


# Phase transformations and plasticity in single-crystal iron from shock compression to spall fracture

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Nonequilibrium molecular dynamics simulations have been used to investigate phase transformations and plasticity in single-crystal iron from shock compression to dynamic tension and subsequent spall fracture. In consistence with experimental observations, the unloading wave following the compression front is found to evolve into a rarefaction shock at the reverse hexagonal-close-packed to body-centered-cubic (bcc) phase transformation, and a pressure hysteresis between the direct and reverse phase transformations is evidenced. The interaction of this unloading wave with the rarefaction wave reflected from the sample free surface classically induces tension within the crystal, which is found to drive a bcc to face-centered-cubic (fcc) phase transformation in agreement with very recent experimental observation under subnanosecond laser shock loading. At the atomic scale, the mechanism governing this bcc to fcc phase transformation is consistent with a Bain transformation path. The spall fracture process is observed to occur through voids nucleation and growth either at favorable sites (twin boundaries, bcc-fcc grain boundaries after partial transformation) or within the defect-free fcc crystal (after full transformation). Thus, the spall strength increases with the fcc phase fraction near the plane of maximum tension. An amorphous microstructure is observed around the voids, likely due to significant heating upon severe plastic deformation, in consistence with experimental clues from the literature.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Despite extensive research work, both experimental and numerical, the details of polymorphic transformations occurring in shock-loaded iron [1–11], their coupling with the high strain rate elastic-plastic behavior under both compression and release, and their influence on spall damage upon dynamic tension are not fully elucidated yet. While laser-driven compression now allows both shock and ramp loading at extreme strain rates as high as  $10^9 \text{ s}^{-1}$  [12–15], sometimes combined with ultrafast *in situ* probing of the crystal structure [16–20], molecular dynamics (MD) simulations provide complementary insight into the mechanisms governing the evolution of this structure at the atomic scale, over short timescales well suited to shock physics [21–32]. In recent years, both approaches have brought significant progress towards understanding the response of iron to dynamic compression, including the kinetics of the body-centered-cubic–hexagonal-close-packed transition (bcc-hcp) [33–38], its governing mechanism [18,39], and its strong and complex coupling with highly rate-dependent plasticity [40–46]. Phase-field, energy-based theoretical models have also addressed the formation of different hcp variants and their detailed effects on stress-wave propagation [47,48]. However, the phase transformations occurring within the release wave following the compression front, then upon dynamic tension due to the interaction of this unloading wave with the rarefaction wave reflected from the free surface, are still much

less documented, although they are likely to play major roles in subsequent spall fracture. In this paper, we use MD simulations to investigate, at the atomic scale, the detailed evolution of shock-loaded single-crystal iron during the complete dynamic sequence from shock compression, pressure release, tensile loading, to the nucleation and growth of spall damage.

## II. METHODS AND COMPUTATIONAL DETAILS

Nonequilibrium molecular dynamics (NEMD) simulations are performed in [001]-oriented single-crystal iron. Samples of  $8 \times 10^6$  atoms with a  $28.7\text{-nm} \times 28.7\text{-nm}$  section ( $100 a_0 \times 100 a_0$ , where  $a_0$  is the lattice parameter) and length of  $115 \text{ nm}$  ( $400 a_0$ ) were thermalized at  $50 \text{ K}$  before being shock compressed along the [001] crystallographic orientation. This sample size was chosen based on previous work with similar loading conditions where it was checked that increasing the sample size to  $250 \times 250 \times 400 a_0^3$  (about 50 million atoms) did not affect the material response [41].

The thermomechanical behavior of materials is known to be sensitive to preexisting “defects” in their microstructure [9,18,24,26,49–51]. For instance, MD simulations have shown the significant influences of nanovoids (i.e., atom vacancies) and grain boundaries on the elastic-plastic response of dynamically compressed iron and subsequent phase transformations [42,45]. Lattice defects may obviously play major roles in the nucleation of spall damage too. However, in this study, initial samples are perfect single crystals, as a first step to characterize the governing microprocesses and their coupling at the atomic scale.

The simulations were realized using the Large-scale Atomic/Molecular Massively Parallel Simulator (LAMMPS) molecular dynamics code [52]. There are currently various

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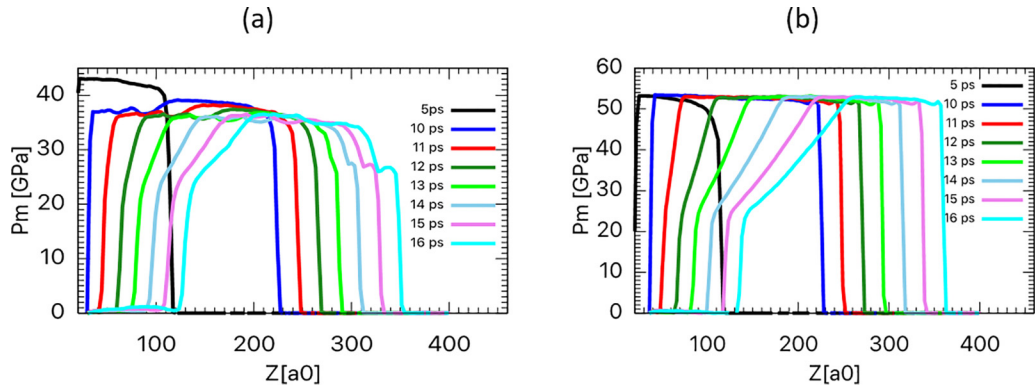


