations—namely, of knowing how to benefit from crisis situations—has formed the basis of its unprecedented and singular success in the evolutionary history of life on the planet. We are the result of this interaction with, and constant reaction to, the environment and we are singularly prepared to simultaneously generate new situations and to confront the crises of knowledge produced by them. In other words, this has been a very long (or very short, depending on the measure of time we use) process of refinement for

the luxury and the tragedy of modernity. The fact of having gotten through the century in which more radical changes have been produced than since the dawn of history without there having been a terminal short-circuit is little short of a miracle.

Let us speculate that the moment has arrived to ask oneself if both political ideology and poetry are no more than the sedimentation of the subjective experience of history while each of us struggles with the objectivity of one's actual, individual, untransferable life. Maybe it's in the no-man's land which exists between life itself, understood as a biological accident, and one's own life, understood as an existential accident, that poetry, art, the symbolic and the mythical occurs, including, I repeat, political ideology, which is the dream of the possible in those very few moments in which it has not ended in disaster.

Art, poetry and science share the goal of making the invisible cease to be so, or maybe in a more precise way—given that the question of what constitutes visible reality has been the object of intense debate since Democritus and the Atomists—of making the unknown less so. Therefore, epistemological as well as ontological models can be created in any of these fields. In addition, a given idea cannot be seen or understood until we possess the metaphor or the analogy that enables us to recognize it, and these means of semantic translation, while obviously linguistic in origin, are essentially visual.

Even though models of interpretation are linked to the theory that they seek to make intelligible, they also have an autonomous life that outlasts the theory from which they emerged. For example, the planetary model of the atom is incomplete in the best of cases, or false in the worst of them; however, insofar as it manages to connect and interrelate the ineffable essence of matter with the limitless dimension of the universe, it activates a set of imagery that as well as getting closer to the truth, is emotional and aesthetic. Similarly, that is why we are still moved, two hundred years after the Enlightenment, by a religious painting from the Baroque period, even without participating in that particular system of beliefs. No representational and interpretive model is intrinsically false; only the theory to which the model alludes and attempts to explain in visualizing it.

[2]

Order is an aberration that sooner or later manifests itself.

Michel Serres, *La Naissance de la physique dans le texte de Lucrèce*

Museums are interpretative and representational models of anthropological reality configured not only by pure theory but by political ideology and by economic, historical, cultural, racial and gender politics. They exist as specular artifacts of the dominant culture; they function as a barometer of ideological meteorology in the world of culture and on the terrain of the social. There is a basic contradiction, however, between a political culture of *attrezzo* like ours in the global infancy and ardor of the 21st century and an institution, in this instance the museum of contemporary art—another spectacular contradic-

tion in terms, let it be said in passing—still shaped by the legacy of the modern movement, that is to say, as an ideological apparatus that sees itself as a recipient of excellence and academic rigor, and simultaneously as a container of ideas that deserve to have a transformational impact in the public arena. This impact is what gives it its political dimension. Therefore, the viability of the museum (and of politics) will be deposited, or not, insofar as ideology—which like myth is both an idealized model of social behavior that gives meaning to experience and a metaphorical lens focused on the world in order to understand it—may or may not be inoculated anew in the territory of culture and in the realm of the social. Ideology-less radicality falls into the wasteland of the rhetorical exercise. One does not refer to the world, one limits oneself to language, but a language supplied with a minimum amount of content, akin to a sick body just prior to becoming a corpse, which is, judging by what has been seen thus far, the only thing the market appears capable of absorbing. In the case of politics, the rhetorical exercise of ideology-less radicality may serve to justify anything.

[3]

Profoundly contaminated by meaning, representation has lost all innocence. We can call a representation innocent when it is simply offered as it is, when it only seeks to be the image of an external world (real or imaginary, but external); in other words, when it doesn't include its own critical commentary. The massive introduction of *references*, of joking, of *double meaning*, of humor, has rapidly undermined artistic and philosophical activity, transforming it into generalized rhetoric. All art, like all science, is a means of communication between men. It's obvious that the efficacy and intensity of communication decrease and tend to cancel each other out as soon as a doubt is established about the veracity of what is expressed (can anyone imagine, for instance, a science with *double meaning*?).

