

With the Ardor of a Thundercloud in a Storm Cell

By: John Leonard

Our baseline was fog and blur, seven hundred days of rain or without rain.
Both ways are bad for your neighbor's ailanthus, and the sky
became the same color as scar tissue on a narwhal. What have you done
to find yourself in a pawn shop on Sunday morning right before church?
We don't know you anymore, like a sidewalk closed off to pedestrians
so the fire ants can finish their meal of a dead Persian grey.
When the phone rang, I didn't want to disrupt myself
dredging birds' nests out of our gutters. The music suckled
at the air like static and my father's lungs were blinking rapidly.
The first day in June, just before storm season, while his tackle box
sat cloistered and mossy on a creek bed somewhere in eastern Mississippi.
We forget things and that's how we forget people. But this, we didn't;
how both of our grandmother's pulled our loose teeth out with ardor
and a rusted fear that our fidgety hands would get dirty from drool and blood.
Now we ask ourselves if sunshine is rare like a crucifixion or a second coming.
The cross above the bowling alley just seemed off today.