

PIETER DE BUYSSER

THE TIP OF THE
TONGUE

ENGELSE VERTALING

translation: jodie hruby

the narrator A few months ago I was invited to the University of Mar del Plata to give a lecture on the Argentine writer Letizia Álvarez de Toledo. For years I have been varying that very same lecture. I am fortunate that there is very little to say about my subject, so little that it constantly tends to implode. But this time – six months ago – was special. Even though, all in all, Mar del Plata is a provincial seaside town, it was there, in Calle Verde, that Borges wrote his story *The Library of Babel*. Letizia Álvarez de Toledo owes her fame to this story by Borges.

In *The Library of Babel*, Borges describes a library that comprises an infinite number of hexagonal galleries. This library contains all the books ever written or to be written and can therefore answer all the fundamental mysteries of humanity. It contains all histories, all laws, all calculations, all predictions, and all imaginable variations thereof. I explained this to my audience there in Mar del Plata, which consisted of colleagues who, like me, were astonished by the extent of its irrelevance.

I showed them a schematic representation of Borges's library that possesses all the properties of the universe, and then told them that at the end of this

masterfully composed metaphysical construct, Borges, in one dizzying footnote, allowed his entire work to collapse like a sandcastle. Stated in one futile, fatal note is Letizia Álvarez de Toledo's remark that a space-expanding library is unnecessary. There may be something more compact than Borges's nevertheless extremely concise story.

I cited Letizia Álvarez de Toledo's footnote wherein she demonstrates that the work Borges had just completed is pointless. That, strictly speaking, a single volume would be sufficient: "Every solid body is the superposition of an infinite number of planes. Each apparent page would open into other similar pages; the inconceivable middle page would have no 'back'."

At that very moment, a man in the second row falls onto the floor. I continue speaking, saying how striking it is that Borges, a male writer, has thought up a space that expands, that penetrates still further into an unknown, ever increasing space, and that Letizia Álvarez de Toledo, a female writer, makes an inward movement, ever deeper into an infinite body. But the man in the second row is gasping for breath. I stop talking. The people nearby examine him. They try to help the man. I realise that my lecture is over.

The ambulance arrives. The nurse says: pneumothorax. His lung has imploded, vacuum suctioned. Bruised ribs, too.

I kneel next to the man, noticing that a beautiful woman is holding his hand. The man looks me in the eye and says: “Thank you for everything.”

I say: “What have I done to make you want to thank me?”

He says: “Not you, Letizia Álvarez de Toledo.”

“You’re joking”, I say.

“Do I look as if I’m joking?”

“No, sorry”, I say.

“But there is absolutely no need for you to be sorry.”

“Sorry, that’s true. But you are in so much pain...”

The nurse interrupts, to say he must first get the man to hospital, but that everything will be okay. As he was rolled away on the stretcher, the woman who had been holding his hand stood beside me. “I want to talk to you.”

“No problem”, I say. “I think I’m done here.”

I grab my things and walk outside with her.

The cool evening breeze makes me happy.

“I’m Grace”, she says. “Grace Verra. I found what you said very interesting. I’m passionate about Letizia Álvarez de Toledo.” I cannot believe my ears, a beautiful young woman from Belgium here in Argentina, who, like me, is quite enthused by a scarcely known, marginal figure from world literature.

“You really came here for my lecture?”

“I’ve been in Mar del Plata for a few weeks already”, she says. “My father owns one of the largest shipping companies in the world: Jean-Jacques Verra.”

“Verra, of course. I can see the letters in front of me, painted on containers in yellow and blue.”

“Yeah, he has thousands of containers, and a fleet of twelve ships. But he has one other boat, the Amare, which is used for scientific experiments, and that boat is now here in Mar del Plata.” She then says it’s a shame I couldn’t finish my lecture but the advantage is that the night is still young. “And maybe I can actually invite you ... to the boat?”

