

SHALE

2012



Shale

2011-2012

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Shale, a type of fine-grained, sedimentary rock, is found all over the state of Kentucky. Its abundance is only matched by that of limestone, which often sits above shale in the geological layers that lie beneath the Bluegrass. As *Limestone* is the name of the University of Kentucky's graduate English journal, we thought it appropriate to reference this pairing of the two. They are found naturally coupled, and this is the way the journals that arose out of the university's English department should also be found.

Since we began as *The Cat's Figment* in 2008, the editors at *Limestone* have been nothing but encouraging of our goal—to provide an undergraduate outlet for creative writing in the same way they provide one for graduate and professional writers. This is the kind of unity of mission that keeps publications and organizations alive to serve their communities. It is in this spirit that we chose *Shale* as our new name.

This year, we have also seen the incredible support offered by the Writing Center at the W.T. Young Library here at UK. Judith Prats, upon taking her position as Director last fall, saw a need to continue branching the Writing Center out into student life. By offering their support as a home and sponsor to *Shale*, they have helped to ensure our continued status as the University of Kentucky's undergraduate literary and arts journal. For that, we are grateful.

From our wonderfully supportive faculty sponsor, Professor Ted Higgs, chair of the Classics Department; to the outpouring of quality submissions we received this year; to the ever-increasing support we receive from the university community at large, we are grateful.

As you flip through these pages, I hope you enjoy what you read as much as I have enjoyed editing them this year. Over the past four years, as students continue to demonstrate their talent and passion for creative writing and art, this publication has become one of the great loves of my life. And for that, *I* am grateful.

-Ashleigh Lovelace, April 2012

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MARSHALL BLEVINS

Cover Art

*Denotes a coupled piece, art and poetry.

Elsa

Of course, Elsa didn't know I had a crush on her. Why would she? We were eight, maybe, and I sat behind her in class mostly watching the way the light from the large, bright window glimmered magically on her hair. Back then, I would have said that it was the colour of a nut. Now, I recall it more poetically as the colour of a fine sherry. She was naturally oblivious to the crush that even I couldn't name and I don't know from where I found the courage to give her a box of chocolates on Valentine's Day, but somehow I did.

I'd been planning it since autumn and had saved the shiny pennies earned from odd jobs in the bottom of an old shoe box where I knew no-one would look before February came and I handed them over to Mrs Hardy with childish pride, in return for the gaudy red and white beribboned box. Mrs Hardy, a fussy old woman who looked like Mrs Pepperpot, thought they were for me, and warned me against eating too many and making myself sick. It wasn't unusual for me to eat too much chocolate and she feared the wrath of my grandmother who lived just a few doors away and bore no truck with Elsie Hardy thanks to a rivalry that went back at least sixty years to their schooldays. Mrs Hardy's shop was nothing more than a room at the front of her house and on hearing ringing of the bell attached to the front door she would call out from the kitchen that she'd only be a minute, before hobbling in, almost always still chewing the remains of whatever meal was pervading the dim, stagnant air with its smell. It always smelled like cabbage. Conscious of my secret, I blushed, suddenly anxious in case she told my mum about the purchase. Mum, I knew, would demand an explanation that I couldn't give. I gave Mrs Hardy the stuttered reassurance she wanted to hear and rushed out of the cabbage-infused atmosphere, taking relieved gulps of frost-filled air as I sprinted home, elated.

I gave the chocolates to Elsa in the hallway outside our classroom a few days later, just thrust them into her unexpected hands with a mumbled "These are for you". I'm not sure what I expected, even now, but the look of confusion on her face made my heart drop to

the floor in disappointment. I shuffled head down to my desk, and watched her stuff the flashy box into her desk and later that day I watched her leave for home without it. She never said a word about it to me, or anyone else that I know of. Three months later in the rising heat of May, Mrs Wallace, our teacher, on a mission to hunt for missing dictionaries, found the chocolates melted over Elsa's schoolbooks. She shouted until sweet Elsa was reduced to tears.

