

Stoned Thinking: The Petriverse of Pierre Jardin¹

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PETRIVERSE. Noun.

- 1) A world composed of rocks; e.g., a rock garden.
 - 2) Words composed of rocks; i.e., verse written in and/or about stone.
- [Latin *petra*, rock; Old English *vers*, from Latin *versus* a furrow]

The Petriverse of Pierre Jardin is a xeriscape in the California Heights neighborhood of Long Beach, California, where many residents have taken advantage of a city program that subsidizes the conversion of grass lawns into drought-tolerant landscapes. The garden was conceived in 2009 when Pierre Jardin coined the neologism ‘petriverse’ to denote both *a world composed of rocks* and *words composed of rocks*. The site has become known for two distinctive features: it presents constantly changing, eye-catching displays of locally collected stones, and amuses viewers with pithy petric-themed text-messages formed with pebbles. When he started a Petriverse blog, Pierre Jardin christened it with the figuratively and literally fitting tagline “a rock garden where nothing is written in stone” (Fig. 1).



Figure 1: A rock garden where Nothing is written in stone



Figure 2 Rock Climbers in tree

As a world composed of rocks, the Petriverse is an evolving assemblage composed of rock configurations and balanced stone stacks that express Pierre Jardin’s experimentally inclined, experientially grounded lithic aesthetic. Jardin’s creative process includes collecting materials at local beaches and deserts, sorting and grouping stones, and gradually integrating them into garden compositions. Hybrid or heterogeneous displays that combine stones with other found materials (trees, shells, bones) probe the porous boundaries among lithic and living materials, including stone. For example, an ongoing series of works dubbed “Igneous Ligneous Inosculation” stages intimate encounters between rocks and wood.

These compositions range from stump-stone stacks where the textures and contours of wood and rock merge into one another, to groupings of logs, cobbles, and petrified wood. A more permanent work in this vein, entitled “Caution: Rock Climbers in Tree,” consists of rocks nestled in the forked branches of a large pine tree. In the seven years since they were installed, they have sunk down into the branches as the tree continues to grow up, to the point that the rocks can no longer be removed, and are being cracked by the tree’s growth. This work comprises a dialogue between inhuman durations, dendrochronological growth and geophysical erosion, and makes viscerally visible both the tensile liquid force of trees and the surprising fragility of some kinds of stone.

As words composed of rocks, ‘petriverse’ denotes petric poems placed in a landscape-oriented page-place for perusal by a perambulatory public. Pierre Jardin thinks of searching for and selecting stones suitable for forming letters in terms of creating a new font, fitted to the scale of the garden and sited so as to be easily legible to passersby. Petriverses often allude ludically to their lithic composition. Some play on the dual nature of signs as both material and symbolic by mapping the self-referential or deictic dimension of language



Figure 3 Petriverse text message

onto the stones of which they are composed (“nothing is written in stone”; “all texts sent from my smartstone are rocking”; “the iRock app for iStone—free and green”). Other messages serve as titles or glosses on displays (“ring toned stones” for rocks with mineral markings in concentric circles; “rock groups in silent concert” spelled out adjacent to matching trios of stones; the caption “spot on” for a blue slate cobble with a round black mark; “rock. on.” below one stone balanced upright upon another one). Petriverses also express Jardin’s affective affinities for rocks (“I took a turn for the good / when I turned to stone”; “rock groups strike a chord”; “In search of wonder / I turn to stone”). Petriverse initiates a petric poetics, a practice of lithic close reading that entrains the eye to see foliations and patterns on stones as terrestrial traces or earth-writing, while decoding the semantic antics of punning pebbles.

Rock-Fishing

This search for interesting stones became an enjoyable pastime in itself.... It deserves celebration and a new appellation, ‘rock fishing.’ Combing the rivers and beaches for distinctively shaped and colored stones is

a superior form of distraction, especially if one has a project in mind.

– Charles Jencks, *The Garden of Cosmic Speculation*, 190.

Pebble-hunting is a pleasant and health-giving hobby... and all but those who are nearing the last stages of decrepitude can enjoy it. With understanding will come still greater enjoyment. To all who engage in this fascinating quest the author wishes good hunting, an insatiable curiosity and an ever-widening knowledge.

– Clarence Ellis, *The Pebbles on the Beach*, 12.

Pierre Jardin finds it difficult to pinpoint the precise inception of the Petriverse, but he can date the onset of his petromania to the day in the spring of 2000 when he went to Abalone Cove on the Palos Verdes Peninsula south of Los Angeles. Stunned by the beauty and variety of rocks there, he spent hours in mesmerized scrutiny of their unusual colors, textures, mineral veins and foliations. He walked with his gaze glued on the cobble, occasionally stooping down to pick up a rock, or cup a rounded pebble in his palm. He sorted out a few stones that he found particularly appealing, took them home, and passed pleasant hours turning them in his hands, tracing distinctive lines and patterns with his eyes, and wondering what forces and events had formed them. One day soon afterwards, he felt compelled to make the pilgrimage to the beach again (a half-hour drive), in order to collect more rocks. After making little piles of potential keepers as he progressed along the beach, he was faced with excruciating decisions about which ones to discard—it is an arduous climb up a steep cliff from the beach to the car. He also began to photograph rocks that he liked, but could not carry, perhaps as a compensation or alternative way to collect them. At some point in repeating the process, Pierre Jardin realized that he felt drawn to the stones, energetically as well as aesthetically: certain rocks (and not others) ended up in the backpack because there was some resonance with them, to the point that he felt as if the stones selected him as much as he chose the stones. Over the years, he has taken comfort in discovering that this strange sensation, of a stone actively attracting one's attention, is common among rock collectors.²

As Pierre Jardin's rock-fishing expeditions continued, he amassed quite a collection, so that when he converted his front yard into a drought-tolerant landscape mulched with bark, he had ample lithic material to turn it into a rock garden. Over the years, the site has become something like an oblique repetition or relocation of a Palos Verdes shingle beach, bearing the memories and feelings of hours spent collecting rocks, imbricated in a suburban xeriscape. The more the garden incorporated the beach, however, the more Jardin began to question his desire to possess

the rocks and the environmental ethics of his voracious collecting. He identifies with George Quasha's view: "Sometimes I'm especially careful about the rightness of moving a stone, of taking it away from its native spot. It will become nomadic. A certain sensitivity to stone translates as responsibility for its further existence. And if the stone is powerful, it will affect the place it's transported to" (Quasha 48). His rock-fishing has become a kind of protracted practice of catch-and-release, a recycling process whereby some rocks are returned to the beach as others are brought back. Jardin has thus, quite unwittingly, instigated a rock cycle in the already unstable local rock record.

Geology

The life of a region depends ultimately on its geologic substratum, for this sets up a chain-reaction which passes, determining their character, in turn through its streams and wells, its vegetation and the animal-life that feeds on this, and finally through the type of human being attracted to live there. In a profound sense also the structure of its rocks gives rise to the psychic life of the land; granite, serpentine, slate, sandstone, limestone, chalk and the rest, have each their special personality dependent on the age in which they were laid down, each being co-existent with a special phase in the earth-spirit's manifestation.

– Ithell Colquhoun, *The Living Stones*

For an extremely large percentage of the history of the world, there was no California.... Then, a piece at a time—according to the present theory—parts began to assemble. An island here, a piece of a continent there—a Japan at a time, a New Zealand, a Madagascar—came crunching in upon the continent and have thus far adhered.

– John McPhee, "Assembling California,"
Annals of the Former World.

...the change from subduction to side-by-side sliding *disassembled the fossil subduction zone to produce the fault-splintered Southern California geology that we see today*. That may seem straightforward, but, as we'll see, the details get a bit involved (76, original emphasis). The state is a geologic train wreck of rocks, faults, and moving plates, still growing in adolescence (88).

– Keith Heyer Meldahl, "Disassembling Southern California," *Surf, Sand, and Stone*.

