



granular disintegration

She wants to say something and then reconsiders. Already too much has been said. Words rinse off pages and slide down storm drains to the sea and pop like bubbles out of texts and float in cinders above cities and sublimate out of media files and bind themselves to her skin and coat her lungs and cross the blood-brain barrier and lodge in her synapses, as immortal as microplastics, filling every void and turning the otherwise real into particulate, chumlike soup. The soup is loud. It is gritty and tastes of ink. She wants it gone. Oh, says her friend Phoebe, trying to be helpful, you should do erasures, they're fun. Thought experiment: obliterate conjunctions, leave only punctuation, tweezer away all vowels, blackmail the adverbs. She sees how it will end, in defeat, the combinatorial ferocity of the alphabets defying her ice pick. She considers her library and knows she will have to burn it. And then the books are history, an infinite, smoking heap. She puts rocks on the shelves. They speak without speaking of a time before and seventy times seven times before. The future is in this music. She holds each one in her hand and listens until she can hear its deep sigh. Like sand sifting a little bit in wind.

: a type of weathering consisting of grain-by-grain breakdown of rock masses composed of discrete mineral crystals, esp. of coarse-grained rocks (such as granite, gneiss, sandstone, and conglomerate), occurring in regions of great temperature extremes.



fissure vein

“I myself consider that in most cases there must have been in the composition of the rock itself some peculiar affinity for the materials held in solution by the percolating waters, which induced, or at least precipitated, a chemical interchange between the two.” — S. F. Emmons, *On the Origin of Fissure Veins*

The crack starts somewhere in your gritty, cemented-together soul. A stress fracture, maybe, like the kind that stings when you run, so you give up running and spend your evenings instead reading everything you can find by Paul Tillich in translation. Or that hairline break in the top of your foot you convince yourself is only a sprained ankle until you wind up in the ER a week later, unable to walk, apologizing to the nurses for your corporeality. But the rift is different. You know exactly when that happened, winter, school morning, eighth grade, clock radio clicking on to the news story about your friend Steve dropping onto the basketball court in mid-dribble, gone down that dark crevasse, they said later, before his head hit the wood floor. And what rose in that instant still fizzes up and solidifies in you as mineral repair, a column of words for why. Not to explain, never to explain, but to fill the space that is always opening and reopening in exactly the same way.

: a type of mineral deposit of veinlike shape with clearly defined walls rather than extensive host-rock replacement.



accretion hypothesis

“What will outlast us? Concrete, rusting steel, quite a bit of plastic, unidentifiable goop, nuclear waste, sediments with anomalous amounts of phosphorus, nitrogen, mercury, lead, and isotopically light carbon from three centuries of burning fossil fuels that had taken half a billion years to accumulate.” – Marcia Bjornerud, *Reading the Rocks*

Because we could no longer find a way forward, we tried to back out of the maze, undoing our steps and peeling off an item of clothing at every turn, pleading with the ref to stop the clock. *It's not fair, we didn't know, it's too hard, we want to go back.* But once we were naked, we realized there was no way back, and besides no one had been assigned to keep track. So we had to turn around again on the path and stagger through the underbrush of our own discarded clothing, fitting on the hats and coats and boots of strangers as best we could – petticoats and cravats, and bowlers and toques, and goosedown jackets and cutoff shorts, and plaid skirts and t-shirts, and pajamas and v-neck sweaters. The more clothing we put on, the more of it lay on the path, tragedies and dilemmas, agonies and immensities, traumas and mythologies of wear. It's too much wear, we yelled at the ref, we want to be naked again. Then the bloodshed began. We had forgotten the past and even our names, but our clothing remembered everything.

