

Sigman Byrd

The Jack-Tar's Song

Ship of convicts and dreamers,
ship of exiled lovers and cosmographers,
ghost ship of my heart
sailing to the lands of Gog and Magog,
let me go with you,
don't spare me the day, the hour,
the precise moment of your great discovery.

After all, you still exist, don't you?
I believe this, and why shouldn't I, on a day
like today cold and cloudy and cleft
with human folly? Set sail, take me with you
through Mohammed's Green Sea of Gloom
to the phantom island of Busse
through Terra Incognita
to invention's outer banks.
You, fire, bliss, who send
the compasses spinning, the astrolabes staring
into the incredulous face of heaven,

you who hold me to this life
as to a howling blunderbuss of rain
and wind and foam dismissing doubt,
deposing pain in a briny sleep—
set sail, take me with you.

The ropes are rolled,
the quarter decks newly caulked.
Ship of alchemists and conjurers,
ghost ship of my heart,
I, too, have made a great discovery.

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