FIG. 1. Wave profiles for piston maximum velocity  $U_p$  of 800 m/s (a) and 1000 m/s (b) showing two-wave (a) or single compression front (b), as well as propagation of shock upon release (see text for details).

many-body interatomic potentials available to model interactions between atoms in molecular dynamics simulations of iron, including embedded-atom models (EAM) [53], modified embedded-atom models [54], bond order such as the Tersoff model [55], reactive force field [56], machine learning [57–59] or machine-learning angular dependent [60]. However, for investigating iron properties under extreme conditions of pressure and deformation, there are relatively few choices providing a reasonable agreement with experiment: the Voter-Chen potential [8], the modified analytic EAM [36], and the modified version of the Ackland potential [61]. All these potentials successfully predict the expected hcp phase. However, to our knowledge, the latter, the physical quality of which has been discussed extensively by Gunkelmann *et al.* [61,34], is the only one to account for both plasticity and polymorphism of iron under extreme conditions. Indeed, it predicts the bcc-to-hcp phase transition at 13.75 GPa under hydrostatic compression [61], in very good agreement with the experimental data [1–3], and relevant plastic deformation in both single-crystal [41–43,45,46] and polycrystalline iron [34,35]. This modified version of the Ackland potential is used in our simulations.

Shock loading is applied on the sample surface by driving an effective infinite-mass wall piston with an imposed velocity  $U_p(t)$  along the  $Z$  direction, while periodic boundary conditions are applied in the transverse directions. The piston velocity is set to a constant value  $U_p$  between 800 and 1200 m/s during 10 ps, then drops to zero. The loading strain rates are about  $10^9$  s $^{-1}$  while strain rates during dynamic tension are on the order of  $10^{10}$  to  $10^{11}$  s $^{-1}$  as detailed further. Local thermodynamic and mechanical variables such as mean pressure  $P_m$ , longitudinal stress  $P_z$ , temperature, etc. are evaluated within a spatial planar bin (of width  $3 a_0$ ) perpendicular to the shock-wave propagation direction in the same manner as in our previous work [41–43,46]. Finally, local phases and defects are analyzed by polyhedral template matching (PTM), centrosymmetry, dislocation analysis tool (DXA), and construct surface mesh (CSM), as implemented in the OVITO software [62].

### III. SHOCK COMPRESSION AND UNLOADING

Figure 1 shows the shock-wave propagation along the loading direction for two representative cases where  $U_p = 800$  and

1000 m/s, respectively. For the  $U_p = 800$  m/s case [Fig. 1(a)], the wave structure upon compression was already documented elsewhere [41]. Here, we briefly recall the essential features for completeness, with a focus on the phase-transition kinetics. For this lower piston velocity, the maximum mean pressure  $P_m$  is about 43 GPa ( $P_z \approx 48$  GPa), enough to drive the bcc-hcp phase transition. Thus, the initially steep compression front splits into two waves (since the elastic wave is overdriven [25]), namely the  $P_1$  wave in which bcc iron undergoes both elastic and plastic deformation and the  $P_2$  wave which drives the bcc-to-hcp phase transformation (see Fig. 2). The pressure at the top of the  $P_1$  wave corresponding to the structural phase-transition onset pressure is about 28 GPa ( $P_z \approx 29$  GPa), in agreement with results reported under experimental laser compression in iron at ultrahigh strain rate [14,33,37,38]. Then, upon further propagation the  $P_1$  wave relaxes to about 26 GPa ( $P_z \approx 27$  GPa), due to kinetics effect governed by the nucleation and growth of the hcp nuclei within the bcc matrix leading to a phase-transformation front where both bcc and hcp coexist [33,37,38]. For the  $U_p = 1000$  m/s case [Fig. 1(b)], corresponding to a loading pressure  $P_m$  of about 53 GPa ( $P_z \approx 60$  GPa), both elastic and

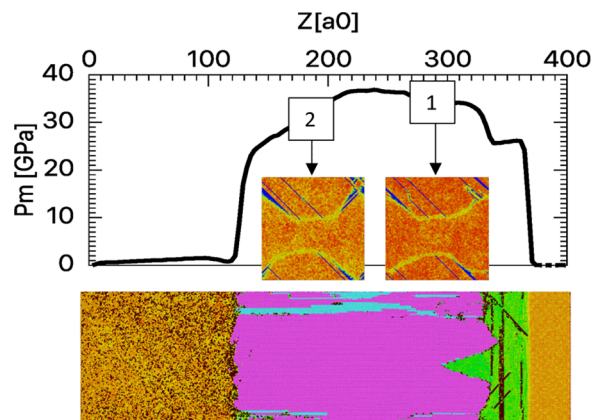


FIG. 2. Mean stress spatial profile (top) at 17 ps for  $U_p = 800$  m/s with associated atomic configuration (bottom). bcc atoms are colored according to local pressure, atoms associated with defects are colored in brown, while hcp and fcc phases are colored in violet and cyan, respectively. Insets show microstructure within sections in compressed state (1) and during release (2) of hcp phase.

