

THE IMAGINAL STONE:
STORIES OF SELF AND WORLD

by
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I certify that I have read this paper and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a product for the degree of Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology.

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Abstract

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By Cyndera M. Quackenbush

The realm of relationships not only includes intrapsychic and interpersonal relationships, but also the relationship between humans and the world. Using participatory epistemology as methodology, this thesis explores that relationship through stone, an accessible entity of Earth. A relationship with stone can be seen throughout various times and cultures; stones have played significant roles within mythology, shamanic practices, ancestral worship, and divination. Stone was a major preoccupation in the ancient art of alchemy, which Carl G. Jung later paralleled to the process of individuation. Psychological views and modern approaches to stone are explored in the writings of Jung, Stephen Aizenstat, Maud Oakes, and James Hillman. The story of a particular kind of stone, what the author has named the Imaginal Stone, is revealed through its geological history and discovery by the author's father. The emerging relationship between the Imaginal Stones and the author is documented through the study of dreams, active imagination, and synchronicity.

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For Dad

How happy is the little Stone
That rambles in the Road alone,
And doesn't care about Careers
And Exigencies never fears –
Whose Coat of elemental Brown
A passing Universe put on,
And independent as the Sun
Associates or glows alone,
Fulfilling absolute Decree
In casual simplicity –

Dickinson, 1959, pp. 194-195

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I	INTRODUCTION.....	1
	Research Methodology	2
	Guiding Purpose and Rationale.....	5
	Synopsis of Chapters	6
CHAPTER II	THE STORYTELLING STONE.....	9
	The Shaman: Speaking with Nature	9
	Memory of the Earth.....	11
	Connection to the Land.....	14
	Stones as Ancestors	16
	Divining Stones and the Right to Rule	18
	Spirits in Stone	20
	Connecting With God Through Stone	22
CHAPTER III	THE SOUL OF STONE.....	26
	A Brief History of the Concept of Soul.....	27
	Stones and the Art of Alchemy	33
	Carl G. Jung: A Life With Stone.....	36
	Individuating With Stone.....	43
CHAPTER IV	THE BILLION-YEAR-OLD ART STONES.....	47
	Billion-Year-Old Rock	47
	James F. Quackenbush and His Discovery	51
CHAPTER V	THE IMAGINAL STONE	62
	The Next Generation of Discovery.....	62
	The Dream.....	63
	Meeting the Mentor	67
	The Owl's Heart	70
	The Snake Queen and the Invisible Pearl	75
	Becoming the Desert	80
	Seeing With the Hands: An Awakening of Body With Stone	81
CHAPTER VI	CONCLUSION.....	89
	Implications of the Study	91
	Further Exploration	93
REFERENCES	96
AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH	102

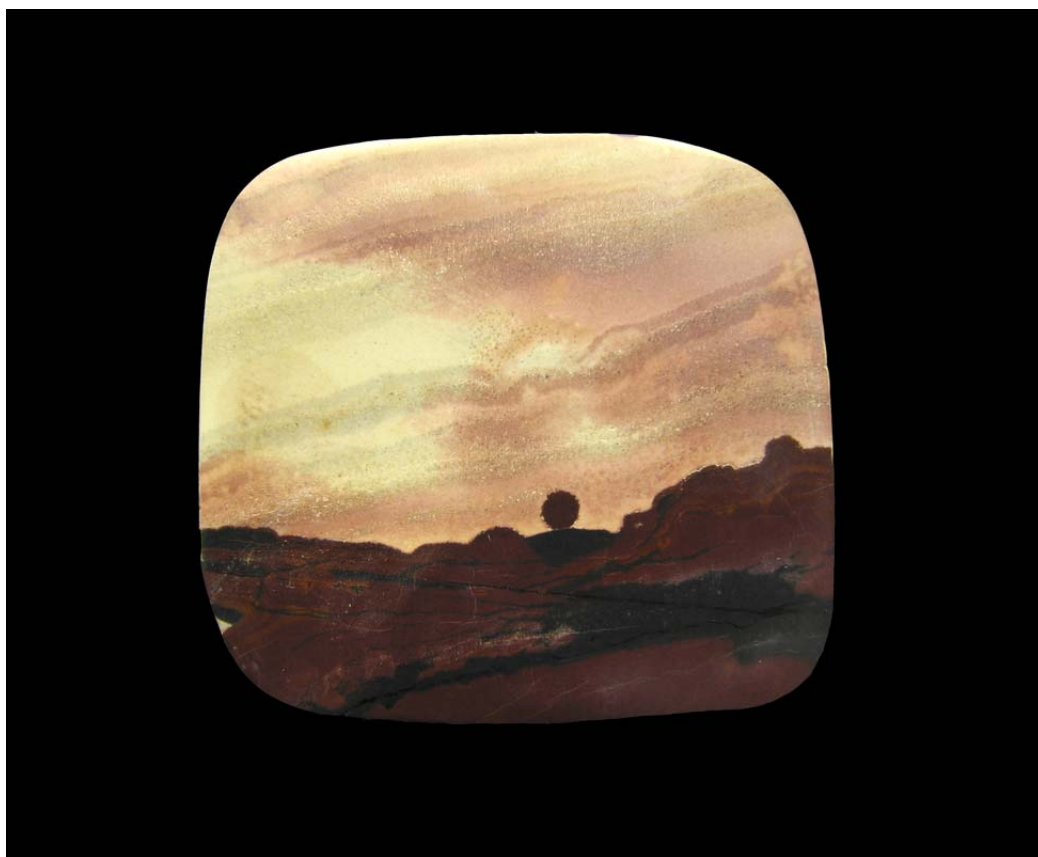


Figure 1. "Rolling Stone." Photograph by Cyndera Quackenbush.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1	“Rolling Stone”	ix
	From James F. Quackenbush’s Masterpiece Collection. Source: Photograph by Cyndera M. Quackenbush.	
Figure 2	“Imaginal Stone”	8
	Unnamed stone. Source: Photograph by Cyndera M. Quackenbush.	
Figure 3	“The Wizard”	25
	From James F. Quackenbush’s Masterpiece Collection. Source: Photograph by Cyndera M. Quackenbush.	
Figure 4	“Butterfly”	46
	From James F. Quackenbush’s Masterpiece Collection. Source: Photograph by Cyndera M. Quackenbush.	
Figure 5	“Creation of Earth”	48
	From James F. Quackenbush’s Masterpiece Collection. Source: Photograph by Cyndera M. Quackenbush.	
Figure 6 & 7	“Mining Rock in Death Valley”	53
	Source: Photographs by David Kerr. From author’s private collection.	
Figure 8	“Walking the Path”	61
	Photograph of James F. Quackenbush and Peter Spoecker. Source: Photograph by David Kerr. Source: From author’s private collection.	
Figure 9	“The Egg”	76
	From James F. Quackenbush’s Masterpiece Collection. Source: Photograph by Cyndera M. Quackenbush.	
Figure 10	“Woman in Reflection”	88
	From James F. Quackenbush’s Masterpiece Collection. Source: Photograph by Cyndera M. Quackenbush.	
Figure 11	“Sun Dancer”	96
	From James F. Quackenbush’s Masterpiece Collection. Source: Photograph by Cyndera M. Quackenbush.	

