





SONGS OF THE SEA

A photographer's eye and poets' pens voyage through the strange seas of mind and matter.

PHOTOS BY SVEN GILLSÄTER

THE SEA

I need an ocean to teach me:
whatever it is that I learn—music or consciousness,
the single wave in the sea, the abyss of my being,
the guttural rasp of my voice, or the blazing
presumption of fishes and navies—
so much is certain: even in sleep, as if
by the trick of a magnet, I spin on the circle
of wave upon wave of the sea, the sea's university.

More than the mash of the sea-conch, as though
worn by a planet's vibrations
that dies by degrees,
I salvage the day with a fragment,
restore the stalactite with a volley of salt
and spoon up a godhead's immensity.

And all that I learn is remembered. It is air,
it is sand, it is water, the interminable wind.

The young think it little,
coming to live here with their fires;
yet out of those recesses where a pulse once
ascended or sank to its void,
the crackle and freeze of the blue,
a star's granulation,
the tender deployment of waves
that squander their snow on the foam,
the reticent power, undeflectable,
a stone throne on the deep,
my wayward despondency, heaping oblivion higher,
turned, until suddenly all my existence was changed:

and I cling with the whole of my being to what is purest in
movement.

NOBEL-PRIZE-WINNER

Pablo Neruda, Chile, 1904-1973



WATER MUSIC

Wrap your sulky beauty up,
From sea-fever, from winterfall
Out of the swing of the
Swing of the sea.

Keep safe from noonfall,
Starlight and smokefall where
Waves roll, waves toll but feel
None of our roving fever.

From dayfever and nightsadness
Keep, bless, hold: from cold
Wrap your sulky beauty into sleep
Out of the swing of the
Swing of sea.

Lawrence Durrell, England, 1912-



THE ALBATROSS

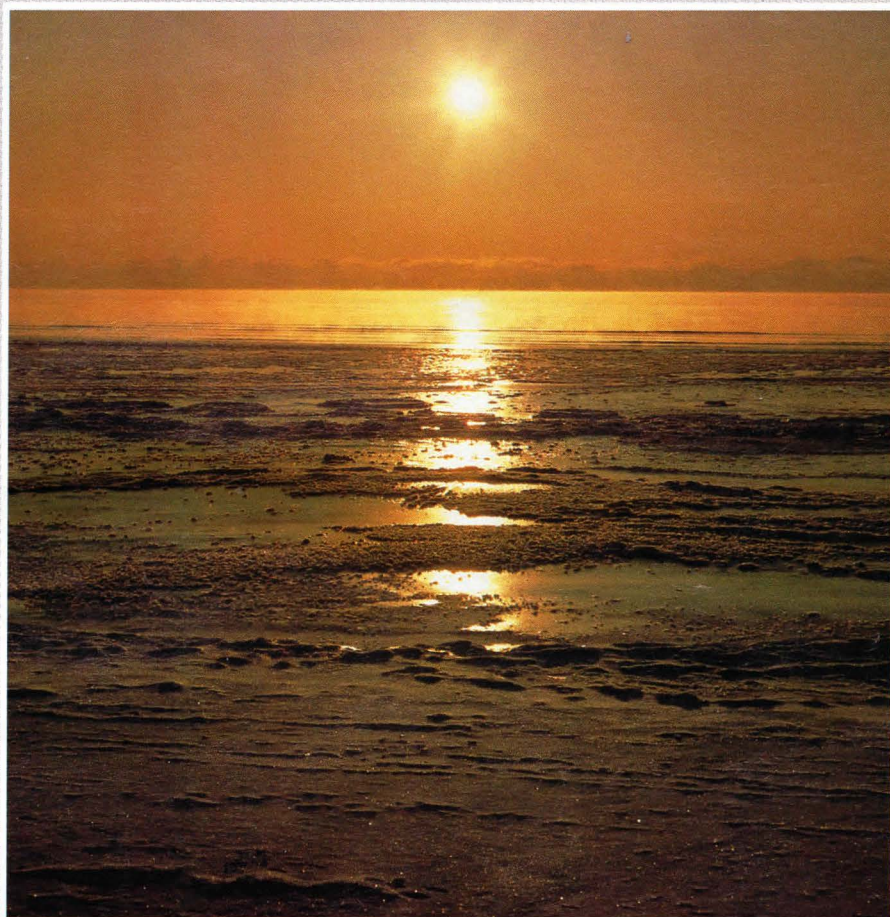
For entertainment, sailors sometimes take
The albatross, that great sea-bird who sweeps
Across the sky, slow consort in the wake
Of vessels moving on the rolling deep.

