

To the Statue of Christopher Columbus, Tampa Theatre

*Christopher Columbus was a cockroach and look what followed him.*

—Sherman Alexie

Always, the artists insist on that hair—  
dusting his shoulders and scooping back up,  
the tip lost in itself like the swirling core of a seashell.  
So many attempts at his same sour bust float through history,  
each varying the extreme to which his turnip head  
is stuffed into that stifling bloom of collar, or seek to refine  
the tilt of the worried, side-long glance of a balding European  
(perfected later by Galileo, Shakespeare.)  
Until tonight, my iconic Columbus  
was the sketch from grade school textbooks: the explorer  
before a herd of hunch-backed Indians,  
his pantyhosed toe pointed like a ballerina's.  
The ink lines so thick, so unbreathable.  
Even the colorless sun in the background is furious.  
How innocuous he now looks among the panel  
of plaster Ebersson knockoffs flanking the proscenium,  
his hand atop his slender rapier,  
the stiff X the baldrics form across his chest.  
Perhaps it is only his placement in the darkest corner  
of electric twilight that causes me to notice him at all,  
glowing in that shade of tempest blue that longs to be purple,  
his hollow gaze sweeping the audience, looking for land.