Elsa moved away sometime that summer and by the time school restarted her seat was taken by a boy called Matthew who lived only a few doors away from me. His family had money—his dad worked in the city, something to do with computers—and they lived in the big new house that had been built at the end of our weathered terraced row of cottages. Matthew and I became friends pretty quickly—there was really no-one else our age in the village apart from Louise Smith who was snobbish, went to a private school, and didn't want to mix with the likes of us. We built go-karts with old pushchair wheels and ironing boards held together with nails that we'd "borrowed" from my dad's shed—he had so many, he didn't ever notice—and we raced them down the precariously steep and thankfully quiet road that led to the old saw-mill. The tarmac had been chewed up by too many frosty winters and swift spring thaws and we ricocheted over the potholes at frightening speeds. I used my wellington boots as a rudimentary braking system until I wore through the rubber, leaving two inch holes in the heels that let in water. More than once, one or the other of us would come hurtling off, skidding across the torn-up tarmac. We built a tree house too, out of old sheets of rusting, corrugated iron that once formed the roof of what was now a ruined cotton mill and, when the tree house was finished, we bought sweets and crisps from Mrs Hardy and ate secret picnics and pretended our tree house was a spaceship. Matthew always got to be the main character and I always played second fiddle—I was the C3P0 to his Luke Skywalker or the Spock to his Captain Kirk.

Those days, though, are long since gone now. The ruins of the tree house are still there—or at least they were when I last drove through the village a few years back. But the village itself has changed. Matthew's family moved away to Wales when we hit our early twenties and we lost touch—it was before the days of mobile

phones and the internet. I tried to track him down on facebook a couple of times but his name is so common and I didn't have the patience to sift through the 30,000 plus suggestions. The house I lived in is different now too—it was disconcerting to see the front door painted white instead of the chocolate brown I knew and the new owners had got rid of the tree stumps that my dad used to use as seats in the tiny space that passed for a front garden. But the field opposite and the tree house remains echo my childhood with its memories of Matthew and Elsa, the girl he replaced. I haven't looked for her on facebook, strangely I can't recall her surname and I bet it's changed now anyway. She's probably married too, no doubt, and probably has children.

It's hard to think of her as belonging to someone else but she could never have belonged to me. It didn't matter that she we were children, even if we had been older we couldn't have been together, at least not then. Now maybe, we might have a chance. Things are different now. But me and Elsa? No, we never could have been and we never could be now. I made my decision, after Elsa, although with hindsight I don't think it was so much of a decision as it was a realization, but the choices that came with that realization can't be easily undone. Now there's not just me to think about anymore. There's the baby growing in my belly and the husband who loves me. And there's no Elsa.

COREY KIRBY

an education.

we are eating uncooked
spaghetti noodles,
digging graves
into the earth
with plastic spoons.
somewhere, there is a radio
playing church songs ;
choirs of angry women
with dead-beat husbands.
we know plenty
about men who drink
too much, who disappear
one Tuesday and don't
come back. what we don't
know is the taste
of hard knuckles against
cotton-candy flavored
lips, the way ribs
protect the lungs against
factory-worker boots.
but we will.

if you can.

imagine a rusty town,
so faded the colors of the
traffic lights look like toddlers'
toys that have been dropped in weeds
and left out in the sun for
so many years. picture houses
with cramping sides, roofs slouching
in with boredom.

think of a road, no streetlights
though the good folks have
complained- have had to
worry about deer and dogs
catching their wheels,
or sharp turns when they've
had too much to drink. instead
this road has trees. oaks and
pines, branchless trees and
ones with so many limbs,
so many arms to drop you.
now look for a little girl.
she has crinkly hair tucked
up into a hat she is pretending
is a space helmet. and the boy?
he is already in the spaceship,
six feet into their favorite tree.
he reaches a hand down
to pull her up, and she takes it.
now keep them there,
inside their ship, where at least
they cannot hurt anyone.

growing oranges.

when we were young
we would suck seeds
out of oranges, spit them
into our palms,
wet and gluey.
on stick legs we would
race them to our wooded yard,
patients losing too
much blood. our nails
dug into clay and earth,
hollowing a grave that
we prayed would bear
fruit this time. that we watched
and watered and read stories
to for weeks until we
had finally accepted
our failures.

ZACHARY GRIFFITH

A very short story about a snowstorm

The moon is cold. There are stars in the sky too and snow on the ground. There are no leaves on the trees. The moon is also yellow and sometimes clouds pass over it slowly. When it's clear the moonlight shines on the snow.