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

It was in the form of a dream that a direction
made itself known –
a dream of colorful images,
trapped in ancient stones,
finally being liberated . . .
to tell stories –
the story of the creation of the universe,
the story of Life, the story of Art, the story
of Nature

Quackenbush, date unknown

Over a billion years ago, in an age of great turmoil, all the forces of Nature raged in a ruthless battle. Mountains rose, islands emerged, and continents were shaped. There were no people, no creatures, no plants; only the chaotic cry of the Earth's elements. During this time, a mysterious rock was being created in a huge inland sea. It would lay hidden and buried for millennia, while, slowly, life on Earth evolved. Human beings eventually began to walk the Earth, until, finally the rock was uncovered. Like a dream frozen in the Earth's bones, the rock was found to contain visions of familiar and otherworldly landscapes, creatures of the animal kingdom and mythical domains, and people from all ages of time. It is as if the rock wished to tell a story. The individual pieces containing these pictures came to be known as the Imaginal Stones.

As daughter of James F. Quackenbush, the discoverer of the Imaginal Stones described above, I have intimately witnessed how a man deeply committed himself to a life with stone. This thesis is an exploration of what a relationship with stone might mean

for people today. What do stones represent to people? Can a connection to stone be healing? As pieces of the Earth, do they provide an accessible connection to the Earth that is literally readily at hand? To conduct this research, I have begun with myself as the test subject. Heuristically, I have discovered some of what it means to have a relationship with stone. This thesis has served as the opus of my healing: on a personal level, I have worked through some of the grief of my father's death and, on a broader scale, felt the deep impact of spending time with an incredible phenomenon of nature. Though the stones must be seen in person to be fully appreciated, images of the Imaginal Stones are sewn throughout the text, reflecting some of the material explored.

Research Methodology

For this research I have chosen a fairly new methodology called participatory epistemology developed by scholar Richard Tarnas (2006). This methodology moves away from the objective empiricism that emerged from the Enlightenment, beginning with philosopher René Descartes. Though serving the crucial purpose of differentiating the self from the environment and liberating humans from unchallenged belief systems, that tradition of scientific objectivity, said Tarnas, has resulted in the limiting conclusion that humans are the sole holders of meaning and intelligence in a vast universe of purposeless matter and space. Employing the method of participatory epistemology, the researcher enters a relationship, a dialogue, with the studied phenomena, staying open to the hidden meanings and purpose it may be trying to communicate.

Through a parable entitled the "The Two Suitors," Tarnas (2006) illustrated these two approaches to research. This thought experiment asks you to pretend for a moment that you are the universe and are being approached, or courted, in two different ways.

One suitor approaches you as though you are inferior, as if lacking intelligence and an interior dimension. Your existence is valuable only to the extent that your resources may be exploited “to satisfy his various needs; and whose motivation for knowing you was ultimately driven by a desire for increased intellectual mastery, predictive certainty, and efficient control over you for his own self-enhancement” (p. 39). Tarnas asked if you, the universe, would more deeply reveal yourself to this suitor, or by contrast, a second suitor, who views you as being at least equally intelligent and valuable as himself and searches not for information to exploit but for a “creative synthesis emerging from both of your depths” (p. 39). Like any desirable partner, the second suitor is good at listening, remaining attentive to unseen intricacies and humbly appreciating the mysteries he does not understand. The suitor remains open to many different forms of communication and can thus more easily enter into mutual exploration. What the suitor seeks to know may even arrive within his very own being, because he knows that subject and object may not be so separate after all.

The researcher using participatory epistemology, like the second suitor, pays attention to what arises in the inner self psychically, but also to what emerges externally through synchronicities (Tarnas, 2006). These meaningful coincidences, often too significant to be ignored, point to a web of connection and intelligence in the larger universe. Though the view that the human being is the source of all intelligence may be dethroned, said Tarnas, the human being serves as an important, self-reflective vessel, holding the spirit of the universe itself.

The participatory epistemological research method suited my engagement with the Imaginal Stones, especially after a crucial realization in the initial brainstorm

regarding this thesis. For years, I had wondered what could be *done with* the stones. It occurred to me quite suddenly one day that the following questions could also be asked: What is it that the stones desire? Why have they intersected with human beings at this point in time? Is there something they can show us? Though it is a dream of mine to find a livelihood with this inheritance, these expectations had to be quieted in order to attune to the stone's possible hidden purposes. The Imaginal Stone was not an earth resource to be exploited but an entity in its own right.

To speak of stone having desire, a purpose—is this not to anthropomorphize the stone? Though, certainly, human projection may occur in a *participation mystique* with stone, Tarnas (2006) challenged the assumption that all the qualities described as strictly human may actually belong to the macrocosm of the universe and are manifested through humans as microcosms. As an alternative to the post-Cartesian view that humans are the sheer holders of meaning in an unintelligent universe, Tarnas posited,

Is it not much more plausible that human nature, in all its creative multidimensional depths and heights, emerges from the very essence of the cosmos, and the human spirit is *the spirit of the cosmos itself* as inflected through us and enacted by us? Is it no more likely that the human intelligence in all its creative brilliance is ultimately the cosmos's intelligence expressing *its* creative brilliance? (p. 492)

Stones may be the accessible holders of this cosmic intelligence. Marie-Louise von Franz (1964), noting the mathematical composition of crystals, wrote that formations such as this evoke “the intuitive feeling that even in so-called ‘dead’ matter, there is a spiritual ordering principle at work” (p. 209). The intricate art formations perceived in the Imaginal Stones were what initially caused my father, artist-discoverer and educator James Quackenbush, to sense what he called an indwelling presence in the stone. With

the second suitor mindset described above, my father viewed his life's work as a co-collaboration with Mother Nature to reveal billion year-old art works.

Guiding Purpose and Rationale

With the hypothesis that stone, if approached in a certain way, may have something unexpected to reveal, I wondered what a reciprocal relationship with stone would look like. How does one enter into dialogue, or even simply “listen” to an object that has been regarded as inanimate and dead? Even with an open mind, I still possess the objectifying mind of reason that is the modern scientific heritage. I had to proceed with trust that I would find more than just myself in this process, though myself I would undoubtedly face. I had faith that through the realm of imagination, by letting go of conscious control, a connection to stone could be fostered. I can not claim ownership of what flows through me in dreams, states of active imagination, or in synchronicities. Perhaps, I thought, in these psychic events, as well as with physical contact, a connection to stone would be found. At the very least, the stones facilitated a focal point, an archetype, for me to circumnavigate; a labyrinth that has lead me through twists and turns down a path of meaning.

Also guiding my research was the concept of the *anima mundi*, or the soul of the world. Plato first articulated this philosophical idea that the world possessed intelligence and a soul, and that each aspect in it held part of this soul (trans. 1892, p. 450). More recently, environmental scientist James Lovelock (2007) defined *Gaia* as a “dynamic physiological system that has kept our planet fit for life for over three billion years” and that “we have to think of Gaia as the whole system of animate and inanimate parts” (p. 15). Pacifica Graduate Institute, for which this master's thesis is written, has the motto

animae mundi colende gratia, “for the sake of tending the soul in the world.” With this mission statement, I am enquiring into the role stone may play in the relationship between human beings and this organism of Earth.

With an interest in Imaginal Psychology, I am curious about the animation of the many entities of the world soul that may be found within the human psyche and in the outer world. Until recently, the field of psychotherapy has traditionally focused on the intrapsychic aspects of the individual and the relationships between people. The other voices of the world are now beginning to cry out in ways that pierce this anthropocentric bubble. As animal and plant species are threatened with extinction and going extinct, humans are being called to investigate their relationship to the Earth itself. Just as the modern world is being called to decentralize the supremacy of a certain sex, race, class, or culture, so, too, will it be necessary for humans to recognize the wisdom, strength, and interdependency of other forms of existence on Earth. By attuning to something as seemingly inanimate as a stone, one’s perspective of the world may be re-imagined and possibly freed from a strictly human view of the world. One can suddenly feel the constancy and patience of rocks firm beneath one’s feet or the aesthetic agony of a mountain blown to bits for its coal reserves.

