

First Storm and Thereafter

By Scott Cairns

What I notice first within
 this rough scene fixed
in memory is the rare
 quality of its lightning, as if
those bolts were clipped
 from a comic book, pasted
on low cloud, or fashioned
 with cardboard, daubed
with gilt then hung overhead
 on wire and fine hooks.

What I hear most clearly
 within that thunder now
is its grief—a moan, a long
 lament echoing, an ache.
And the rain? Raucous enough,
 pounding, but oddly
musical, and, well,
 eager to entertain, solicitous.

No storm since has been framed
 with such matter-of-fact
artifice, nor to such comic
 effect. No, the thousand-plus
storms since then have turned
 increasingly artless,
arbitrary, bearing—every
 one of them—a numbing burst.

And today, from the west a gust
 and a filling pressure
pulsing in the throat—offering
 little or nothing to make light of.

Source: *Poetry* (April 2011)