The moon is waning.

I was eight years old. It was autumn in Chicago and I'd never been to a big city before. It was windy and cool. Mom and Dad and I walked down Michigan Avenue. My jacket wasn't thick enough and I was shivering a bit. I was happy. Then we were in a café ordering sandwiches. People sat outside under umbrellas. There was a park across the street and I wanted to be there. I was terrified of getting lost. Then it was morning and we ate breakfast. Sunlight peeked between the skyscrapers and over the tops of buildings. The wind blew my hair.

Now it's snowing and I'm sitting outside watching it come down. I don't hear anything. There is no sound. All I can really see is the snow. All I can really see is white and black and yellow. All I can see the snow and the night and the yellow moon and all of it around the light pole.

And then I was a little boy and Dad used to take me out to the garden every Saturday and the grass was always wet with morning dew and the loose blades would stick to my bare feet and I would kneel next to him as he cut some turnips from the ground and he'd take his knife and slice one up and sprinkle some salt on it and I'd eat it right there.

There's a frozen lake nearby and I can see part of it from where I'm sitting. The ice is thick near the edges but toward the center the ice is thin and there are cracks. Most of the time you can't see the cracks though because there is too much snow on top.

Then Mom and I visited Dad at work. He owned a pharmacy in another town and every Saturday I begged mom to let us go up there and visit him. There was an off-ramp that was very sharp and I thought we were going to die but we didn't. Corner Drug sold comic books and had a soda fountain where they made milkshakes. Dad let me sit at the counter and Mom made me a root beer float. I ate it with a spoon and read a Spider-Man comic. I didn't really read it though. I just looked at the pictures.

Then I'm older but there really aren't memories in between.

Then Dad moved out. I don't remember how it happened but I remember it was coming. He told me about it and he cried and I don't remember how I felt. There is nothing there now only moments. I don't remember it.

I know that this is hard to see but there is one bird I can see. I can see one bird in the darkness and the snow and it's bright red sitting in a tree. I think about going to look at it more closely but when I move it flies away. I know this.

Then we started and it was maybe too soon. But she was so pretty and everything seemed fine. I don't remember much of that either but I felt it then. There was something that couldn't be said but it was there and I felt it then. And she felt it too. So we tried.

Then it was winter and we were sitting in my apartment and I could see our breaths. An ice storm had blown out power in the city. It was snowing heavily outside. We tried to walk on the sidewalk. It was covered in a layer of snow. On top of the snow there was a layer of ice. I wasn't wearing my glasses and the ice in the trees made them look like giant snowflakes. People were sitting on the steps in front of their apartments. We laughed together and our cheeks were red. The next day when I was cleaning snow off my car, a lady walked up and asked me for some money to buy a pack of cigarettes. She looked homeless. I didn't have any money.

But then we were at the track and it was warm and the sky was blue and there weren't any clouds and it was loud and men walked by

and the aisles were small and I could smell the dirt and the grass and the horses and I was sitting and she said something but I don't

holding drinks and their wives and girlfriends were all wearing dresses remember what it was and I said "Forget about it, let's just try to enjoy the day."

And she asked if I even cared and I said "Can't we just talk about this later? You're ruining the race." And I watched her tear up a little and I said I was sorry and then the race started and the horses rushed out of the gates and everyone stood and cheered and I watched the jockeys for a second and then I looked to my right and I watched her sit while everyone else was standing and I closed my eyes and sighed.

And when I opened my eyes everyone was still there and she was still crying and the race was over.