Michel Houellebecq, *Interventions*

Part and parcel of the economy of contemporary art is that the latter is international, a condition that calls for traveling, hotels and *lingua franca*. Local art is condemned to non-existence through not possessing omnipresence. International contemporary art, meanwhile, obtains omnipresence by always being the same, repeating itself as many times and in as many places as is humanly possible. Private galleries, auction houses and the specialized press are basically there so that this may be so, in the sole reality agreed upon by a ridiculously small number of people, all of them pertaining to the wealthy classes of the West—notwithstanding its drive, China, for example, is but a market (the beneficiaries of the new economic model) and source of talent (local artists “discovered” by Westerners). The quality of facture is carefully preserved in order to dignify the economic forces in play, although even this is unnecessary at times. Immersed in this soup of answers to questions nobody asks and questions without answers of which most mortals

have no idea or need, we professionals take planes to present our work to people we don't know from Adam in places we are only passing through, or where we are like "guest workers," as the euphemistic jargon has it. We might even consider the international contemporary artist as a luxury labor force with a temporary work contract. The meta-space of the airport and the meta-space of the hotel are complemented by the meta-space of the new museum of contemporary art devoid of political discourse, that is to say, a *utopos* that floats in a gravitational field of its own and that only reencounters the dirty (real) version of reality when it is the object of a terrorist attack, as almost happened to the Guggenheim Bilbao during its opening. I cite the preceding because it lays the behavioral foundations for the simulacrum of a supposedly transcultural culture—the redundancy is fitting—existing over and above non-hegemonic cultural particularities, which remain, finally, reduced to mere ethnological curiosities or footnotes. No artistic practice contributes more to this state of things than superstar architecture, also responsible for the design of new art museums like, for instance, the future Abu Dhabi Louvre in an inverted symmetry with the adventures of Napoleon in Egypt, also a land of sand and camels, an opportunity that was seized to make off with a fine assortment of objects of immense artistic and archaeological value with which to nourish what ended up becoming the real Louvre. Although, obviously, if art is a means of communication between human beings, no one's mode of communication ought to be imposed.

Whilst the simulacrum cannot explain great truths, representation, like literary fiction, on the other hand can, which does not detract from the fact that the first may convince if we make do with simply giving credit to what we see or with believing what they tell us, in the same way that a demagogic and manipulative political discourse can move the citizenry if the latter has previously surrendered its ability to criticize. The success of aggressive nationalism or of religious fundamentalism, for example, is nourished by this surrender. Representation is in its own right a facet of the totemic behavior of which the unjustly forgotten Lévi-Strauss eloquently speaks. There are other means, but representation is crucial, due to its pure complexity and technical sophistication. At the end of the day, to represent means first to abstract and then to create a form that is never arbitrary. It isn't the outcome of a good idea first thought of in the dank semi-darkness of the primordial cave, but the evolutionary outcome of a neurological apparatus capable of delivering it. The brain of Altamira is, in biological and evolutionary terms, the brain of Kant, Einstein and Duchamp. Nor does it appear accidental that the basic spaces in which this has always taken place are sacred, mystic or auric: caves, almost inaccessible mountainsides, churches and contemporarily art museums less than a century old, the enlightened, social-democratic context *par excellence* in which the nexus with the sacred in its obligatory hermeneutic aspect has been weakened but the hermeticism retained of the initiatory rite that gives so much satisfaction to the priesthood and commands so much respect from the layman.

