

The monarchs would restore his station soon.  
 They must! His words would open, clear their eyes.  
 He would return; his mission was Cathay  
 And still Cathay: This salt of Genoa,  
 This commoner who lived by wool and wits  
 And charts to touch Cipangu's fringes, claim  
 Them for Castile, was Destiny's own son  
 Ordained by God. He would not founder now  
 So close her gold reflected in each stream.  
 Next voyage, her silk and spice, her lace-carved tusks  
 And more would ride his holds low in the sea.

By night he made the stars his rosary,  
 Lamenting long to heaven's porchlights, pride  
 Still preened, comparing all his griefs to Job's:  
 And did I govern badly? Providence  
 Almighty was my guide. What choice had I  
 But execution of insurgents who  
 Defied the law? The gall of Bobadilla  
 Seizing private papers! And my house!

The captain was uneasy in these waters;  
 He sought and took his prisoner's advice:  
 "Northeast to catch the stronger westerlies.  
 This time of year Madeira is the landfall--"  
 The only words Colón spoke on his journey  
 Of degradation back to Spanish judgment.

The Admiral of the Ocean Sea could walk  
 The quarterdeck between arrested sleep.  
 He thought about how knowledge changed a man.  
 While proving others wrong, teredo worms  
 Of error/doubt could enervate his own  
 Accepted stock. But one thing never changed:  
 The Evil One beset all chosen men  
 Proportionate to greatness. Take the jinns,  
 Those cursed spawns of Islam loose on earth  
 To foul supplies and water, cause a plague  
 Or agitate the settlers' discontent.  
 Or pour malevolence in ears at court...

Misfortune falls on triumph like a fever.  
 Nor yet is either over, guiding angels...  
 I rally at this wrongful bitter dose!