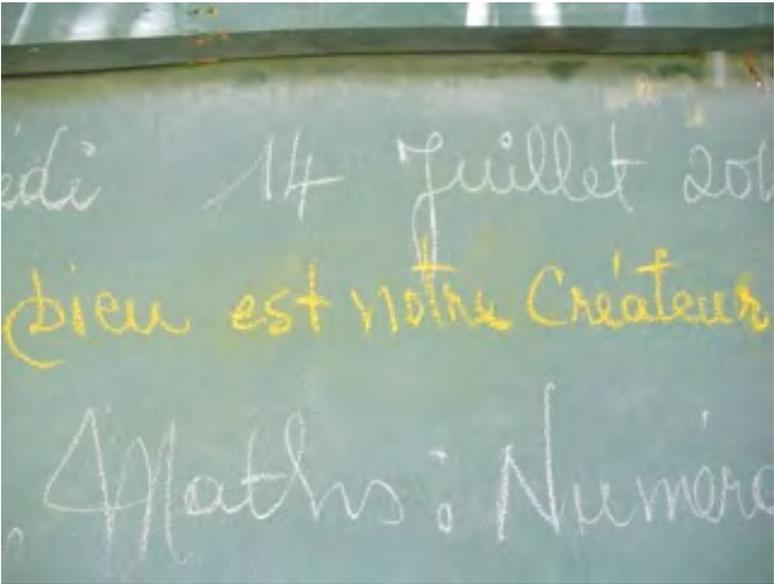
Now there is nothing again. There is nothing but me sitting watching the snow. There is nothing but the snow and black and white and the yellow from the cold moon. That is all.



CRAIG HODGE
Untitled



SYDNEY MANNING
Untitled Drawing



CLAIRE HEITZMAN
A Haitian Education (2010)



CLAIRE HEITZMAN
Faces in a Fountain, Boboli Gardens (2011)

SANJANA PAMPATI



Headlines

At 7000 Hertz -

wishing the speeches would turn into white noise.
Through the slums, the shanties, the tunnels,
forgetting if it is
carpe diem or carpal tunnels.
Like wingless flies,
allured by pheromones,
we are all given the promise.
Soon enough.
Maybe tomorrow.
Patience is the greatest virtue.
Worries that THE MAN has forgotten reign,
fallen asleep, perhaps.
Rapid eyes move faster than helping hands.
After staring up at the 100 volt light,
the thirteen white and red stripes
blend to form two crossed lines:
a punnett square

and me, the recessive gene.

Posterized blue-eyed blondes with golden curls of hair are
pre-industrial, pre-pubescent, pre-revolution
anyway.

Too melodramatic about the melanin,
too enraged about the estrogen.

telomeres grow shorter,
my worries grow longer.

I have put all my hopes
in little quantum pockets

- destined to always want to move on to
the next level

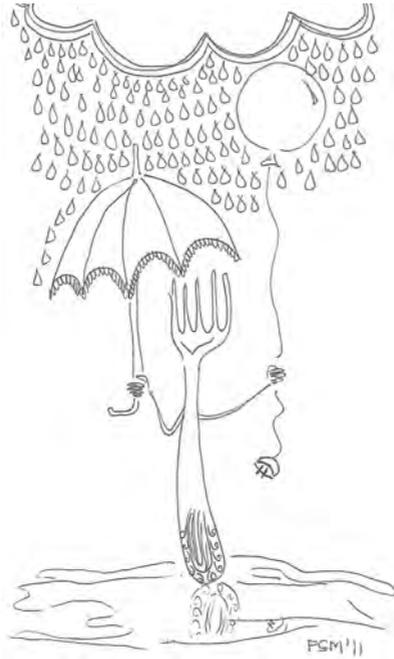
the next major

the next job

the next relationship

until my (potential) energy reserve is
barren.

Affectionate amnesia, set me free.



FAINA MATVEEVA

The five-pronged misfit never lets anything rain on his parade.



CLAIRE HEITZMAN

The Well-worn Vienna Prater (2011)

JORDAN QUINN

The Books

after James Baker Hall's "The Maps"

All those years she was restless,
poring through water-stained books.
She sought out the roughest copies, the do ears,
pages bleached beyond repair—those were the ones
that loved her the most, cradled her head, whose
pages swallowed up her tears. She fell in love with books.
Hardbacks were the strongest, the bold ones whose spines
held the weight of Harry's loss, Alice's confusion, Scout's
shattered innocence. She would burrow beneath the covers
at 3 am, holding her breath so her mother would pass by the
door without knocking, hands clenched tight around to
absorb the solidarity of the books. Her lips loved the words,
a letter at a time. Her heart loved the security they offered.
At some point she quit, I quit calling myself *she*.

I fell in love without books.