[4]

**Things can be lonely / but night's dreams come true / making love to someone
exactly like you / and you can't do a thing to stop me.**

Chris Isaak, *Can't Do a Thing (To Stop Me)*

Could you fall in love with your lover's double? After years of work the Altamira cave has been reproduced or "cloned" to permit unlimited visiting by tourists. The real cave has been closed to the general public, entrance only being permitted to a small number of academics each year. A newly built museum designed by the prestigious architect, Navarro Baldeweg, who is also a visual artist, encases the reproduction of the extraordinary cave. In the museum a number of authentic objects from the Magdalenian period, proceeding from various excavations, contextualize the (fake) cave, transforming the exhibition device as a whole into a theme park that is neither completely authentic nor completely false, given that the exhibited objects accompanying the recreated space are a real archaeological sediment. But other aspects also come into play. By having faithfully reproduced the cave, the physical proximity of the copy to the original becomes irrelevant, since the genuine cave has been closed to the public. In fact it could be situated anywhere (a bad copy already exists in the garden of the Museo Arqueológico Nacional in Madrid). The director of the new Museo de Altamira, which has a cafeteria and shop as is *de rigueur*, reflected in the press on the ability of the reproductions to generate emotion and aesthetic pleasure in the way the originals do. He believes it's possible. One might add that it's perfectly plausible to imagine a Museum of the Caves, maybe under the auspices of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, by means of its Museum of Natural History in New York, where the visitor would be able to go from Altamira to El Castillo, from La Pasiega to Lascaux, from Les Trois Frères to Parpalló without the stress, fatigue and economic effort of doing it the old way. This hypothetical museum could be reproduced as many times as there are Guggenheims, achieving with Paleolithic art what has been achieved with the contemporary kind: almost all museums are alike and their permanent collections have almost the same in them, a metaphor (here I go repeating myself) of the Western concept of democracy that everybody desires, without realizing it, the instant they are born.



THE REPETITION OF THE NOVELTY,
P.S.1 COAL BUNKER, NEW YORK, 1977.
REPRODUCTIONS OF PAINTINGS FROM
LASCAUX AND ALTAMIRA ON THE WALLS.
AN IMAGE OF THE CHIMPANZEE LANA*
OF THE YERKES PRIMATE RESEARCH
INSTITUTE IN ATLANTA. COAL.
A WHEELBARROW. LIGHT BULBS. SOUND
TRACK.

* Lana is famous for having learnt to speak with the help of a computer with an ideographic alphabet. She is the first higher primate to attain this level of semantic complexity and even managed to elaborate concepts and invent words.

[5]

Maybe it's a mistake to mix different wines, but old knowledge and new mix well.

Bertolt Brecht

Let's hope that the recent idea of associating Leftist critical radicalism in art with the total lack of skill when it comes to execution is never applied to micro-surgery or to sex.

The author in conversation with Manuel J. Borja-Villel, 2007

Art has been granted many defining functions that were only partly so or were not exclusive due to being shared with other manifestations of the human. It has been said, for instance, that the function of art has been, and is, to decorate, in the noblest sense of the word, of course. That is to say, the attempt to transform tangible reality into a recognizable ideological and iconographic universe that is one's own and therefore non-hostile—the question of taste and refinement comes later—quite the reverse of nature in its pure state or of the imaginary of other social groups with a vision of the world different to our own. The first aspect, the transformation of tangible reality into something personal and controllable, is intimately related to the evolutionary, genetic and biological history of the human being and is shared by all races and cultures (it is interesting, here, to recall Marx's definition of work, substituting "art" for "the labor process" and "social environment" for "nature": "[The labor process] is the general condition requisite for effecting an exchange of matter between man and nature; it is the condition perennially imposed by nature upon human life, and is therefore independent of the forms of social life—or, rather, it is common to all social forms,") while the second, the differentiation of the "other" implicit in the construction of a reality in keeping with the social group we are immersed in, belongs to the particularity and social sediment of each culture. From this point of view, art with political content is the one that decorates the most.

It's also been said, by Morse Peckham in fact, that art is a socially integrated way of experiencing the chaos and entropy of existence without endangering the order necessary to all social cohesion, something akin to the treatment with methadone of those of us suffering from permanent cold turkey for a socially dissolute kind of adventure. Likewise, it's been said, by Ernst Fischer in fact, that it is the moment of raising the intensity and tension of awareness that gives us a deeper sense of knowledge of our place in the world and in the universe, something that religion, political ideology and science also provide, each in its own way. Or, according to Matisse, art would be the best way of relaxing the cultivated—and well-off—man and woman after a hard day's work, a health resort on the wall for combat executives. Mondrian, on the other hand, thought that the day in which human beings were to get close to perfect spiritual balance, art would disappear because its function has been, in point of fact, that of compensating for the lack of harmony that has accompanied us since we came down from the trees—another therapeutic interpretation of a shamanistic sort. All this appears to contradict the canonic function of modern and

