

Martin Robertson

September Cruise

(for Tom, Les, Cecil)

1 Aegean

Traverse the beach, from your feet always
a light-path on the water reaches
towards sun, moon,
fisher's lamp, recurring flashes
of lighthouse beam. The path is always
there, and your own.

Tread it... No. No bodily pathway
this glittering skein the light-source casts you
... and yet... and yet
reaching you so, it surely should be
laid there for you somehow to tread it
with lightened feet.

2 Kea Lion

Hewn from the rock
huge he lies,
relaxed and watchful,
serene over the centuries.

Pirates and empires pass.
Life changes and goes on,
hard among these terraces of vine and thin corn,
inescapable stone.

The lion lies, is as he always was.

3 Leaving Kea

High on the precipitous promontory
dark trees gather, and the white monastery
looks east over the sea.
East we fare, and the rock-bound dreaming island
shrinks and hazes, and dreaming ghosts of islands
rise half perceptibly.
World is numberless shades of blue, breaking
to greys, to silver, white. A light wind makes
the flat sea wrinkle,
suddenly kindles
stars, firefruits fallen
from the sun's high tree.

4 Syros to Naxos

Today the sea is milk, milky blue
hardly lined off from the milky sky
except where islands lie
hardly distinguishable through
the bluish haze,
the milkiness.

5 Occultation of Jupiter

Above the dark harbour the crescent moon,
and just beside her bright Jupiter.
We watch them move
slowly, inevitably, steadily
together. At last the planet's fire
begins to weaken, flicker, vanishes
in night, marking the unseen edge,
the moon's dark circle
which joins her crescent-tips.

Then we notice
how far, while we were watching them, these two
have sunk towards the ships.
We watch the crescent set,
know her concealed companion setting too.

6 Statue at Apollona, Naxos

Block half freed from the quarry. God hardly half freed,
adumbrated in the block. He does not heed
precise feature, upright stance. He is here in the block,
itself still rooted in the quarry rock,
the marble mountain. He lies below the face
they chiselled back to free the block. This is his place.

7 Thomas auf Naxos

Squatting on waterskis, a golden boy
ploughs with his rump a furrow in the blue.
The Sea-god, ardour kindled by the view,
the beauteous youth doth cruelly enjoy.

8 Siphnos, Kastro

Stepped and corridoried the town
white to blindness clothes its steep
hill under the wrecked keep.
At the white alley's end you look
straight on sea.
Stepping further on, look down
where a church sits small, alone
on a small promontory
and the sea-swell swings its shock
against rough rock.