

CJ Scruton
DIAGENESIS

It's a word of halforigins, for when fossils are replaced by another material in roughly the same shape, the beginnings of what we can touch. Really, it means any time sediments are changed, reorganized by their proximities to each other, the movements of the earth, great pressure and heat. Some fossils cast molds, a sort of absence we can read. But others let water slip into the small spaces, bone shafts and dead cells, where they sit for millennia, carbonizing or calcifying.

When we say we *feel a presence*, that some spirit must be in our homes or family garden cemeteries, what we really mean is we have just begun to feel who isn't there. A presence is the absence before it, the realization that when you reach your hand across the bed or turn to the kitchen table, only part of you knows no one will be waiting.

What must life be but the billions of years before, within. The universe is expanding, in our pictures of it, moving in all directions at once. How intimate entropy sounds, the everoutward movement of spirits and things. To let all our heat pass between us, each rise from the grave a space, a gift of earth.