militant contemporary art, according to which art is not a mediator between the human being and his environment but a deliberate tool of transformation of said environment, although after a second reading one arrives at the conclusion that all parlor revolutions have the placebo effect of curing by trickery. Put another way, Matisse was not so far off the mark, although in this instance the beneficiary might not be the enlightened bourgeois. Perhaps what ought to be explained, once and for all, is that we cannot permit ourselves the luxury of painting the same cave without it falling in on us and breaking the mirror in which we recognize ourselves. John Archibald Wheeler wrote that the universe doesn't exist without witnesses. But things...

[6]

Finally, the beginning.

Michel Serres, *La Distribution*

...are even more complicated.

In New York a stooping man slowly walks along dragging his feet across the snow leaving footprints behind him in the shape of a flatfish

In Barcelona an old woman who lives alone suddenly feels unwell and calls the Red Cross by pressing the red emergency button in the middle of the plastic transmitter hanging from her neck while she thinks of her son who lives in New York

In a New Jersey suburb another old woman of the same age sells the house she's lived in for the last fifty years and falls into a depression at having to trash the part of her history that doesn't fit into what remains to her of life

In San Sebastián a youngster on a motorbike crashes into a taxi and goes flying through the air before landing like a broken doll on the pavement in front of a restaurant and the customers slowly get up from their tables wishing they were somewhere else

In Kosovo a boy of five survives an accidental bombardment by NATO planes but loses his mother and his sister with whom he was always playing doctors and patients

In Chicago a taxi stops at Michigan Avenue and Illinois Center to pick up a well-dressed blonde woman and her five-year-old son who is crying because it's raining

In Madrid a woman of fifty-six closes the door of an art gallery at 9.30 on a Thursday evening but goes on working until past eleven without being certain that it's worth the trouble

In Phoenix a single woman of fifty-eight urgently needs affection and tries to lure the first man she meets in a bar into her bed without managing it due to her age

In El Paso a very young illegal immigrant manages to outwit the frontier immigration police and gets as far as Albuquerque in New Mexico where his married sister has lived for three years without papers hoping for an amnesty or a miracle

In Tarifa the swollen body of a North African man appears floating face down in the water very close to a beach full of tourists from the north of Europe who go on sunbathing as if it wasn't there

In Madrid a well-known politician resigns because of serious crimes of corruption committed by close collaborators and intimate lifelong friends but hardly anybody takes into account his gesture of personal dignity and his opponents inside and outside the party are glad about what's happened

In Trieste in the wheelchair in which he's been prostrate for two months and will go being so until the passing of time does him in an old man makes an effort to remember the Italian names of the towns that passed into Yugoslav hands at the end of the Second World War and where he'd been as a young man

In Mexico City a woman of a certain age urinates in the early hours of Saturday morning while her husband sleeps and the young couple in the apartment below make love panting strongly

In Los Angeles a white truck driver from Corpus Christi makes a deal with a black prostitute with very big thighs and breasts born in a small town in Alabama who climbs smiling into the air-conditioned cab on a stifling Monday morning

In Bilbao a couple from the outskirts visits a new museum of contemporary art without understanding what they are seeing but the building impresses the two of them

In the Sant Andreu area of Barcelona a woman with dyed blonde hair prepares the breakfast for her son and her husband with whom she has had a blazing row about money the previous night before going to bed where he penetrated her from behind without saying anything

In Alahurín el Grande a young man of twenty-three and a girl of twenty get married in church and all because they love each other and because that way it's going to be for all time

In Montreal a married man says to the woman he's in bed with that he'll always, always, always love her and he doesn't lie but she doesn't believe him because life often works against what we desperately desire although she assents with a nod of the head in silence

