

## D.J. Dowsett

### ONCE WE SAW A CITY

Once in all our travel we saw a city  
which filled us with such wild attraction.  
Even from afar we knew that  
this was paradise.

Why was this? Had we dreamt it  
in the valleys of cockcrow and stones,  
along luminous roads ruined by rain,  
or splitting our feet in pastures of flint  
beneath our burden of sunlight?  
Dreamt and left it unsaid until we recognised  
that familiar, all-unremembered place.

At its entrance we stood exhilarated  
our feet sticky with fallen fruit.  
Stood receiving no acknowledgment,  
neither welcome nor antipathy, there was only  
a failure to notice the wild-faced men  
waiting in an orchard, their thick hands shaking.  
We waited wanting our name called,  
wanting some sign that this  
was the garden of our dreams,  
that we were expected.  
Uninvited we could not stamp our filthy feet

through its lanes of watered stone;  
could not wander the blue-shadowed arcades,  
beside hexagonal fountains and courtyards  
reeking of butter and oranges;  
nor glimpse through fluttering curtains  
a white arm in a dark room.

We waited with our poor dignity  
pretending uninterest, unable to leave.  
By murmuring firelight we raged  
that it was just another city,  
its gutters filthy, its foodstalls fly-blown,  
the hands in the square quick for our copper  
while tongues clattered their usual sneers.  
But we knew we could have loved it all.  
In this place. At this time.  
So returned to our apartments in darkness  
to water their carpets with tears.

Finally we had to leave not knowing,  
in silence, infinitely regretful that  
hesitancy had become habit,  
that we had not heart for the risk  
nor had troubled this place with our secret life.  
And this our achievement too  
for we always had to return  
to the smell of leather and sweat,

woodsmoke and burnt meat.  
To have chanced and lost would have been unbearable.  
Yet what would winning have meant?  
We still hold fast our dignity and dry dreams.  
Our fictions sustain us.

## Wilfred Höet

### DICE

twelve hours a day she sits and works,  
glueing black felt dots on white toy dice  
(and this is her life)

sometimes, just for fun, she sticks them crooked  
just for fun. No one knows

one would think  
she would sometimes wonder  
who rolled these dice  
that were her life ...

but she doesn't.  
you see,  
her mind is busy glueing black felt dots on white toy dice  
and this is her life.