

Bhoireann, A Stony Place

My five-year-old son and I hop out
of the rental car, tighten our hoods, hold
hands against the wind. On the shale—thin
panes of flagstone, eroded farren—we tiptoe
and peer into grykes to see how far down
cracks open up the earth. By this trip
to Ireland, he's stopped asking for a brother
or sister but coos to strangers' babies bouncing
by in prams. Under a blue sky roughed
with clouds, we tiptoe; plates of slate-colored
rock move under our heels. Between two
limestone sheets, he finds a snail's shell.
Navy blue and ochre, its hues unnatural,
as if someone daubed the coin-sized spiral
with a paintbrush. No one's home right
now, he says. No one will be, I say, folding
my fingers over it and slipping it into my pocket.
We step, our feet steady on the shifting rock.