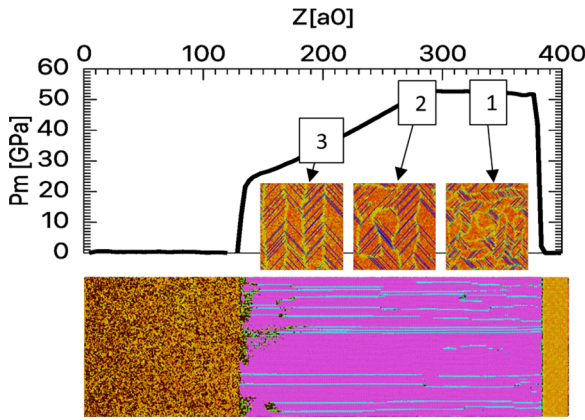


FIG. 3. Mean stress spatial profile (top) at 17 ps for piston maximum velocity of 1000 m/s with associated atom configuration (bottom) where color meaning is same as in Fig. 2. Insets show evolution of microstructure in hcp phase from compressed state (1) to successive stages during release (2 and 3).

$P_1$  waves are overdriven, so that a steady, single shock front is observed [Fig. 1(b)], taking almost instantaneously iron from the bcc to hcp phase across a planar interface that propagates toward the sample free surface (see Fig. 3), without distinct nucleation and growth or kinetics effects.

When the piston is stopped after 10 ps, an incident release wave is initiated which propagates to the right and unloads the material to ambient pressure.

Figure 2 and Fig. 3 show microstructure evolution in the hcp phase during the compression and release regimes. In both cases, the evolving microstructure shows twinned variants of the hcp phase (orange) and grain boundaries (yellow) whose aspect depends on the piston velocity. For  $U_p = 800$  m/s, the microstructure in the hcp phase during loading and unloading regimes remains almost the same (Fig. 2). On the other hand, for the  $U_p = 1000$  m/s case, it evolves from small elongated grains of random orientations (inset 1) to larger, parallel grains (inset 3) upon pressure unloading. After full pressure release, the sample returns entirely to the bcc phase with no defects other than randomly distributed point defects.

For all the piston velocities investigated here, the initially sharp release front splits into two waves: the upper part (unloading of the hcp phase) spreads with increasing propagation distance, as expected and usually observed in most materials due to the decrease of sound velocity with pressure, but it is followed by a steep pressure drop. This unusual behavior known as rarefaction shock wave [63] is due to the reverse hcp-bcc transformation, occasioning an anomalous variation of the sound velocity [63–65]. It is consistent with the original theoretical prediction by Drummond [66] later confirmed by early shock experiments under both explosive [67,68] and plate-impact loading conditions [2]. Figure 2 and Fig. 3 confirm that this sharp release front coincides with the reverse transition from hcp (violet color) back to bcc, after the gradual unloading of the hcp phase.

Another well-known characteristic of the iron bcc-hcp martensitic phase transformation is the existence of a hysteresis between the direct and reverse phase transformations [69,70]. Accounting for this hysteresis is crucial in determining the dynamic shift of the bcc-hcp phase boundary at

ultrahigh strain rates compared with the equilibrium phase diagram of iron. In our simulations, the rarefaction shock wave associated with the beginning of the reverse hcp-bcc phase transformation is observed at  $P_m$  of about 24 GPa ( $P_z \approx 23$  GPa), lower than the onset pressure of the direct transformation (about 28 GPa, as mentioned above), which is consistent with the expected hysteresis. The reverse transformation is observed to occur through a rough interface between twinned hcp and high pressure bcc, which propagates forward along with the release front (Figs. 2 and 3). Across this interface, of typical width about  $20 a_0$ , the bcc and hcp are mixed. When pressure falls below  $\sim 21$  GPa, the hcp phase is found to form a laminar structure within the bcc matrix before complete reversion to bcc [71]. No significant dependence of the reverse phase-transformation kinetics on the shock strength was observed. All these results are remarkably consistent with the predictions of a thermomechanic model involving a first-principles density-functional theory-based multiwell energy function for bcc and hcp iron [5]. Quantitatively, the difference between the direct and reverse phase-transformation onset stress  $P_z$  is about 6 GPa, in fair agreement with the 4–5-GPa hysteresis reported from shock-compression experiments [72]. This hysteresis is thought to depend on the degree of completion of the phase transformation [72]. It is found to be roughly independent of the piston velocity in our simulations, since the transition was more than 80% completed in all investigated cases. The mean pressure between the forward and reverse phase transition  $P_0 = 1/2(P_{\text{bcc-hcp}} + P_{\text{hcp-bcc}})$  is 25 GPa, higher than reported at lower strain rate [2], which confirms that ultrahigh strain rates can significantly shift the boundary between the bcc and hcp phases, as observed experimentally [14,15,33,37,38].

