

## About Almonds and Ambergris

There is a perfume rising off the sea today.  
A scent of almond top notes and base notes of ambergris.

I think about ambergris, a grieve ball of scent starter  
coiled in the stomach of sperm whales or rolling free,

a pomander perfuming the waters of oceans.  
Did Jonah know that he was valuable as ambergris

sought after and needed to touch pulse points?  
I meditate upon these matters this day as I lie

upon the outer reaches of Lyssons beach.  
I think that I shall add the scent of berries now

to the perfume rising off the ocean. Water berries,  
bright red such as those which cheered the eyes of Columbus

when he feared the sea would dip under and that he christopher  
and his colombo in the Niña the Pinta and Santa Maria

would be drawn down to the weed clogged sea floor.  
O chrisobal Colun set out for Cipangu and China

sweet winds swept his caravelles out to sea,  
blessed weather, April month in Andalusia.

Now three ships full of frightened men  
who have crossed that fine line of foam

into uncharted waters. Then Christobal sights  
carved board horses and green branches

fresh branches bearing berries, life cast upon water.  
There is a sweet smell coming off the sea today

of almonds and ambergris and red berries.  
I think about Columbus and how he thought at first

these islands would be a source of gold,  
of cotton and mastic, aloes, wood, and things invaluable

to him, poor thing. That sweet smell rising off the sea today.

May the perfumed tides wash my people now bright berries.

***Lorna Goodison***

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