I’m surprised. “Yes”, I say, immediately adding that I first want to text my wife. That way Grace will know from the outset that there are certain adventures for which I am not available. To my relief, her reaction is completely indifferent. When we arrive at the quay it’s dark, but I soon notice there’s an ambulance in the distance, lights off, near the only large ship. We’re getting closer. I recognise that it’s the same ambulance that had just taken the man away. I see heavily armed men walking on the deck of the ship; some have taken up a post on the quay next to the gangplank.

Grace says not to worry, “Safety – you never know nowadays.” I say, “But why does a science-ship need so much protection?”

“Raymond will be making that clear to you shortly.”

To my amazement, the man who had so recently exited the audience approaches me from the gangway. “Welcome aboard”, he says. I follow the man onto the ship, through a small steel door, down some stairs and into a dark room, where he offers me a drink. I am alone with him, disappointed that Grace has not accompanied us. He closes the door. “Pleased to meet you. I apologise for this unusual form of invitation, but there is no other way. I’m Raymond White, a private detective. I was hired by Grace’s father. I had to find her for him.”

I say: “It seems to me that you have found her.”

“We found each other, yes.” He smiles. “You can indeed say that.”

“And does her father know this?”

“Grace and I have meanwhile given ourselves another assignment and have just started working on it.”

The footsteps I heard on deck disappear; replacing them is the growling of the ship’s engine. It sounds like a lazy bear. The ship vibrates.

“Are we sailing away?”

Raymond does not answer. “Jean-Jacques Verra”, he says. “Grace’s father finances this ship with money from Saudi Arabia. The ship is chock-full of high-tech devices that he uses for geo-engineering experiments. He’s an inveterate optimist of progress.”

“So what’s he doing then?” I ask.

“Last month, this ship fertilised the ocean near the tip of Patagonia with iron sulphate, hundreds of kilometres of it, which stimulates the growth of plankton; plankton reduces CO2 emissions. So the ship helps the ozone layer recover. It rescues the climate. And everyone can still continue to use oil. So everyone is happy: Saudi Arabia is happy, the father is happy, the fish are happy.”

“That’s beautiful”, I say.

“It is not”, he says.

“Under the banner of progress, technology and science, this ship keeps the industries that deplete the Earth on track. Including Jean-Jacques Verra’s parent company. Thanks to this intervention, he does not need to change course; he can continue to plunder the resources of this planet. And for every study showing the harmful effects of this advanced technology, he buys five studies that cast doubt on the results of that study.”

“But what can you and I do about it? That’s just how it goes.”

“We have hijacked this ship.”

“What are you saying?”

“That Grace and I have seized this boat. And right now, you, Grace, and I are the only ones on board. All of our helpers disembarked some minutes ago. You’re coming with us.”

“You’ve captured me?”

“Let’s call it a somewhat firm invitation.”

“What are you up to?”

“No more and no less than bringing this regime to an end. No fumbling on the sidelines with those old-fashioned revolutions in city squares and streets. No. This time we are going to tackle it more subtly and more fundamentally.”

“That makes me curious. And how are you going to replace the old regime?”

Raymond laughs and says: “You will be the first to know.”

I say: “But why me?”

“Because through your knowledge of Álvarez de Toledo, you know the movement from the inside, and through your knowledge of Borges, you know the movement from the outside.”

I look at him with concern: “You attach a ridiculously huge amount of importance to the study of literature.”

“If you want other reasons, you can invent them for yourself. We want you to testify for us, in planetariums all across the world.”

Soon I discover that we are indeed alone on the ship. Raymond White, private detective; Grace Verra, daughter of Jean-Jacques Verra; and me. It takes half a night on this steadily progressing sailing vessel before they tell me that we're heading for the South China Sea.

Two weeks later, I am up on deck at three o'clock in the morning. The stars are sparkling in the sky like nowhere else. They are as strange as they are familiar. I realise that these lights will be shining even when the last joy and the last sadness are extinguished. I see that Grace is in the captain's position at the helm. That doesn't surprise me. Even though the ship is equipped with the most advanced navigation technology, Grace happily steers it in relation to the stars. On this clear night, navigating is easy.

