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# To Christopher Columbus-- Your Fifth Voyage and Beyond

Wilda Morris

You'd be surprised, Chris,  
how many people now live  
on this earth you concluded  
is shaped like a pear,  
astonished at cities  
along coasts of islands  
you thought Far Eastern.  
But would you be surprised  
at the fuss made over what remains  
of your once red hair,  
strong hands, adventurous self?

Chris, it seems your bones  
were as restless in death as in life.  
Valladolid could not hold you  
for long. Diego took you back  
over that four-hundred mile trek  
you'd made by mule when you were old  
and infirm, laid you down again  
in Seville. It must have been too quiet  
there in the monastery of Las Cuevas  
de Triana for a wanderer like you,  
too lacking in honors for one  
whose demands had been so extravagant:  
to receive a tithe of all transactions  
with the Indies, to be Grand Admiral  
and Viceroy and pass these titles  
to your sons through all time to come.

Your fifth voyage across the sea—  
three decades later—took your body  
back to Hispaniola. Did you sleep well  
as the ship rocked on those waves  
you'd loved? Were you happy  
to be stretched out in a lead tomb  
on the Gospel side of the main chapel  
in your new cathedral home  
in Santo Domingo, Chris?

Did politics or your internal discontent  
lead Archbishop Portillo to exhume you  
—or part of you—once again,  
send mold and bone to Havana?

Was it a final indignity, Chris, or a ploy  
devised in your deteriorating brain  
that caused your disintegrating remains  
to be divided—some retained  
in Hispaniola when the rest were taken?

Almost a century later,  
were your bones turning,  
struggling to escape, suffering  
from too long on one side of the ocean?  
Did you haunt the Duke of Veragua,  
give orders, 'til he arranged  
to sail that box of bone and dust  
back to old Seville, leaving  
the world you wanted to govern?

Do you laugh when priests  
and scholars argue  
which is your real resting place?  
Chris, are you forever restless,  
awaiting your next stormy voyage?