

## Adam Zagajewski

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### *The Sea*

Shimmering among boulders, deep blue at noon,  
ominous when summoned by the west wind,  
but calm at night, inclined to make amends.

Tireless in small bays, commanding  
countless hosts of crabs who march sideways  
like damp veterans of the Punic Wars.

At midnight cutters sail from port: the glare  
of a single light slices the darkness,  
engines quake.

At the beach near Cefalù, in Sicily, we saw  
countless heaps of trash, boxes, condoms,  
cartons, a faded sign reading “Antonio.”

In love with the earth, always drawn to shore,  
sending wave after wave—and each dies  
exhausted, like a Greek courier.

At dawn only whispers can be heard,  
the low mumble of pebbles cast on sand  
(sensed even in the fishing town’s small square).

The Mediterranean, where gods swam,  
and the frigid Baltic, which I entered,  
a skinny, trembling, twenty-year-old eel.

In love with the earth, entering its cities, in Stockholm,  
Venice, listening to tourists laugh and chatter  
before returning to its dark, immobile source.

Your Atlantic, busy building white dunes,  
and the shy Pacific hiding in the depths.

Light-winged gulls.  
The last sailing ships, white canvas  
billowing on crosses.

Slim canoes are manned by watchful hunters,  
the sun rises in uttermost silence.

Gray Baltic,  
Arctic Ocean, mute,  
Ionian Sea, the world's origin and end.

*Translated from the Polish by Clare Cavanagh*