



Source: Raymond Bonner, 'Letter from Australia: Bad news from Iraq starts to take its toll', *International Herald Tribune online*, 23/10/06.

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It happens every ten years, you figure. History has a major shift, and you haven't noticed. History in the world, history in the house, in life, in the body.

There are some decades you can't remember. But this cycle, you think, you will remember.

You've always thought about what it must be like to live at the turn of centuries. Grappling irons? A floating bridge (and below, a swathe of time). A strange interpolation into two different spaces. You become one of the ones you used to look back on. The beginning of the century will appear so long ago, the previous century so far away.

At this point in time...There was a time, you want to begin. Once upon...Yes, the setting is the past; it's talk about the past. The past; history, so to speak. It's about ten years, isn't it, since the rise and success of neoconservatism?

Your house has had one cycle of renovation, but it's not enough. Never enough. It's overdue for its second. It's as if now it never had its first. Days pass, in routine, or so it seems. Maybe you want to party all the time, you think, guiltily. 'Girls just wanna have fu-un'. You want a change. Sometimes, and this saddens you, you can't walk your front pathway at the end of the day, without dread, without a downturn of the spirit. You want to be traveling to somewhere else. A new residence. A new career. You've grown old, unbelievably. When did that happen exactly, you think.

Your body betrays you. It's not keeping up. It's not keeping pace.

Words betray you. Are betrayed. In economic prosperity there's an epidemic of distress and depression.

Relaxed and comfortable?

It's not like it was before. Sometimes you can't think what it was like before. Before what?

Something's going on, going down, you say. You don't know what it is. You wish it were some kink, some fold in space-time, in the fabric of the universe. Unfortunately, you know that it's something practical, much more mundane, more routine. Nevertheless, heart-rendered, you keep on thinking in another way because the imagination is generative. It's a thing not for selling.

You begin to imagine cars off the road. The death of supermarkets. Walking to a market garden to buy fruit and veg. Chickens in the backyard. And milk delivered...how exactly? Cows on the commons. Overseas by sail, if at all. You think about joining a neoconservative political party to try and understand the thinking. You don't understand how privilege, the destruction of community, the activity of consumption support the heart and don't kill the body.

The great equations that move the universe do not have monetary components.

When will it be time to leave? (Will you leave?) It's a question that, you remember now, looking back, over your history, that has had a continual haunting. When was the last time? The time of another war. Of another rise of nuclear hackles. And it's on again. And again.

The Berlin Wall. Communism.

But the world is a big place. To get out from under the unimaginative. In dispatches from the front, other things happen, what doesn't get covered.

The West Bank wall. Rolling consumption.

One year to change a habit. Ten years to write a book. Twenty years for family, friends and neighbours to die.

In time, you will die.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Moya Costello.*