Most of the stones in the Petriverse come from the Palos Verdes Peninsula. The Petriverse rock cycle is of course Lilliputian compared to the

cycles responsible for the Palos Verdes rock record, which has a complex tectono-metamorphic history involving cycles of erosion, re-deposition, subduction, and uplift. Geologically speaking, the Palos Verdes Peninsula is a tectonic fault block of Miocene, Pliocene, and Pleistocene seafloor sediments and volcanics draped on a submerged mountain of Catalina Schist metamorphic rocks. It is situated in a subduction zone whose remarkable history is shaped by the interactions among three tectonic plates (one of which broke up and formed two other plates). Between 35 and 15 million years ago, as the Farallon Plate subducted under the North American Plate, the Pacific Plate began side-sliding along the San Andreas fault, dragging rocks west of the fault northwest for several hundred miles. These developments caused the Western Transverse Ranges Block (the mountain ranges around Los Angeles) to migrate from near where San Diego is now and rotate clockwise, creating the geologically unusual east-west orientation of the coastal ranges. This action created a stretched zone where rocks that once were buried miles deep in the Farallon Plate subduction zone bobbed to the surface. The metamorphic core complex on which the Palos Verdes Peninsula (and Catalina and the Channel Islands) rests, composed of rocks called the Catalina Schist, was dragged deep into the Earth on the sinking Farallon Plate, then uplifted and eroded, and later dropped to deep ocean depths, to catch the Monterey Formation 8 to 15 million years ago. However, as geologists are quick to caution, "This is only the simplest scenario. At least 150 million years of geologic history is missing on Palos Verdes Peninsula" (Morris).

In the context of a Geologic Now, a dawning Anthropocene Epoch, the Palos Verdes Peninsula holds special interest because geologic and human histories interact in highly visible ways. Over the past three million years, Palos Verdes has risen from the ocean in an episodic series of tectonic uplifts, punctuated by pauses, during which wave motion planed the bedrock flat, forming a terrace at sea level. This process produced thirteen step-like terraces that ring the hills of Palos Verdes; "fossils in the uppermost terrace indicate that the hills have been uplifted nearly 1,300 feet in about 1.5 million years" (Sylvester and Gans 223). The tectonic uplift pushing up the terraces, produced by compressive stresses in the plates, works in tandem with climate cycles that cause



Figure 4 Recumbant fold exposed in cliff; house on top

sudden shifts in sea level. These stresses create striking folds visible in the landscape (fig. 4). Human history inscribes itself in this story in the form of the housing developments sited on the terraces, which then caused landsliding, or mass wasting, the movement of rock pulled downwards by gravity. Irrigation sped landsliding because it changes tuffaceous layers in the strata to a slippery clay which fails easily when wet. In May 2012, a large swath of road and cliffs fell into the ocean in the White's Point Landslide. The precarious position the shifting grounds of Palos Verdes geology place humans in is dramatically illustrated by the many homes atop eroding cliffs one glimpses from the beach below.

In general terms, geologic time seems to be linear and vertical. The geologic timescale is a chronological metric that divides earth history into eras, periods, epochs, and ages. Following the law of superposition, stratigraphy reconstructs the order and position of strata in relation to the timescale. But the geologic record, and earth history generally, unfolds in cycles as well. "Deep time" conjures images of exposed parallel lines in the lithosphere seen in profile: strata, sedimentation, and deposition. But the cycles that form the Palos Verdes geologic record evoke rhythms of rising and falling, mountains uplifted as one tectonic plate subducts under another, land bobbing up in stretched zones, which subsequently erodes. Jacquetta Hawkes, in her singular geologic portrait *A Land* (1951), depicts these cycles as planetary respiration: "The history of the earth's crust has a rhythm. Denudation weakens it, the mountains are rucked up and the molten layer below forces itself toward the surface, then the storm dies away and denudation begins again. If the movement were speeded up, as in a cinematograph, we should see a rise and fall as though of breathing" (15). She then cites these lines from W.J. Turner's *The Seven Days of the Sun* (1925): "The bosom of the landscape lifts and falls / With its own leaden tide" (qtd. in Hawkes 15). Similar images of geo-respiration, the living breath of a living planet, can be found in many Daoist works. In *The Great Image Has No Form*, Francois Jullien offers a condensed summary of this ontology: "Everything in the universe originates in the same breath-energy.... It leads to the infinite diversity of beings, man included, and to their relations with one another and their cohesion within a landscape . . . rising and falling, soaring upward or sitting down, the mountain brings about the great respiration of the world" (135).

Palos Verdes offers fertile rock-fishing because the peninsula is a headland where the waves have enough energy to move the sand sediment, regularly exposing new stones. The rocks Pierre Jardin collects most likely range tremendously in age, from the millions-year-old slate compressed miles below the surface into dense, heavy blueschist, to the fragile, sedimented slate and mudstone

formed more recently. Blueschist turns out to be quite rare, found only in the Greek isles, coastal Japan, and along the California coastal ranges. Geologists call it “cool under pressure,” because it forms at “extremely high pressure (more than 4-6 kilobars) but relatively low temperatures (below 400°C)” (Prothero 259). These conditions occur in a subduction zone where cold, wet, weathered oceanic crust that has traveled across the sea-floor plunges down into the mantle, producing the “cool under pressure” metamorphic conditions that form blueschist (Prothero 269-70). Palos Verdes pebbles, then, are mnemonic archives, bearing traces of the events that formed them. In Francis Ponge’s succinct formulation, “All rocks descended by schizogenesis from the same enormous ancestor” (“The Pebble” 91). Pebbles are geologic memory chips: “A pebble is a capsule of stories that reach realms beyond human experience” (Zalasiewicz).

In contemplating these matters as he meanders along the beach, Pierre Jardin grows into a geologic subjectivity, his mortal span embedded in these deep timescales. Back in the present moment, the Palos Verdes fault continues to uplift the Peninsula, exposing siltstone, sandstones and conglomerates in the coastal cliffs. Rain, waves and mass-wasting break down these rocks and deposit the resulting sediment onto the beach, in an evolving stratigraphic sequence. Pebbles are not only archives of past events; they, too, persist in a cyclic time: “Firstly we must always bear in mind that a pebble is a transient thing. It is in the half-way stage of a long existence. Beginning as a fragment of rock, which itself is millions of years old, it ends its existence by being pounded into minute particles or grains” (Ellis 24).

Geophany

... what is hidden from us is not something rare and occult, or even augustly sacred, but, too often, the Earth we stand on. I present to you a new word: “geophany.” A theophany is the showing forth, the manifestation of God, or a god; geophany therefore must be the showing forth of the Earth. – Tim Robinson, “Listening to the Landscape,” *Setting Foot*, 164.



Figure 5 The Petriverse manifesto

The Petriverse of Pierre Jardin, like any suburban front yard, is simultaneously public and private property. The garden’s public mission is to cultivate aesthetic appreciation for stone and the wonders of earth, by designing provocative, playful compositions

that invite passersby to stop, look, read, and think. The garden is regularly seen by a diverse audience, including schoolchildren, parents, and neighbors, who often stop to comment on the changing displays. Pierre Jardin propagates the Petriverse and its vision in lithic, digital and print media. A large, square, flat mudstone serves as a plaque that bears the garden's name. Large stones spray-painted roadsign-yellow and mounted on carjacks at both sides of the garden inform



Figure 6 Petriverse blog QR code labeled "READ ME"

pedestrians that they are passing through a "SLOW TIME ZONE." A "Manifestone" broadcasts the garden's flat ontology in a lighthearted haiku: "Stones are vital signs/ of the earth's living spirit/ plus they're pretty cool." An eponymous blog features photos and writings about Petriverse displays, while also providing a platform for Pierre Jardin to disseminate his research and thoughts about stone more generally. A display with a QR code allows garden visitors to access the blog and read about the garden. Particularly

interesting developments in the garden are chronicled in a newsletter called *The Slow Times*, made available in print (document-box in garden) and on the Petriverse blog.

