

# A Boy in the Sea

by [Michael Shindler](#) (November 2019)



*The Sea (1)*, Emil Nolde, 1947

**A boy in the sea** beckons forth  
Amid the blue, amid the black,  
Amid the arc hung in the north,

And yet I am so far aback.

The sun in glory sinks below

And the stars take up their courses.

Thus, the great sea traces their glow

On the face of ceaseless forces.

The high moon shines with stolen light

On what should be in darkness deep,

The cold world of this, our last night:

A world that ought to be asleep.

Without sleep, the world will not wake,

And yet perhaps it is sleeping

And this is but a dream, a fake,

Dreamt up as penance for weeping.

And if this world is but a dream,

Then, as with Jonah in the whale,

My breathless song has but one theme,

Which echoes past a living veil.

Like a whale is the dreaming world  
Swimming in some primordial cup  
Where wan angels like waves are hurled,  
And yet here I am, swallowed up.

All things, great and small, have their place:  
The stars in perfect courses pent,  
The moon in orbit, keeping pace,  
And me in the world, born and bent.

What right has a mere man to pray  
Himself out of his mortal post,  
To say, "World, cough me up today,  
Your belly is a monstrous host"?

And yet I dream of waking back  
Amid the arc hung in the north,  
Amid the blue, amid the black,  
Where, afar, a boy beckons forth.

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