

Story for performance #236
webcast from Sydney at 07:51PM, 11 Feb 06



Source: Adrian Croft, Reuters, 'Hamas is offered Russia's friendship', *Sydney Morning Herald online*, 11/02/06.

Tags: [language](#), [workplace](#), [politics](#), [travel](#)

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I do the dishes and look out at the city skyline, Sydney, Australia, 2006. My cd plays in the other room and a deliberate voice says:

To fall
(space)
ca-er
(silence)
ca-er

I mutter in the quiet bits:

CAIY-ehr
CAIY-ehr

I am learning a foreign language.

To get up
(space)
levantar
(silence)
levantar

to rise up
levantarse

On TV, 1988, a man is being strung to a crucifix, smiling. I can see a woman in the background cutting something, maybe rope. I watch this broadcast of a union protest on the streets of Guayaquil, Ecuador. I am in a room in the same city watching the events unfold on TV.

Se levantan ellos.

They will rise up.

The protest is covered by television cameras. The crowd march in real time and there is radio coverage too and great patter, lots of people tell the media that they don't want to lose their last national business. They are protesting the closure of a beer factory. A giant crucifix leads the procession with a man tied to the wooden cross, holding what looks like a beer can in each hand. A river of workers chant that they do not want to lose their jobs to the big cowboys and the Colombians.

Look
(space)
Mirar
(silence)
Mirar

London 2004. No TV broadcast. Outside Australia House a chain of people loop around the entire building on the Strand. The crowd is waiting to vote. Travellers and ex-pats huddle together in Autumn and chat and sigh and wait. There is a laugh. There. A woman squeezes her husband's hand impatiently. A group of young men and women roll up, pissed. I look up at the giant statuary of Australia House. On one corner, looking back at the crowd are three statuesque women, in a Pre-Raphaelite embrace, their torsos launch out from among sheaths of wheat, all carved in yellow stone. The cluster of flora and fauna is kitch and voluptuous. We get closer and closer to the mouth of the voting rooms. Before I cast my vote, I look around at the gilded interior of the House. Tracing the entire ceiling are golden bushels of wheat interlaced around rams' horns and the docile masks of sheep.

No-one notices.

Nadie se da cuenta.

I enter this room in 1986 and it is whirring with petty officials from my home town. One Tasmanian politician, the ruddy Bruce Goodluck places his hand on my adolescent arse and guides me through the room towards the Premier. I have the opportunity to ask the Premier one question on behalf of my school. I have one question poised on my tongue and I clench my fists. The large Robin Gray has Marlboro Reds sticking out his top pocket. Cowboy smokes. He is powerful like a lizard and his hand crashes down on my downy head.

To ask for something.

Preguntar a algo.

I ask, 'Mr Gray,' I hear my own prim little so-and-so, 'why do you have no women representatives in Parliament?' My dogged little so-and-so forgets his fingers are laced in my golden hair. He begins to laugh, cigarette smoke gusts out his nose. 'Well my dear, about women,' a pause crashing down over me, 'my wife tells me everything I need to know.' I feel the crowd pivot. Raising a collective eyebrow.

To blush
(space)
To blush red
(silence)

I hold up the card of a wounded martyr (10 bullets = 10 of Diamonds). The Quartet sit down at the card table. I am mysteriously a player, my legs swinging mid-air next to the four bold contenders on their stools. They don't seem to notice I am there. We keep throwing cards of men and women onto the pile in a warm-up game of snap. When the Quartet has finished for the day after running things, they relax with a game or two...

The chinzy puta-princess gasps 'Snap', lays down a double martyr, 10 of Spades. 'Schnapps' says a hoary old drunk. The square-jawed cowboy says, 'Well I am disappointed.' I stare up into the chandelier and ask 'Did you know that Hamas is an acronym in Arabic meaning zeal?'

To shut up.
(silence)

I riff around today's scrap of news:
'The choice of the X people.
INSERT in the place of X a nation or a state
The choice of the ANGRY people
The choice of the HUNGRY people
The choice of the SATISFIED people
the PARADE of people
the BELEAGUED people
The choice of the X people must be accepted.'

Golden sheaths of wheat bristle against the breast of a beauty. A politician stubs his red Marlboro out in a crowded room. The crowd cheers as a crucified factory worker cracks open a beer. Someone casts a vote. An eyebrow is raised. A man, laced tight, enters a public room with zeal. A woman parrots a foreign language at the sink.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Caitlin Newton-Broad.