Over the course of its first decade, the Petriverse has become an ongoing performance, perhaps serving as a work of public Relational Art (an intentionally interactive installation only completed or realized through spectator responses). Because it expresses an underlying vision, philosophy and ethos, the Petriverse also could be classified as an Outsider Art Environment: a whimsical and/or revelatory world improvisationally created on one's home ground in spare time, an artwork that is never finished, yet always complete. The Petriverse differs from most such worlds in that the constrained space compels Jardin to continually change compositions, whereas Outsider Art Environments from Simon Rodia's Watts Towers of Los Angeles to Noah Purifoy's Joshua Tree Outdoor Museum to Leonhard Knight's Salvation Mountain are additive and cumulative in nature, yielding assemblages, structures, and environments that are monumental in scale. Too, the Petriverse is not properly speaking Outsider Art, because it is not working outside any specific traditions. Jardin has thus tagged the Petriverse with a more homey, literal label: Outside Art, art done and displayed outdoors.

The Petriverse evolves in a process of continual reconfiguration, composing in cycles of build-up and tear-down, in an iterative rhythm of "assembling" (McPhee) and "disassembling" (Meldahl) that mimics in

miniature the volatile geologic history of Southern California. Compositions reflect his discovery of new kinds of stones, or new insights into local geology, in a give-and-take that unfolds as a “collaboration within geologic life,” embodying an attempt “to approach the Earth itself... as a collaborator” (Yusoff, “Geologic Life” 792). The Petriverse undertakes an exploration in “geophysical aesthetics,” which should be engaged “not through ... conceptual metaphysical discussion and essays but through excursions, walks, experiments, and assays” (Parikka 63).

Pierre Jardin aspires to reveal the too-often hidden or forgotten beauties of stone and earth, to decontextualize and defamiliarize rocks just enough for their familiar presence to assert itself anew in a new context. As George Quasha observes, “there are two kinds of stones. There are the immediately obvious extraordinary ones, stones beautiful or strange or otherwise powerful in themselves.... Then there are the invisible stones, the stones we see as *stone*... These stones rarely appear as *themselves*” (46). In rock-fishing and displaying stones, Jardin works to discern distinctive qualities in “invisible” stones, and then create compositions so that they “appear as themselves.” In the events of this appearing—which happens when children stop and point at particular stones, or when parents inquire how and where the “unusual” rocks were acquired—the Petriverse becomes a “geophany” (Robinson), a showing forth of the Earth.

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THE PETRIVERSE NEWSLETTER

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Jardin Encounters Earth in Garden



When Pierre Jardin stumbled on these sandstones in the Yuha desert, it looked as if the small one had broken off of the big one. “The phrase ‘a chip off the old block’ just flashed in my brain,” he said. Then, when he installed them in his garden, he was struck dumb by a BIG idea: every rock is a chip off the planetary block; chips is to rock as rock is to earth. “These two rocks made a third materialize,” Jardin exclaimed, “the third rock from the sun, right here in my garden!”

Probing further, Jardin realized that this scaling relation in size also holds true for time. Rocks store telluric energies in concentrated form; composed of many compressed materials, they carry multiple histories. Jardin thus thinks of stones as tectonic “memory chips,” or archives of earth history.

Asked to describe this close encounter with earth in his garden, Jardin compared it to two other mind-bending mirrorings of macro- and microcosms: “It was sort of like geologist Jan Zalasiewicz’s earth-history tale *The Planet in a Pebble*, or the stunning scene in Italo Calvino’s *Mr Palomar* where he confronts infinity in his front yard.”

Inspired by Zalasiewicz’s view that “a pebble is a capsule of gigantic stories that reach realms beyond human experience,” Jardin now imagines the sandstone chip and block as the moon breaking off of the proto-earth 4.5 billion years ago. “I know my garden is just a tiny bloc of space-time,” he marveled, “yet surprisingly often, it suddenly expands to cosmic dimensions and takes me time-traveling!”

Geophilia

As these prolongations of the Petriverse indicate, what began as collecting rocks and setting them in an eccentric suburban garden has become an amorphous, protean project. Pierre Jardin has advanced from a first crush, a casual curiosity about rocks, to a vocation, an apprenticeship to stone.³ “The Petriverse” serves as an umbrella term for the various practices and pursuits that this apprenticeship entails, including rock fishing and gardening, writing about rocks in conceptual and poetic registers, and studying stone artists and cultural traditions. The Petriverse, comprehensively speaking, constitutes a generalized “geophilia,” which Jeffrey Jerome Cohen evocatively defines as “an affective interspace where the agency of stone and human ardor meet in mutual relation, in cross-ontological embrace, [...] a middle region of creation and innovation, a space of convivial wayfaring—experimenting, working, and living together, a place of differences and disorienting danger, a forging of alliance and embrace that gather a world so vast that even stones become fellow travelers along epochal, uncertain, but never unaccompanied ways” (Cohen 252). The various modes of Jardin’s work with stone feed into and fertilize one another, to the point that they have become inextricably entwined: for Jardin, the garden is a poem, or a geo-philosophy; blog-writing is tending a virtual garden.⁴

Philosopher’s Stones



Figure 7 “Stone Stacks,” Paul Harris and Richard Turner. Hannon Library, Loyola Marymount University (2016).

The inextricable link between stones and thought so central to Jardin’s geophilia informs an installation that features stones on loan from the Petriverse. Visitors to the Hannon Library at Loyola Marymount University stumble onto a strange sight: shelved cabinets filled with stacked books and stacked stones, interspersed with short texts on foam-core blocks. The installation, titled “Stone Stacks,” transposes library stacks into a space for stoned thinking (see below). The first display, labeled “Philosopher’s Stones,” presents three citations (with headings) sited on their source-books, next to unusual rocks:

Heidegger's Dumb Rock

The stone is without world. The stone is lying on the path, for example. We can say that the stone is exerting a certain pressure upon the surface of the earth. It is 'touching' the earth. But what we call 'touching' here is not a form of touching at all in the stronger sense of the word.... Because in its being a stone has no possible access to anything else around it, anything that it might attain or possess as such.

Nancy's Touch Stone

Corpus: all bodies, each outside the others, make up the inorganic world of sense. The stone does not 'have' any sense. But sense touches the stone: it even collides with it, and this is what we are doing here. Sense *is* touching.... Sense, matter forming itself, making itself firm: exaction and separation of a tact. With sense, one must have the tact not to touch it too much. One must have the sense or the tact: same thing.⁵



Figure 8 Nancy Touch Stone and rock stack

Cohen's Lithic Legibility

Stone is animated and self-organizing. It speaks, when we stop insisting that communication requires words rather than participating in meaning's generation. The temporal alterity of stone does not make the lithic any less a collaborator. It is not so much that we project ourselves onto rock and trick ourselves into discovering tales of our own implanting.... More surprising is that, despite having dwelt on the earth for a brief time...., the stories in which we participate, stories in which we are not the protagonists, are nonetheless partly about us.

Subsequent displays invite stoned thinking by simple juxtaposition of text and stones.



Figure 9 Text by Paul A. Harris, Stones on loan from *The Petriverse of Pierre Jardin*.

"Stone Stacks" was part of an exhibition called "Being and Slow Time,"⁶ which "signals a shift from Heidegger's phenomenological, human-centered analysis of time to an ecological, earth-centered vision in which human and natural histories have become inextricably entwined" (Harris and Turner). The exhibition was part of a SLOW LMU initiative, for which three designated Slow Time Zones were created on the campus.

The stoned thinking suggested by reading the texts and regarding the rocks in "Stone Stacks" was offered as a 'Slow Time Exercise' designed for this specific Slow Time Zone.

Stoned Thinking

I work with stone because stone is so much work. Physical labor stimulates thinking. The more engaged I am in working the freer my thoughts become.... The thinking that goes along with the placement of each stone incrementally adds to what is.... The stones provoke the thoughts and the thoughts give birth to the form. A finished construction is a thought process petrified.

