

Dragons

By Devin Johnston


We gathered in a field southwest of town,
several hundred hauling coolers
and folding chairs along a gravel road
dry in August, two ruts of soft dust
that soaked into our clothes
and rose in plumes behind us.

By noon we could discern their massive coils
emerging from a bale of cloud,
scales scattering crescent dapples
through walnut fronds,
the light polarized, each leaf tip in focus.

As their bodies blotted out the sun,
the forest faded to silverpoint.
A current of cool air
extended from the bottomlands
an intimation of October,
and the bowl of sky deepened
its celestial archaeology.

Their tails, like banners of a vast army,
swept past Orion and his retinue
to sighs and scattered applause,
the faint wail of a child crying.
In half an hour they had passed on
in search of deep waters.

Before our company dispersed,
dust whirling in the wind,
we planned to meet again in seven years
for the next known migration.
Sunlight flashed on windshields



and caught along the riverbank
a cloudy, keeled scale
about the size of a dinner plate,
cool as *blanc de Chine*
in the heat of the afternoon.

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