

**JEAN-MICHEL MAULPOIX**

**SEA-BITTERNESS**

**TRANSLATED BY YASMINE SEALE**

The sea awaits her span, hunts her waters, longs for blue, spits and snaps, holds out and caves when her crust, her shell break, and the brittle slate of her steeples, and all the glasses she emptied and flung behind the thickets.

The sea lisps at evening and pills, falls asleep with her head in her arms, a fearful child, combing the calm night for thoughts of dawn and thrill, a little more wine, wind and brightness, a little unremembered relief.

Her fat machine's heart falls to pieces in her blue, her bondage begs its salary of salt: a few drops, a bit of bread, such meagre spoils, not even enough to sail away after so many waves stirred for so long.

She burns to throw off the sky that steers her, now flattering, now stern: oh for those wings she lacks, that horizon everywhere at hand! Will she ever see her own day break, in the half-light of a woman's name?

She has no body, no flesh of her own: she is back from nowhere and speaks all wrong, she dreams of other things, speaks and dreams of unnamed things: why ever not say that time at noon stops at the bottom of a lake?

They say that blue beads under her eyelid: they call her crazy, she loses heart, dreams for nothing of branches and roots, slumped on some leather case at the end of the beach where no one will come to find her.

What is the night, the day like in her sitting woman's dazed head? She opens wide her arms to the children come running from the open sea. She likes to set off their laughter and their splashes, to bathe the bare feet, lick the bright skin.

But living is not her business: she does not tell her desire, feverish with images and shores; she will go no further than this sadness, impossibly lavender-blue, of old love letters and handkerchiefs wet through.

Here she is sepulchre-grey, with all this emptiness around her, plucking death with a sudden kiss, sucking the stone and spitting out the fruit, lurching like memory, sometimes praying very quietly, breaking after a dream the jug it emptied.

Her heart is an abyss that begins again, day after night, the same dark waking day, that sings in the same cloudy voice disorder and noise, that goes on, washing its wound, always moving for nothing its water low on love.