—Dan Snow, *Listening to Stone*, x, xii.

As a world composed of rocks, the Petriverse is a speculative landscape for stoned thinking. Ralph Rugoff, in writing about The Museum of Jurassic Technology, characterizes stoned thinking as "something close to a trance. The effect of Stoned Thinking is to scramble our perception of boundaries, so that almost anything looms as a potential exhibit deserving an intimate once-over" (Rugoff 101). Pierre Jardin's stoned thinking discloses itself in an entanglement of physical relations, affective affiliations, and cognitive congruences with rocks; constructing lithic compositions and unfolding a geo-philosophy are inextricably entwined processes.⁷ Stoned thinking could be aligned with the abundant new materialisms emerging in the 'geologic turn,' but it is not so much a conceptual materialism as a concatenation of thoughts produced by working with materials. In the geophilic Petriverse, 'materials' include stones and writings about stone; construction and research, composition in words and stones, feed one another in feedback loops and bounds.

The scrambled perceptual boundaries of stoned thinking could be figured as absorption, in its material and aesthetic dimensions: the gradual taking in or soaking up of one energy or substance by another, and engrossing the attention. Pierre Jardin feels drawn by rocks; they exert a kind of pull, energetic presence, or gravitational attraction on his body and mind. When rock-fishing, the moment of initial notice when a single stone catches the eye, if at all sustained, becomes a process of mutual absorption. The rock draws the eye and something about it absorbs attentive focus and energy; in the process, some quality and/or material aspect is absorbed (form, color, markings, texture). One generally touches stone first with the eye and then with the hand; grasping a rock, picking it up, turning it in the fingers, elicits an intimate, layered encounter described well by Kathryn Yusoff: "Hold a palm up to a surface of rock, hold the tenure, the pitch of the rock, feel the cold intensity of mineralogy, feel the creep of death,

its contraction in the extension of a warm body. Different contagions of energy are exchanged, that difference is a celebration of the hours that are yet to come and have been" (Yusoff, "Geologic Subjects" 404n).

To touch stone is to be absorbed; to absorb stone is to feel touched by it. This mutual absorption forms the rudimentary gesture and ground zero of stoned thinking. This is not looking at and thinking about stone, but opening oneself to stone, "listening to stone,"⁸ thinking through and with stone⁹: "Stone speaks through the hands...because touch, being the oldest of our senses, is most sensitive to its language. Seeing is really just a way to touch beyond our arm's reach" (Snow xii). Alongside or perhaps prior to touching stone is being touched by stone: Yusoff suggestively asks, "Always there is the presumption that it is 'Man' who touches rock, but is it not the rock that touches Not-Man into being? Is it not the rock that lures the waiting imagination to find something that subtends it?" She speculates that humans as "geologic subjects" emerge with a "geomorphic aesthetics" expressed in (for example) Lascaux cave paintings: "If we remember that the commonest form of rock art is the open hand with ochre spat around it, then this is to remember the first act of touching rock, of opening hand, spit, lip, and breath to the question of touching the earth and its geologic perspective" (Yusoff, "Geologic Subjects" 386).

Chinese Lithophilia

Pierre Jardin's conception and experience of lithic absorption has been shaped by his study of Chinese stone appreciation. He has constructed his understanding of this tradition from research, extensive time visiting Chinese gardens, and interacting with leading collectors of Gongshi, or scholar's rocks. Aware that cross-cultural work always entails translation and construction, he approaches this task pragmatically, for the purpose of deepening his aesthetic, physical, and metaphysical feeling for stone. He was introduced to "Chinese Lithophilia" through Graham Parkes's work, which Parkes defines as "the Chinese veneration for stone in its natural, unworked state" (75). The susceptibility to simplifying traditions can be seen in Parkes's statement, which is misleading in a small but significant way. Chinese stones, from scholar rocks to garden stones, are not necessarily in a "natural, unworked state." Many Taihu stones were carved into dramatic forms and returned to Lake Tai so that traces of the work would be eroded. The widely held idea that Chinese and Japanese traditions centered on "natural, unworked" stones may reflect Orientalist preconceptions. In practice, Euro-American collectors of viewing stones place far more value on the notion that they are "natural, unworked" rocks than their Asian counterparts.¹⁰

The historical Chinese passion for stone is pervasive: it underlies cosmology and philosophy; it finds expression in the arts of creating gardens, visual art, and poetry, as well as mounting and displaying stones on desks of officials and scholars. These systems and practices are often integrated rather than seen as separate domains. Of particular interest are Gongshi, 'weird rocks' or 'strange stones.' Large examples have been placed in emperors' gardens since at least the 3rd century BCE, and smaller stones mounted on stands for private viewing.¹¹ Such rocks have a special place in Daoist philosophy that views the cosmos as composed of *qi*, a word for energy can connote "Vital Energy, Atmospheric Conditions, Breath, Air, Life Force" (*Zhuangzi* 215). The Dao translates as 'the way' but it also means all things (past, present, future) in their state of constant transformation. The Daoist text *Zhuangzi* stipulates that "The birth of man is just a convergence of energy. When it converges, he lives. When it scatters, he dies. Since life and death follow each other, what is there to worry about? In this way all things are one" (*Zhuangzi* 86). Echoing the language cited above of the rising and falling of mountains (and all things) as "the respiration of the world," Parkes writes, "Since breathing is a process that distinguishes the living from the dead, it was natural to think of the breath as a special manifestation of the energy that animates the cosmos, with an active (*yang*) phase corresponding to inhalation and a passive (*yin*) phase corresponding to exhalation" (Parkes 79).

In the cosmic web of shifting energies, rocks function as concentrated configurations of *qi*. The 12th-century treatise by Du Wan, *The Cloud Forest Catalogue of Rocks* begins: "The purest energy of the heaven-earth world coalesces into rock. It emerges, bearing the soil. Its formations are wonderful and fantastic..." (Schafer 12). Rock was seen as a specific and integral part of the earth's living body, its flow of energies. An entry on stone from an 18th-century encyclopedia posits that "The essential energy of earth forms rock . . . Rocks are kernels of energy; the generation of rock from energy is like the body's arterial system producing nails and teeth . . . The earth has the famous mountains as its support . . . rocks are its bones" (qtd. in Parkes 81). Over time, aesthetic appreciation developed a vocabulary for the morphological attributes of rocks and the desired qualities they should possess.¹²

Geomancy in Gardens

The vital breath of *qi*, while invisible, manifests itself or finds expression in the contours and textures of the landscape. The *Huainanzi* differentiates several topographical *qi* influences, including mountains, wetlands, and stone, in order that people are attentive to the energies in landscapes and situate themselves accordingly. This is the thinking that

informs *fengshui* (literally, 'wind and water'), a set of techniques and principles by which to harness and direct vital forces to produce positive effects. Placing oneself in proximity to rocks where concentrations of these energies were circulating would thus be beneficial to mind and body. Julien summarizes the outlook and its implications succinctly: "Not only my own being, as I experience it intuitively, but the entire landscape that surrounds me as well, is continuously flooded by subterranean circulating energy.... The most glorious sites will be those where it is most densely accumulated, where the circulation of the breath is most intense, its transformations most profound.... By rooting one's dwelling here rather than elsewhere, one locks into the very vitality of the world, taps the energy of things more directly" (Jullien 91-92).

Certainly, among the most "glorious sites" where rocks could be enjoyed for their aesthetic and physical benefits were and are Chinese gardens. The many studies by scholars of Chinese gardens demonstrate that they have a complex history. Over time, traditions have changed, sites have been transformed, and the logic and language of the art of gardening has evolved. One must thus bear in mind to refer to "classical Chinese gardens" is implicitly to evoke a coherent, essentialized or ahistorical tradition.¹³ Many of the most famous classical Chinese gardens, now World Heritage sites, were built in Suzhou during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Modern Chinese gardens designed in this tradition have been constructed in Portland, Vancouver, Seattle, and Pasadena, among other North American cities. While there are major treatises on constructing gardens, Ji Cheng's *The Craft of Gardens* (1631) being the most cited, no single set of design procedures can be given. Rather, the designer has to proceed intuitively and attempt to adhere to '*wu wei*,' the principle of non-action, or more precisely, action not in contradiction to nature. The garden should mimic the curves of nature, and evoke its patterns, and express and embody its dynamic energies.

