

# Cavafy's Double Helix

*by* Con Chapman

The store was closing for good, and so I purchased a book of poems  
by Cavafy,  
that poet of ruins and tombstones, and fragments from  
disintegration.

In some cases they recalled a double helix, two strands coiled  
around an axis.  
He led a double life, clerk by day, Captain of Pleasure by night,  
bemoaning a beautiful boy of whom no statue was made before he  
died,  
and another, consigned to a grim shop, never to taste the pleasures  
of the city.



He lived upstairs from a whore house, across from a church, down  
the street  
from a hospital—poised between flesh, forgiveness and death, he  
said.  
The bookstore is being picked clean, like the rotting carcass of an  
animal  
on the road by carrion birds. I can only imagine his lust for young  
men



like himself, their legs entwined like his columns of broken lines,  
like ruins.

Cavafy died at age 70 to the day, neatly completing his three score  
and ten.

He loved discreetly, knowing the stigma there is in scandal, laconic  
to the end.