In Madrid a blind man attempts to guess by touch the forms of a life-size marble sculpture of a recumbent woman in the Círculo de Bellas Artes while those who are looking at him are embarrassed without knowing exactly why

In Minneapolis a man who's been single for years passes several hours of the night talking by phone with a woman who's prepared to do sexually what he wants for as long as he wants without ever seeing or meeting each other for four dollars and sixty cents a minute

In Fisterra a fisherman remains at home with his wife and children because a northeasterly is blowing very hard and he's afraid to go out to sea and never see them again

In Gainesville a man of thirty-three finds out that he's adopted when his biological mother who'd sworn a thousand times she wouldn't do it looks for him and manages to find him through a private detective specializing in such matters

On the beach in Varadero a call-girl of nineteen studies the faces of the fifty-something European tourists who are strolling along seeking with furtive gaze in order to decide which of them looks like an easy and above all harmless client

In Derry a mature woman resentfully leaves her husband despite him being a good man because she cannot put up with his addiction to drink and his sexual impotence and because she thinks that her life with another man could have been better

In Saint Petersburg a lieutenant-colonel of forty-eight veteran of the Afghanistan campaign accepts the post of director of the Artillery Museum where Lenin's armoured car is kept because he is appalled by the erasing of the historical memory of his country in the 20th century even though it was all a mistake

Near Gandesa a North-American Jew and Communist of eighty-two veteran of the Lincoln Brigade returns to the spot where he lost his right arm while quickly drawing the enemy position under drumfire in order to draw it all again with the arm he still has extremely slowly this time

In Brisbane a Filipino male nurse helps an old woman who cannot manage it by herself to defecate and then wipes her with a sponge doing this with care and tenderness because she reminds him of his mother whom he hasn't seen for months

In Berlin a schoolteacher of seventy who was an informer of the Stasi due to fear and his Marxist convictions reflects and concludes that if he was reborn he'd do the same thing again because each person must be clear about who and why he betrays someone

In Palm Beach a mature and intelligent woman with two grownup children lives a well-to-do and apathetic life thanks to her husband who's a bookmaker of bets that are almost always illegal whom she's never been in love with but would never think of leaving

In Rentería a son of Extremaduran immigrants of twenty born in the Basque Country who's been a member of Jarrai since the age of fifteen throws a Molotov cocktail against an Ertzaintza van and causes second-degree burns to a policeman he doesn't know from Adam

Near Burgos a road accident kills two German tourists veterans of the Condor Legion on their first visit to Spain since the Civil War

In Tucson a USAF lieutenant acts as a guide to a group of senior citizens on a visit to Davis-Monthan Air Force Base making use of cheap jokes and pointing out he's a fighter pilot when in fact it isn't so and that mortifies him

In Atlanta after dining together a rich coke-addict couple seduces another slightly younger couple that they've recently met so that they agree to a night of group sex which ends up leaving everyone not knowing what to say to each other at the end of it

In Leningrad a Canadian tourist buys a fake icon and a genuine Hero of the Soviet Union Communist medal in the flea market near the Hotel Europa without knowing that the original owner of the medal really deserved it

In Moscow a businessman from Boston bribes the desk clerk of the Hotel Metropol so that they give him the room Lee Harvey Oswald stayed in and he can tell the story back in the office

In Rio de Janeiro a Spaniard who's passing through finds and buys in a second-hand bookshop a book published in Madrid in 1952 that smells of mildew with some gruesome photos of prisoners executed in the war in his country that a Marist Brother had shown him in the school playground when he was twelve saying the Reds did this

In Guanavara Bay on the ferry sailing towards Paquetá Island a pregnant mulatto girl feels slightly ill and is sick in the swirling water with her sweat-beaded forehead on the ship's handrail at dusk

In Coyoacán an English Leftist militant who sweats a lot asks how to get to Leon Trotsky's house-cum-museum without it mattering to her that Frida Kahlo's is nearby because she's always thought that art is a rich man's plaything and a stupid way of wasting time

In Thiès near Dakar a girl of nine suffers a clitoral ablation because that's the way it's always been done to avoid women's natural inclination to have illicit sex which has such terrible effects on the relations between men and so gravely offends God