#### IV. RESPONSE TO TENSILE LOADING

When the compression front (either the  $P_1$  wave for lower piston velocity or the single shock front in case of high piston velocity) reaches the sample free surface, it is reflected into a rarefaction wave propagating from right to left. As this reflected wave meets the incident unloading wave inside the sample, a tensile pulse (negative pressure) is produced. The shape of this pulse and its width are governed by the interactions of the different waves beneath the free surface, which depend on the loading conditions. As discussed above, the unloading wave starts with the gradual release of the hcp phase followed by a rarefaction shock.

For the  $U_p = 800$  m/s case, the reflected release wave results from a complex process, including reverberations of the  $P_1$  wave between the free surface and the oncoming  $P_2$  wave. Its interaction with the incident release wave leads to a wide, nearly Gaussian tensile profile [Fig. 4(a)]. The tensile deformation rate  $\dot{\epsilon}$  at this plane of maximum tension is evaluated at about  $7 \times 10^{10} \text{ s}^{-1}$  from the particle velocity spatial profile, following [25,46]. In many shock experiments, a rough estimate of this tensile rate is classically inferred from time-resolved measurements of the free-surface velocity [73,74]. Here, this estimate, based on the free-surface velocity profile in the simulation, is found to be approximately one order of magnitude lower than the value given above. Both approaches are detailed in Sec. 4 of the Supplemental Ma-

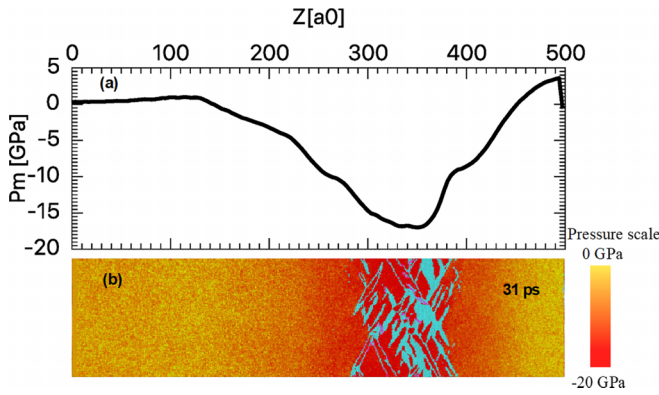


FIG. 4. Mean stress distribution along the  $Z$  axis (a) at 31 ps showing tensile (negative pressure) wave spatial profile for piston velocity of 800 m/s with corresponding atomic configuration (b). Atoms are colored as in Fig. 2; cyan corresponds to fcc phase.

terial [71]. The microstructure in this region under tension [Fig. 4(b)] is mainly composed of twinned variants of the bcc phase with a significant fraction of fcc phase, up to 50% in the plane of maximum tension [71]. The fcc phase primarily nucleates at bcc twin boundaries and then grows at the expense of the bcc phase when tension increases. No significant dislocation activities were detected at this stage of tension.

For the  $U_p = 1000$  m/s case (Fig. 5), the single shock front reaching the free surface (Fig. 3) reflects as a single rarefaction wave, which evolves into a gradual release of the hcp phase followed by a sharp release during its backward propagation, just like the incident unloading wave. Wave interactions inside the sample then produce a tensile pulse of “Y-like” shape with a narrow hole of sharper edges and amplitude about 20 GPa [Fig. 5(a)], slightly higher than in the previous case. Here, the maximum tensile rate  $\dot{\epsilon}$  is about  $1 \times 10^{11} \text{ s}^{-1}$ . The bcc-fcc phase transformation is completed to more than 95% phase fraction (see Supplemental Material [71]). Such extensive bcc-fcc phase transformation under a tensile pressure  $P_m$  close to 19 GPa is fully consistent with very recent experimental observation under subnanosecond laser compression [15].

Figure 6 shows a detail extracted from a snapshot at 29 ps in the simulation of Fig. 5, showing the fcc arrangement

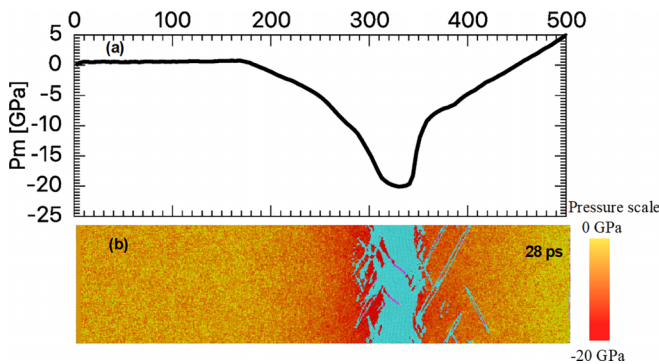


FIG. 5. Mean stress distribution at 28 ps (a) showing tensile wave spatial profile for piston velocity of 1000 m/s with corresponding atomic configuration (b), where atoms are colored as in Fig. 2. Extensive phase transition from bcc to fcc phase (cyan) is observed under tension.

