

Peter Lugg

CICERO WRITES TO HIS FRIEND, MAENIPPUS

There is no ship to take you from yourself — Cavafy

I've left Canberra, Maenippus, to winter on the coast.
I eat sweet fish, stroll by the sea, compose letters to myself.
Yet there are things I miss in your platinum and silent town —
pine resin mornings on the freeway, Black Mountain tower
up to its hilt in mist; lavish picnics in the Brindabellas.
And you, rattling along your Via Dolorosa to Fyshwick, where
Canberra turns normal with vacuum pots, welders, gravel language.
I waste time here, watching well-oiled girls, eyes bright as Venus.
Yesterday I tried to write, but watched nymphs play ball instead.
Far out to sea, love glimmered and slipped over the horizon.
While exiled to a villa in Calabria, you wrote three books —
I cope with exile, Maenippus, not so well as you.