**Strata**

Daryl Scroggins

*“All stones are broken stones.” -James Richardson, Vectors*

When he heard that his son had been killed in another land, he ranged the high desert for a week, collecting stones. And then he spent the next week attempting to return each stone to its exact location.

*There*—an indentation in sand like an empty hip socket, and *there*—a cube missing in a flowing line of strata in the road cut. But then it rained on the third day of the second week, and the vacant places lost their edges. Water, wind, gravity. Grains shifting in descending fans.

He drank coffee in the play-fort of sandstone blocks he had built with the boy. Looked out at tarns of water in swales between creosote’s faint green. Each lake an eye.

Nothing always stays in the same place. Things move and leave places shaped by them, but even the shapes don’t stay. A life: motions and vacancies.

Is a stone lifted from a streambed and thrown into a bare field *different?* Planets are made of melded collisions. All bone worried by heat.

Only different if questioned: *How did this come to be here?* But questions lose their own edges, and answers become sediment.

Then he hears his name being called, at intervals, at different distances. Followed by the phrase *Are you there? Are you there…?* The ring of her voice in cool morning air. And though it had seemed nothing in him could move again, he feels himself being lifted. He brushes sand from his sleeves and jeans. Raises his hand into a wave.