Thrown on the deck, the king of azure sky,
Ashamed to know that he no longer soars,
Drags at his sides, disheveled and awry,
His great white wings, bent back like trailing oars.

How gauche, that winged voyager, and how weak!
Just now so fair, how ugly and absurd!
One tries to thrust a pipe into his beak;
Another limps, to mock the grounded bird!

The Poet, like that monarch of the clouds,
To arrow and to storm alike defiant,
Exiled on earth among the jeering crowds,
Walks awkwardly because his wings are giant.

Charles Baudelaire, France, 1821-1867



SEA

I have wandered along sun-warmed beaches.
And the roar from strange seas
mingled with the murmur of my blood.

I have left havens in every land
and flowed in the wake of every tide.

And at the bottom of the unmeasurable depth
I've buried my will my awareness
and I no longer know
if the sea is myself
or myself the sea.

Steinn Steinaar, Iceland, 1908-1958



THE WAKE

We could see the wake but nothing of the boat
Because it was happiness that had passed by.

Looking at each other they had come at last
Deep within their eyes to the promised clearing

Where great stags were running at liberty,
No hunters visited this country without tears.

It was the next day after a night of cold
That they were recognized as drowned for love.

But what we might have taken for their grief
Assured us it was not to be trusted.

Part of their sail still floated in the air
Alone and free to take the wind as it pleased
Far from the boat and the oars drifting.

Jules Supervielle, France, 1884-1960



DISTANT SEA

It is not the sea but its image,
its imprint, wrongside, in the sky.

It is not the sea but its fragile
voice,
across the wide world,
broadcast through the winds.

It is not the sea but its name
in a lipless language,
townless,
with no other word than this:
sea.

It is not the sea but its idea
in fire, unfathomable, clean;
and I,
flaming, drowning inside it.

Pedro Salinas, Spain, 1892-1951



THE SEA

I stand in front of the ocean.
There it is.
There is the ocean.
I look at it.
The ocean. Aha.
It's like the Louvre.

Göran Palm, Sweden, 1931-

ON THE SOUTHERN SEA

The leaping sea blows up silver hills,
When winds lull, jade chips roll.
My skiff is a house atop heaven;
Sitting, I can gather stars and the moon.

Great Master Sosan, Korea, 1522-1604



QUICKSANDS

*Demons and wonders
Winds and tides
The sea already backward rides*

And you
Like sea-weed in the wind's soft loving
In the sand of the sheet are dreaming and moving
Demons and wonders
Winds and tides
The sea already backward rides
But, in your half-opened eyes,
Two small waves remain to keep
Demons and wonders
Winds and tides
Two small waves to drown me deep.

Jacques Prévert, France, 1900-1977





SEA-FEVER

I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by,
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's
shaking,

And a grey mist on the sea's face and a grey dawn breaking.

I must go down to the seas again, for the call of the running tide
Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied;
And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds flying,
And the flung spray and the blown spume and the sea-gulls
crying.

I must go down to the seas again to the vagrant gypsy life,
To the gull's way and the whale's way where the wind's like
a whetted knife;
And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing fellow-rover,
And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long trick's over.

John Masefield, England, 1878-1967