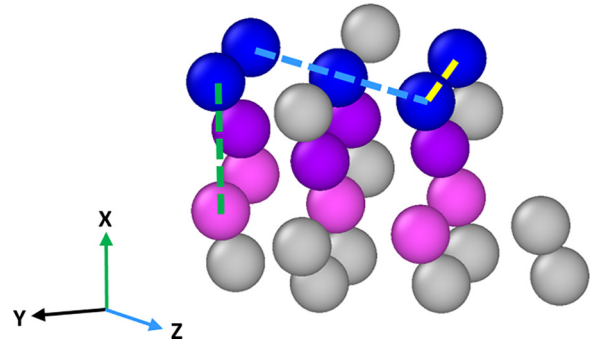


FIG. 6. Detail extracted from cyan zone in simulation of Fig. 5, showing fcc arrangement resulting from bcc-fcc transition observed under dynamic tension along  $Z$  direction.  $X$ ,  $Y$ ,  $Z$  axes are  $[100]$ ,  $[010]$ , and  $[001]$  orientations of initial bcc crystal. fcc cell is displayed as colored atoms. While its  $[001]$  orientation (green dotted line) still matches  $X$  axis, its  $[110]$  orientation (blue dotted line) is parallel to  $Z$  axis. Equivalently, and given crystal symmetries,  $[011]$  direction in parent bcc is  $[100]$  orientation in daughter fcc (yellow dotted line), so that this bcc-fcc transition is consistent with Bain transformation path.

resulting from the bcc-fcc transition observed under dynamic tension along the  $Z$  direction. The  $X$ ,  $Y$ , and  $Z$  axes are the  $[100]$ ,  $[010]$ , and  $[001]$  orientations of the initial bcc crystal, respectively. The fcc cell is displayed as colored atoms. While its  $[001]$  orientation (green dotted line) still matches the  $X$  axis, its  $[110]$  orientation (blue dotted line) is parallel to the  $Z$  axis. Equivalently, the  $[011]$  direction in the parent bcc is the  $[100]$  orientation in the daughter fcc. Thus, this bcc-fcc transition is consistent with the Bain transformation path [75]. Note that it is not observed for tensile loading along other low-crystallographic index orientation such as the  $[110]$  and  $[111]$  orientations.

## V. SPALL DAMAGE

If the tensile load detailed in the above section exceeds the tensile strength of the material, spall damage is expected to occur within the sample, through the nucleation, growth, and coalescence of microvoids or microcracks [76,77]. This well-known dynamic process has been the subject of extensive research work, including MD simulations [78–84]. It depends intimately on the nature of the material (ductile or brittle), the sample microstructure (defects, inclusions, grain boundaries ...), the initial conditions (temperature), the thermomechanical history before failure (including phase changes), and the loading rate [73].

As discussed above, the tensile pulse is observed to vary from near Gaussian to a more intense and narrow profile when  $U_p$  is increased from 800 to 1000 m/s. This results in a significantly different microstructure at the plane of maximum tension, namely twinned bcc mixed with fcc for the lower piston velocity versus defect-free fcc single crystal for the higher piston velocity (Figs. 4, 5, and 7). In both cases, voids start to nucleate (Fig. 7), which means the local tension  $P_m$  (negative pressure) overcomes the tensile strength of the material. Such nucleation and subsequent growth of stable voids create new free surfaces allowing progressive relaxation of the

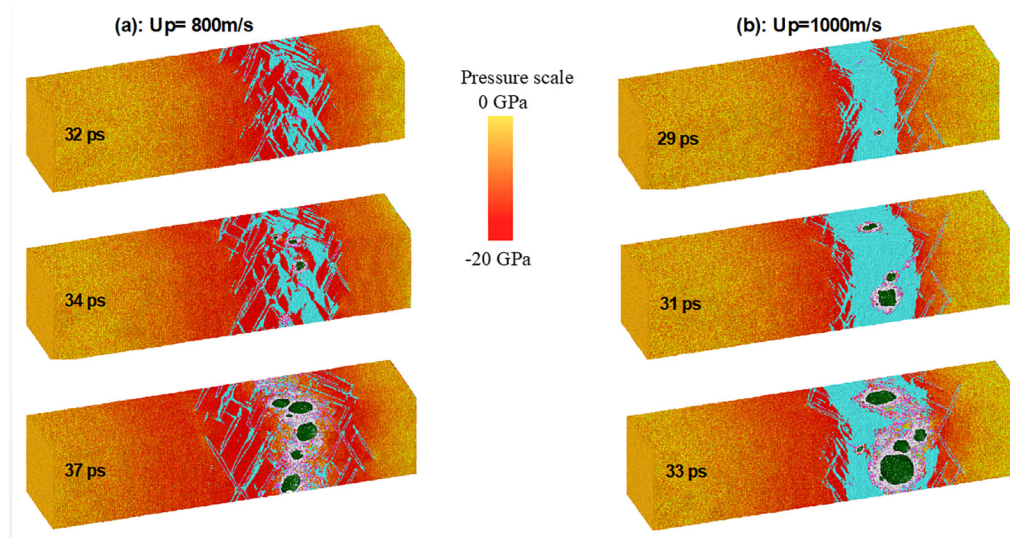


FIG. 7. Snapshots at successive times showing voids (forest-green colored surface) nucleation and growth for piston maximum velocity of 800 m/s (a) and 1000 m/s (b).

