

A NON-GRECIAN NON-URN



David Capps

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Yavanika Press

A Non-Grecian Non-Urn

Cover photo: Phil Openshaw

First published in 2019 by Yavanika Press
Bangalore, India

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For Anna

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the editors of *Peacock Journal* for previously publishing my poem, *Myth*.

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Omonoia II

We wake to the world's violence
unable to ascribe violence to that world.
Even this small corner of Omonoia is too large,

the one where the graffiti says 'Frankly I don't
give a damn' and further on, 'forever a loan'
and rail-armed refugees camp out,

their children riding bicycles on the steps
of the museum. It's all too large, this world
where children act like children.

In the museum, the gears of the Antikythera
mechanism rot on display, while the planets
turn perfectly in their sleep.

At night we hear cats in the street, fighting
or fucking. In any case, no longer so elevated
as in olden times.

Old Ruin

Imprisoned, we find our way past the need
for credentials

sheep in a fold, the scythe hanging on the wall
ill-hallucinatory

as if I don't understand the language, as the only language
is the language is the one

not understood
may have stood

Alexander

here

or Hadrian

Cicadas

Cicadas divide the city into sectors: low pitch, high pitch, no pitch, much as graffiti or lack thereof—script consigned to flames of other script, cross hatch and obverse, perverse and in verse (ah Sappho, white-handed, singing of Hesperus) mutes peeling violent silences of walls—Icarus, wing-splattered, perishes in an orgy of pale spheres and blue ink.

Fig Picking

Outside, fig trees bend
toward us.

Yesterday's firm figs
have yellowed,

hang like soft ornaments
on termite-deserted

boughs. In the hot shade
of the chapel, Stratos

kisses an icon of Jesus,
thumb-sized, gilded

with silver, like armor,
and crosses himself.

Nearby, Tetramithra trees
flourish under the sun.

Stratos tells me the old folk
say to not cut them

down—the birds come
to eat the seeds,

and people eat the birds.

Ikaria

Ikarian children run in the streets
unsupervised

Ikarian bees get drunk, I mean utterly wasted
so that their small legs look like men straddling cliffs, falling sharply—
on lamb gristle, fight through

to the marrow

the people live long (call it a blue zone, call it
what you will—we thought of explanations for longevity: from drinkable
herbs, to thermal springs,

intensity, diversity, propinquity, proximity of friendships...)

and don't listen well (especially if you ask
for milk or butter)

there's a marginal statue of wings

in the harbor (I call it unrealized potential—take that, Daedalus)
that smacks of salt and twine and wax and iron (we saw a man

running to secure the ship, and Ikarus, out of the corner of my eye)

a sign advertising 'wood dragger'

there's an excess of pebbles on the beach (which we find after walking
through to the airport, foraging grapes and figs)

but to begin here, like a sunrise beginning before
beginning, two points coeval—

the tortoise eggs you noticed, with the poorly drawn sign, just beneath
a layer of sand.

Daedalus

In the early light (I wanted to stay
in the stillness of morning)

a star rose, as clear as a field,
blue light tapering like a shield

distantly. For a great short second
dawn was unbroken, warmth caught

in my ear, a faint war cry. I turned
to complete the wings.

‘I could ask the shepherd for you’

Morning’s blue-grey light appears
from the veranda (I have just stepped out, continuously
unable to sleep

overlooking the Ikarian sea, an urgelessness, diaphanous
blue) I loom to cast it as a spell, to settle it compactly
as the scent

of dittany and sea salt.
Inside, bundles of sage hang from the rafters,
as if they were barnacles

on a lost ship. As if I could walk into all of my dreams
toward the tincture
of goat bells in the hills,

never mind what it means to express
the populous sums of my saturnine rings falling away
from weariness.

Sisyphus

Sisyphus' labor is at root ours: to imagine himself a free man. But to imagine himself a free man he must *freely* so imagine...

The rock's splendid weight, the folds and ridges that remind him equally of home seen from a distance and a lover's skin, must appear at their apex, subject to a kind of grace. When it is such a long way down, where he stands must look like the point of return into which he gazes, like a Sphinx's half-closed eye rising before a staircase of air, as he waits for an eternal truth to dissipate...

It is summer. He calls out a long bellow which sounds like the cry of a wounded animal, his muscles, the bulwark built around his shoulders, tensed, his lungs shooting sharp pain from his heaving the boulder, what will never simply be the cry of a wounded animal.

The cry grows hoarse, faint, but never completely disappears before we reinvent it, as the rolling waves, the sun gone into the sea...

“I am here, also, in Arcadia”

Light-footed through pines (those surviving the nth wildfire),
Pan’s trail

is traceless: myrtle bent in undergrowth, vanishing paths, dryads,
scented sage

wind runs with him, syrinx-labored, horsehair-like and loosened
in the hide

his sharp bellow sounds, his satyr-part pants, echoing like pines
become masts

of ships splitting apart, teaching wanderers become sailors
to drown.

Myth

One grain of sand was milled to perfection, so that it was a perfect sphere when it fell with others in the hourglass, and the hourglass fell outside time.

Yet upon waking you rub the sleep from your eyes,
calmly you rub the sleep from your eyes.

At the Road to Corfu

You say all Corfu men are liars—

Only,
light reads the message left by a poor blind man in an alley in the dark.

The Death of Atzesivano

(after Sikelianos)

Buddhists may talk of lust,
but the line is an extension of the point.

The lake that walks my eyes out to twilight
is a glimmer

in the grain of the dock.
The green reed's sway at night, an oboe's

quiet embellishment to the symphony, began
as one clear note

in a green-billed mallard's throttle. Surfacing
from the water his holy

twilight and sea, they call to one another.
The Buddha heard

as his disciple plunged a knife into his heart;
its silver flash

the moon in a lake of his own reflection.

Voúves II

At Voúves, standing as you take the picture
I begin to have a thought,
leaning to one side as strands of ants form
a line on the bark of this oldest
olive tree in Crete. There, in my mind/brain
electrical signals surged, ion
channels opened as they have always opened
in our species, with such fury
of hunger, lust, danger, the aesthetic of wide
horizons, shade, fruit, branches
smoothed by the laying of hands over years.

Olives

hung before my thought,
whatever it would have been, could arise,
olives, *eliés*, the same word
for the raised moles on arms and shoulders,
minor interruptions of the skin's
seamless unity, that largest organ we live in,
while at the center of the spiraling
branches, rounded in purgatorial frieze,
there is a hollow large enough
to lie in under the ancient canopy, to sleep.

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The moon's reddish underwheel rises intermittently outside
our bedroom window, its light omnipresent as the soil of gravestones—yet the altar,
candles, myth and legend,
that overlooked gentleness, is ours.



David Capps received his PhD in philosophy from University of Connecticut and an MFA in poetry from Southern Connecticut State University. Recently his poems have been featured in *Peacock Journal*, *Mantra Review*, and *Cagibi*, among others. He lives in New Haven, CT with his luxurious Maine Coon.