

The Great Elsewhere

Owen Pallett

Talking, what's it good for?
Absolutely nothing.
Wrestle, let's wrestle.
You can pin me to anything. Thought I saw you in the seaweed.
Thought I saw you in a forest flame.
I'll fill up the silence with the sound of your holy name. Knowledge of the sea-ways, knowledge
of how the water flows.
Whoever coined the phrase has never had to brave the snow.
I climbed the shroud to the top-sail and I peeked through the glass.
The curvature bisected by the wintry mizzen mast.
The scar upon my stomach, I call it my Flying V.
And every time I show it, I can feel your eyes on me.
How many islands will surrender to the blunderbuss?
And, how long must we sail before you show your face to us? Followed him out to the end of
the pier.
"Don't come any closer," he cried, "I am afraid
Of the man I'll become if I lay my
Life down for a people that I don't even care for."
Face to his face, I put my
Hand into his and I tried to tell him, "No,
I've seen his work upon the panes of cathedrals,
In the sweat of the workers and the flight of the seagulls."
My words were drowned out by the sound
Of the motors and rowers, the ship as it ran aground
And from the trees came a thousand soldiers.
I went down on my knees with a spear in my shoulder.
About face, about face, I swam back
To the Victoria. I shiver with the
Memory, memory of the island dwellers
And the indifferences of the Storyteller.

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