In Hong Kong a young businessman trained during the final years of British sovereignty debates whether he should or shouldn't become a member of the Chinese Communist Party since the nature of business consists of knowing how to adapt to circumstances

In Istanbul near the Galata Bridge an adolescent youth robs all the cash from the wallet of a Western businessman and passive gay who's the spitting image of Goering and whom he's made think he'll go to his hotel with

In Manhattan a middle-aged man visits the psychiatrist who's treating him for chronic depression and terribly ashamed tells her things he'd never told anybody not even himself and exits onto the street in order to go on living without feeling any relief at all

In White Sands not far from where the first atom bomb was detonated before the real one was dropped on Hiroshima a New York sculptor loses his way in the white sands for hours and when he finally finds his car thinks that it would have been better to stay lost

In a suburb of Richmond a married woman only manages to reach orgasm when she makes love with her intimate girlfriend and doesn't feel guilty but does feel sad because she knows that sooner or later she'll have to decide what to do and whatever the decision is it will be devastating

In Paris a retired policeman and widower can't help but remember at night the dull sound of the truncheon blow he dealt to a North-African-looking girl student and the slight groan she let out before falling to the ground with bleeding head all of this forty years ago on a sidewalk

In Buenos Aires an antique dealer in the barrio of San Telmo knows he'll be able to sell a toy car to an Italian tourist for a lot of money when the man tells him he'd had one exactly the same as a child which got mislaid when his parents moved house

In Luarca an old and sick parish priest confesses in the hospital to his younger brother that he lost the faith forty years ago but continued acting his part because he couldn't betray the faith of others

In Kigali a Tutsi woman who saw her husband and her children killed before being raped says that the sweet and darling daughter who was born of that rape is the best thing that could ever have happened to her

In the old village of Belchite an Anglo-American producer uses the crumbling remains of the village as a set for the shooting of a humoristic war film with a multi-million dollar budget and to the ruins they add others of papier mâché that seem realer than the genuine ones and a scaffold and a decapitated equestrian statue for greater effect

In Lisbon a successful illustrator who fought in Angola an only son voluntarily exiled in America returns to take care of his dying mother and by chance meets again the woman he loved for the first time and to whom he always thought he should have married

In Barcelona a youngster locked up in the Model Prison for manslaughter learns to paint in oils in order to be able to depict from memory the landscapes of the Almería village in which he grew up

In Barcelona a now aged and unknown yet unembittered painter teaches the inmates of the Model Prison to paint in oils because he believes art makes people better

In Miami a pregnant student of seventeen who didn't want to abort gives birth to a healthy eight-pound baby boy with whom she spends half an hour before giving him for adoption

On Long Island a man in his fifties who has lived intensely strolls along the beach near the lighthouse in Montauk with the feeling of not having understood anything fundamental in his life but he doesn't know what it is and he is terrified by the thought that he might die in such ignorance

In Lyon a teenager of sixteen ends up losing his virginity with an older girl from the neighborhood and he will not know until he's very old that this hurried fuck has been one of the most important acts of his life

In Barcelona in the hepatic illnesses ward of the Hospital Clínic a middle-aged man shaves and smartens up his father with whom he has had a difficult relationship without knowing that the old man will die early next morning

In New York early in the morning on the fifth floor of 38 North Moore Street a man has spent hours trying to write a poem without managing it

Notwithstanding the fact that in the Libyan Desert caves might exist that were painted and engraved exquisitely seven thousand years ago by the expert hands of craftsmen who along with their names disappeared long ago and which have been seen by hardly anybody in the last six thousand years

And that in the Atacama Desert the sun might go down vertically on ants dragonflies lizards scorpions tarantulas snakes and the common graves of the 1970s missing

And that in the Olduvai Gorge there might still be hundreds of fossils of our hominid ancestors of which no American university has the remotest idea

And that in Chaco Canyon to the north of Santa Fe in New Mexico not a single soul may have lived since the day the last Anasazi disappeared

And above all (comma) that the Earth might go on turning without pause in the orbit that a blind watchmaker gave to it without there being any sound reason (period)

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