Chinese gardens are cosmological landscapes designed to express "the entire universe with its 'ten thousand things,' and make this profusion intelligible" (Jencks, "Meanings" 196). The Chinese word for landscape, '*shan shui*,' literally means mountains and water, and evokes the Isles of the Immortals. It suggests balanced oppositions between *yang* and *yin*, masculine strength and feminine moisture, material and mental stolidity versus yielding and following the path of least resistance, rough and smooth textures, stillness and motion (streams), silence and sound (waterfalls). Rocks, individually situated or piled into rockeries, evoke mountains. Scaling, producing nature in miniature, is an important design principle in Chinese gardens. In an oft-cited 18th-century treatise by Shen Fu, he writes that "in piling up rocks into mountains...the aim is to see

the small in the large, to see the large in the small, to see the real in the illusory and the to see the illusory in the real" (qtd. in Jencks, "Meaning" 196). Rocks and rockeries were more than visual evocations of mountains: as Parkes writes, "rocks are thought to partake of the powers of the mountain less through their resembling its outward appearance than for their being true microcosms, animated by the same energies that formed the heights and peaks" (78). He cites a line from the *Cloud Forest Catalogue of Rocks*: "Within the size of a fist can be assembled the beauty of a thousand cliffs" (qtd. in Parkes 78).

Chinese gardens require the visitor to adjust to their construction, which often can feel constraining and even claustrophobic.¹⁴ One's movement through the landscape is funneled quite carefully; one traverses it a bit like moving visually along a scroll painting—one moves scene by scene; no one vantage point sees the whole. Pavilions, courtyards, walls, porches, serpentine paths, bridges, lookout points, all produce singular vantage points, each revealing a different scene for contemplation, a different configuration of *qi* to absorb and be absorbed by. The disruption of linear progression, and its relation to an attempt to integrate the infinite in a finite space, is evident in patterns throughout these gardens, from the simple form of zig-zagging paths and paving to the complex space-filling curves seen in intricate latticework in entryways and windows, including the "eternal knot." Itineraries shift abruptly between interior or domestic spaces (pavilions, corridors), external vistas (ponds, lakes, green expanses, groves of trees, rockeries), and spaces dedicated to single objects deliberately displayed (rocks). These different locations could also have different functions; gardens were places for formal and informal gatherings, private and public meetings, parties, festivals, writing, painting, and so on.

Rocks have multiple functions in gardens. They may be objects presented for viewing, often placed on islands in ponds or small courtyards; they may be piled into mountains as a wall above water; they may be grouped together into rockeries that provide routes to be walked through, around, over or under. They may lend gravity to landscapes or, on the contrary, evoke lightness and flight. Cheng's *The Craft of Gardens* recommends that the rocks used for the peaks of artificial mountains should be larger at the top than below, and fitted together so that "they will have the appearance of being about to soar into the air" (Cheng 110). Rock groups are not ever found in rows; they are rather set in undulating, winding configurations to produce plays of light and shadow, solid and air. They must be situated mindfully because, as Cheng writes, "Rocks are not like plants or trees: once gathered, they gain a new lease on life" (112). Their anfractuous textures are thus replicated in the contours of the routes one takes through them, physically and visually. They prevent one from seeing

the whole garden and also, through the dynamic of hiding and revealing that they produce, exemplify the ways that we perceive the inexhaustible totality of the Dao. The confused nature of space, the labyrinthine quality of itineraries through the garden, with the play of light and shadow, rocks and reflections, all produce an experience in which “space, and therefore time, are suspended in the garden” (Keswick 178).

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THE PETRIVERSE NEWSLETTER

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Forcefield Detected in Petriverse



Geomancers have confirmed observations consistent with the formation of a megalithic forcefield in the Petriverse. Garden proprietor Pierre Jardin was quick to assure concerned passersby that the site's energies pose no harm to people or pets.

Megalithic forcefields have been detected in ancient stone circles such as Avebury and Stonehenge. Massive stones at these sites emit electromagnetic signals that geomancers hear as a low buzzing, using Spectrum Analyzers.

The Petriverse forcefield is formed from two types of earth energy. Holey stones discharge *geofoam*, tiny bubble-like pulses related to quantum foam. Smooth stones propagate *geowaves*, vibrations audible at specific frequencies. The forcefield is a function of the two energies interacting with one another, comparable to interference between standing waves.

Stephen Albert, a Sinologist specializing in Chinese gardens, believes that the unique features of the megalithic forcefield in the Petriverse are due to the watery origins of the garden's rocks. “Shore stones selected for appealing form, impressive height, complex texture, or distinct coloring, retain oceanic wave forces,” he explained. Yin and yang, water and stone, create energies that resonate when rocks are placed in proper proximities, but few gardeners are skilled enough in feng shui to produce such effects. “The Tao is strong with this one,” Albert said, calling Jardin “a new hope” in garden design.

Jardin believes that shore stones bring glad tidings from the moon, and beach rock groups give off good vibrations. He hopes that this is music to the ears of his neighbors, whom he knows to be sensitive to the subtle beauties of stone.

Lithic Absorption

The two pervasive themes throughout the history of garden design in China are the expression of Daoist philosophy of nature on the one hand and the connections between gardens and the arts of poetry, painting, and calligraphy. These arts, including gardening, considered within the Daoist philosophical context, were thought of and practiced as versions of one another. Gardens, are, as Fang Xiaofeng writes, “places that can create poetic and painterly concepts.” They were seen as “a kind of three-dimensional landscape painting or ‘solid poetry’” (Xiaofeng 10). Early Chinese scholars such as Li Yu compared making a garden—specifically the art of building rock mountains—to writing an essay, for in both cases the problem is how to construct the whole piece from parts (Keswick 174). Gardens were tantamount to forms of concrete intellectual statements

(Xiaofeng 12). Clearly, gardens were not only places to write, paint, and think, but were themselves seen as a means of aesthetic expression of philosophical-spiritual concepts.

All these modes of expression—gardening, painting, poetry—were ways to engage in a practice of absorption where the line between the contemplation and composition becomes indiscernible. For example, both garden-design and painting depend on a double ‘vital spirit,’ one composed of the *qi* in the living landscape, one by the artist, who creates a ‘harmonious vibration’ in the elements of the work. A mutual “spiritual encounter” and “silent harmony” must be established between artist and landscape (Jullien 163). In order to experience the “limpidity” or “purity” of the wind, for example, the artist must also, through contemplation, take on those qualities within, as Jullien writes, through the “limpidity” and “purity” of the breath-energy that also irrigates me and changes into spirit” (162). Only by emptying the self, not being occupied with the self, can the landscape’s energies flow into one and emerge as garden/painting. “Contemplation” in this context, Jullien says, has two meanings: “contemplation of self, freed from importunities and uncleanness, and as a gathering up ... of the landscape within oneself” (161). The artist’s task is therefore ethical as well as aesthetic-spiritual: by not meddling in one’s contemplation of the landscape, one does not muddle the energies and one’s resonance with them. This is the way of the Dao—the “carefree” or “free and easy wandering” of the first chapter of the *Zhuangzi*. What Jullien calls “a silent osmosis between the outside and inside,” enables a landscape to “illuminate itself,” in the phrase from the *Zhuangzi*. The painter has to make a complete void within where and so that “mists and clouds and all the brilliance of the world, in concert with the breath-energy that ceaselessly bring to life between heaven and earth” may take shape in the artist and be expressed in the landscape painting or garden (165). Or, again in the words of the *Zhuangzi*, once the spirit does not struggle, “then there is painting”—it just happens, as if without agency or intention of the artist, certainly without confrontation or struggle.