We have been sailing in a straight line for days now, in the zone that sailors know to absolutely avoid. Here you find the largest whirlpools in the world. There's not a single ship in sight within a 100-kilometre radius. We sail calmly but resolutely toward the centre, the centre of the centre. Vortices with a circumference of 135 km are no exception; that is to say five times greater than the largest underground particle accelerator in Geneva.

This location is known in myths and legends as the first and last place for the dreams of so many sailors, adventurers, and explorers. We are sailing

straight toward the focal point. The stars above us remain motionless. There isn't a single seagull to be seen. When I turn around I spot Raymond, who is standing at the ship's wheel alongside Grace. She waves for me to come. It's time. I walk up to the front railing. I feel – maybe for the last time – a splash of saltwater on my skin, and I go over there. I walk inside. Grace and Raymond are waiting for me.

From now on, the ship is on autopilot. Together we make our way to the innermost bunker. This is the laboratory. I stand in my place, put my head in the leather straps, animal hide with iron buckles. Raymond fastens me in securely. Arms, legs – I cannot move any more except for my head. At least for the time being. Now Raymond and Grace take their places.

They tightly bind themselves and each other into position. There we all are, all tied up. We're waiting. We notice how the ship rocks more and more fiercely and almost tips over; this happens in the space of a few minutes; the rocking increases, the boat tilts to one side and remains inclined; soon we notice that the rocking has stopped, devolving into an evenly gyrating bobbing motion. Raymond knows that it's time to press the button next to his hand.

TEN: There's no turning back, we are going into the centre.

NINE: A mechanism pulls the straps tighter, accelerating the rotational movement of the ship.

EIGHT: A leather-covered iron arc flips out and clasps my head. I cannot move at all any more. The particle-accelerator computer directly in front of me in the middle of the laboratory, starts up.

SEVEN: The apparatus for the entanglement of quantum particles starts up. It's the model from the University of Delft, but on a human scale. Particle A is entangled with particle B; by adding one property to particle A, particle B, because of the entanglement, receives exactly the same properties as particle A. Particle A travels, relocates, and thus moves to particle B; this entanglement happens in an instant, faster than the speed of light.

SIX: The vortex into which we have arrived is five times larger than the particle accelerator that knows how to split the smallest quantum particles; multiply this by the velocity of the particle accelerator on board...

FIVE: My blood, my lungs, my intestines are flung to the left side of my body through centrifugal force.

FOUR: The rotational speed of the ship times the speed of the on-board particle accelerator will immediately dissolve Grace, Raymond, and me into quantum particles.

THREE: My mouth will be pulled up through a brace, my tongue will be clasped; the quantum particles of Grace and Raymond will be attributed to a quantum particle in this device that, in turn, is entangled with a particle

from my tongue; there they will reappear in a universe that springs from a string on the tip of my tongue.

TWO: I hear the horrific din of iron breaking and rupturing; the rocking of the boat has become unbearable.

ONE: Let it happen, now.

A few days later, I wake up. The straps have been loosened. The places where Raymond and Grace stood are covered by heat-shield cocoons. I know the procedure and know that I can never crack them open. I take a breath. Everything seems to have gone according to plan.

I free myself, twist open the lock, leave the laboratory. I go up onto deck. The ship is abandoned, a piece of the upper bow is broken off, but it has, just like the computers and navigation systems, done its job. The sea is calm.

I see a coastline.

Not much later, the Chinese Coast Guard sails up alongside. They board the ship with the same sort of ease that children open their lunch boxes.