I thought I had the essentials, thought I had enough,
filling each moment without thought. I spent day after
day siphoning despair by night, allowing it to seep into
my pores and block out my love of books. It took years.
I lasted for only so long, lessened by one fragment of soul.
I traced my memory to the feel of a freshly baked book
hot from the car in summer, to the smell of ink faded
from black to sepia. I had to go all the way
back to those nights, clinging to my storybook
anchors, back to my stockpile of best-love
and it dawned on me, now more than ever,
that I need those crinkled pages. That
now, more that ever, I need to be saved.

Origin of the Grin

Missing you today, of all days,
when everything is you—

raspberry lemonade left in the
glass that chipped your tooth,

the echo of that single word
you screamed that left a bad
taste in your mouth for hours,

a rag still stained crimson
from your shocked mouth,

the crooked mirror in the hall
where you laughed at your
new smile like a carnival toy.

Hit and Run

Leaving this morning,

*I grabbed my keys off the hook and
all that came to mind was that
the coffee in my thermos was already cold,
it was a little later than usual
didn't matter, I had a meeting at eleven—
and I should probably
take the shortcut, I told myself—and all I had to do was
walk a bit faster.*

walk with a purpose to make it on time.

What did not come to mind

*That morning, seeing the girl in boots who
was hitting the pavement hard,
had appeared from nowhere, watching her as she was before
lying in the street staring at
my 2012 Camry, jumping out of the car to stand next to
the front bumper, wishing away
her heap of tears, I was summoning courage—
with all my might that foremost
I had to show it for her—but my
worry was focused on
meeting with my boss took hold and I couldn't handle it...
being five minutes late.
blew my courage to the wind and I drove off just as fast.*

A Lesson in Conservation

Ice coats all outside,
holds captive pine and willow.
Flakes drift toward ground.

What belongs to us:
mirror blanketed in steam
hot from shower's flow;

curtain bathed in suds;
hair and bodies dripping now.
All are fully charged.

Eyes locked tightly now:
opening, closing, piercing.
Hold us to this spot.

Lips meld and arms grasp
at something that must be saved,
bottled to keep close.

Shampoo flows from hair,
puddles slowly down our legs,
gathers at our toes.

ADRIENNE BRAUDIS

Weak with Wanderlust

I had it bad. I came to believe it was a curse. I noticed it when I was 14, when my friend, Carla, and I went down to this obscure little shop called Sqeacial and bought a book about travelling to Mexico. It told you the places to go, what you would need, how much things would cost, what to do if you ran into trouble, the kind of things to help a naïve foreigner survive in another country. We promised each other that we were going to go there when we grew up.

Wanderlust. I had a very bad case of it. It's very hard to get rid of, and its pullings and yearnings in your heart and soul are almost too much to bear. My case lasted for over fifteen years.

It started with that book and the dreams that Carla and I had of going out to see the world. We were ready to leave the nest, leap from the nest, haphazardly maybe, but we were ready. We had both already been collecting items that we would need once we moved into our own apartment. We collected cool dishes that we'd find at garage sales, or stash away pictures or tapestries that we were going to hang on the wall of our future downtown apartment. The book on going to Mexico was going to be placed on our bookshelf full of cool books, or maybe it would sit out on our coffee table, like a conversation piece, a reminder to us, a motivation.

Then I was 15, and I had my driver's permit. My dad had purchased a Lebaron convertible for me. I remember driving with my dad one day. It was warm outside, the sun was shining, the top on the convertible was down, and we were cruising down I-64 west, coming from Winchester, Kentucky. The wind blowing into my hair, the sun beating down on my dad's balding scalp, and the white dashes flashing past the car's driver side at a rate of 65 miles an hour did something to me. I wanted to keep on driving. I began telling my dad about how I wanted to travel, how I wanted to see the world, experience life...I wanted to LIVE. The feeling, I can still remember it, took me over. It was stronger than anything else inside of me.

I think that I scared my dad, because he never fully released the car to me. It was supposed to be mine, but I had to follow certain rules to get it, and I wasn't one to care enough.

My passions for doing what I wanted to do overrode any emotions I had towards obtaining that car. I had Pete and Charlie, you know. It might have taken longer, but I could walk anywhere I wanted to go. Ah, the passion of youth, never again to be grasped like it once was.