tensile stress through two recompression fronts that propagate from the spall plane in opposite directions (Fig. 8). Thus, the spall strength is given by the minimum pressure  $P_m$  (negative in tension) computed where voids nucleate (at the so-called “spall plane”).

In both plate-impact experiments [64,67,68] and laser-shock experiments [85], postrecovery observations of spalled samples have evidenced a drastic change from a rough fracture-surface morphology in bcc iron to a so-called “smooth spall” after the bcc-hcp-bcc cycle, partially attributed to the highly localized tension resulting from the interaction of two rarefaction shock waves due to the reverse hcp-bcc transition. Here (and see Fig. 11 further), the fracture surface does not appear particularly smooth, but it corresponds to an extremely early stage of damage development (a few ps) and tiny spatial scales (a few nm). Thus, it would obviously take a much larger sample and a much longer simulation time to discriminate the different morphologies reported in the experiments.

For  $U_p = 800$  m/s [Fig. 7(a)], the voids are found to nucleate either at twins boundaries or at fcc-bcc phase boundaries (Fig. 9), which constitute weak sites favoring damage activation, in consistence with previous work [86].

For  $U_p = 1000$  m/s [Fig. 7(b)], voids are observed to nucleate within the fcc crystal, where the absence of preferential fracture sites results in a higher spall strength. Thus, the maximum tensile stress induced at the spall plane is found to increase from 17.1 to 21.9 GPa upon increasing piston maximum velocity from 800 to 1200 m/s, which points to a strong correlation between the spall strength and the maximum fcc phase fraction (Fig. 10). This is consistent with recent data reported by Ma and Dongare [84], shown in the same plot (discrepancies come mainly from different initial sample temperatures, 50 vs 300 K, and different tools to analyze phase fractions, PTM vs adaptative common neighbor analysis). Because the amount of fcc phase was shown to depend directly on the tensile rate and on the loading pressure (see Sec. IV and Fig. 10), this correlation evidenced at the atomic scale may provide insight to interpret the variations of spall strength observed experimentally in shock-loaded iron [6,65,73,85–87].

Void growth is accompanied by intense plastic deformation nearby, which is found to be accommodated by the emission, multiplication, and propagation of dislocations, either lines or loops (Fig. 11). These dislocations are composed mainly of  $1/2\langle 111 \rangle$  type with a local screw character. Thus,

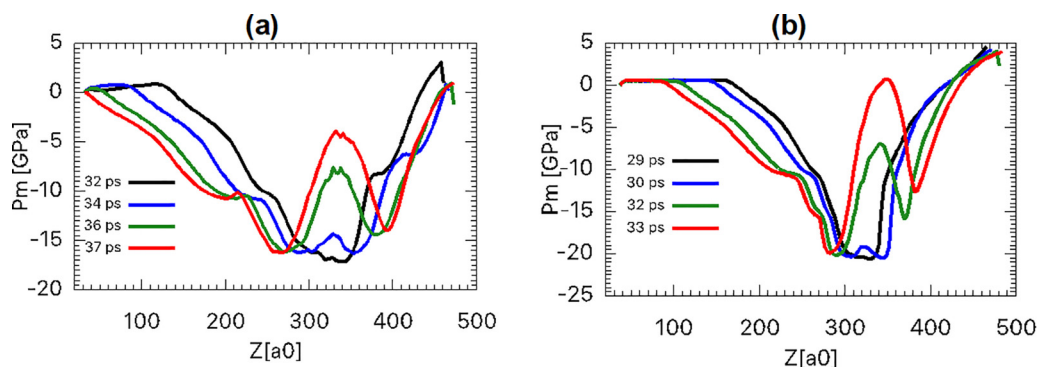


FIG. 8. Pressure distribution at successive times for piston velocity of 800 m/s (a) and 1000 m/s (b), showing tensile pulse (negative pressure) induced within sample (black), then progressive stress relaxation accompanying nucleation and growth of spall damage.

