

NABLA

The danger doesn't come from the sea,
but from the land

A radiophonic documentary by

MICHAEL FAHRES

in cooperation with

MICHAEL JUELLICH

commissioned by

DE BOVENBOUW/NOS RADIO

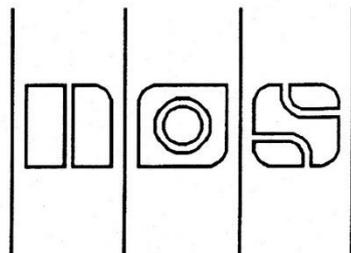
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English translation

Joan Poort - Prince

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NABLA ?

Michael Fahres' choice to make recordings inside a Nabla girder of the Haringvliet Surge Barrier, was determined by the acoustics in that space and the continuous presence of the sound of traffic thundering over the road on top of the locks complex.

As for these acoustics: the slightest crackle can be heard for dozens of seconds; a good bang on a cymbal reverberates for minutes.

The construction defined by the architect as "nabla" (the cross-section is an isosceles triangle) does not only refer to an ancient musical instrument (probably in use during the period the Jews stayed in Egypt, probably a triangular harplike instrument, of which no picture can be found anymore), but also to the Egyptian pyramids.

Apart from lending its name to the documentary, NABLA also refers to a number of mathematical theories, which form a part of the text layer.

THE LAYERS

Roughly speaking there are four layers to be distinguished in NABLA:

LAYER 1 consists of the percussion recordings Michael Fahres and Michael Jüllich made on 12 June 1990 inside the central Nabla girder of one of the lock segments of the Haringvliet locks.

The composition of this layer has a make-up of singular bangs on instruments strung with hides (drums) and metal percussion instruments (ranging from all kinds of cymbals to sound discs) resulting in a real sound-orgy, followed by a general pause of five seconds. After that the music relaxes and ends with the sound of someone blowing softly into the microphone, during which time in the distance the low drone of car tyres on the road dies out, "dries out" so to speak.

LAYER 2 is the layer with electronically arranged percussion sounds, made with the use of samplers in the Centrum voor Electronische Muziek in Arnhem on 13 June 1990.

LAYER 3 is the text layer, consisting of a short fragment from the film produced by the Government Information Service about the disaster and the Delta Works, completed by an interview with Suze (the guide), who runs the Delta Museum, where groups of tourists and students (among others) can see the information film.

The story (played by Vincent van Engelen) is about a man who is sitting bored at home; he wants to put on the t.v., comes to the conclusion that the aerial is not connected, gets in his car and goes for a drive, during which he is surprised about all kinds of everyday things, like the green kilometre markers by the roadside or the driving ethics of his fellow road users.

The presentation (Piet Hein van de Poel) deals with the nabla shape, (dated) theories about the measurements of the Cheops pyramid and alleged relations between measurement proportions and (f.i.) the circumference of the earth, the number of people who have lived etc.

Also mentioned is the "Theoria Numerorum Typographica" or the pyramidal family of theorems and resulting therefrom the theory about the meaning of the symbol "+" (for example).

A quote from Heracleitus says: "Everything flows, nothing exists nor remains the same". This quote could also be applied as a (second) subtitle for this radio phonic documentary.

LAYER 4 can be divided into two sub layers, one of which is the recording of the drive from Boxmeer to Hilversum (recorded 10 June 1990), preceded by the actual getting into and starting of the car (recorded in Essen on 9 June 1990).

The second sub layer consists of recordings made just underneath the nabla girder of the Haringvliet locks, on top of which the road runs (recorded 12 June 1990). Both sub layers are used as continuous carpet like sound layers, sometimes more sometimes less prominently mixed into the total.

NABLA

SCRIPT

(SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS)

VOICE ...and go on. On go the footsteps towards the horizon and somewhere in the future the second crossing.

PRESENTER NABLA

The danger doesn't come from the sea, but from the land, a radiophonic documentary by Michael Fahres, in co-operation with Michael Jüllich, commissioned by De Bovenbouw/NOS Radio, and with the support of the Fund to Stimulate Dutch Cultural Broadcasting Productions.