Then I hit seventeen, and I had, somewhere along the way, gotten turned onto Rainbow Gatherings. Rainbow Gatherings 101- A group of hippies that travel from public forest to national forest, living and celebrating as a community. They pride themselves on having no president, council, or other organized leadership. We camped for free, cooked in homemade ovens, held hands and ohmed around the campfire, swam naked and bathed in mud, and longed for candy bars and chocolate milk when we emerged back into civilization.

I will never forget the first one that I went to. I went with Carla and my boyfriend Ryan, and we picked up a couple of hippies trying to make their way back to the Gathering. The guy had on a tie-dyed T-shirt with a Grateful Dead face on the front, if I remember correctly. His hair was long and pulled back into a pony tail; his feet were dirty and set comfortably inside a pair of sandals with straps made out of hemp. But the one thing that I remember the most is the way he smelled. It was so intoxicating- the smell that was embedded into his clothing and into his skin, his hair. It was the smell of a campfire, or one who had been sitting around one for an extended period of time. I fell in love with that smell. I wanted to go into the woods and leave smelling like that, earthy and woodsy, and I never wanted to wash my clothes again.

That was the first one, and by the spring of 1992 I was at another one, and I was ready to leave. When this group of dirty hippies packed up to leave, I planned on being a part of the caravan out of the state, but I needed a plan. I was only still seventeen, and, by law, I was still considered a minor.

I came up with a plan, and the only reason it worked is because I'd been getting my parents ready for this time when I would fly the coup. All I ever did was run to the woods and camp and talk about travelling the world, so I guess I already had them softened up a bit. Of course, the plan that I told my parents of was a little different than the one that was truly in the works.

“We’re going to hike the Appalachian Trail,” I informed them.

“Who’s “we”?” was the first thing they asked, and they both stopped what they were doing, like they we were playing some kind of freeze game, and just stared at me.

“Kip and me,” I said. (I’m not sure if I said “I” or “me”, because I am a grammar nut, and always have been, but I’m going to guess that in my excitement and because of my age that I might have slipped and said “me”.)

“Just you two? Two girls by themselves?” my dad sounded worried, like that kind of worried that knows there is nothing it can do to change the impending circumstances.

“Well, Ryan might go, too,” I told them, to try to ease their angst. In reality, I didn’t care if Ryan was going to get to go or not, because my mind was set. I was California bound even though I told them we were going to hike the Appalachian Trail. I thought it sounded better.

So, after an oil change and a set of new tires on Kip’s car, we were ready to go. Our last stop on the way out was my parents’ house, where they handed me a hundred dollars and waved goodbye. I’m pretty sure that my mother was holding back tears and fears. Looking back, I can only imagine her anxiety at seeing her eldest daughter taking off at the age of seventeen, in a world that had not yet been introduced to cell phones and the internet. The only way she would hear from me is when I decided to call her, collect, from some random place, to her landline. I can only imagine at how she was probably afraid to leave the house in case I was to call.

We drove for four days, and drove into California while it was still dark. We persevered, so excited, so tired, so ready to see the Pacific Ocean. We were driving down highway 101 with the stars up above, two lone headlights in front, and the pounding ocean on our right. We could hear the sound of the powerful waves crashing onto the rocky Cali shores as we drove south. Finally, we turned in to a pull-off, a sightseeing area, and parked, and slept.

I cannot put into words how it felt to wake up, cramped and worn out from travelling across the country, and stretch in the light of a fresh day and spray from the Pacific. The murmurous roar was soothing and invigorating at the same time. It was the first time I’d seen any ocean, and the awe of it filled my whole, young being.

We ran down the long set of steps that led us to the beach. We soaked in the beauty and walked down to the beach to feel the sand beneath our feet. I stood there trying to see how far I could see out onto the water. I've heard that the human eye can see as far as twelve miles. I squatted down to dip my hands into the salty sea, then put my fingertips to my mouth to taste how the ocean tastes. Soon, we jumped back into that little white, faithful car that had gotten us thus far and headed down to Santa Cruz.

Sun, sun, sun! That briny scent in the air. The weather was on the cusp of chilly and hot- the cool breeze coming off the ocean would make you want to throw some sleeves on your arms, but the hot, pelting, California sun made you want to rip your sleeves right off.

