

## TWO POEMS



Nicholas Murray

### CYCLISTS

They are out in all colours on Offa's Dyke.  
Black Lycra legs; spiked gloves;  
Crash helmets; jockeys of the bike  
That lightly bounces over rut and twig.

They are sealed within themselves,  
Intent, armoured in bright rig,  
Chasing pleasure with the grimness it deserves.  
No time for me, no time at all:

The casual wanderer in normal shoes  
Pausing to pluck a wand of bracken  
To scout the flies; stopping for views  
Of sleeping hills under sheets of mist.

A rabbit plumply settles on the track,  
Its tardily suspicious eye not yet on me  
Until I tread on fallen twigs that crack  
A message of alarm to send it loping off.

Well-being spills with sunlight through a cloud  
That opens like a clam to show a purer blue,  
Glinting through leaves, the sprinting crowd  
Of cyclists, fifty yards ahead, a bright flash.

*from* GREEK ISLANDS

*Samothrace*

Too early in April to enter the blue sea  
We went to the ruins whose keeper kept chickens  
And a key to the stockade of fallen marble  
That ran to the shore through carpets of flowers.  
From here they took to the Louvre the winged Victory  
Which flutters its wings in a plaster cast  
(One more room to be unlocked).

*Aegina*

The fury of the fish restaurant  
And the greed of a fatman  
Licking his lips  
And calling out for another carafe  
Of chilled retsina.  
Another plate of battered squid.

*Nissiros*

The blue lupins on the mountain road  
Are all that I would wish to note.

*Hydra*

I would have disembarked  
But the young woman in black  
With a mobile phone  
And a cellophaned sandwich  
Put the idea in my head  
Of moving on to the next port.

*Samos*

A meal at the harbour's edge,  
Mist coming in off the sea;  
Mist on the chilled bottle  
Of dry, Samian wine.

*Crete*

The wild flowers of Rethymnon  
Near battlements built against the Turk.

*Ithaca*

A white beach where I lay in the sand  
Like someone resting after a long voyage;  
Like someone tired by a year of work  
Still running in my head like an angry crowd.

*Mykonos*

The pink pelican has stepped out of a postcard  
For a stroll along the front,  
An early evening photo-shoot,  
Hamming it up, lifting its big beak  
Like a supermodel flaunting herself  
In a public park amid lights and white screens.