Synopsis of Chapters

To help with this re-imagining of the world, it is helpful to explore the ancient ways in which humans have regarded nature. This thesis focuses on stones, in particular. On every human-inhabited continent, humans’ ancestors saw nonhuman entities more as brethren than as inconsequential objects (Harner, 1990). Some of these perspectives, found in various cultures and shamanic traditions, past and present, are explored in

Chapter II. *Culture* as referred to here includes the arts, beliefs, customs, mythologies, and other products that have been developed by diverse groups throughout history. Often, the way the land is blanketed with colorful stories allows the natives to treat it with greater care. Chapter II specifically highlights the ways in which stones have been seen to “speak” or otherwise communicate in some way to human beings, as seen in mythologies around the world.

As a young woman from the rural desert of Southern California, I find the study of distant peoples engaging as it gives alternatives to the way I view and live in the world. Though I was raised with an Eastern belief system contrary to the dominant culture, the lens through which I see the world is nevertheless that of the developed Western world. My intention is to not unrealistically idealize ancient cultures but to note how different mythologies and alternative approaches to nature may offer important insights for a modern perspective. As I seek to expand this lens through the study of other cultures, I have tried my best to remain aware of biases and blind spots that influence the observation of other cultural standpoints.

Chapter III provides an overview of how psychology, or the practice of caring for the soul, can be extended to the world at large. Discussion includes the connection Carl G. Jung had with stone throughout his life and his visionary experiences involving stones, as captured in Jung’s (2009) newly published *The Red Book*. It was a preoccupation of Jung’s to parallel the process of individuation with the Medieval art of alchemy, in which stone symbolism also plays a crucial role. Also presented in Chapter III is a discussion of this esoteric practice and a specific example of how individuation was approached through stone, as documented in a memoir by Maud Oakes (1987).

Following these chapters which review the literature, a special chapter will include discussion of the geological factors surrounding the formation of the billion-year-old rock I call the Imaginal Stone and a short history of my father, its discoverer. This chapter is a prelude to the creative piece of this thesis: the details and findings of my beginning relationship to the Imaginal Stones as portals into imagination, creativity, and healing.



Figure 2 . An Imaginal Stone. Photograph by Cyndera Quackenbush.

CHAPTER II THE STORYTELLING STONE

Everything that is, is alive!

Siberian shamans, as cited in Harner, 1990, p. xv

In order to investigate the human relationship with stone, an older, wilder terrain must be explored, where the stones speak, dance, and divine and where the ancient ones were listening. Sources to be considered in detail in this chapter reveal this connection with stone, from practical to superstitious to religious, which can be traced as existing throughout the world since the beginning of humankind. Because the vast relationship between humans and stones cannot fully be captured here, this chapter specifically explores how stones have communicated to humans in various ways. Stones have provided a connection to the Earth's story, the realm of the gods, and the ancestors. Stones have told stories of the past and revealed the future. When significant stones as well as other aspects of the land are surrounded with beliefs and stories, meaningful bonds are forged between the people and the land.

The Shaman: Speaking with Nature

Shamans, respected medicine men regarded by their ancient tribal communities as healers, are distinguished by their intimate understanding of the nature and spirit world (Harner, 1990). According to Michael Harner, anthropologist and founding director of the Foundation for Shamanic Studies, shamans are the “last ones able to talk with all of Nature, including the plants, the streams, the air, and the rocks. . . . In fact, from the

shaman's viewpoint, our surroundings are not 'environment,' but family" (p. xiii). Harner reported that they carry the ancient methods of healing for their communities and many of these techniques are similar in societies far distant from each other (pp. 40-42).

Having worked directly with living medicine men and women, he attributed this universality to shamans having simply discovered the methods that worked—and still do.

Harner (1990) explained two different types of consciousness that anyone may possess, but which the shaman is trained to navigate skillfully. The Ordinary State of Consciousness (OSC) is the reality familiar to most people. This is the reality in which one can cook, work, and mingle with others on a daily basis. The Shamanic State of Consciousness (SSC) is an altered state of consciousness, usually naturally attained (without the use of substances), whereby specific information may be retrieved or shamanic missions carried out. What occurs in the SSC is vastly different from the OSC, said Harner. He noted that talking animals, mythical beasts, spirits, flight, and other incredible feats are not uncommon in nonordinary reality (p. 21). Though these experiences may be extraordinary, the shaman ascribes them full reality within the context of the SSC. Harner found that a shaman does not confuse these states of consciousness and can enter and exit either at the appropriate times (p. 46). This skilled ability to navigate outside and within ecstatic states differentiates the shaman from the rest of the tribe. "The shaman, and he alone, is the great master of ecstasy" (Eliade, 1964/1974, p. 4). Though major events transpire within what seems to be another realm, change is witnessed in the ordinary reality: problems of the tribe are resolved and sick people are often healed (Harner, 1990). Within the SSC, said Harner (1990), the shaman is able to communicate with the other entities of the natural world with love and respect.

An understanding of a dependence on nature and other useful information such as the healing properties of a certain plant can not be accessed in the OSC (pp. 53-54).

With equal regard for the inorganic entities of nature, shamans are also able to receive valuable instruction from stones (Harner, 1990). Scholar of religious history, Mircea Eliade described how in one Siberian shamanic initiation, the future shaman envisioned an encounter with seven stones: “The stones spoke to him one after the other. . . . He remained with these stones for seven days and so learned how they could be of use to men” (1964/1974, pp. 40-41).

Harner (1990) described a rock-seeing technique found amongst the Lakota-Sioux that demonstrates how a stone may help with a specific problem. The inquisitor roams through any wild area until a stone “calls out” to him or her. Sitting down comfortably with the stone, its surface is studied until the formation of images can be seen within the texture. The process is repeated on the other sides of the stone, and on each side, the inquisitor contemplates the stone’s message. A shaman may help another using the same method, an approach Harner compared to the modern psychotherapist (p. 55).

Memory of the Earth

Malidoma Patrice Somé (1999), who has dedicated himself to bringing the wisdom of Africa to the West, described how the Dagara, the people of his village, believe that every person is born into this world with special gifts and brings a unique genius to fulfilling certain tasks. The community recognizes and affirms each individual’s purpose and eventually benefits from receiving what each individual has to give. Somé described this not as a case of finding, but as a case of remembering what one was placed on Earth to do. The Dagara believe that this knowledge is stored within the minerals of

each person's bones. These are the same minerals found within the Earth's bones, which are its stones. A way to remember one's purpose, noted Somé, is to engage ritually with stones and to allow the memory of the Earth to awaken the stored memory of the individual. The minerals within stones are also believed to spark the communication of feelings between the living and their receptivity to messages from the Otherworld. Somé also wrote, "To know the true story of our earth, including the story of ourselves, is to listen to the rocks. They are the conduits through which earth passes information on to us" (p. 256).

Having noticed the tendency of Westerners to look outside themselves for their vocation in life, Somé (1999) suggested a ritual in which a group may use stones to remember their gifts. A shrine is built consisting of diverse stones and bones. After a period of drumming and chanting, individuals are asked to "remember moments in their lives when they felt strong, connected, powerful, and useful, moments when the world around them seemed like a true home, familiar and welcoming" (p. 249). These memories can help individuals to find again the threads connecting them to their inner genius. Each person holds a stone in his or her hand, relinquishes conscious control over the mind, and, with focus locked on the stone, pays attention to the inner flow of images. Following the meditation, each person shares with the group these images, which symbolically point to the long-concealed memories. The gifts of each individual are acknowledged and appreciated by the group. In closing, a prayer is said in hopes of keeping the discovered memories alive within each person's awareness. With the help of stone, approached in a ritual manner, one's path, past and present, is articulated aloud—almost like a story. With

community sharing, said Somé, the stories of these individuals are connected to the story of their people and, more broadly, with the story of the Earth (1999).