Then we found the beach, the boardwalk. It was just like I had imagined it to be, just like in the movies. People were walking around in bikinis and speedos, people were walking dogs, and people were eating ice-cream cones. I had brought something special; it'd been a dream of mine ever since I had started California dreamin'. I took my roller skates out of Kip's trunk, the white ones with the red wheels. I changed into my daisy dukes and a t-shirt, and then I lace up my skates. I was going to skate down the boardwalk. Now, THAT is just like in the movies.

I skated along, a perma-grin on my face. THAT was the life. I was so excited that I had to share the moment, and I figured that it was due time that I called my parents to let them know I was still alive. Oh, I was alive, alright, more than I had ever been, or will ever be again.

I pulled a quarter out of my pocket, and then I put it back. I would just call collect, so I dialed "0" and my parents' (my) number. An operator picked up and asked who was making the call.

"Becky," I said, hardly able to hide the excitement in my voice.

The phone on the other line rang, and rang, and...

"Hello," it was my mom.

"You have a collect call from Becky. Do you accept?" the operator asked, her voice monotonous and somewhat nasally, just as you'd imagine an operator's voice to be.

"Yes!" my mother answered, without being able to hide the excitement in her voice.

"How- WHERE are you? And how are you?" she began before the

operator could even hang up her line.

“Guess where I am!” I demanded playfully.

“I thought you were going to hike on the Appalachian Trail,” she said to me. Oh, yeah, I had forgotten about that little lie.

I was too excited to try to explain, and I knew that she knew already, somewhere in her she already knew.

“I’m roller-skating down the boardwalk in Santa Cruz! Santa Cruz, California!” I said, hardly able to hide my own excitement. “It is soooo sunny here, and awesome. The ocean is beautiful! I can’t believe I’ve never been to an ocean before!”

So we talked. I wish that I had a recording of that phone call, so that I could hear what was said, verbatim, so that I could hear the intonations in our words, so that I could hear how our voices sounded twenty years ago, so that I could hear that innocence and youth. We didn’t have cell phones, camera phones, or digital cameras, and even if one had a 35 mm camera, hippies tended to be camera shy-either from paranoia that you were an undercover cop or from some kind of religious paranoia that the picture would steal a little bit of the soul. Anyway, all we have are our memories and stories.

KAYLA JOHNSON

Boating

Quick winds blew my face in their crooked race.
This was our boat, Grandpa's and mine; kept a
tattered fishing hat and scents of sunscreen.
He looked proudly on as I steered the boat
to our secret cove, where I liked to float.
His tan, wrinkled skin, stretched to its normal
grin. His muddled hair smelled of dirt and bait.
The wind was always warm on the water.
We all dressed in black, and the rain was cold.
One long caravan, all with purple flags.
Grandma wore a veiled hat and smelled of mint.
All together, but all alone we were.
That June day, I felt the wind on my face
as we left him in his last resting place.

KATIE CROSS

An Ars Poetica

Dimples on a fallow wall
or even those cratered next to the edges of a cheeky smirk
like curtains revoked, sallying across a stage.

A man assaulted the wall, skin taught and knuckles skeletal.
Not influenced by persuasion, he yearned to feel the vigor possessed
by a fist
with tepid blood seeping into its panting pores,
yearned to thrust his hand in and extricate the unseen.

Beatles

The oldest insect.
 Enormous snout and smile float
 over beating shells.

Meditating waves,
 wah-wahs from spider-thread strings
 strummed by taut feelers.

Lady bug catcher
 bellows drones, sings harmonies.
 Later he sprouts wings.

Bold, troubled crawler
 mindful of inside and out.
 Imagine none squished.

Skilled Explanation

She shook every available syllable
from his pockets, his palms, his ponderings,
every sibilant sigh he couldn't bear to offer.

She took his autumn
(for no one now can spare a summer),
his coin purse, window decorations,
and he was left with every reassurance
that he stood alone in the room before her.

Love and fear take only a little space.
They trembled, they breathed,
they stood before each other
and between each other.

In the same room, they rotated
at the same rate, unaware of
commonality, chaste circumstance
coming from naiveté, having no rush,
from no need/closed eyes,
from going your own way,
from unsteady ankles.

At these, we are skilled:
illegitimacy, headrest, volume, duress.
We are playing avatars being young,
growing up, being here and staying here,
the best way to wait for you.

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