Jullien underscores the crucial point that the ‘spirit’ here is more of an operation than a thing or faculty: an operation and process of refinement and distillation to an essence (wine, perfume, sperm). Likewise, contemplation is, in Jullien’s words, “effective, nonsubjectified”—it is a process whereby energetic capacity gathers, and the artist tunes to it, listening to rather than seeing it, and as it gathers, the painter/gardener gathers it up within. The painter “steals away” the mountain being painted—not its characteristics but “the creation-transformation” of the mountain itself (173). Similarly, in speaking of how to paint rocks, the *Mustard Seed Garden Painting Manual* (1679) states that: “To depict rocks with *ch’i*, it must be

sought beyond the material and in the intangible. Nothing is more difficult. If the form of the rock is not clear in one's heart(-mind) and therefore at one's fingertips...the picture can never be realized" (129).

Particularly masterful paintings of rock landscapes and even individual stones were as coveted and admired as the rocks themselves, because they contained the same *qi*. For particularly powerful, complex rocks, multiple paintings were sometimes executed, showing different views, in order to express their energies.¹⁵ Just as restorative powers were attributed to stones, numinous powers were attributed to paintings. The scrolls were often not hung permanently but taken out on specific occasions to be contemplated in silence for days at a time. Jullien writes that this practice is not about the eye and perception of an aesthetic work of beauty but about a deployment of energy into which "the spirit, in becoming refined-distilled, can be absorbed" (176). Lithic absorption also has a literal dimension in cases of alchemical elixir poisoning. The view that rocks, minerals, or herbs might contain "an elixir of life," or "confer on the owner a kind of immortality" (Keswick 35) was taken to its logical conclusion by more than one emperor.

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THE PETRIVERSE NEWSLETTER

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Jardin Petrified By Petriverse



Pierre Jardin is seldom seen in the Petriverse; when spotted, he is usually standing still, staring at stones. While he appears to be lost in thought, or absent-minded, something more mysterious, if not mystical, is occurring. Jardin has spent so many hours absorbed by rocks, that he has begun absorbing stone himself.

Petrification occurs in organic material like wood, when the original pore spaces fill with minerals and become stony. The process has never been observed in living humans and scientists remain sceptical about Jardin's reported transformation. But in *The Third Policeman*, Irish author Flann O'Brien advanced the theory that "people who spent most of their natural lives riding iron bicycles get their personalities mixed up with the personalities of their bicycle as a result of the interchanging of the atoms of each of them."

A similar molecular exchange may be occurring here. Jardin's fixed gaze induces a confusion psychologists call "boundary dissolution." Utterly engrossed in the textures, forms, and sheer beauty of stones, Jardin enters a "deep thought" state; when deep thought is immersed in the deep time of stones, a porous membrane between matter and mind forms. Through what Gaston Bachelard has termed "dialectical animism," stones and homo sapiens seem to actually seep into and absorb each other.

Judging from a recent petric text message (left), Jardin is unfazed by this osmosis-diagnosis. Slowly turning to stone over six years has brought peace to Pierre Jardin. Visitors who linger mindfully over displays should be mindful of peacefulness or other petrification symptoms contracted by stone-staring.

A Rockin' Regimen of Spiritual Exercises

Rocks were therefore both normal and numinous.
 – Dean, *A Culture of Stone*, 5

A restraint, or an economy of means, would appear to be the most viable means of establishing a connection—a communion—with stone's intrinsic holiness... This singular economy of means for working stone—a rustic immediacy, it could be called—which makes possible the consubstantiation (communion) with the numinous environment, is the expression of a more archaic cultural essence. – Paternosto, *The Stone and the Thread*, 186

As part of his apprenticeship to stone, Pierre Jardin has honed rock-gardening into a contemplative practice. The Petriverse has become a spiritual landscape,¹⁶ a place where he takes his spiritual exercise: "It's a practically priceless practice he has gaily deemed the daily lodestone download."¹⁷ This practice integrates Daoist contemplation with the Composition of Place, an important element in the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola.¹⁸ Composition of place is a means to lay out an imaginal plane, an interior 'space' open to receiving affects and percepts and composing images and thoughts. Jardin has adapted this meditative technique as a tool for focusing and disciplining the creative imagination; he conceives this constructed plane in terms of Deleuze's plane of composition.¹⁹

The composition of place is both a general method of Ignatian prayer and a technique used in contemplations on Scripture or other material. There is a geographical dimension to prayer in the Spiritual Exercises. In general, one begins by asking oneself, *Where am I?* The work of locating oneself takes time and unfolds across many scales—one's immediate context and surroundings, rippling out to the neighborhood, town or city, country and so on out to the cosmos. In this form, the composition of place hearkens back to the Stoic philosophy that influenced Loyola and the Jesuits in their development of the Spiritual Exercises. As Pierre Hadot (1995) has shown, the Stoics used 'thought exercises' as contemplative means to reflect on the cosmos and one's place in it, and to develop ethical ways of living.

Ignatius stresses that you should work to be *surprised* by where you are—that the intimacy necessary to prayer demands openness to surprise. The composition of place is thus a general practice of attuning oneself to one's environment, understood as a dynamic process that encompasses many levels. The epistemology of Ignatian composition of place is Medieval in character, rather than Modern. This means that place is not composed from the viewpoint of a discrete, static self who gazes

on fixed world. Instead, composition of place is projective, immersive, and dynamic. One gathers up details, juxtaposes views and scales, creating an imaginative movement; one projects oneself into the scene, enters into events, identifying with different characters or components and their modes of apprehension. In short, one is a participant rather than an observer, or a constantly shifting kaleidoscopic participant-observer.

The composition of place—predicated on a dynamics of attunement, surprise, and immersion—is thus an inherently temporal process. Its practice urges one's being to open to becoming—composition of place situates one in a vibrant field, a block of shifting space-time. This space-time is a timescape—not a space with a temporal dimension, but a temporal process grounded in a changing landscape. In practicing composition of place, one simultaneously creates and projects oneself into the timescape; the timescape does not exist but persists or inheres in its process of composition.

Each day's work in the Petriverse begins with a contemplative composition of place. A silent reflection and a few deep breaths center the inner mindscape to receive the outer landscape, creating a clearing, a plane of composition, for feeling the flow of forces in the garden, and the changes in timbre in the flow with each movement through it. The numinous Petriverse is felt as an intensive field of lithic energies, inhuman in scale; stones become potentials, nodes in axes of forces: "What is optimal changes according to the forces active at any given moment—powers of the field. The field is at least as alive as the entities within it" (Quasha 45). The stolid stability of stones is replaced by the contingency of their configuration. Each step is the brink of a possible gesture, a decision to move something, to create a new set of relations. The visual is already tactile: to look at the stones is to touch them. The stones function as attractors—attracting the eye, attractors of energies, vectors of pattern. Looking is also listening: a receptive openness to textures, surfaces, masses, densities. Listening in this way, the energy field is as active and alive as the rocks in it; there is an active interplay of background and foreground, rock-part and field-whole.