The Seneca tribe, of what is now considered New York State, credited a stone with the origination of storytelling itself (Cunningham, 1939). Their legend says that in exchange for the birds a young orphan boy hunted, a large, smooth stone related to him the first story ever told. When the village noticed the boy consistently bringing back less food, the stone told the boy to invite the chief and the entire village to come listen, in exchange for food from each villager. A space was cleared and the people sat around the stone.

When everything was quiet the stone began: “Now I will tell you stories about what happened long ago. There was a world before this one. The things that I am going to tell you happened in that other world. Some of you will remember every word I say; some will remember a part of the words; and some will forget all of them. I think this will be the way, but each man must do the best he can. Hereafter you must tell these wonderful stories to each other, to your children, and they in turn to their children and their children’s children, so the stories may never be forgotten. Now listen to what I say.” (p. 13)

After three days of listening, the storytelling capacity was given to the people and “all the knowledge of the world before this” (p. 15). This legend provides an example of people simply sitting and listening to an entity of nature. In a mutual exchange the people received stories and gave nourishment back in return. It seems appropriate that a stone, witness to some of the oldest periods of Earth, is the holder of the first stories. It also seems significant that an orphan discovers the stone. Without the inheritance of stories would humans not be like orphans? One can get to know oneself through a story as it is told. Stories, passed down from generation to generation, bind people together and to the land they inhabit. Through stories, they are given a connection to the past and learn instructions for handling future events. Stories bring listeners in touch with their

capabilities, but also provide an understanding of human limitations. According to Somé, storytelling is also linked to the mineral realm: “Stories open a world wherein relating to others and the world is automatic, and they boost imagination toward a place of better self-knowledge. Without stories, a society will find it difficult to hold itself together” (1999, p. 250).

Like a stone lying securely in its place on the Earth, so through stories people connect deeply to where they are and where they are from. Stories connect people to people, to animals and plants, and to the land, like minerals bound together tightly in stone. In nature, individuals see that they never exist in a vacuum—because the air, the water, and the minerals are inside and outside oneself, so too are memories, stories, and wisdom.

Connection to the Land

In many cases, the stories surrounding stones create a sense of kinship and sense of responsibility to the land. The intimate connection ancient Hawaiians had to the island’s features through stories imbued the landscape around them with a colorful history and living reality (Day, 2002). Coastal rocks were originally thrown by giants or were human victims transformed by wrathful gods (Westervelt, 2002). Deities were the elements found in nature, and because of their omnipresence and power, they had to remain appeased: “The religion of the premissionary days in the Hawaiian Islands was founded on an animistic reverence for the manifestations of nature, and ceremonies were performed to set up and preserve proper relations between humanity and the surrounding powers” (Day, 2002, pp. iii-iv).

As lava still cools from active volcanoes on Hawaii, these islands are in touch daily with the very process of stone making. Hawaii is steeped in stone superstition. Tourists return rocks they previously took home, in fear of bad luck (Moon, 1998). Current website services receive back native stones and bury them ceremonially to restore luck. The overwhelming quantity of stories on just one website, hosted by Rainbow Moon, demonstrates, first, the tremendous draw to take stones as souvenirs from a memorable place, and second, the deep-rooted regard for the gods—in this case Pele the volcano goddess—that persists in modern times. Letters on Moon's site show that diseases, financial problems, depression, and even sexual abuse have been attributed to the revenge of this fiery goddess. One anonymous person simply included a short list with their returned rock: "Marriage broke down after two months. . . . Business is bad A 4" x 8" sheet of mirror almost fell on me. . . . Mother in law broke one arm, a week later the other" (para. 135).

The wrath of Pele reaches far back into Hawaiian mythology. The missionary, William D. Westervelt (2002), who ended up collecting Hawaiian stories, retold the myth of Hopoe. Hopoe was a young woman who knew all the hulas of the ancient people. She taught these dances to Pele's youngest sister, who loved her dearly. Pele became jealous of the dancing girl and sent a surge of lava to destroy her. Hopoe, "looked out over the death-dealing seas into which she could not flee, and then began the dance of death. . . . Pele changed Hopoe into a great block of lava and balanced it on the seashore" (pp. 68-69), and the lava stone, moved by wind or human touch, could still be seen as dancing as it teetered on the cliff's edge.

Such a story about a unique asset of the landscape connects the story's listener to the land in an emotional way. When a stone exists as more than just senseless matter shifting in the wind, a person is moved to allow it to remain. Perhaps this is why it eventually took a severe earthquake shock, as opposed to a human being, to send the rock hurling to the shore (Westervelt, 2002).

Stones as Ancestors

In ancient societies, stones have served to separate the realms of the living and dead (Eliade, 1949/1958). Stones were often regarded as containing the souls of ancestors (p. 219). This ancestral significance bestowed to the land can be seen in the lives of the Australian aborigines, who lived in daily contact with the Dreamtime: the "sacred knowledge, wisdom, and moral truth permeating the entire *beingness* of Aboriginal life, derived collectively from Dreaming events" (Hume, 2004, p. 237). The whole land was given significance by ancestor gods who found a place for everything in existence: "As they traveled over the land they left tangible expressions of their essence in the shape of some site or rocky outcrop, tree or water hole, metamorphosing a part of themselves into some feature of the environment" (p. 238). This evidence of ancestral presence sprawled over the landscape allowed it to remain sacred and alive.

Oblong stones called *churingas*, found in Australia, were considered to be actual relics of an ancestor's body (Jung, 1938/1967). Linked to the souls of the ancestors, the *churingas* are "buried among the graves so that they soak up the mana of the dead. They promote the growth of field-produce, increase the fertility of men and animals, heal wounds, and cure sicknesses of the body and the soul" (p. 97). The practice of rubbing

churingas against other “child-stones” (p. 97) was thought to promote pregnancy, a belief which ties back to stone as originally giving birth to the gods (p. 97).

The impact that ancestor spirits can have on people and the land is evident in a myth from Central Australia (Ellis, 1991). In the story, the small Kunia tribe relocated to a rocky region, not far from the mighty rock of Uluru. After working awhile to establish themselves in this new place, a warrior clan suddenly arrived and killed all the Kunia people. The ancestor spirits were there to witness the event and were disturbed by the bodies lying there, untended. The ancestors “changed each one into a smooth-edged stone . . . and they have lain untouched since that time. . . . As the tourists to Uluru look around the area nowadays, some say they sense a deep aura of sadness among the silent Kunia rocks” (pp. 96-97).

A recent archeological study of Stonehenge has sought to investigate theories that ancestor worship propelled the extraordinary dedication to building the monoliths (Spencer, 2008). The film *Stonehenge Decoded* (Spencer, 2008) documented how archeologist Mike Parker Pearson was inspired by an archeologist in Madagascar, where stones are still regarded as the natives’ ancestors, to discover if the same was true for Stone Age Britons. Upon excavating the surrounding territory of Stonehenge (instead of the classic preoccupation with the actual site), Pearson discovered the largest settlement ever found from that era, 4,500 years ago. Pearson explored the possibility that the ancient Britons honored the dead, their ancestors, with the henge of stone, and then ritually brought the life given from the dead to the living by walking to a second henge made of the more transitory material of wood—a more appropriate representation of mortal life (2008). Pearson contrasted the ancient view of stone with the modern view,

wherein, in his view, more often than not, stone is seen simply as a commodity to be bought: “I think we’re looking at something completely different at this time because the rocks are imbued with meaning and maybe even with soul and spirit” (2008).

