The Sixth Age
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First of all the deathless gods who dwell on Olympus made a golden race of mortal men...  
—Hesiod

Call it Capital, call it Modernity Post Hoc—the hours have passed through the hourglass and back into the sea.

The high-resolution satellite image of the world’s largest rare earth mine looks from above like a cluster of plums dried on their branches, sins of omission. Each round of leaching has left behind the lined anonymity of a topographical map.

In my Californian school, we discovered our history by learning to pan for gold.

They taught us to watch for the dense flake that sank below the grit, to remember that staking a claim once meant a stake in the ground. We swirled our portion. Far away, prices scrolled by, incantations uttered by no man.