

# The Last year and the Ninth Wave



As a final year student in April, the last month of lectures and coursework, change become my fears and hopes.

Throughout this period, I've been captivated by the imagery of "The Ninth Wave," portrayed in Ivan Aivazovsky's painting (left). It depicts the ninth wave from Irish myths, the strongest and most challenging wave, only conquered by the toughest souls who seek passage to the afterlife, and the little paddle boat of survivors that is left.

For me the ninth wave is the exams and coursework I'll face in April, before being allowed access to the unknown. The small paddle boat amidst the tumult symbolizes my hope, reflecting the changes I strive to make in preparation. As the last exam in the first weeks of may concludes, I'll know if I've earned access to the afterlife.

In contrast another image haunts my imagination, portraying my fear of change. The burning ships from the "Battle of Cesme at Night" (right). These are the very vessels I painstakingly constructed during my three years at Queen Mary, now consumed by the relentless flames. As change engulf my creations, illuminating my hidden faults, my effort dissipates into thick smoke. My time is running out as the flames spread from the sails to the deck, panic sets in as I feel the collapse of masts behind me. I fear that I can't adapt to the quickening changes as their searing heat burns through the deck beneath me. I breathe in gasps and steel myself before plunging into the unknown. The sting of saltwater serves as a harsh reminder of the challenges ahead as I battle against the unforgiving waves, desperately reaching out to the blurry outlines of fellow survivors as they haul me onto a crowded boat. *Is this defeat?*

These paintings remind me of the nature of change.

*"Will I be overcome by the changes to come, or will I be saved?" and "As the ninth wave approaches, will my boats survive?"*