



Source: 'Bush to meet Maliki as diplomacy gathers pace', Reuters; *Telegraph*, London in *Sydney Morning Herald online*, 23/11/06.

Tags: [home](#), [literature](#)

Writer/s: [Miriam Taylor Gomez](#)

© 2008 Barbara Campbell and the writer/s

She tightened her eyelids against the light, squeezing out the sun. It was the last thing she wanted to see, sunlight, day, brightness, life in motion, all loathsome now. Fanny rolled over and faced the wall, her nose touching the cold stucco, a welcome dark tomb. But the sun rose higher over the Andes and crept higher into the apartment. There was no escaping it. The poor excuses for curtains were old bedsheets, torn in places, hanging at angles which gave the piercing sunlight every opportunity to invade the small room.

Fanny was unclear as to why exactly she felt this way but the weight upon her was so intense; even her horizontal shadow against the wall looked narrow and squashed. Perhaps she was squashed by the drunken comments of fellow nihilist Gonzo. The week before he had thrown her first pages of *Fox Tail* on the floor and that had taken her months to write! Gonzo stood there swaying, saying to the multitude in the Tout Vas Bien bar, 'Who cares about all this, Fanny my dear, who really cares?' Or perhaps it was the intervening week of dissolution where she had drowned herself in aguardiente and strange men off the street. Who cared? Nobody!

Or perhaps it was the death of her idolized grandfather Tomas, something subliminal rising inside her. She regretted not being able to get back to Barranquilla in time for his last breath, but all the money seemed to have disappeared. She had to borrow for the bus to go to his funeral. Yes, perhaps it was that, the guilt, the fear of his ill opinion in the next world, or was there a next world? Who knew? Who cared? Or perhaps it was the discussion she had had this week about cognitive therapy with that psychiatrist, 'What was his name?' the fat Argentinian who followed Albert Ellis around like a dog. All that talk about how to feel, how to think, how to act had made Fanny depressed, and then she wondered if she needed to go to a therapist after the therapist.

More than likely it was the writers' block. She just hadn't been able to face the page. All inspiration had left her. Denying it was becoming a habit and that too fed her fear.

The sunlight crept higher up the wall and was beginning to drive itself into Fanny's pores. She scratched at her arm which was outside the sheets, then pulled the sheet over her head; her thick black unbrushed hair itself a sheet

across the pillows. That indefinable weight of the sheet spread a cool darkness over her skin but the sun persisted penetratingly. There was no other way but to open slit eyes and acknowledge the day.

Whilst ladling coffee grains into the percolator, Fanny had spilt them everywhere, and now they burnt themselves into an aromatic smoke that spread in circles around the apartment. 'Nothing like the elegance of the Japanese with their delicate fingers, delicate china teacups—pure elegance,' Fanny observed and it made her feel worse. She was taking a short bath in the alberca which doubled for washing clothes. It was cold but she no longer noticed and she didn't care to change things. The certainty of her surroundings was the only true certainty of her existence.

The smell of burnt coffee reached Fanny's nose as she had her foot up on the side of the alberca, drying her toes. 'Why can't I pour straight?' she wondered and then her mind wandered to the sensual curve of her calf with the mingled smell of burning coffee. She sniffed again and lowered her leg to stand and put on her underpants and bra.

The freshness of the coffee was like a shot of whisky to an alcoholic. Fanny sipped with intense pleasure, and suddenly the sunlight seemed a welcome sight. The doubts about her own writing that had arisen from Gonzo's comments disappeared. The sadness and guilt following her grandfather's death too. Likewise the depression about her state of mind. 'Who needed therapists?' she gasped. The cold water had washed away the dissolution of the week before. Sunlight and coffee quietly seeped into her cells, the inner core.

Fanny tried out words with a timid confidence, composing in her mind, as she pulled up the skirt, wriggled and zipped it up tight to the waist. She poured herself another coffee. She sipped and squinted into the sunlight.

A weight now removed, she inhaled deeply to feel her shoulders tense against the bra straps. The coffee touched her throat again. She swallowed it all, put down the cup, went straight to her desk and began to write.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Miriam Taylor Gomez and dedicated to Fanny Buitrago, a Colombian Nadaista from the 1960s.*