I could now explain to you how I was detained for days by the customs authorities in Hong Kong. I could tell you about the crying fit that exudes

from Jean-Jacques Verra after yet another night at the hotel bar where once again I tried to explain what had happened, an explanation that did not go smoothly, given that since then my tongue seems to be subject to another gravitational force. I could tell you how I accidentally bit my tongue on the plane during the landing in Brussels on the way back from Hong Kong; how because of that I panicked for days, thinking I'd destroyed the entire mission. I could elaborate on the method of quantum entanglement with which Raymond and Grace ended up in my tongue; I could go into how string theory necessarily leads to the theory of the multiverse with an infinite number of Big Bangs, like a bubble bath of bubbles, with universes that are entangled with each other in 11 dimensions... but it is time. It is time to share with you the fruits of our mission.

(onstage – the narrator is speaking live image: grey, white noise, test image)

We have been asking the wrong question for too long. Where Kepler and Co. try to map the world, we need another kind of map.

Apologies for my speech defect, you know very well which infinity has pierced my tongue.

But I have my accessory with me: This, ladies and gentlemen, is my *machina coelestis*. An instrument created in collaboration with engineers,

scientists, designers, and artists. It was constructed using well-known techniques, although these were applied in another manner and have not deleted or excluded any existing knowledge, have not engaged those old-fashioned tabula rasa practices; existing knowledge is included, integrated into a larger whole. Nothing is deleted.

With this, ladies and gentlemen, I'm now going to make contact with Raymond and Grace, who at this moment are to be found on the tip of my tongue. You'll remember that they told me I should bear witness to their mission. Well, for you, ladies and gentlemen, courtesy of the planetarium, OCAD, the security service, the centre for nuclear control, Frontex, Europol, and the illegal immigration service, I'm going to make a connection straightaway.

Raymond, Grace, we are ready.

No more fumbling around with revolutions in the streets and squares.

As Einstein said: "An idea cannot be really good if its implementation does not seem totally impossible at first."

Or, as an old European once said: "Every great historical event began as a utopia and ended as a reality."

And so we are going to make live contact with Raymond and Grace.

It's a question of taking a moment to adjust the gamma rays in order to achieve the right proportion of neutrinos and cosmic background radiation. It'll be fine.

They are on the tip of my tongue. The multiverse is in everything and everything is in the multiverse; thus, the tip of my tongue is in the multiverse, but the entire multiverse is also in the tip of my tongue That has significant consequences. Hence this fundamental cosmological speech exercise.

(nothing happens)

Yes, just say hello, it's up to you two...

(we hear crackle, we see rustling)

No one promised that this would be easy. To take distance from the old ways of thinking, to seek access to a new depiction of the world. In earlier times, when they spoke of a historic paradigm shift: the worldview tilts. But there can be no more talk of it, even today. Because here and now, the old-fashioned worldview is pulverised.

Wrldviewww.

And so we are going over to our live coverage... If all goes well...

(test image)

Hello Grace, hello Raymond, we're ready, all set up in the planetarium. Do you hear me?

We must overcome some fundamental difficulties of perception.

Grace? Raymond? It's up to you now...

A bit of patience...

There are deer in a forest in Germany that, after so many generations, still cannot cross the border between East and West Germany for fear of the shock.

(crackle, rustling)

The connection will soon be established.

This machnia caelestis protects me from the Earth's pressure, the ambiguity,
the falsity,
the double bottom.

“In the place of truth, nothing can be uttered.”

The totem calls on us to go to the truth, but the taboo forbids us to enter it.
Still, there's the pronouncement and the idea that the truth does not exist in
contradiction with itself.

The verdict: the truth does not exist, based on a claim of the absolute truth
that it upends itself. Our chance, the chance of the truth, lies precisely in the
uncertainty.

Hello Grace, hello Raymond?

(we hear indescribable crackling)

It worked during the rehearsals. It has something to do with the magnetic-
field constant – believe me, it works. It's ultimately as simple and
incomprehensible as the the way trees grow.

But it ought to work here at some point...

(finally something moves in the image)

Raymond?

Grace?

You have to turn your camera outwards. Yes, I have an image. But I don't know what I'm looking at.

