

Alexander Long

Flash Forward with The Amistad Before Us in the Distance

“Next,” the cashier says. I step up, tissues,
Coffee, ask for Marlboro Lights. “Shit,”
The guy behind me says, “I was here first.”
He wasn’t. I watched him saunter in, cool,
Decked out in colors I’ve barely dreamed of.
“Yo, dawg,” he says, “I take two blunts and twenty
Scratch offs,” and pushes me aside, gently,
Almost. In this moment, I believe him:
He was here first. The cashier rings it up:
“\$8.36.” “Yo, for what? That’s a good deal,”
And he laugh-coughs, looks at me, lays down a ten.
“Not you,” the cashier says. “Him.”

The present

Has descended upon us again. Some-
One has been displaced again. This is no
Morality play, no history lesson.
This is a day like all the rest, but one
I feel more quickly than the rest. This is
The day that happens over and over
From now on.

I lay my ten next to his,
Look away. That’s as close as we’ll ever be,
I fear. I, too, have rage. He takes my ten
And leaves his for the cashier. I get my change
And stuff in a bag. “So that’s how it is,”
The guy, now beside me, says. “Even now,
This day and age, a man can’t even get
What he ask for? Nothing don’t ever change....”
I guess he went rightly on. The doors whooshed
Before me, and I walked home. I walked home.