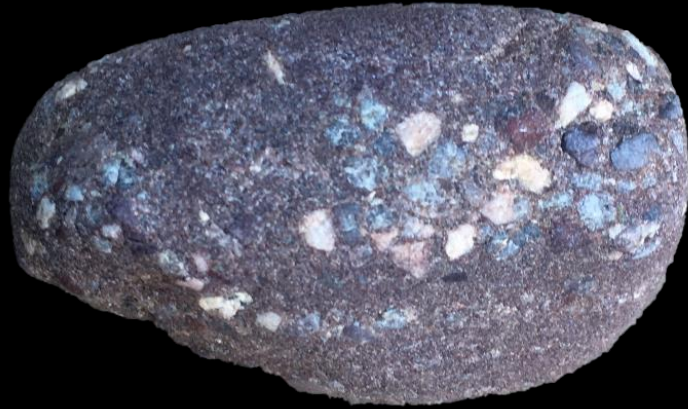
: any hypothesis of the origin of the earth which assumes that it has grown from a small nucleus by the addition of solid bodies, such as meteorites, asteroids, or planetesimals, formerly revolving about the sun in independent orbits, but eventually drawn by gravitation to the earth and incorporated with it.



phenocryst

Yeah, finding the only thing that keeps me from full-scale 24/7 doom scrolling is to dig in real dirt. Pull on my overalls, fetch my trowel bucket and long-handled shovel from the basement, go outside, and move earth around. I'll fill in those holes in the lawn, build a new section of garden, plant cosmos seeds saved from last year. Squirrels are interfering with the broccoli, and a groundhog who lives under the shed munches on my zinnias at night. Bring it on. Outside this small eminently undefendable bubble, humans continue to develop effective ways to rip bodies and minds apart and throw their hands up and say *not my fault*. In a cupped palm, the cosmos seeds are impossible slivers, sleeping beings. They lift like paper skeletons and blow away at the slightest breeze, but I'm careful, notch twenty quarter-inch holes in the dirt with my finger, pick each one out of the tangle, drop it in, cover it up, add water, move on to the next. It's a task I can accomplish only while on my knees, bent over as close as possible to the ground. I was just now going to say *we can accomplish* but did not, having no idea if you would agree or could agree and lacking the courage such words these days require.

: one of the relatively large and ordinarily conspicuous crystals of the earliest generation in a porphyritic igneous rock.



musical sand

After the lecture, I go to the podium and wait my turn to ask. My body is a carillon ringing with desire and hope that feels also desperate, hungry with a dangerous edge. Bells and knives, that's it, the song I am hearing, the song that is inside me. I don't know my question until I say it, and then like a fool, I ask her, But there is a possibility for beauty? Oh, beauty, she answers, and then she smiles. Beauty is necessary and inherent, not contingent, although it can often feel contingent and seemingly fragile, serendipitous, unearned, an unlikely gift, easy to overlook, often overlooked. She pauses and adds, But not by you, am I right? But suffering and brutality, I forge ahead, worrying it. Do they not erase beauty? This may happen, she admits, but beauty returns. But, I say, suffering and brutality also. She sees that I will not let it go. They do return, she says. And then you yourself may choose which you will serve.

: a sounding sand that emits a definite musical note or tone when stirred, trodden on, or otherwise disturbed.



craton

Looking around for a safe place to stand, trying to avoid loose manhole covers, glacial crevasses, and the dark sort of trapdoor that opened under Persephone, you might look no farther than this holy book beneath your feet and its sandy, loamy, cobbly, granitic, aquifer-ridden scriptorium renowned for billion-year-old palimpsests that launched a thousand Ph.D. theses and set the old churchmen on their butts. Consider those slo-mo plate collision comb overs that scrape ocean crust up like rocky road ice cream and dump it in scoops on dry land. Consider those mountaintops, eroding as they rise, dropping scree and rain shadow into the valleys below. You might lie back in a playground swing, late in the day when everyone's at dinner, and listen to finches singing from trees. You might note all the flavors of your neighborhood's political flags, flapping in the restless, apolitical, salt-stung breeze coming in off the bay. You might consider time as a randomly variable metronome, or as a tiny package with no return address delivered expressly into your hands, or as a warm, nearly motionless mineral wave that will cover us some day under a custom-made quilt, melted together like a box of crayons left in the sun. When you climb out of that swing, boots down, and take your next breathless steps on this round world, you might feel welcome for a little while longer, you might feel as if maybe you could stay.

: a part of the earth's crust that has attained stability and has been little deformed for a long time.