

## 1500 A.D., ANOTHER ATLANTIC CROSSING

The dream-- or was it weariness and wine  
Inventing scenes of gargoyle fantasy?  
Convulsing heart, an ague in the brain.  
Cathedral bells and stabs of fiery tongues,  
Vignettes of naked natives, cursing Spaniards.  
Canary Island trees kowtowing west  
Like supplicating crones, trunks forming arches,  
Hair flung down foretoking the ground--  
That vision loomed so many times before,  
Asleep, awake, a simmer in the soul.

Half-thoughts in swirling idiom, a stew  
Of Latin, Portuguese, Castilian steeped  
In seaman's argot. He wondered where he was--  
Back in a yawing cradle, child again,  
Or ill across a horse ignobly sprawled?  
The Admiral, rising, bumped his head; the dusk  
Revealed his place. His hands reflexed, he heard  
The linking metal, felt its weight and wept.

The caravel was under way across  
A bias-running tide. The bulkheads groaned  
Disrhythmically; he languished on his bunk  
To drain the tankard pressed between his palms,  
His hard-won palm-lined shores lost from his grasp.

The captain of the ship released his bonds  
Which he, Colón, the colonizer, true  
To God and Sovereigns, loftily relocked.  
Let Isabella witness this injustice;  
Chains would be his scepter, calumny his crown!

By day, his silence broken only by  
His iron expletives against the rails,  
He watched the tropic birds dive whitely hungry,  
Longed to hold a quadrant to the sun.

The caravel embraced the blue winds-- his.  
His route, his reckoning, unknown before  
He shaped the course. Now every idle sail  
In Christendom would fill with jealous greed  
Of westward-bearing amateurs who sought  
The East, the scoffers and the scholars who  
Believed but had no spine for unmapped risks.

(cont.)