GUIDE OF THE
DELTA MUSEUM

Well, that's how I understand it: of course we're not so very young anymore and have experienced that flood, and then we saw what wind and water can bring about. And nothing was the work of human hands. But now, especially here at the Haringvliet locks, we sometimes see so much refuse in the water, that we say: now THE DANGER DOESN'T COME FROM THE SEA, BUT NOW THE DANGER COMES FROM THE LAND.

Because it still hasn't dawned on everybody that we are toying with the environment. We are just throwing much too much refuse, but also much too much dangerous refuse, into the water. And now the people who live here with wind and water don't only think of sea and beach and wind, and not of storm either, but mainly of that refuse. Where do we end up with that?

Because our rivers, our ditches, our sea is being totally polluted. And now we don't speak of the flood, but we speak of the disaster caused by people.

INTERVIEWER What was it like here in '53?

GUIDE

Well, we didn't know of course what was going to happen. We waited with fear, and as people who are used to living here, we had often see and heard the wind and the water. But then the Haringvliet here on the island of Goeree Overflakkee filled up completely and also the Grevelingen. Both sea arms penetrated right into the land and met up further on where now the Volkerak has been built. The sea demolished the dikes and then the land was flooded. And here at Stellendam we're actually only on a narrow strip of the island of Goeree Overflakkee and the sea carried off everything and everyone it came across.

(FILMMUSIC)

(SOUNDTRACK OF FILM –STORM)

NEWS READER We bring you an extra bulletin of the radio news service. In various places in western parts of the country a state of emergency has arisen because of abnormally high waterlevels.
Varying reports have reached us so far from places along the coasts of the islands of South Holland and Zeeland. The first report was received between four and half past four in the morning from Zwijndrecht, where the state of emergency has been declared. The water was breaking over the dikes. Following reports of fifteen minutes ago, the situation is critical. An all-out effort is made to reinforce the dikes.

FILM PRESENTER That was the news on Sunday 1 February 1953 which woke up the Dutch people with a shock. At that time the storm was already raging in all its fury and no one was actually able to visualize what had happened that night and what was still to happen later. The water was rising. The people laboured at the dikes, which had to be saved at all costs. However without success. An enormous flood poured forth across the islands of South Holland, Zeeland and West Brabant.

(SOUND OF STORM)

NEWS READER We bring you further reports. The flood that was caused in our country during the night and early morning, has reached the extent of national disaster. Unfortunately, during the last few hours news has reached us not only about dikes bursting and floodings, but also about victims. Various polders have been or are now being flooded. The general situation is still very confused. People on their way at the time the dikes were breaking, were caught by the water. Others are sitting in the upper storeys of their houses or even in the trees. They had hardly any time to flee to their attics.

(MUSIC)

PRESENTER The backbone of the Haringvliet locks is formed by Nabla girders. These are enormous concrete isosceles triangles which stand upside down. Inside each girder we find four other pyramid shapes: in the centre one pyramid pointing towards the horizon, the symbol of the male element FIRE, and three more pyramids upside down, the symbol of the female element WATER. The FIRE is surrounded by WATER.

NARRATOR I'm tired. Blood is rushing to my head. When I close my eyes I can feel it better. I open my eyes. The rain has stopped.

The clock ticks louder and louder. I must throw away the clock.
I can't sit any longer. The pillow is hard. I get up. My arms feel heavy.

Music maybe. I go to the amplifier. Press the button. The balance regulator is not in the middle. Okay, that's right. Put the tuner on. I've forgotten the tuner amplifier. Go to it. Put it on. The plug is in the socket. I don't hear anything. The plug is alright. Tuner? The aerial is not connected. I used it for the TV yesterday. Don't feel like getting the aerial from below. All right, no radio. A record instead. But what? Jazz again? Something quiet. Classical, no ... look around ... a compact disc doesn't have to be turned round ... let's see, mmmmmmm, I know this, don't feel like it.

I'm tired. Put off all apparatus. The rain is ticking against the window again. Close your eyes. It won't work. It's not right yet You can't just sit there can you? My back hurts. From sitting down all the time. That's no good either.

I slip forward on the chair. The chair topples, the cushion is too slippery.

I can't keep sitting here. Must do something, what? Where's the cat? He is lying below. Sleeps all day.

I'll go down anyway. Be careful, the stairs are steep. Go left. Living room, it's dark. Put the light on. Switch on the telly. Lie down. Where's the cushion? Yes ... that's fine. Let's see. I don't hear anything. The headphone is still plugged in. Much too loud like this.

