

The so-called likenesses of Columbus are mostly fancy sketches. As men have made to themselves gods, each after his own national image, so have they portrayed their heroes, and not least our heroic discoverer. The great navigator as represented at Madrid, in the palace of the Duke of Berwick-Alba, is seated on a throne, and arrayed in high colored silks and embroidery, while his features are no more true to nature than his dress. This painting is said to be a copy from a likeness in Havana, which has often been sought for but always in vain.¹ It is the original of the largest known Columbian engraving which bears this inscription: "The original was painted in America by Van Loo." *El cuadro original fue pintado en America por Van Loo.* When was Van Loo in America? The gods, one would think, must annihilate both time and space to make the owner of such a sham happy. Yet a copy of this engraving was highly prized by the late Mr. Lenox, and now adorns his library in Central Park. He supposed that the Duke of Alba portrait had been painted in the lifetime of Columbus.²

In the Cuban consistorial hall at Havana, Columbus appears dressed as a familiar of the inquisition.³ In one likeness he resembles an effeminate Narcissus; in many others the costume and arrangement of hair are in a style unknown to his century, while his lineaments are treated with no less license than his vestments. Seeing Columbus thus transformed—or rather deformed—we are reminded of personal caricatures in Punch, of Mark Twain, asking "Is he dead?" or of a heathen idol baptized with the name of saint, so that what was carved for Jupiter becomes Jew Peter.

More than one canvas passing for a Columbian portrait is a palimpsest; that is, it shows traces of a former name having been erased in order that the word Columbus might be inscribed. Productions betraying such an *alias* remind us of a dinner scene in Mark Twain's *Tramp Abroad*. An American complained that

¹ Carderera, p. 8.

² *Cat. of Ticknor's Spanish Books in Boston Public Library*, p. 95. Carderera, p. 23.

³ *Magazine of Amer. History*, vol. i, p. 510.