

Planitia

*When her body calmed and became reconciled to
reanimation,
she looked around. The room seemed dimly lit,
though she had never
Awakened to dimness before.*

—from Octavia E. Butler’s “Dawn”

This time the sand floated up to the bottom. Ochre light slipped below each verdigris row. Seekers have tried to latch Mars, but our crater is lined with dusty hollows, flat horizons, fields and fields of uninterrupted rock (not a mirage). Unreachable light years become billions.

The indelible marks of our past shaped like stones dropped in soft mud. We have been told to adapt to day in order to borrow polar night. Gas becomes cud. Methane simmers slowly. Dust seas, predicted to moisten rivers of rock, peaks and lakes on the rim of a bed. But myth has its limitations, especially stories conjuring beginnings. I am not one to believe everything I have been told.

We have two moons, this I know.
Subsurface, a form never drifts
beyond

the imagined. In the fog, yellow and red transpose recognition. Our transference of life into sand, a reality previously considered unconscionable.
Splintered imagoes.

We watch from our planet's core. Rubber wheels and spectrometers propel their so-called rovers. Sideways velocity can only carry you so far. Flats, gorgeous canyons, and sandy layers stretch beyond an ordinary crater's mouth, an existence

without liquid or consumable air. Subsurface, neither flamed debris nor asteroid can extinguish living thought. Our ancestors are nanofossils.

And the polar sea,

I am content inside. Not because dust devils are predicted to reverse course or winter's revolving is set to claim a new spring. I slip to the surface unnoticed, watch the sand float as they land.

There is this thread of bliss, watching seekers propel beyond Earth, testing and retesting surface evolution, spinning theories of their own in the yellow light of another day.