Nederland 1, a quiz, another one, those people!! Sound down.

Where's the remote control? Ah ... there on the table. Lie down ...that's right.

Let's see, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Pity this set is so old. Only eight channels. Just have to choose a channel myself. Got to get up again. No, a video recorder would be nice. Means you never get to bed at all, you'd just lie there.

There's nothing on TV today. Where's the Radio Times? There, no, that's it, yesterday Gerda put it with the old newspapers. Did she water the flowers? Get up. I put the TV off at once. All rubbish. Cat, shut up. Is your food finished? See to the plants first. Oh shut up you, you've got everything. What more do you want? Stupid animal. Bored I suppose.

Give some water, go back to the living room. Shall I lie down again? I'm so tired. You only get more tired when you lie down. Maybe the fresh air will do me good. Is it still raining? Open the front door. It's raining.

Quick to the car. Cap on, coat on. Where's the key? Ah, yes, here, in my pocket. Okay. Close the door.

How wet it is. just a shower. Won't last long. Walk. The car at last.

Open the door, sit, close the door. Thank God, I'm dry in here. Turn the key. It gets stuck again. Steering wheel lock again. Start engine, clutch, first gear, there we go.

PRESENTER

The pyramid is a geometric figure, which is brought about by connecting the angles of a rectangle in the plane with one point outside the plane.

The content of a pyramid equals one third of the length (of the plane) times the width (of the plane) times the height (is the point where the lines meet outside the plane).

Like every pyramid, the Cheops pyramid has a square base. With a side of 232, 805 meters, the height was originally 148, 08 meters.

The base, i.e the equilateral rectangle, is 366 yards. The 366 yards are based on the standard measure, the sacred yard, which equals 1,728 feet. 366 yards stand for the number of days of a leap year.

When multiplying the sacred yards of the Egyptians by 10.000, we arrive at the value 100 meters. This corresponds with the centre of the polar circle as calculated by our scientists.

The circumcircle of the four sides of the pyramid base is 931,22 meters. Dividing this number by the double height, we get the calculating value $(\pi) = 3,1416$.

When the ratio of the circumcircle of the pyramid to the double height amounts to 3,1416, the four sides of the monument should form an angle with the base of 51 51'.
AND, SO IT IS.

The height of a pyramid equals the square of the root of the surface area of a pyramid side.

NARRATOR

I can't manage to get out of the parking space in one go, because someone has hemmed me in.

Let's see, no more cyclists? Okay.
Second gear, clutch, step on the gas, indicator on, look if no one is coming. No one is. Fine.

Pfff, the heat. Something's rattling inside the car.
Someone is crossing the road.
First gear. Red.
The engine has conked out. The engine is much too cold anyway. Start, first gear, clutch.
It isn't good to keep the clutch pedal down all the time. I'm glad I'm not on the bike. This is slow. This is much too slow.

Window open, the heat! I can't go any further here.

Well, second gear, clutch, close window because there's a draught. That's one stationary.

The birds fly much lower too because of the heat.

Oh, I see, he's determined to cross, must be blind or something.

Here it becomes four lanes. Every time you think it's four lanes, it gets narrower again.

I say, just ran over a milk carton.

It stinks here. It's not the car, is it? 50 kilometres the absolute limit.

Jolly good system, I must say: there's only one man at the traffic lights pressing the button and ten cars have to stop.

Not very efficient really. Ah well, it's all right for that man though.

A hitchhiker to Wageningen. Now I have to watch out for the exit. Straight on here.

That one's from Switzerland. Vaduz, Lichtenstein.

Throw my cigarette butt out of the car. He doesn't have to pay taxes the lucky dog. A number plate like that is invaluable.

Ah, there's the sign. Utrecht 57 kilometres, to the motorway.

Brake, accelerator, indicator to the right. Accelerator, meticulously registered.

Something's rattling again in the back. I must get rid of that junk one day.

They all have their lights on, those blind people. A green tunnel. What a pity it's gone already. At last we're getting to the four lane motorway.

Traffic lights again I'm afraid.

Okay, left. Red.

Dutch asparagus, spare ribs, as much as you want. The sign belongs to that restaurant.

PRESENTER

"The intersection of the Meridian in proportion to the surface area of the pyramid base equals (π)". Abbé Moreau says: "AND, SO IT IS".

