

Archaeological Graffiti
By David Attree

A question:

Do you know what chalk is?

But, do you *know* what chalk is?

Not what it looks like, to observers

Not what it represents, to many

Not the invisible borders it marks, for some

Not what it is, as a destination

It is all of those things, already

No

Do you know what chalk *is*?

It is this:

It is coccoliths

“A microscopic skeletal plate of calcite, on the surface of certain marine phytoplankton”

Up close?

Really close?

Each speck is a spherical snowflake

of dizzying geometry

Each and every invisible former life, truly beautiful

A fossilized reminder of a different world

If I had the inclination, I would gather up 400 million of them

But that would only cover a pound coin

Chalk is, simply, maths and history in unfathomable scale

When I see a chalked love-heart, names smeared on to the ground with “4 EVA” below them

I smile

Because this act of love is made of trillions of lives, millions of decades, then thousands of years

4 EVA?

It is, almost, already far longer than that