

Here they lie, the **quintessential** relics of those little Eocene fishes and other sea beasts, if such they were, that swam and crawled about the waters many years ago – piled up on the terraces so high that the mind grows dizzy at contemplating their **multitudes** or the ages required to squeeze them into this priceless powder; piled up for 500 miles along their old sea beach – an arid inland chair of hills nowadays, where hardly a blade of grass will grow; sterile themselves, the cause of surprising **fertility** elsewhere. These phosphates are something of a symbol: there are men and women fashioned after this model.

Norman Douglas: *Fountains in the Sand* (1912)