We do not in fact know the exact height of the Cheops pyramid.

So we have to base ourselves on the Pyramidion, the little golden pyramid that stood as a spire on top of the big pyramid.

The length of the equator equals: the height of the Pyramidion multiplied by the height of the total pyramid, multiplied by 10 to the power of 5.

To calculate the distance from the surface of the earth to the centre of the earth, one has to multiply the circumference of the base of the pyramid by 24 to the power of 3 divided by 2.

When multiplying the surface covered by the base of the pyramid by 96 times 10 to the power of 8, that figure equals 196.810.000 square miles, also the surface of the earth.

Aghlié says:

"AND, SO IT IS".

From the top to the base the content of the pyramid measures in Egyptian measures of capacity about 161.000.000.000.

How many souls will have lived on earth as from Adam up to this moment? Approximately between 153.000.000.000 and 171.900.000.000. Piazzì Smyth says:

"AND, 50 IT IS".

THEORIA NUMERORUM TYPOGRAPHICA.

The pyramidal family of theorems. (Open brackets, zero plus zero, close brackets, equals zero, etc.)

$$\begin{aligned}(0+0)&=0 \\(0 + S0) &= S0 \\(0 + SS0) &= SS0 \\(0 + SSS0) &= SSS0 \\(0 + SSSS0) &= SSSS0\end{aligned}$$

When we suppose: $(0 + S0) = S0 = (0 + a) = a$, then the whole quantified comprehensive chain is: $(0 + a) = a$.

When all the chains fall within the pyramidal family of theorems, this then also is a totally quantified comprehensive chain, summarizing the total.

For example: the symbol + makes believe that every formula in which a plus sign is found, contains something we know, something familiar, something sensible about the well-known familiar operation we call addition. It rubs us up the wrong way to add the following next axiom:

$$(0 + \text{roughly } a) = \text{roughly } a$$

When we place this axiom opposite the pyramidal family of theorems, we are confused by an apparent contradiction between both.

But: it could well be that this apparent contradiction (let us call it (Omega)) is not the same which we call contradiction.

The above mentioned originated from the comparison:

1. a pyramidal family of theorems, which collectively suppose that all natural numbers show a certain characteristic and:
2. a single theorem, which seems to suppose that not all natural numbers show a certain characteristic.

By analogy with the foregoing: the (Omega) system (which supposes an apparent contradiction) is just as difficult to understand as the plausible non Euclidian Geometry.

or:

(GENERAL PAUSE)

NARRATOR

Yes, Utrecht 55 kilometres. Turn left, clutch, accelerator, third gear. There's a Belgian by the roadside. Breakdown?

What are they, those little green markers? This one says 20,9. Is it perhaps the distance to the next emergency telephone? No breakdown for me! More than a 20 km walk, no, that's impossible. 20,2, I see, distances of 100 meters, oh no, 200 meters. 20,0. 200 meters right ... yes, there's another one. To the left a petrol station, have I got enough petrol? Yes, I'll manage.

Red, clutch, brake another standstill. Ah, that's one of these new cars, odd model. That backside, the rear window, the way they axe joined. Monstrous.

Audio Bell. Another petrol station to the right. 19,5. Parking, another 600 meters. Left goes to ... no, I mustn't go there. Utrecht, straight on. Look at that, the man can't wait to overtake.

Here we go again. Oops, well done, just made it via the other lane, and another one behind him. They're lucky they didn't crash into each other. Nijmegen, Apeldoorn, Oberhausen. Utrecht straight on. Third gear, clutch, accelerator. Okay, now we must turn right. The A12.

Indicator, Utrecht 52 kilometres. just had that, haven't we? Oh no, that was 57 kilometres. Motorway. A curve to the right, watch out, 150 meters. 119,9 D. That can't be the distance to the next emergency telephone, can it? 119,8 D. What does the D mean? 119,7. There's a car coming Nothing coming up and nothing behind that one either. Bear left, indicator, that's it.

Just stay on the right half. Fourth gear, clutch, accelerator. Indicator left.

129. That's not right, is it? It must be something else, I don't know. Those numbers continue on the motorway, but where do they begin and where do they end?

118 kilometres to Amsterdam, that's not possible. It's got to be something else. Now we're doing eighty and 120. That one with his caravan is holding up all the traffic, oh yeah, turning left is he? Of course!