Animaterialist Imagination

Stoned thinking is the work of the "animaterialist imagination," a portmanteau coined after the work of Gaston Bachelard. Bachelard's method fits the Petriverse ethos of combining systemic rigor and personal discovery; he emphasizes disciplined commitment to living poetically and "dreaming well." Bachelard championed the development of a "material imagination," a mode of immersive, intimate interaction with matter. The "material imagination [...] goes beyond the attractions of the imagination of forms; [it] thinks matter, dreams in it, lives in it, or, in other words,

materializes the imaginary" (*Earth and Reveries of Will* xlvi). Bachelard stipulates that "a kind of dialectical animism" between matter and mind is required to set this imaginative work in motion. This animist dimension of animaterialist imagination exceeds the discourse of "animating" that is ubiquitous in contemporary new materialisms.²⁰

Bachelard calls this way of thinking matter, dreaming and living in it, *reverie*.²¹ Reverie is not a passive or undirected mental drifting. In Bachelard, reverie is an ascetic practice: it requires both a concentrated will and deep listening. Reverie also culminates around a specific temporal concept and experience. In diametric opposition to Bergson's concept of the stream of consciousness as continuous duration, Bachelard posits reverie's equilibrium being punctuated by a "poetic" or "ephiphantic instant."²² This instant disrupts the "horizontal" flow of time and opens a "vertical" time, a moment characterized by "the principle of an essential simultaneity in which the most scattered and disunited being achieves unity." Time ceases to flow; it suddenly shoots up (*il jaillit*), Bachelard says. The poetic instant is an "inaugural" moment, a "phoenix flash" of cosmic time traversing personal time: "When these flashes of fire, lightning or flight surprise us in our contemplation, they appear to our eyes as *heightened, universal moments*—not so much ours as given to us, moments which mark the memory and return in dreams, retaining their imaginary dynamism. We might term them, in fact, phoenixes of reverie" (*Fragments* 32).

Bachelard's notion of "reverie," while grounded in a particular epistemology, is marked by its being "not so much ours as given to us," from the outside. This bears emphasizing if we accept that the contemporary ethico-aesthetic project involves "the art of becoming inhuman." Material imagination is integral to Kathryn Yusoff's comments on developing a geologic subjectivity: "Considering the human within geologic time poses the problem of thinking an inhuman milieu, both before, after and internal to 'us.' Thinking with geologic subjects may be a way to generate new sensibilities around the recalcitrant nature of the geologic as a form of subjectivity, when what is at stake is not a nature that involves entities *per se*, but what passes between them; holding together or forcing apart" ("Geologic Subjects" 387).

Rockery Reveries

Rockery Reveries are compositions juxtaposing verse and image that give condensed expression to lines of contemplative reflection spurred during sustained encounters with stones, informed by a poetics that intertwines abstract-conceptual and literal-material semantic registers through evocative wordplay and self-reflexiveness. Rockery Reveries embody

what Bachelard calls “*that strange reverie which is written and indeed forms itself in the act of writing*” (Water 27, original emphasis) and they aspire to realize Bachelard’s claim that “*reverie assumes the whole universe in its images; simultaneously creative and natural, its value is indissolubly aesthetic and ontological*” (xxxvix).

Rockery reveries express a petric poetics that prioritizes a present moment pregnant with epiphanic potential. A petric poetics prefers pithy, proverbial prompts that really, readily proffer themselves to readers to play with. So much in a petric poetics depends upon an inverse relation between brevity in form and length of duration demanded to read and reflect. This formal relation has a correlation in content: durational length in reading opens onto a *longue durée* the work evokes; the petric poem places us in a deep time. A petric poetics deploys semantic density, stratigraphic layers, to evoke and entangle different temporal scales. The poem does not represent temporal concepts but presents a present moment within which disparate timelines intersect and interweave.

The haiku is the ancient poetic form that performs this dance between present moment and earthly temporality par excellence. Risking cliché, and certainly not deigning to claim the profundity of a Haiku master, Pierre Jardin has turned to the genre as a fitting form in which to convey epiphanic insights or impressions garnered from long days in the garden.

In this first Rockery Reverie, distinct bands of color on rocks are read as graphic inscriptions in which signs of different temporalities can be deciphered by creative interpretation: “reading between the lines” on stones allows one to navigate between “lines of time.” The timelines being talked about shift in each poetic line, from the incessant, repetitive rhythm of ocean waves, to the lunar cycles shaping ocean tides, to the geological epochs in which the foliated patterns on the stones originated. All these timelines converge as “current tidings,” breaking news, being read in a “now,” the expansive moment in which a person experiences time on several levels simultaneously.

Reading Between The Lines of Time
(haiku)



Waves trace blue ripples
Current tidings from the moon
Now written in stone

Rockery Reverie #1

The Petriverse of Pierre Jardin

“Sky & Sea Island Stone” also plays on a deictic anchoring, a verbal self-referentiality to mark a present context from which a poem emanates and encompasses different earthly rhythms and natural processes. The stone was found at Little Harbor campground on Catalina Island off the coast of Southern California. It is a piece of blueschist, “a signature rock produced by low temperature-high pressure metamorphism in a subduction zone” (Meldahl 86). The island attracts striking formations of clouds and waves in the skies above and the seas below. This stone microcosmically compresses all these images and forces and contains them. The deep ocean color and brittle hardness make the stone seem as if formed when waves met lava, the water turning the red molten flow blue. The white lines on its two faces, as one flips the stone to look at first one and then the other side, recall the days on the island spent watching clouds and waves.

This Rockery Reverie is a hybrid of haiku and Chinese couplet. Like the haiku, the Chinese couplet is aphoristic and evocative. The Chinese couplet has two equal-length lines of four to seven characters which mirror one another in (inverse or identical) tone patterns, and corresponding characters in the two lines must have the same lexical category (noun-noun, verb-verb, etc.). Following the Chinese form, in the Rockery Reverie poem, the words in the first and last lines echo one another in structure, sound, and lexical category. While these lines evoke the sky above and water below, the middle line speaks as and for the island itself, harbored in the stone. It is thus a reflective surface, a passage where the rock flips from one side to the other. The middle line announces itself as such in content (a mirror) and form (a palindrome).

Sky & Sea Island Stone

(haiku)

Light wispy clouds form



I'm a mirror rim am I



White whisp'ring waves fold

Rockery Reverie #7 | Catalina Island | The Petriiverse of Pierre Jardin

Find Balance in Stones

“Stone breathes within nature’s time cycle. It doesn’t resist entropy but is within it. It begins before you and continues through you and goes on. Working with stone is not resisting time but touching it.”

—Isamu Noguchi (qtd. in Herrera 508).

A particularly rich zone of contact between lived human time and geological time is created while balancing or stacking stones. A stone's specific morphological features are traces of multiple events across diverse timescales, from tectonic processes of subduction and uplift to tidal tumbling and wind wearing. Every little feature one searches out, the features that make a balance possible, result from an untraceable sequence of minute events. George Quasha's phrase, "stones stutter to a balance" (73), thus echoes across several timescales. Stacking stones successfully is less about control over material than allowing materials and bodies (including one's own) to merge with one another and assume a new form. Balancing stones requires an attentive listening through touch, bringing the histories of stones to intersect and interact with the human body's clocks, the metabolic processes of muscles, the diastolic and systolic pumping phases of the beating heart, and the inhalation and exhalation of breathing. Breathing with stones, touching their sense, entails aligning our mind and senses with breathing, and the in/out, move-in/pull-away rhythm of balancing stones merges with breathing as well.



Figure 10 *Leaning Tower*

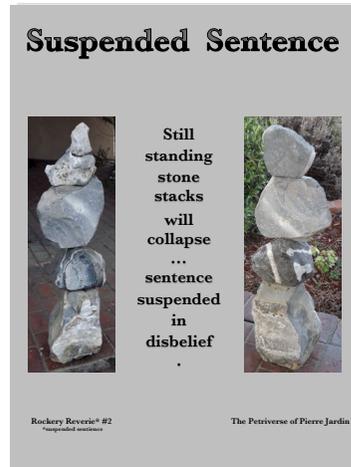


Figure 11 *Poised/OnEdge, 5', 200 lbs.*

Once accomplished, a delicately poised cairn produces a different collision of disparate timescales, as the obdurate durability of stone contacts and contrasts with the unknown duration of the stone stack. As Quasha observes, "a stone at the edge is still happening" (36). The human shaping of the stones into a balanced configuration can come to an end at any time; its mortality is certain but time of death unknown. Ephemeral stone stacks as an uncanny harbinger of death inverts the customary role of stone as a medium for monumental memorialization of mortality.²³

This theme finds expression in "Suspended Sentence" (Rockery Reverie 2). Mortal human life is lived as a suspended sentence: we know we are sentenced to die but we usually do not know when or how.

