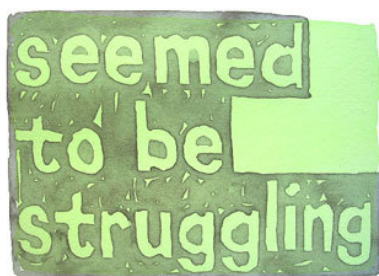


Story for performance #988  
webcast from Sydney at 07:27PM, 04 Mar 08



Source: Ed O'Loughlin, 'Tell them I only want peace, begs grieving dad', *Sydney Morning Herald online*, 04/03/08.

Tags: [travel](#), [countryside](#)

Writer/s: [Philip Terry](#)

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A four-mule cart was covered with old ticker-tape stretched on branches of elms, and in that manner we had been voyaging a couple of weeks, while my ears kept starting out of my balaclava through frostbite. Until we left the mountainous land of glaciers and snow and pines for an area of dykes and muddy streams, of which I was to learn later that it was so built by a Canadian. That land revealed to me mysteries not named, what might in the past have been called the natural detestation of people for nature: the crying of sheep, women coming back empty-handed from market, thatchers with their machetes devastating reed beds, here and there a barge near the road, belching smoke into the atmosphere. Undoubtedly these nothings existed also in my mind, but here they were somehow condensed into one immodest concentration of everyday vicissitudes and trials.

We were modestly received for the time being in a houseboat by a cigar factory. My mind stops at the very threshold of returning there but cannot cross it and the appellation of the region does not appear, nor the faces of our benefactors, nothing except the nickname, Dortolunda, of that little child at whom I looked, about whom I thought something, though how she looked I do not know any more, all I know is that she was wearing a clergyman's hat.

And so it is, against probability, that Dortolunda or another creature, a complete nonentity, accompanies us for decades and we constantly ask ourselves what happened to her. For, after all, we are able, by concentrating our focus, to raise her, so to say, to the

mountain top, and to make her important to us disinterestedly, since nothing emotional colours our viewfinder. This is an essay on one of our lost ones, how she did not choose a castle or a tribe to be born into such and such a famine. There is no point, I entangle her in all that has happened since that evening, thus the destruction of the decades, of the skies, of that place. Let us assume that she married, had a family, then was deported to Poland, starving, infected with gonorrhoea, tried to save herself and her family, worked hard, discovering a dimension of non-being which is better left in silence, for our fabrications about indecency and torture have nothing to do with it. Let us assume that she learnt about the prosecution of her husband in the back of a lorry, found herself in Italy, had two children more, lived successively in Sicily, in Tunisia, in Taiwan. And the houseboat by the cigar factory followed her in her nightmares. Of course, in my moments of weakness I imagine an opportunity for our meeting as two lovers, which has never occurred, perhaps our lovemaking, her beauty, her eyes, dark I am pretty certain, our basic resemblance, of a couple having the same ancestors, customs, hairstyles. We have been giving too much time to what divides lands, in reality we could have been, the two of us, cousins, and it would have been fine, and our wishes would have faded in human records as they fade now, when I have no recollection of what she really felt and thought, except an old newspaper on which she underlined the words 'seemed to be struggling.'

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Philip Terry.*