If things went wrong due to the moving of stones, it was likely that the ancient people viewed this as not just happenstance, but as the ancestors themselves communicating disappointment (Spencer, 2008). The stones, after centuries of moving and meticulous placement, directly correlated with the rising of the summer and winter solstice sun. The placement and regard of stones not only connected the living with the dead, with the continuance of fertility, but also with the heavens (2008). With this earthly reflection of stars, Stonehenge may also be compared to the monuments of Easter Island and the Egyptian pyramids.

The Japanese culture has also imbued stone with ancestral significance (Fairchild, 1962). William Fairchild, in his study of shamanism in Japan, noted that stone memorials were believed to be necessary to keep evil spirits at bay and modern prayer practices stem from the belief that ancestor spirits inhabit the stones (p. 42). Fairchild reported that when a stone is lifted after a prayer to the ancestors; if the stone is either exceptionally heavy or light, then the prayer has been heard and will be answered (p. 42).

Divining Stones and the Right to Rule

In addition to serving as conduits to the past and the realm of the ancestors, stones have also been linked to the foreknowledge of future events (“Stones,” 1928). Even today, fortune telling is associated with rune stones or crystal balls. Reaching back to ancient history, the oracle of Delphi, as she channeled the fate decreed by the gods, sat

upon a conical stone, the *omphala*, believed to be the center of the Earth (p. 870). The chief oracle for the Mandan Indians of North America was also a large stone (p. 870).

A divining, speaking stone appeared in a myth from Mexico, had an obstinate will of its own and even defied the powerful ruler Montezuma (Bierhorst, 2002). Wanting to increase the splendor of his kingdom's appearance, Montezuma asked his stonecutters to search the countryside for a larger sacrificial stone. When a desirable stone was found, the stonecutters started to shape it. Priests blessed it and musicians and comedians were hired to entertain the stone while it traveled. The stone, however, refused to budge. It protested:

“Why do you pull me? I am not to be taken to Mexico. Tell Montezuma it is no use. The time is bad, and his end is near. He has tried to make himself greater than our lord who created the sky and the earth. But pull me if you must, you poor ones. Let's go.” (p. 23)

The stone allowed itself to be pulled until they reached the middle of a lake, where it refused to go any further, and drowned many of the men. When the stone was discovered back in the very place from whence it was wrenched, Montezuma was finally humbled and accepted his impending downfall: “Brothers, I know now that our pains and troubles will be many and our days will be few. As for me, just as with the kings that have gone before, I must let myself die” (p. 25). As an entity that had existed long before Montezuma, and would long outlast him, the stone succeeded in humbling the hubris of the king.

A stone with the authority to decree rightful rule is also found in the extensive history of the Stone of Scone, believed to bestow a monarch's power (“Stone,” 1984). Considered to have been Jacob's pillow, it saw in its travels the coronations of Egyptian pharaohs, Scottish kings, and even Great Britain's royal family of today (p. 444). In

ancient Irish tales, The Stone of Destiny, as it was also called, was believed to have once been a Grandmother-Goddess. As a stone under the coronation chair, she would “cry out with a loud voice when the rightful king of Tara was placed on it: the usual signification by Mother Earth that the king was acceptable to her” (“Stone,” 1988, p. 523). This resembles the famous legend of the sword in the stone, in which solid stone relinquished the sword Excalibur to Arthur, who was then named the true King of England (Malory, 1908, p. 11).

Spirits in Stone

The magician of the Arthurian legend, Merlin, tied in legend to the mounting of Stonehenge, met his end by literally being ensnared in stone (Rosenberg, 1240/1994). Carl Jung, with his interest in alchemy, noted the ancient legends that say people can “still hear his cries, so the legend runs, but they cannot understand or interpret them. . . . It might be said that the secret of Merlin was carried on by alchemy, primarily in the figure of Mercurius” (1961/1989, p. 228). In a version adapted by writer John Steinbeck (1996), Merlin built a room of inconceivable wonders beneath a cliff to consummate the love promised by the beautiful maiden Nyneve. In exchange, Merlin instructed her in all his magical knowledge. When she could learn no more from him, they traveled to the room of treasures, which could only be reached by walking down a stone passageway. Once they were at the threshold, Merlin stepped into the wondrous room first. Nyneve, however, stepped back and closed the passage with a spell, trapping him inside: “She could hear his voice faintly through the rock, pleading for release. And Nyneve mounted her horse and rode away. And Merlin remains there to this day, as he knew he would be” (p. 101). An anonymous text of the 13th century, entitled *Suite Du Merlin*, stated that

when Merlin was sealed within stone he let out a great cry (Rosenberg, 1240/1994). The “echo of the cry was heard throughout the length and breadth of the kingdom of Logres, and it gave rise to many extraordinary events” (p. 363).

The idea that, with foreknowledge, Merlin lives eternally trapped within stone is striking. The image of a magical wizard locked in stone suggests that a wise perspective exists within stone if only human mortals could hear it. In alchemy, explored further in the next chapter, in the stone as *prima materia*, “sleeps the spirit of Mercurius” waiting for the emergence of the philosopher’s stone (“Stone,” 1984, p. 444).

Mercury’s Greek counterpart was Hermes, whose name meant “he of the stone heap,” which referred to the phallic stones, called *hermai*, placed at crossroads which long distance travelers would pass (Hyde, 1998, p. 6). The Greeks began worshipping stone in its natural form and later, as the stones became mythologized, began to shape the stones into human form (Eliade, 1949/1958). The transformation of the Greeks and their imaginations animated the *hermai* with character and history, according to Eliade. He explained that the “*hermai* only manifested a divine presence to minds that could receive the revelation of the sacred directly. . . . And so Hermes ceased to be one with stone; his appearance became human, his theophany became myth” (p. 235). This transformation of stone, from being inherently sacred to finding human shape can be seen in the trajectory of civilizations as they developed complex religious beliefs.

The complex relationship between humans and their use of stone is also captured within the secret traditions of ancient Japanese gardening (Slawson, 1987). In his analysis of these esoteric codes of gardening, designer David Slawson noted that the wild indwelling spirits of rocks were often exorcised before the rocks could be used for human

purposes such as for stepping-stones or to convey human ideas (p. 200). If a rock was placed upside down or in some way turned from how it was originally found, the indwelling spirit of the rock could be angered. Slawson also commented on the feeling-tone that is induced by the witness of a well-placed and suitably named rock. For instance a rock called “Looking Back Falls” was so named because it was located at the precise spot in which a waterfall first became audible (p. 136). A rock so suitably named connects a person intimately to his or her environment and “does not treat the viewer and what he views as two distinct entities, but places these two where they belong—inseparably fused at the heart of the aesthetic experience” (p. 137). The sensory qualities that invoke this experiential response in the viewer is another way a rock may speak to a person, pointing to a beauty beyond, but also including, them both.

In the Orthodox Hindu religion, man-worked stone is regarded as an insult to the spirit of residence (“Stones,” 1928, p. 872). Spontaneously unique stones, *svayambhu*, may be worshipped as navel stones (centers of the world), fertility stones, bride stones, death and memorial stones, or as possessing magical powers to ward off diseases, confirm oaths, and strengthen warriors (p. 872). In the Bible, God said, “If thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it” (Exodus 20:25, King James Version).