Are you there?

(from here, my voice is back on tape)

raymond Yes.

the narrator Who's that speaking?

raymond Raymond.

the narrator Is Grace with you?

raymond I already told you next week that it will not have been so simple to answer that.

the narrator There is something wrong with your tenses ...

raymond I could also say the same about yours.

the narrator What's wrong with past-present-future?

raymond I've tried to explain that to you in 100 years' time, and then it was also in vain.

the narrator Is everything okay with you two?

grace From here, we each have a different perspective on good and evil.

Maybe you have another question?

the narrator Where are you now?

grace 3,000,000,000 to the northeast of the 750,000,000,000st atom in your neutron, on the tip of your tongue, in your mouth, in your head that at this moment is in the planetarium. Shall I wave?

the narrator Yes!

I realise, ladies and gentlemen, I realise that this is incomprehensible, but today the scientific consensus is that anyone who claims to understand quantum mechanics does not understand quantum mechanics.

You see this courgette. Our brains have a weight and shape more or less equal to this courgette. Nevertheless, with this tiny organ we have been able to discover laws and heavenly bodies that were active before man existed, even before the Earth existed. All the billions of light-years from all the galaxies, black holes, and infinite infinities were calculated and understood by a rather lousy organ such as this.

Man and his brain came into being a mere two million years ago. That's nothing when you think of the 4.6 billion years the Earth has existed, much less when you think of the 13.8 billion years since the Big Bang. So our brains are infantile. Incidentally, feel free to enjoy this perspective – it's the only one in which the human brain is still innocent and childlike.

At present, the outermost limit of the observable universe is estimated to be 50 billion light-years. One light-year is 10 trillion kilometres.

With this brain of ours that has a life of only 80 years or so and is the size of a courgette, we want to gain insight into all this time and all this space. Here you see the farthest visible reach of space recorded until now. And I'm just

talking about the universe in which you and I ramble around at the moment. A bunch of similar courgettes have calculated this for us. Here you see the farthest visible reach of space that has ever been recorded to date: an image of 13.8 billion years ago; this is the afterglow of the Big Bang, or the baby photo of the cosmos. Microwave background radiation. The oldest light ever. 13.8 billion years old. How is it that an infantile, miniscule human organ could have discovered this? It defies all logic, all power of imagination. Because we remain helpless, ignorant little atoms that whirl around in these unknown heavens.

(we hear a sound like a message coming in)

Grace? Do you want to say something?

(we hear the same sound again, but it lasts longer)

She is now inviting you, ladies and gentlemen, to think of an experience from your childhood – something you remember clearly: the time you played in a river, or had your first bike ride, when you fell asleep under a tree – choose a moment that you can still clearly see, feel, and maybe even smell, as if you were really there. Try to be as precise as possible in recalling what you smelled, how it felt, exactly what you saw. You, who are here now, in this chair in the planetarium, with the body that you now

possess, present here and now: you were not there. Not a single atom in your current body was around then. Every one of your cells has changed since then. Matter swirls around and comes together for a while to compose 'you'. Whatever you may now be, you're not made of the stuff from which you existed then. No single atom, no single dust particle, no single piece of skin, nothing of your material body was there then. And yet you are still the same person with the same memory of that moment from your childhood.

Who are you then? From what do you exist? Such stuff as dreams are made of, as Shakespeare says, is maybe much more than stuff, maybe much more than dreams, and maybe a lot more than just us.

Grace?

grace Yes.

the narrator How's it going?

grace I have not done any 'going' for a long time. lol. But it really thrills me to be here.

the narrator I must say hello to you from your father. Grace?

grace I'm still here. How is he doing?

the narrator Not good. He lives on a small sailboat, alone with his dog.

grace Dad!

the narrator He is consumed with guilt.

