

Two Poems

Randall Horton

In the Year of Our Lord Circa 1840

The Ion (formerly the Amistad) sets sail from New London, CT

a sight never to see
somebody once saw—

finely pilfered cargo draped
around melanin men crepe
& calico but some nude—

broken branches
 swaying
in the breeze bodies
they were—

how odd the daylight
at half-mast no valid flag flew—
 a nation
above deck pitch dark
anarchy fore & aft

at the riverbank's edge
 overlooking splinted reeds
wooden houses quaint—

seagulls frozen plumb
between morning fog
 no one notices—
allusions thought some
 what audacity what
if—

amistad means friendship
shall we befriend another

human always difficult
to propagate as truth as is—

it's the question curled tight
into a clenched fist

which became a-why-not-
thing of intrigue here—

—menial wakes— almost
river bottom the keel even
& a dreg of sludge

its breadth (***amistad***
not the ***ion***) held chattel

(re)sold (re)manacled
(re)shipped (re)landed

to own man is illogical)
what lexicon shall we
speak coherent

untroubled a schooner
slicing-slicing
the *mist*—
brilliant
cane knives
raised
—steady now—
along a lag tide

against dawn's still—
the schooner's hull
but not forgotten

they had been men
once before being

(re)tried (re)imagined
mende (said

of trial cadences of gavel
sound & decisions spoke—
opposite a square stern

hold strong the bowsprit—

canadian geese *cry*—taken
without consent (erasure
in the (re)naming

just above the esplanade) along
the shoreline a u.s. custom
house

in the year of our lord (circa
1840—

today begins in earnest
or paradoxical)
out of memory's throat

angelic but devilish
steering wind by the lee
in the wet well
a saga—one day maybe salt cod

mackerel—
coming down (soft rain
on the river) through the fog
soft rain—

Dear Reader (1)

before the cataclysmic end of the world
whittles down to zero, before

grounding out idiot noise pushes
in all motion skin color, before that

which cannot be defined: our terribleness
calibrated on a triple beam scale .or.

call it residue running to the border.
subjective but it is about subjects

(underneath always underneath) &
language. after the betrayal. .or. a thing

of intrigue: an illusion
caught in a soundraft. the recoil

before that final echo dimming the sun
display(ed) for the (dis)placed

more clearly to see at the end of the world.