Connecting With God Through Stone

In many instances, stones play a role in communicating the messages of God to the people. The Bible’s book of Genesis contains the story of Jacob, who, while sleeping with stone as his pillow, received a divine message from God. He glimpsed the ladder, surrounded by angels, that connected Earth to Heaven. God said that the land on which

he slept would be given to him and his progeny. Jacob honored the stone by smearing it with oil and renaming the place Bethel. He declared, "This stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house" (Genesis 28:22, King James Version). Also in the Bible, is the story of Moses bringing the laws of God to the Israelites in the form of stone tablets and, by smiting a rock, retrieved water for the thirsty Israelites to drink. This was in disobedience, however, to God's command to Moses: "Speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink" (Numbers 20:8, King James Version). For not speaking to the stone, but instead striking it, God punished Moses and the Israelites by denying their access to what they held most precious, the Promised Land (Numbers 20:12, King James Version).

The New Testament in the Bible contains a speech by Jesus to the Pharisees concerning their protest to his disciples' welcome. He said: "If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out" (Luke 19:40, King James Version). Stones as witnesses, with the ability to cry out, also appear in the Bible's Book of Habakkuk 2:11 in response to the forced labor involved in the building of a Nineveh palace.

Another stone with divine witness to human events is featured in a Chinese novel from the 18th century. In *Dream of the Red Chamber* (Hsueh-Chin, 1759/1958), a stone was left unused in the Goddess Nügua's repair of heaven's dome. In its dejection, the stone begged a Buddhist monk and Taoist priest to be sent down to Earth to observe its many pleasures. The stone said to them, "Though I am crude in substance, I am not without some degree of understanding or a sense of gratitude. . . . I shall be grateful to you for eons to come" (p. 2). In addition to its own story, the stone recorded the

happenings of two households in Peking, which are inscribed in detail on its surface and later read by a monk seeking greater wisdom.

The journey of stone tracked throughout the history of humanity sheds light on the nature of people and their connection to each other, the world they live in, and their beliefs in the world beyond. It is fascinating to assume the perspective of stones: after billions of years of sitting throughout the world's many stages, they are then regarded by a peculiar race of creatures who view them with fascination and imbue them with superstition and meaning. In this chapter, stones were seen as entities to be engaged with directly in myths and shamanic practices. Stories surrounding stone connected human beings to their ancestors, the gods, and the land itself. In representing the Earth, they bestowed kings and queens with the right to rule. Through stone, the past and the future may be accessed; thus, in the fleeting lives of generations, the eternal may be touched. This thesis now turns towards the modern era and the ways in which psychology has regarded the realm of stone.

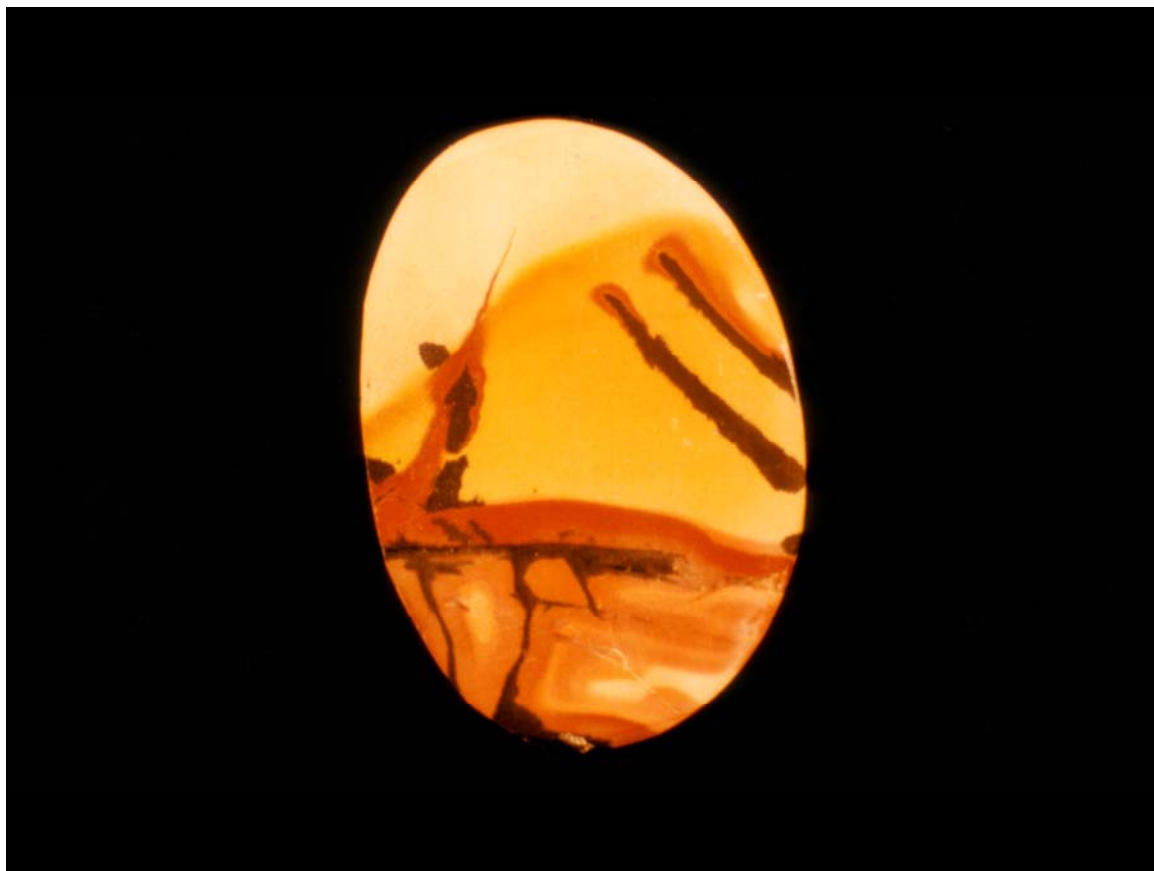


Figure 3. “The Wizard.” Photograph by Cyndera Quackenbush.

CHAPTER III THE SOUL OF STONE

Having denied the soul in things, having said to things, with Descartes, “You don’t have souls,” things have turned around and said, “Just you *watch* what kind of soul I have, muthafucka.”

Ventura, as cited in Hillman & Ventura, 1993, p. 4

If, as explored in this thesis, stones are as animated as any living thing, when they have wills of their own and pass down stories to human beings, it is as though the stones possess soul. The stone and what it signifies exists as part of a meaning-filled landscape. According to psychologist and scholar James Hillman, *soul* “refers to that unknown component which makes meaning possible” (1977, p. x). If the stone can be considered to have soul, it could be because it is part of the *anima mundi*, the world soul. In *Timaeus*, the philosopher Plato said: “Using the language of probability, we may say that the world became a living creature truly endowed with soul and intelligence” (1892, p. 450). Where do stones fit within this soul of the world? Is soul restricted to only that which lives and breathes? What would it mean to say that stones have soul? In order to shed light on these questions, the following chapter explores a brief history of soul in psychology and how it has finally begun to escape the confines of human beings and return once again to the world. Stone specifically is explored as an archetype of the psyche, from the world of alchemy to modern psychology.