That one has a caravan like a baby pram.

It's so stuffy today. I don't get it. At home it was oppressive too. This isn't Ice Saints, is it? No, no, that's in May.

Van der Meent, Zephyr, well well, at last he's moving on a bit. Got a hat on as well. And keeps looking around, not at the road, but at the heather.

Those have their lights on already. Why do they do that? It's broad daylight.

There's a storm brewing. That's a small weather station, I think.
Air pollution, you can hardly see anything. Light isn't necessary.

Left again, just overtake. I say, that one over there is using
His screen washer. What a lot of traffic in the left lane. Ten past four. During
Whitsun there was a tailback of 35 kilometres. Utrecht 42 kilometres, Ede,
Wageningen.

The bus, Rinkelberg, De Raat. Security and cocoa.

That was an optimist, Adria, hm, the weather is bad over there.

A Trabant from the CDR. No more DDR on it, just D.

104,5, let's overtake. The thing looks awful. Wayside restaurant,
1200 meters Veenendaal.

So many cars. Making no progress this way.

A completely flat hill. Only one bush on it. You can see from the roads
that Holland is flat.

Better be careful here, there's often radar control. All, I'm not the only one.
Driebergen is close by. Porsche, nice car.

The only petrol station for miles around. I still have petrol. Yes, I'll
manage.

PRESENTER

Being is not more or less than not being. The material similarity with the
factor time is FIRE, in which everything perishes and which perishes in
itself. Heracleitus says: "Everything flows, nothing exists nor remains the
same".

The steps of the pyramids are sun ladders, that lead us closer to FIRE than
to time.

The isosceles triangle of one pyramid side is indicative of a so called
"ternary" evolution, is indicative of the succession, is indicative of the
factor time. The square of the basis of the pyramid represents the
simultaneity, the arrangement of coexistence, of space and of Cosmos.

NARRATOR

The ashtray stinks. A system with WATER drainage would be a lot better. Now my radio is getting warm as well. Have to smoke less or empty the ashtray. Must close the lid. Stinks here. Ow, jammed my finger, my nail is torn.

There should be a parking soon now, surely. Mat a nuisance, the petrol warning light goes on. just after I've passed a petrol station. Never mind, I won't stop for an ashtray.
Maarsbergen, the next exit is Driebergen.

Okay, go ahead, squeeze in between. I don't understand why people never watch out for an approaching car; they just race onto the road. And then, when you stare at them, they behave as if they haven't a clue. Ah well. They're doing 120. You're not allowed to go faster anyway.

But this one's determined to overtake, so there he goes.
Doesn't care. A petrol station after 100 meters. The warning light's gone off again. No need to fill up, or is there?

A12, E35, what a smell coming from the ashtray - it was only one cigarette that was smelling. Open the ashtray again.
There's another one burning underneath. Watch out where you're driving, now.
Now it's really started to burn. hey, ash on my trousers too.

Central Trailer.

In ten minutes I'll be home again. Is that ashtray still smoking ? Yes, it's still smoking.

Sometimes I think of nothing while I'm driving. Empty space, empty streets, that would be nice.

Over to the right, because the one behind me wants to overtake.
And when he's supposed to overtake he doesn't. He's not doing more than 120.

Just look out. An Opel from Austria.

How silly, 225 P and R.
To the left, watch out if something's coming. Utrecht 15 kilometres.
We're getting closer. That spells trouble. 100 kilometres. Now I have to drive 100.

The ashtray's still burning, unbelievable. I must make a habit of emptying the ashtray sooner.

I'll be glad when I get out of this foul smell.

Just open the window for a while. I'll dump the ash in the toilet when I get home. WATER puts out FIRE. Put on the ventilation. This one ventilates by the wind that's blown in from outside. The other one by a fan. The fan is in front, isn't it?

PRESENTER

The backbone of the Haringvliet locks is formed by Nabla girders. These are enormous concrete isosceles triangles which stand upside down. Inside each girder we find four other pyramid shapes: in the centre one pyramid pointing towards the horizon, the symbol of the male element FIRE, and three more pyramids upside down, the symbol of the female element WATER. The FIRE is surrounded by WATER.

AND, SO IT IS
FOR US TOO

NARRATOR

I have to get off here. Utrecht 600 meters.
Right, indicator.
Look there, left, another tailback. Imagine being in there.

