

TWO POEMS



Simon Carnell

THE CITY
after Cavafy

You said you wanted *out of this backwater—
pastures new, a radical departure—
a lighting out across clear blue water;*
to find the gap in a brackish labyrinth of brick,
canals and stone. All you'd ever done: fated,
condemned, imprisoned in a living tomb of bone,
your jaundiced eye swimming with black ruins
(*how much longer could you take this gloom?*),
vistas of years wasted and destroyed, utterly.

But you won't find escape, love, stowed away
on a sleek liner or ferry heading out to sea.
You'll carry the same ravelled streets with you,
in the self-same packed suburbs turn grey,
always reaching this City. Forget about escape,
for you there is no ship, no route out.
Look at the rusted wind chimes embedded
where the sap has solidified around the wire,
in your hemmed garden's gnarled solitary tree.

ZINZIRIND'OR

The finest household thread
attached to a back leg
of the shimmering

Zinzirind'or beetle plucked
pollen-drunk & fumbling
a lazy breaststroke

deep in the folds of a rose
gives ingenious children
a kind of buzzing

green & gold living balloon,
with a metallic carapace.
The same exquisite

torturers gave a dialect name
to the rare *pal'an cul*—
a sliver of dry grass

inserted slowly into the anus
of a big enough dragonfly
makes a hilarious

“helicopter”, spot-hovering in its
death throes. Communing
with nature, in a way,

you still have to wonder: what
was giving there, those
steep midsummers:

cabbage whites whacked
with a gut-strung racket
& carefully collected

into a chalk & silk textured
well massacred but still
twitching mound.