

TIMOTHY LIU

Athens, 2004

“Fuck the Olympics” spray-painted
on the ruins of Greece, unseen

strikers’ voices heard over the agora

walls. You on Rhodes. Me almost
unable to get a ferry reservation

to take me there. You say, “Don’t
come.” How strange to fly halfway
around the world in order to *not*

see you! There are worse ways

to drop a G. There’s an “Agon” show
at the Archaeological Museum

where I found it hard to take

my eyes off the boy (almost a man)
with parents in tow, sometimes

straying a little as we followed one

another from room to room filled
with artifacts, his body mirrored

in every kouro standing firm, erect

as columns to some ruined temple
I’ve ever worshipped in, one foot

slightly forward to nowhere in this
climate-controlled world, the parents
apprehending glances, myself
the xenos-cum-pedophile more open
to classical man-boy love than anyone
I've yet met in this museum—all
the Tadzios I've ever laid eyes upon
now coming to take me away to some
Olympic-sized dream freed from
strikers' voices and graffiti tinged
with hate reaching islands where you
hope I won't set foot upon and mar
your paradise, but no, those voices
from the next block over return
as I tip my espresso freddo metrio
all the way back, glad to find a ticket
(VIP—economy class sold out) since,
as that gypsy said to me last night,
No one owns that island, and this
is the only life you have, every boy
an island whereupon a man just might

go, not knowing what he wants, only
that there's nowhere else on earth
able to offer its particular pleasures
even if one ends up alone on a street
in Athens with no plans to attend
the Games, stray cats fighting over
a piece of octopus flung into the dust.