And he still hasn't digested the fact that you and Raymond fell in love. He still feels cheated.

grace Still?

the narrator He misses you. He realises he should never have had a detective track you down, that he should have talked to you.

grace We talked enough.

the narrator Through your silence, you have given him cause to reflect.

grace You see, what didn't work with words succeeded through this act.

the narrator He's in exile now. His whole empire, his technological inventions, his capital: everything has collapsed. He has sold all his ships.

His ideals, his values, his criteria, everything has gone under. He no longer knows what he can still hope for, what he can still believe, or what or who he can still love. His entire being throbs from an out-dated but unfortunately still prevailing cosmology. What for him were ideals and higher values have long been a nightmare for planet Earth. However, he was not the worst – a generous entrepreneur, optimistic, ambitious, philanthropic... He supported organic farmers.

grace We are not here, screwed into your tongue, to hold yet another of those little debates about bio-products, alternative urban gardens left and right, playful activism, and the evils of capital. It's time for all that sort of well-meaning but floundering on the ground in vain to finally help with the elementary and large scale issues, once and for all. For centuries, life was lived in accordance with the same thought patterns, the same grammar, the same worldview, the same idea of realism and pragmatism. It's time to advance a significant step higher and deeper.

raymond Darling, high and deep are two dimensions in which we are not going to be doing too much more DIY.

the narrator To understand the nature of our reality, we can go in two directions: inwards, into the microscopic, molecular, and quantum world of matter and energy. Or outwards, into the vast order of space and time that

contains all stars, matter, anti-matter, and cosmic rays. These two directions appear to be opposite but are nevertheless intimately linked.

One of the biggest questions that contemporary physicists face is a theory that describes the motion of heavenly bodies and earthly objects. And a theory that describes the laws of quantum particles, or the very smallest elements. Until recently, these two things did not correspond. To the great frustration of contemporary science, there was no singular theory, or, as Stephen Hawking calls it, a theory of everything. A theory that describes all the forces at work in the universe. This unification theory has been the long-sought-after holy grail; it would unite the fundamental theories of physics: elementary particles that move according to the laws of quantum physics, and the fundamental forces of nature that move according to the theory of general relativity or the laws of classical physics. There's now one theory that's the most serious candidate for this theory of everything: string theory. String theory poses the question:

What are the indivisible, unchanging elements that make up the world around us? You present one thing, and you want to know what that is made of; you go into it and you first come across atoms – inside which are electrons, inside which are neutrons and protons, and inside which are even smaller particles or quarks. And inside those is a dancing filament of energy; it looks like a vibrating string. It's these strings that produce the different particles from which our world is made. And here is the unifying factor: all

matter and all natural forces are made of the same thing, of these strings. Everything that 'is' emerges from the vibration of these strings. At present, this theory only works in a universe with at least 11 dimensions.

Thus, there must be more dimensions. We already know about height, depth, and width, and mathematics offers us a list of 500 candidates for other dimensions, each with different physical properties. The result of all this is that not only are there other dimensions, but the existence of other universes must therefore also be assumed. This single unifying string theory implies that there's a multiverse instead of a universe. What we call the Big Bang is only one pop in a bubble bath full of endlessly increasing expanding universes. All these universes are entangled with one another.

(we hear the sound of a message coming in)

Raymond?

Yes, Raymond?

Have I explained it somewhat?

I'm doing my best.

raymond There is, however, nothing special once you're here. A quantum state is the sum, the superposition of multiple possibilities. Grace and I ended up in the other possibilities. See this protoplanetary disk here?

the narrator No.

raymond Indeed, it's not here yet. Grace and I are working on it. Once it's here I'll combine it with a small emission nebula in a molecular cloud, and with that I'm going to fasten this protoplanetary disk at 11 points to the 11th dimension of each of the 11 strings on the tip of your tongue. And from there on out, it's up to you.

the narrator Why eleven?

raymond Because the hypothesis is that the infinite number of universes arises in the 11th dimension of the string.

grace And if you want a totally unscientific reason: 11 is the step beyond the 10 Commandments; 11 is the exceedance, the transgression, and at the same time, it's one step away from the perfect number 12; 11 erupts out of a closed system on two fronts. But that is a purely poetic, mythical reason to choose eleven.

the narrator That's allowed. There's no tabula rasa. The old is integrated into the new.

raymond I shall do my best to tug gently on the knot, to not tighten it too hard.

the narrator That's very kind of you.