To the right. Diversion Utrecht-Oost, that's the one I need.
Oh, only from 21 June. No problem, today's 15 June.
We can go straight on.
Strange light

63,1 Y
63,0
Those green markers, surely not the distance to Amsterdam or Rotterdam.
Ah, maybe The Hague?
What was 119 then? We've driven 50 kilometres, yes, that's correct.

Utrecht-Oost, direction indicator to the right, get in lane.
It's starting to smoulder again. I'm glad I'm not smoking filter cigarettes.
There are some filters in my ashtray though, not mine, somebody else's, dammit. I can't stand the smell any longer. Hey, another low flying bird.

"For God so loved the world", it says on that church. I ask you. In red. The things people think up.

I'll empty the ashtray at that petrol station. You see, just when I'm going to empty it, it stops smoking.
I'll be home in a minute. Stop. Okay, traffic light red. Clutch, brake.

Look around, no cyclists.

Stop, red, 50 kilometres, absolute limit. Hearing aids. Stop apartheid.
Boycot. Straight on.

Who's that driving there? Behind that cyclist, right, straight on. Is he looking for a parking place? No.

Traffic light, right, right, cyclist coming, come on hurry up. Crossing over too, sure sure.

This bump here, bad for your car.
Indicator left, parking place? Great, right in front of the door.

Boy, am I glad to be home!

Switch off engine, steering wheel lock on, key out. Ready. It's not raining anymore. Open door, get out, now I'm standing, turn around, where's the key, lock.

Cross over, no car? No car.

INTERVIEWER

What was it like here in '53?

GUIDE OF THE
DELTA MUSEUM

Well, we didn't know of course what was going to happen. We waited with fear, and as people who are used to living here, we had often see and heard the wind and the water. But then the Haringvliet here on the island of Goeree Overflakkee filled up completely and also the Grevelingen. Both sea arms penetrated right into the land and met up further on where now the Volkerak has been built. The sea demolished the dikes and then the land was flooded. And here at Stellendam we're actually only on a narrow strip of the island of Goeree Overflakkee and the sea carried off everything and everyone it came across.

Of course we're not so very young anymore and have experienced that flood, and then we saw what wind and water can bring about. And nothing was the work of human hands. But now, especially here at the Haringvliet locks, we sometimes see so much refuse in the water, that we say: now
**THE DANGER DOESN'T COME FROM THE SEA, BUT NOW
THE DANGER COMES FROM THE LAND.**

Because it still hasn't dawned on everybody that we are toying with the environment. We are just throwing much too much refuse, but also much too much dangerous refuse, into the water. And now the people who live here with wind and water don't only think of sea and beach and..and wind, and not of storm either, but mainly of that refuse. Where do we end up with that? Because our rivers, our ditches, our sea is being totally polluted. And now we don't speak of the flood, but we speak of the disaster caused by people.

THE END

NABLA

A TEXT ABOUT

The Journey

At that time: 1953

A spot, the dyke is telling its history.

The dyke, a shield, planned and built by mankind, breaks through.

A symbol of achievement, science and civilization of mankind: captured land, gained from the sea.

At that time: 1970

A surge barrier has been built.

The backbone of the locks is formed by Nabla girders. These are enormous concrete triangles which stand upside down. Inside each girder we find four other pyramid shapes: in the centre one pyramid pointing towards the horizon, the symbol of the male element FIRE and three more pyramids upside down, the symbol of the female element WATER.

The FIRE is surrounded by WATER.

Now: 1990

The danger doesn't come from the sea, but from the land.

The land behind the surge barrier is polluted; rivers flow their waste water to the locks, where it dries up.

The surge barrier, a shield, now barrage and future symbol of mankind for environmental catastrophes.

Daily life: 1990

A man as usual A moving by car hum A to B.

He takes the road on top of the surge barrier every day; he has confidence -as proved through the ages- in science.

The pyramid a symbol of science, achievement and civilization of mankind: the distance between A and B of the pyramid is related to the ratio of the planet Earth.

At that time

The Nabl is an ancient Egyptian temple-instrument: a harp, a cither, a lyre, a lute?

Tomorrow

The land is dried out. Burning heat. Brown sweltering rivers flow.

**AND, SO IT IS
FOR US TOO**

Michael Fahres/January 21. 1991