A Brief History of the Concept of Soul

The role of soul in psychology began with Sigmund Freud even in the very formation of the term “psychoanalysis” (Bettelheim, 1984). Two words originating in Greek are combined: *psyche* meaning “soul” and *analysis* referring to a process of scientific examination, a taking apart (pp. 11-12). Psychologist Bruno Bettelheim wrote that Freud’s “greatest concern was with man’s innermost being, to which he most frequently referred with the use of a metaphor—man’s soul—because the word ‘soul’ evokes so many emotional connotations” (p. xi). Bettelheim noted that Freud chose a word like *soul* precisely because it could not be concretely defined. An interest in soul was true to the practice of psychotherapy because its depths could be approached but never fully grasped by scientific methods. Though many do not attempt the difficult task of defining *soul*, Hillman took on the challenge of articulating a description of *soul* as a “self-sustaining and imagining substrate—an inner place or deeper person or ongoing presence—that is simply there even when all our subjectivity, ego, and consciousness go into eclipse” (1977, p. x). In other words, soul exists whether or not one wills or even believes it to be there.

Following Freud’s initial investigation of the individual soul, Jung (1921/1976 [CW 6]) identified contents of the unconscious that were not personal, but part of the psyche’s inherited design: “These are the mythological associations, the motifs and images that can spring up anew anytime anywhere, independently of historical tradition or migration. I call these contents the *collective unconscious*” (p. 485, [para. 842]). The collective unconscious is made up of archetypes, inherited patterns that manifest as motifs in world myths, and in the dreams and fantasies of living people (Jung, 1983).

Jungian analyst and scholar Anthony Storr (1983) said that to come into contact with an archetype is to have a numinous experience, a profoundly awesome or terrifying encounter with an *other* much larger than oneself. Numinosity works to humble the ego but can also, with its beauty and profundity, instigate healing (p. 16).

Jung (1955-1966/1977 [CW 14]) found archetypes to exist independently from conscious possession: “The ‘living idea’ is always perfect and always numinous. Human formulation adds nothing and takes away nothing, for the archetype is autonomous and the only question is whether a man is gripped by it or not” (p. 524 [para. 746]). The process of active imagination developed by Jung (1957/1960 [CW 8]) allows the autonomous figures of the unconscious to be engaged. He found that a mood or emotional disturbance can be clarified through inner work with a visible form, created by both the conscious and unconscious mind working together. In order to do this, a person surrenders him or herself to a state of reverie and either writes, draws, or may even give physical expression to the fantasies that arise; “fantasy must be allowed the freest possible play, yet not in such a manner that it leaves the orbit of its object” (pp. 82-83 [para. 167]). Active imagination cannot be more intimately exemplified than in *The Red Book*, Jung’s (2009) recently released personal journal. In exquisite calligraphy and drawings, Jung detailed dialogues and encounters with his own inner figures.

With Jung’s discovery of synchronicity—meaningful coincidences that occur acausally and are marked by the accompaniment of an outer physical event with an inner psychic event—Jung began to suspect that the unconscious also existed outside of human beings (Tarnas, 2006). Jung described a collection of dreams that seemed “to point to the presence of a formal factor in nature. They describe not just a *lusus naturae*, but the

meaningful coincidence of an absolutely natural product with a human idea apparently independent of it” (1955/1991, p. 296). In a dream that occurred repeatedly, the dreamer “*was in a wild mountain region where he found contiguous layers of Triassic rock. He loosened the slabs and discovered to his boundless astonishment that they had human heads on them in low relief*” (p. 295). Another dream contained these hints of human existence in stone:

The dreamer was walking in a wooded mountain region. At the top of a steep slope he came to a ridge of rock honeycombed with holes, and there he found a little brown man of the same colour as the iron oxide with which the rock was coated. The little man was busily engaged in hollowing out a cave, at the back of which a cluster of columns could be seen in the living rock. On the top of each column was a dark brown human head with large eyes, carved with great care out of some very hard stone, like lignite. The little man freed this formation from the amorphous conglomerate surrounding it. The dreamer could hardly believe his eyes at first, but then had to admit that the columns were continued far back into the living rock and must therefore have come into existence without the help of man. He reflected that the rock was at least half a million years old and that the artifact could not possibly have been made by human hands. (pp. 295-296)

These two dreams, amongst others Jung collected, link human themes with the much older elements found in stone. They suitably foreshadow the Imaginal Stone, with its images of human life. After many years of encountering and investigating synchronicity, Jung found that support in a person’s individuation could be provided not only from the interior psyche but also in the outer world (Tarnas, 2006, p. 59).

Hillman (1982), founder of Archetypal Psychology, claimed that soul could no longer be confined to the interior of people; soul exists in the world *out there*. Each thing in the world, either living or nonliving, natural or human made, said Hillman, reveals its soul through the image it displays; objects speak through their color, form, and texture. What was considered before to be dead, the recipient of human projection, could now be seen as alive—perhaps not as humans are alive, but with a form of expression all its own.

As Hillman stated, “an object bears witness to itself in the image it offers, and its depth lies in the complexities of this image. Its intentionality is substantive, given with its psychic reality, claiming but not requiring our witness” (p. 78). By giving the objects of the world imaginative recognition, stated Hillman, the world returns to its soul, and psychology can free humans from the imprisonment of their ego perspective. In *We’ve Had a Hundred Years of Psychotherapy—and the World’s Getting Worse*, Hillman (Hillman & Ventura, 1993) pointed out that perhaps it is precisely because psychotherapy has focused so much on the inner world, the soul inside, that much of the beauty, energy and care for the outside world has been sucked away. He said, “We’re working on our relationships constantly, and our feelings and reflections, but look what’s left out of that What’s left out is a deteriorating world” (p. 3).

The practice of depth psychology, which concerns itself with the reaches of the soul, the mysterious depths that impact all of consciousness, must therefore travel not only into the depths of individuals, but deeply out into the world (Hillman, 1977). Hillman went as far as to say, “A self-knowledge that rests within a cosmology which declares the mineral, vegetable, and animal world beyond the human person to be impersonal and inanimate is not only inadequate. It is also delusional” (1988, p. 109).

Psychotherapist and founder of Pacifica Graduate Institute, Stephen Aizenstat (2003), saw that the next step for depth psychologists (or perhaps psychologists in general) is to tend what he calls the *World Unconscious*. Their role is similar to that of the naturalist who witnesses the environment and understands the human relationship with it. This awareness can inspire an alignment of the human soul with the soul of nature (p. 2).

Aizenstat (2009) remembered how natural this capacity was to him when he was about 12 years old. He recalled a day at the beach in which he discovered an invitingly large rock. Sitting on the rock, he began to converse with it, “listening as it told its stories, not in words, but through its appearance, texture, and form” (p. 156). A surfer eventually walked by and casually remarked, “Did you know that rocks can talk?” (p. 156). This synchronistic affirmation confirmed a deep belief in his mind that the world was alive and that he could connect with it at any time (p. 157). This anecdote serves as a good example of the openness one can have in listening to the entities of the world soul: how is it that they speak? More often than not, one can be sure, it will not be in English.

Another way to acknowledge the World Unconscious is by viewing dreams not as belonging to the dreamer exclusively but also to the world itself (Aizenstat, 2003). With a psychology that moves far from Freud’s original emphasis on the ego, Aizenstat proposed a stance that is instead *eco*-psychological. His process of Dream Tending remains open to the possibility that entities of the world have subjective inner natures and are dreaming with the dreamer: “When we touch the World’s Dream, we expand outside of the human realm altogether. Here we realize that dream images originate in the soul of the world as well, and we can have an experience of those dreams” (2009, p. 150).