Ouch.

Fable 11:

There are billions and billions of planets. Existing on the planet we see here are molecular units that could be called 'man'. Man seeks lovers, sometimes establishes families, and unites in what he calls 'a people'. This molecular-unit man tends toward clustering. The one group then excludes the other in the hope of increasing its chances of survival. On this planet, the word cosmopolitan has become a dirty word.

Fable 10:

Two customs officers, one from each country, stand together on a line in their head. Many people want to cross the line that's in their head. But those whose papers don't have the correct letters printed on them aren't allowed to do so. To not cross the line is unfair to the people of the country on the one side, while to cross the line is unfair to the people of the country on the other side. What to

do? Despair ascends beyond the atmosphere. Now it's a matter of waiting until the first customs officer, in his desperation, ascends as well, and from there begins to draw new, unseen lines in 11 dimensions.

Fable 9:

There was once a country in which people could love the border, just as they love a beautiful, clear line.

Fable 8:

Like a border that breaks, so broke the morning in Grace's laboratory. Grace is a young writer who has just finished her chapter on Letizia Álvares de Toledo. She wrote:

“We can only explore the cosmos starting from the possibilities offered to us by planet Earth. On planet Earth, man wanders round; he has a brain for thinking, for speculating, and for constructing instruments for measuring and viewing.”

But man cannot think beyond himself. She stood up, walked over to the window. On the windowsill was a meteorite, a stone from before man was on Earth. She stuck it in her mouth and said:

Fable 7:

From now on, etched into my tongue is the name of the tree that grows outside of the human mind.

Fable 6:

One day, Raymond White, a private investigator not without merit, discovered that he himself was complicit in a crime on a planetary scale. The primacy of linear history, the only explanatory story of the origins, was the huge collective mistake he was guilty of. He was just a pawn in an all-encompassing story that held cosmologists, psychologists, and political scientists hostage: the detective who reveals the primordial events and predicts the future. During his last assignment, he fell in love with the beautiful Grace. With her father being his client, he could no longer endure the betrayal; he handed in his badge and speculated about an as-yet-unseen geometric figure of timelines. Not much later, by dint of a ruse on a ship, he broke into the tip of my tongue. And as a result, he let me speak 11 fables.

Fable 5:

When Raymond and Grace kissed for the first time, they climbed together, in her mouth, in the tree that grows outside of the human mind.

Fable 4:

Jean-Jacques Verra was a successful entrepreneur. One day he divided up his company among his employees and stopped using fossil fuels.

Fable 3:

Fable 3 is the fable of silence, of a love for perplexity.

Fable 2:

In the planetarium, it so-happened that we, with the ease of children climbing the branches, hung the old, bitten apple of knowledge back on the tree. And, under this artificial starry sky, in this heaven on earth, we are planting a whole new forest.

Fable 1:

Later, when I'm old and wrinkled, I hope I can say: I have seen the immense smallness of man and I've seen the immense greatness of man, in two directions, at one and the same time.

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Pieter De Buysser

Scenografie / scénographie / scenography: Herman Sorgeloos

Full dome video: Elias Heuinck

Dramaturgie / dramaturgy: Esther Severi

Geluid / son / sound: Yoerik Roevens

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Pieter De Buysser (1972) is a writer, director, and performing artist. He studied philosophy in Antwerp and Paris. His work is presented by various organisations and at many international festivals, and is widely acclaimed in Flanders and abroad. Recurring themes in De Buysser's work include the intertwining of fact and fiction, exercises in 'sense of possibility' and the image of resistance.

www.pieterdebuysser.com