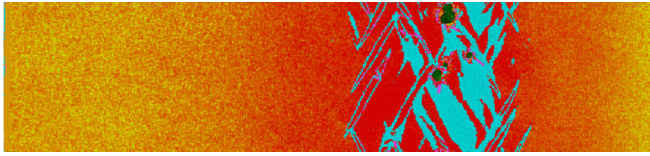


FIG. 9. Longitudinal cut within sample at 33 ps for 800-m/s piston velocity, showing voids (green colored surface) nucleated mainly at twin boundaries and phase boundaries.

the observed dislocations loops are composed of two screw dislocations with a leading-edge local character. These loops expand until they meet defects such as twin boundaries. The dislocation density increases up to  $5 \times 10^{12} \text{ cm}^{-2}$  for the  $U_p = 1000 \text{ m/s}$  case. Subsequent dissipation induces strong local heating, with a temperature as high as 2000 K [71], which is observed to result in a complex microstructure including amorphous regions around void (Fig. 12).

Figure 13 shows the free-surface velocity profiles for three values of the piston velocity. In all cases, this imposed piston velocity coincides necessarily with the particle velocity  $U_p$  behind the compression front. After a transit time slightly dependent on loading pressure, shock breakout produces a steep acceleration to a peak velocity. In case of a single shock front (high piston velocities), this peak free-surface velocity is twice  $U_p$ , which matches a classical approximation in shock physics [2,63]. For the lowest piston velocity ( $U_p = 800 \text{ m/s}$ ), the incident wave front is split into a double structure ( $P_1$  wave followed by  $P_2$ ; see Sec. III), so that this approximation is no longer valid and the maximum free-surface velocity is 1470 m/s, lower than  $2 \times U_p$ . Next, the emergence of the unloading wave at the free surface produces a gradual deceleration, interrupted by a reacceleration (around 40 ps) usually referred to as the spall pulse, due to the arrival of the relaxation wave generated at the spall plane upon void opening (see Fig. 8). Thereafter, wave reverberation across the spall, i.e. between the spall plane and the free surface, produces velocity oscillations. Hence, the period of these oscillations, about 13.5 ps here, should be twice the transit time across the spall thickness (because waves propagate back and forth). Assuming a mean propagation velocity at the bulk sound

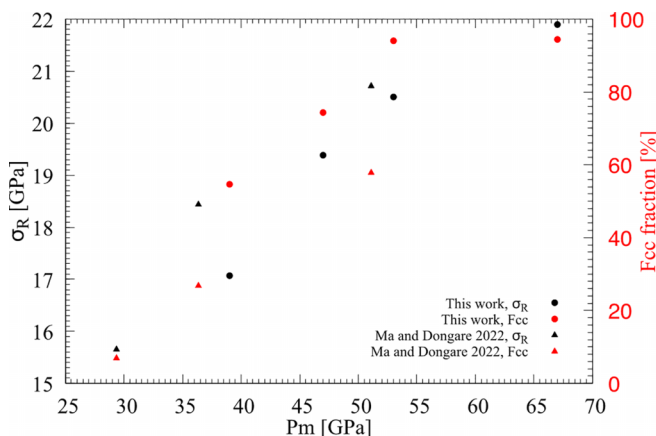


FIG. 10. Spall strength (black) and fcc phase fraction (red) evolution as functions of maximum shock pressure.

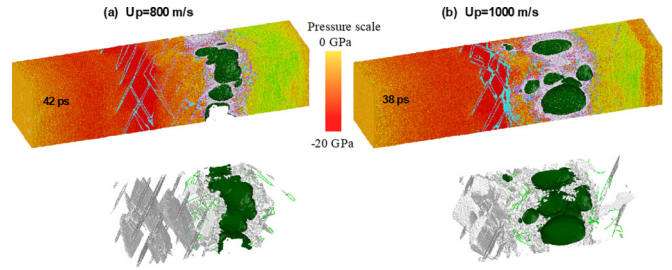


FIG. 11. Late-time snapshots showing extensive voids growth and coalescence for piston velocities 800 m/s (a) and 1000 m/s (b), with intense plastic activity in their vicinity, which is found to be dislocation mediated (green loops in bottom pictures).

speed of iron  $C_0 = 4640 \text{ m/s}$  [87], this theoretical thickness would then be about 31.3 nm, which agrees very well with the distance between the fracture plane and the free surface evaluated to 32 nm in the snapshots (see, e.g., Figs. 9 and 11). Finally, using the so-called “acoustic approximation”, the amplitude  $\Delta U$  of the deceleration from the peak velocity to the minimum just before the spall pulse, usually called the velocity pullback, provides an estimate of the tensile strength [76,77],  $\sigma_R = 1/2 \rho_0 C_0 \Delta U$ , where  $\rho_0$  is the initial density. This classic relationship is widely used to interpret velocity records in experiments (e.g., Refs. [74,87]), and it has been discussed in molecular dynamics too [80]. The  $\sigma_R$  estimates thus obtained vary between about 22 to 24 GPa depending on the piston velocity [71]. They are systematically higher by about 10 to 20% than the maximum tension calculated at the spall plane before void opening and subsequent relaxation (spall strength values in Fig. 10). Such discrepancy is probably due to the limits of the rough and simple relationship recalled above.

