

New Poetry by Scott Hughes: “Still”



THE FAULT LINES / *image by Amalie Flynn*

STILL

I never thought of you
as a hopeless romantic; this was news to me.
Are you still meditating? Meditate
on this:
You can take the Mulholland Highway across
the ridges of two counties
and stay high a long time.

We parked there once in your subcompact
in love and unconfined.

From the afternoon shade of a scrub oak
I remember the ridge route home,
the silhouettes of Point Dume and your profile
in the afterglow.

Since then I have been a jack of all trades
and a master of nothing:
unremarkable, unsubstantial, undignified;
unresolved, unremembered, unconceivable;
unqualified, unpublished, unreadable.

I looked for you in the county beach campgrounds
where you went with surfers from your high school.
I looked for you in all the places I heard you were in love.
I looked for you where rumors sent me.
I looked for you in the hills of Northridge
where we walked around the fault lines.
I looked for you among the barstools
from Venice to Ventura.
I looked for you in old Beach Boys songs.
I looked for you in stacks of photographs.
I looked for you in the bottom of a glass.
I looked for you stranded after a concert.
I looked for you at the Spahn Ranch.
I looked for you in the bittersweet words in books.
I looked for you in unsold manuscripts.
I looked for you in the margins of old college notes.
I looked for you in every woman who looked at me.
I looked for you in dharma talks.
I looked for you in shrines.
I looked for you in my next life.

I don't think my karma is right.

Forty years on the hard roads of two counties
and I am

still.