

THE MEDITERRANEAN

James Doyle

If I push the mule any harder,
it will turn back on itself, then on me.

I'll be stranded at the highest point
of this island's shoreline. The sides

of my luggage begin to seep moss,
the rash on my bare feet sneaks

a moment of intimacy with the ferns,
a tongue-tied breeze recycles the same

Homeric lines over and over. Not a bad
place to settle down. From this height,

perhaps I could tempt the gods little
by little back into the human after all

these centuries. Such delusions of grandeur
are a specialty of the Mediterranean. Why

shouldn't Neptune rise in its blue robes
again, or its green rays sort through

the drowned for new heroes? The mule
tugs at me. Now he is impatient, wants

to start down. I have to agree. One
deserted hilltop, neither tall enough

nor important enough to have a name,
and I want to construct a homemade

Parthenon out of stray rocks and even
strayer brain cells. What else, looking

out on the sea that centered the known world,
on Odysseus windsurfing off Calypso's isle?