## VI. CONCLUSION

NEMD simulations were used to investigate phase transformations and plasticity in shock-loaded single-crystal iron with a specific attention to the unloading wave, its interaction with the reflected rarefaction wave, and how subsequent spall damage depends on the various highly coupled processes occurring during the full sequence. Shock pressure was varied to investigate both the double-structure and overdriven regimes, which were shown to lead to significantly different responses. Upon unloading, the reverse hcp-bcc phase transition starts at about 23 GPa, with a hysteresis between the direct and reverse transformations and the propagation of a rarefaction shock, in fair agreement with experimental data. The mean pressure between the forward and reverse phase transition is observed to be higher than reported at lower strain rate, which confirms that ultrahigh strain rates can significantly shift the boundary between the bcc and hcp phases, as observed experimentally. Next, the tensile pulse produced by release wave interaction, the shape and intensity of which depend on shock pressure, is found to induce a bcc-to-fcc phase transformation beyond a tensile pressure of about 19 GPa, consistent with recent experimental observation under subnanosecond laser-driven compression. The mechanism governing this polymorphic transition is consistent with the Bain transformation path.

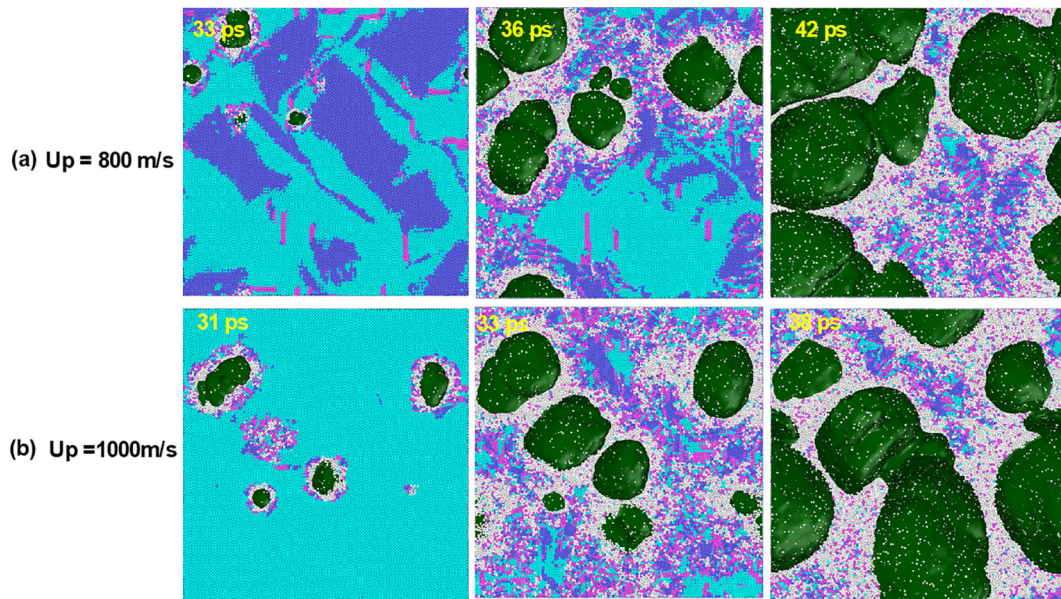


FIG. 12. Snapshots showing microstructure evolution around voids (forest-green colored surface) at different simulation times for piston velocity of 800 m/s (a) and 1000 m/s (b). Atoms are colored according to local phase structure: bcc, fcc, and hcp atoms are blue, cyan, and violet, respectively, while white color represents atoms with no identified local phase structure according to PTM analysis, i.e., regions which can be considered amorphous.

Subsequent spall damage starts with the nucleation of roughly spherical voids, either at favorable sites (twin and grain boundaries, bcc-fcc interfaces) or within the bulk of fcc crystal in the absence of such sites after complete transformation under high tension. As a consequence, the spall strength increases with the fcc phase fraction near the plane of maximum tension. Finally, the later stage of void growth and coalescence involves intense, dislocation-mediated plasticity leading to large dissipation and strong local heating, which results in amorphous regions around the voids.

This detailed analysis at the atomic scale provides a data basis which may allow better interpretations of a variety of experimental observations, both past and future.

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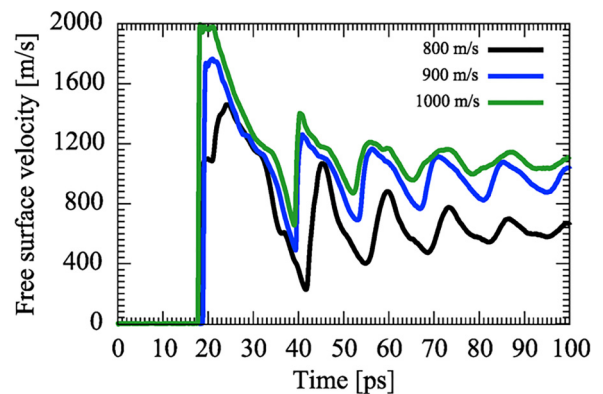


FIG. 13. Free-surface velocity profiles for piston velocity of 800, 900, and 1000 m/s, respectively.

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