

'Grace is the art of the fall ascending.'¹

1: The Picture In *My* Head.

A man is stuck inside the ball we call Earth. His feet glued onto the earth, he forms the left 45 degree angle of an isosceles triangle. His head is supported by the corner of the triangle and his hat does not fall off.

This is the picture in my head.

A man is stuck inside the ball we call Earth. His feet glued onto the earth, he forms the left 45 degree angle of an isosceles triangle. His head is supported by the corner of the triangle and his hat does not fall off.

Sweat drips from his face,

his arms,

his legs,

his body.

This is the picture in my head.

¹ The title has been influenced by the following text by Simone Weil.

“To come down by a movement in which gravity plays no part... Gravity makes things come down, wings make them rise: what wings raised to the second power can make things come down without weight?”

Creation is composed of the descending movement of gravity, the ascending movement of grace and the descending movement of the second degree of grace.

Grace is the law of the descending movement.

To lower oneself is to rise in the domain of moral gravity. Moral gravity makes us fall towards the heights.”

(Weil 1952:3-4)

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his arms,

his legs,

his body.

Sweat drips and falls.

Sweat looks after the man.

Sweat is the miner's version of Greek catharsis.

A man is stuck inside the ball we call Earth. His feet glued onto the earth, he forms the left 45 degree angle of an isosceles triangle. His head is supported by the corner of the triangle and his hat does not fall off. Sweat drips from his face,

his arms,

his legs,

his body.

The sweat drips and falls and takes care of the man. It is the miner's version of Greek catharsis.

This is the picture in my head.

The sweat drips
slowly at first,
as to be invisible,

but after a time accumulation turns invisibility into colour.

The colour takes its leave through the rocks above the miner's feet.
Its ferocious blue cuts through the earth and finds its way into the sea.
The miner is paddling upside down in the sun.
His feet are wet.

The ferocious blue sweeps up into the sea.

2: The Picture in *Your* Head.

We stand at the mine shaft waiting for the lift.

We are in mining uniform and full of the novelty which that brings.

The minerals fly up from the shaft and stick to the concrete giving it a sense of the archaic. The cage itself is functional and unwelcoming. If this was a horror film the cage would break down and the protagonists would be in limbo, left to die somewhere between the earth as we know it and the earth as we do not.

Miners come out of the cage at the end of their shift. Not visibly dirty they are covered with an imperceptible layer of salt. The story of their work is felt upon their bodies, yet not seen. Later I will lick my arm and taste the salt. The salt of my sweat? The salt of the rock? I don't know which salt is which.

We are introduced as artists. There is a novelty in this for our guide; we are not his usual clientele. Standing beside people who spend their lives deep in the crust of the Earth, the career of an artist feels insignificant.

We enter the cage, preparing for our ears to pop as we travel the 1100 metres down in 4 minutes.

We are deep in the crust of the Earth.

Above us there are strip lights. They make the mine dim, not light.

The ground is rough, uneven and dust coloured. As are the walls. As is the ceiling.

Perhaps I expected roads made out of concrete, fake ceilings, a factory underground.

What I see is more primitive

yet we are on a truck driving through the mine, in the ground under the North Sea and so

we are far from primitive

yet we are so close to the Earth that perhaps , and yes,

we are primitive.

Sitting in the front of the truck I feel that I am on some kind of rollercoaster. We drive through low tunnel after low tunnel, oppressive light seeping through, our future in front of us and then gone.

There is a hazy sleepy feeling in the mine, the temperature is high.

Yes, it is tiring.

This relentless subterranean world.

3: The hands of man are hot and alert

Rock is crumbling somewhere, falling apart from the earth, into the hands of man, somewhere under the North Sea.

It is not day here, or night.

There is no view of the sun.

There is no view of the moon.

Here, machines prowl through the Earth- stripping the Earth of its Earth. The potash is mined until there are cracks in the ceiling above us. It is mined until the Earth begins to make strange noises. Yet the Earth knows and gently replenishes what has been taken. We see where the rock has moved up a metre in one year. We notice this -the bumpy which once was flat.

We are in the Earth, and if I stress this, it is because it is so.

This is more than simply being underground.

We are in ground.

In the middle of this Earth trucks move, conveyer belts circle, lights are switched on, machines are operated by remote control and someone in the dark matter lab checks his emails. The miners always aware they are working side by side with danger – the danger of an Earth unfamiliar with the hands of man.

What does it mean to work here, always with the Earth?

The story of the Earth cannot be second guessed by words and so, at best,

the answer lies in

the arms.....

the legs.....

the body.....

Bibliography

Weil, Simone (1952) *Gravity and Grace* London, Routledge