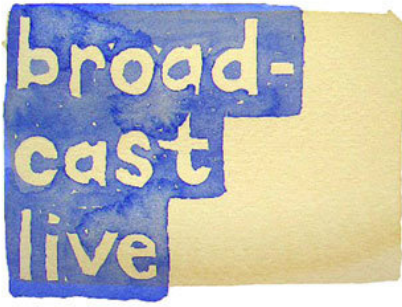


Story for performance #351
webcast from Sydney at 04:53PM, 06 Jun 06



Source: Akbar Dareini, AP, 'Rice plays down Iranian leader's oil supply threat', *The Age online*, 06/06/06.
Tags: [architecture](#), [celebrations](#), [evidence](#)
Writer/s: Cynthia Troup

© 2008 Barbara Campbell and the writer/s

Oblivion and three fragments

Wall (present, informal)

Me: I walk uphill beside a wall on my way to work. It's a respectable, historic brick wall around a school yard; children's voices evoke little scenes behind it. Once, while I strode past her at the wall, a woman spoke to me there. As if we were dear friends.

You: You were running late; you're always running late.

Me: I was sweating horribly, and angry, and the wall did seem to slow me down, as monuments do. She stood exactly in the middle of the footpath, with one thin arm extended to touch the bricks. They're vaguely warmed by the morning sun.

You: Walls attract and repel, like magnets.

Me: She was silvery-old, but tall, somehow both very frail and very dignified; she had a handsome leather briefcase beside her. That day, the proportions seemed all wrong to me and I wanted to be rude.

She was absolutely still, concentrating, then said to me suddenly, 'look, how extraordinary. We might not survive!' But she was glowing with pleasure, perfectly at ease.

You: Did you look?

Me: I wish I had. I mean, I will. I thought later that she might have meant the moss. It was infuriating.

Wall (past, formal)

Me: It isn't sledgehammers that I remember, but the more haunting sound of the lesser 'wall peckers' in January 1990. A thousand tiny chisels were scoring the concrete on the West Berlin side, souveniring fragments of the graffiti to sell. You could say that after 28 years the wall peckers were the first to take—or rather to seize, quite delicately—economic advantage of Germany's reunification. This memory is emphatic. The brisk tapping could be heard through the nervous, freezing air

anywhere along the boulevards of West Berlin. From further away, it had the trance-like quality of noise being made in spite of tremendous exhaustion.

November 1989: the Berlin wall fell in an instant because Günter Schabowski's news conference was broadcast live on television. Or rather his postscript to the news conference.

You: He'd been on holidays, hadn't he?

Me: On holidays, and was inadequately briefed. It fell conceptually; literally, checkpoints teeming with euphoric East Berliners were forced open, and those in uniform who supposed that they could still exert their control were surprisingly disinclined to kill.

You: Of course it had always been penetrable. And—

Me: Yes, yes, I paid for a piece. It looked like a scrap of burnt biscuit, and pulverised in my luggage.

Wall (future, another mood again)

Me: Did you know that from the moon, the earth's moon, and from outer space, you can see the Great Wall of China?

You: That's simply not true. With the human eye?

From which side of the moon? From where in outer space?

Try not to be so impatient, so inclined towards anger. On Mars the sky spreads blue at sunset. The sunset is blue. Not one blue; a regal, rapturous, susceptible blue—like—massed delphiniums.

Me: What does that have to do with oblivion?

You: It has to do with the wall. You'll keep coming up against it. My advice is, move closer, bend down to it. As that woman in the street said, whatever it is, it's much more and less substantial than you realise.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Cynthia Troup.