

ETEL ADNAN
SEA and FOG



NIGHTBOAT BOOKS

The sea ignores Achilles' death and can't be warned, as we have forgotten her alphabet. Space narrows down to a slit: radiation reaches the brain, burns neurons. Sliding into deep sleep, the brain erases all, cancels itself.

In an invented summer the world breaks apart. Slowly, mountains appear... through a multitude of traps set by divinities. Are these beings still among us? Sometimes they are.

For lack of essential audacity, we value misdeeds. Eyes remain riveted on the moon that's rising from the edge of a man's sorrow.

Infinity's presencing – going against the monsoon. Winds sweep the imagination while the spirit dries up. Small memories drift away. The brain – soft bag – collapses on itself. Stripped speech patterns float in the soul's canyons where things are perennial.

Dryness peels away the soul caught in gravity's unconquerable solitude. The body's magnetized metals turn naturally North. The face, with eyes, mouth and nostrils, strains to remember intricate mental constructions. Bones end dust over dust.

Death withdraws from the plains that lead to the sea. The latter turns me into a mass of beneficial water where the heavy bird of heat tests its wings. I'm letting go. The entering fog is eager for human presence. Not a stranger, not a pause.

The spherical ocean's luminescence is a thing familiar, but our energies won't respond to its call; they're designed for the body's penetration by salt, and the soft happiness that invades the spirit when water meets light.

To take leave from the moon and go in deeper night. On its other side, to encounter Being. Spiritual fields of attraction. Immateriality.

The hour returned to renewed landscape. A piece of paper disintegrated, and water engulfed an Egyptian deity. But what is Egypt for the sea? Or Syria? They, lands of the accumulated ferocious secretions that we name history, for lack of a better word.

I have not seen war, by being in it, and missed the Pacific's advancing pyramidal waves by living nearby. Love went astray, an animal, a wind.

Some people give their lives for a boat, others would rather swim. And what about the corpses that sharks feast on? Did the belief in resurrection rise from the repetition of the kind of innocence that water induces in the body?

Late afternoon. Such apprehension, such madness! Is the sea aware that her heroic beauty may be in disuse, someday? The moon never experienced the sinking of empires that she witnessed; day after day, she longs for a shimmering heat.

As for you, you will not hear but spin around your own axis, cross your limbs within a circle; the dizzying sense of immortality will floor you and make you find and lose what you had already lost and kept.

Water's iridescence is language. An exchange of blood endangers our arteries for this salt, this oil. A privilege. Brown stains line the sea as she furiously breaks herself against the coast's tormented rocks. 'I', lighthouse waiting for storms.

The sea's instincts collaborate with ours to create thinking. Our thoughts come and go, in birth and evanescence. We feel we own them but we're the ones to belong to the radiations that they are, lighter than fog, but endearing in their unreliability...

Massive clouds break up to uncover other skies where no divine order betrays its existence. Waves are gentle with the sun's early rays. Traces of melted copper line the shore. We will not die.

Sea's Passion. Ophelia no longer woman, Medea submerged in blood. Luminous beams shed light on the humiliation. The sea has no arms to uplift the sky. Planets are forbidden islands, still forbidden.

Elemental sounds. Always alive, this seamless livid creature. But what is life? A scintillation? On a clear day a different kind of clarity starts to be lacking. We face the river.

On these walls that surge, building impregnable fortresses, then collapse suddenly, in fierce light, and rise further down, in similar though not similar repetition.

And this erratic edge called restless tide changes its geometry, and with urgent, terrifying power, covers the flat rocky formations that were here and are no more, when waters and foam are so icy that the spine calls for mercy.

Towards the evening, there's pain, turbulence, fever. Cafés remain open. Currents circulate freely. The Sea of Cortes has exact knowledge. Its fire is subsumed as water. An encounter with it can happen anytime, as the heat would be there.

Nothing is grounded. Large stretches of land cover secret mobility. Underground floods erupt, expressing anger. The world is essentially mute. In the obscurity of one's brain the ocean roars a triumph.

The sea is not having nightmares about the Milky Way. Coppery clouds descend through a passage down to the coast. The hills loom in a steely blue color that can slay the heart by its beauty.

We're spending a life loving it exclusively because we couldn't change the world. Blinded by its light, our retinas rest on its epidermis, follow its ripples. Its assaults are mercurial, its nights, impenetrable. Voices speak of a species which is wounded. Space is not some abstract notion but our own dimension.

Matter calls for matter, unfolding on hypnotic territory, oozing from the belly though remaining indifferent. It keeps us outside its absolute privacy. So where do we stand? We can drown in it, be dissolved, forgotten.

Like autumn leaves, my thoughts fall on paper. The ocean is near, the sea, far.

Insinuating itself between cuts and bruises, its ubiquity makes of water a divine substance.

Geometry's ecstatic powers overtake the mind. Geometries undefined. Not an apology for perfection, nor an alternative notion of form, but the fusion of sounds with light, there, where anything goes wild within change's archaic identity.

She was friendly, that morning, in the midst of catastrophe, her breathing regular. She had diverted us from our fate. Death was pacing around but didn't touch her. There was life to her life.

Once in a while comets befriend boats. In their inability to cope with reality, passengers attribute this experience to hallucination. Fish follow the cruiser.

Soon, disoriented but keeping full speed, a body intact throws itself against demented waters; the two masses, the single spear-like and the oceanic other meet, clash, then fuse their weight in an ultimate reckoning with Being.

But where are the trees, the trembling trees? Meadows in Middle America are on the alert. Wingless creatures, they dream of killer whales. Winds have stirred the tide; that blue surface is arching its back. The moon has reached fullness.

With unceasing movements the sea, having missed her cohesion, returns. The center is about loss. Far from separation or unity. Loss as the price for Being. Being is mind's obscure horizon. An incurable presence seduces us with no possibility left for escape.

A monument enters through the window. The sea is childhood's sole companion, it says. To understand her – or any object, mental or material – one has to increase one's surrounding obscurity to a breaking point. We're standing within a hypnotic affinity with history.

And what is this surge of the stupendous and quasi un-nameable entity, where un-numbered amounts of bubbles unbreakably bound to each other make a eulogy for smallness while creating the most maddening form of an elusive infinity?

Measure beyond measure, we shift to discover a longing that pulls us toward the universe's destiny.

Thus waves come in pairs.

Love is wedded to time, and revelation is their breaking apart. In one of August's sizzling days, the sea swallowed a woman whose flesh gave up resistance. Funerals did not take place; instead, the sea howled all night long.

I laid epic tales on her undulations to quiet down her belly's turbulent monsters. She desired to keep her tides frozen because of her unspent love for the night. Directions vanished under a breeze possessed by a tempest.

In its eruptive solitude no volcano approximates the forces unleashed by angelic mutations. Would her phosphorescence deeply penetrate my fabric? Modulations of light faster than speech, than thought, arrest the brain. Where's the water of disappeared rivers?