Similarly, stone stacks stay standing in a state of sustained caesura. Persisting in a prolonged pause, they hover precariously between existing and ceasing to exist, between presence in space and absence in time. This Rockery Reverie pays homage to these qualities by suspending a sentence between the stacks serving suspended sentences. The word stack of the first lines may collapse through the ellipsis that suspends the sentence's progress; the sentence instead ends on the note of disbelief or denial. "Suspended in disbelief," of course, echoes Samuel Taylor Coleridge's phrase "a willing suspension of disbelief," referring to the necessary choice by a reader of literature to 'suspend disbelief' in the world created on the page; instead of saying this is not real, the reader must accept the reality of a fiction. The same double-think obtains with respect to our need to treat the reality that our life is haunted by a death sentence as a fiction.



Temporal Phronesis

I champion a certain *temporal phronesis*, temporal literacy, or lucidity—being able to attend to and negotiate with multiple temporal levels at the same time—David Wood, "Earth Art: Place, Word, and Time (146).

The Petriverse of Pierre Jardin is an ongoing experiment in geologic subjectivity, an attempt to adapt to the demands of the Anthropocene to develop new relations to the lithosphere. It is an experimental dwelling in deep time, and an experiential practice of slow time. A Petriverse blog



Figure 12 *Suspended*, (4'h x 12' w)

entry describes contemplative work with stones as a “a drift in time,”²⁴ a phrase which connotes both being adrift in time, and a dilation in the fabric of space-time—like a “wrinkle” in time, a drift in time is a meta-physical breach, in which different timescales can be accessed and occupied. The installation “Suspended” (2017) is composed of “Miocene stones, Pleistocene holes, Holocene text, Anthropocene jack.” The letters in “FIND BALANCE IN STONES” suggest a balanced stone stack or a human stick figure. The piece as a whole evokes multiple geologic epochs and the fine balance needed to navigate this precarious juncture in our history.

Stoned thinking cements a breccia with traditions by cobbling together conglomerate materials, composing a speculative landscape nestled among the terroirs of rock-gardening, geo-aesthetics, eco-philosophy, concrete poetry, and land art. Its petric poetics scratches the surface of the upper crust in a geologic genealogy of lithic inscriptions comprising a stratigraphic archive, a rock record in which nothing—and everything—is written in stone.

Loyola Marymount University

Notes

1. Some passages from this essay also appear in “In the Labyrinth of Slow Time: ‘A Perturbation in the Deep Stream’ and ‘A Perambulation in the Deep Stream,’” forthcoming in *C21 Literature: Journal of 21st-Century Writings* (Open Library of the Humanities). All images are by the author.
2. See Quasha, p. 118, on the connection to a particular stone in a field of stones. Similarly, Cohen describes an “oval of salt-and-pepper granite” that he first says he chose because its form and texture trigger associations with his professional work and personal background; thus he “seized a round stone on a winter beach in Maine because it dwelled already inside [his] history.” But then asks, “But what if the stone seized me?” Teasing out the implications of the query, Cohen writes, “What if the petric egg, so perfect for the palm, holds more than an accidental power to draw human hand and story? What if it is not anthropomorphizing to speak of a stone’s ability to resist, its power to attract—and even of its sympathies, alliances, inclinations, and spurs?” (212).
3. Jardin’s apprenticeship to stone takes inspiration from Gilles Deleuze’s notion of apprenticeship, in which “to learn is first of all to consider a substance...as if it emitted signs to be deciphered, interpreted.... One becomes a carpenter only by becoming sensitive to the signs of wood” (Deleuze, 4).
4. A rich historical precedent for the interrelations among stone practices is found in the Chinese literati tradition, in which contemplating stones, using stones to create gardens, and writing about or painting stones were all aspects of stone veneration. See below.
5. For analyses of this encounter between Nancy and Heidegger, see Rugo, Jacobus, and Morin.
6. *Being and Slow Time* (Paul A. Harris and Richard Turner, Bellarmine Forum Artist in Residence). Exhibition in Hannon Library, Loyola Marymount University, August-December, 2016. In conjunction with the 2016 Bellarmine Forum “The Values of Time” and LMU Common Book 2016.
7. For an account of creative practice as a form of thinking, see Manning and Massumi (2014).
8. This phrase is the title of two books directly pertinent to stoned thinking: Snow and Hayden Herrera’s biography of Isamo Noguchi, who said that in his later years he was drawn away from working on stone to listening to stone.

9. See Tewksbury for a rich treatment of scopophilic versus tactile modes of stone aesthetics.
10. For a succinct summary of this question, see Elias, "Worked versus Unworked Stones."
11. For examples of scholar rocks and viewing stones, see the virtual exhibition in this issue.
12. See Hu's essay, "Stone Aesthetics in Ancient China," in *The Romance of Scholars' Stones*.
13. See Yang 2003 for a detailed treatment of the economic and political historical forces that shaped these gardens over centuries.
14. The claustrophobic feeling of visiting Chinese gardens is exacerbated by their popularity. It is difficult to absorb these sites when tour guides speak through megaphones and hundreds of people crowd small courtyards. Many of the Suzhou gardens open very early; Pierre Jardin recommends arriving at opening time to enjoy an hour or two of quiet before the buses start arriving.
15. LACMA exhibition "Wu Bin: Ten Views of a Lingbi Stone," December 10, 2017-June 24, 2018. See Marcus Flacks, *Crags and Ravines Make a Marvellous View: A Study of Wu Bin's Unique 17th Century Scroll Painting Ten Views of a Lingbi Rock* (forthcoming 2019, Sylph Editions).
16. Among the voluminous writings on spiritual landscapes, a treatment relevant to the approach here, with reference to Deleuze, Derrida, etc., is found in Dewsbury and Cloke (2009).
17. Petriverse blog entry "My Sediments Exactly: A Rockin' Regimen of Spiritual Exercises," March 31, 2014, petriverse.wordpress.com/2014/03/31/unsentimental-sediments-in-arigidly-regimented-spiritual-regime/.
18. This pairing is not as preposterous as it may seem. For relevant comparisons of Ignatian spirituality in its cosmic-mystical form with Taoism, see King (2011). For a clear account of composition of place in relation to Buddhism with references to Taoism, see Habito (2013). For an insightful comparison of the Spiritual Exercises, Buddhism, and Lacanian psychoanalysis (!), see Newman (1996).
19. See Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* Ch. 7.
20. A salient touchstone here is Roger Caillois's "mystical materialism," expressed in his writings on stone. There are direct comparisons between Pierre Jardin's stoned thinking and Caillois's lithic contemplations, which he terms a "mental inebriation." Jardin and Caillois speak in terms of "spiritual exercise" and both combine Taoist and post-Catholic spiritual elements in the work (see the excerpts from *Pierres réfléchies* in this issue). Caillois is not treated here because it is the subject of a separate work-in-progress.
21. Bachelard's extended meditations on reverie are collected in *The Poetics of Reverie*.
22. On Bachelard's epiphanic instant, see Kearney 2008.
23. A unique perspective on stones and mortality is provided by Méchoulan (2006), which includes countless affecting epitaphs on ancient gravestones. To take just one example:

* Eh! oh! Voyageur! Arrête-toi un instant,
 Cette pierre muette le désire.
 Ici gisent les os d'Olus Granius, crieur public,
 Homme bien élevé, content de peu, loyal.
 Voilà tout! Il voulait te l'apprendre.
 Tu peux reprendre ton chemin.
 Tu peux reprendre ton chemin.

* Hey! Oh! Traveler! Stop for a moment,
 This silent stone desires it.
 Here lie the bones of Olus Granius, town crier,
 Well-bred man, happy with little, loyal.
 That is all! He wanted to bring it to your attention.
 You can resume your journey.

(Tombeau d'Olus Granius Stabilio, Rome, IIe siècle av. J.-C.)

24. "Adrift in a drift in time," October 17, 2017, petriverse.wordpress.com/2017/10/17/a-drift-in-time-ste-1o13/

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