

Orthodoxy

by [Scott Cairns](#) in the [June 2024](#) issue

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—*after Kapouzos [ΝΙΚΟΣ ΚΑΠΟΥΖΟΣ]*

Yes, sweet, and very sweet the darkness  
of the nave, and also very sweet  
the observant surround, these icons  
of our ancient fathers and our mothers,  
whose images have acquired a warm  
chiaroscuro from centuries  
of fragrant smoke—incense, beeswax wafting  
for centuries attended by seamless  
petition and praise. Such prayers as these  
yet fill the air with yet another  
palpable sweetness.

So often, the world  
appears wretched, choked by a broken,  
angry and willfully cruel people.  
So often, the world proves wretched indeed,  
and its darkness is bitter. How then  
to mitigate the assault waiting  
just beyond the narthex? How to carry  
at least some distance into the world  
this fragrance, this sweetness, these images?