The image one receives in dream, fantasy, or vision no longer needs to come from personal history, collective humanity or even from anything considered alive at all. A life rich in meaning is built by seeing the intimate connection between self and world and tending to the entities outside of oneself as well as those within. To live in a world with meaning, “we must live as if the world around us is alive, has a soul, and is filled with meaning in its every nook and cranny, its every animal, rock, and tree” (Aizenstat, 2009,

p. 155). Though ongoing studies and analyses are truly helpful to a scientific understanding of the human brain and the world (this knowledge can point towards definite environmental issues that threaten current and future life), it does not supply human beings with an essential reason for living. As Jung said, “Meaning makes a great many things enduring—perhaps everything. No science will ever replace myth, and a myth cannot be made of any science” (1961/1989, p. 340).

In this evolving psychological approach, soul is not seen strictly under human ownership, always projected out upon the Earth, but rather the Earth itself as intelligent and ensouling human beings (Tarnas, 2006). While noting the importance of separation of viewer and viewed in the development of modern thought, Tarnas also challenged the idea that aesthetics, purpose, imagination, and the quest for truth belong solely to humans. To Tarnas, this belief is actually an inflated and egotistical conclusion with dire consequences. He proposed that the cure to this limited and damaging perspective is to begin listening with an open mind to the *other* in all its manifestations—other cultures, other times, and other forms of life and expression—without assuming superiority. He found that moving beyond exploitation or control of the world’s entities and entering into a dialogue allows a true relationship to begin.

Living in relation to the world around oneself is to see another as *thou* instead of as *it*, according to philosopher Martin Buber (1958/1987). An *I-It* interaction, stated Buber, involves the separation of the self and the other and an experience *of* the other, whereas *I-Thou* has to do with relation *with* the other. Acknowledging that nature is the first sphere in which relation arises, he provided an example of an I-Thou relationship with a tree. Whereas the tree, in his example, is not simply dependent on the mood,

imagination, or impressions of the viewer, it is “bodied over against me and has to do with me, as I with it—only in a different way. Let no attempt be made to sap the strength from the meaning of the relation: relation is mutual” (pp. 7-8).

By dialoguing with psychic images, the human ego gives up for a moment the idea of superiority and becomes one of many entities, to be equally regarded by others as it regards itself. Without forcing desirable ends, the ego enters a reciprocal relationship with the entity, by listening attentively; thus, the whole idea of relationships, which is the domain of psychology, is expanded to the world itself.

Having explored the concept of soul in the world, new light can now be shed on the soul of stone specifically. Stones may be encountered intrapsychically, in fantasies and dreams, and also in their physical manifestations in the external world. The ancient art of alchemy, whereby the internal work of the psyche met the materials of a laboratory, is the perfect place to begin the exploration of psyche’s stone.

Stones and the Art of Alchemy

Alchemy was a preoccupation of esoteric medieval philosophers. Old pagan ideas, thought to be completely suppressed by Christianity, lived on in the alchemical doctrines (Jung, 1942/1967, p. 122 [CW 13, para. 157]). Jung uncovered parallels between this quest for the ultimate wisdom, and his concept of the process of individuation—the psychological process of personality development and differentiation from the collective (Storr, 1983, p. 19). Stone, a prominent symbol within alchemical imagery, represented both the *prima materia*, the base material the alchemists began with, and the end result, the *lapis philosophorum* (Jung, 1955-1966/1977, p. 42 [CW 14, para. 36]). The *prima materia* was defined as the chaos of elements that would gradually be brought into

harmony by the alchemist's operations, which were conducted in many stages and culminated in the unity of the lapis, the philosopher's stone (p. 385 [para. 552]).

The philosopher's stone would be the ultimate panacea, the universal medicine that could "dispel all corruption, heal all disease and suffering, and bestow youth, longevity and wisdom" ("Philosopher's stone," 1998, p. 145). The alchemists wanted to heal the dissonance of the physical world as well as the psychic one, the "affliction of the soul" (Jung, 1955-1966/1977, p. 473 [CW 14, para. 674]). Similar to the reconciling of the unconscious and conscious contents, said Jung, the alchemists were also concerned with the unity of opposites, particularly spirit and flesh. They believed that the stone was alive, possessing a soul and spirit. They also believed that the base matter of stone was the physical manifestation of God and they "wanted to 'realize' the unity foreshadowed in the idea of God by struggling to unite the *unio mentalis* with the body" (pp. 541-542). This pantheistic view of matter, stated Jung, was directly in opposition to the Church's view that deemed God as purely spirit.

As the philosopher's stone would provide a "primordial religious experience" (Jung, 1938/1967, p. 294 [CW 13, para. 294]) it was paralleled to Christ. The philosopher's stone also complemented the figure of Christ by balancing out his unreachable perfection: "Christ's spirituality was too high and man's naturalness was too low. . . . The lapis the 'flesh' glorified itself in its own way; it would not transform itself into spirit but, on the contrary, 'fixed' the spirit in stone" (p. 96 [para. 127]). Jung proposed that the human psyche had chosen the symbol of the stone precisely because it was accessible to anyone. For this reason, according to Jung, the lapis "exactly corresponds to the psychological idea of the self, the product of conscious and

unconscious” (1955-1966/1977, p. 371 [CW 14, para. 524]). Jungian analyst Marie-Louise von Franz also described stones as fitting symbols of the self “because of the ‘just-so-ness’ of their nature” (1964, p. 209).

The actual attainment of the philosopher’s stone, of course, never occurred (Jung, 1955-1966/1977, [CW 14]), a fact which is also comparable to the unreachable goal of individuation. Jung remarked that this failure is unimportant compared to the “fascination which emanated from the sense and intuited archetype of wholeness” (p. 544 [para. 777]).

In his Eranos discourse entitled “Concerning the Stone: Alchemical Images of the Goal,” Hillman (1993) discussed the importance of a gleaming end result for true work to be initiated: “We shall have extraordinary and marvelous goals, like gold and pearls, elixirs and healing, stones of wisdom, because then we shall be motivated to stay the course, that *via longissima* called a lifetime” (pp. 235-236). An exceptional and healing end result, said Hillman, allows seekers to take extraordinary risks and suffer the depressions and disappointments of the process. Though their eyes may never glimpse what it was they were seeking, in the end it is the seekers who are transformed.

The desire for the goal—the stone—is also discussed by Hillman (1993) as the body yearning to enjoy the other objects of the world, a yearning Freud had originally called the *object libido*. This form of Eros exists for the world itself and not for an ideal beyond it, stated Hillman: “The world itself speaks through the desire in the materials; that desire is the language of the world” (p. 261).

Through stone a deep love for the world may be felt. It is an undeniable presence existing in the world and a representative of the very matter of which it is made. What is

it for someone to love the world through stone? How might stone serve a role in the development of an individual? An answer can be sought in Jung's relation to stone.

Carl G. Jung: A Life With Stone

"A wondrous life arises in things. What you thought was dead and inanimate betrays a secret life and silent, inexorable intent" (Jung, 2009, p. 272). This quotation, liberated from the concealed contents of *The Red Book* after almost 100 years, captured the meaning behind Jung's relationship with stone, which began early in his childhood and lasted throughout his lifetime. Stones make an appearance in the work with his analysands, throughout his writings, within the visions documented in *The Red Book*, and finally within his memoir, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (1961/1989). He wrote of his physical connection to them as a boy and later, as an old man recovering from the death of his wife.

From the ages of seven to nine years old, Jung (1961/1989) spent an extensive amount of time in nature and had a stone on which he liked to sit, pondering the mystery of the stone's otherness. He described this "imaginary game" (p. 20):

"I am sitting on top of this stone and it is underneath." But the stone also could say "I" and think: "I am here on this slope and he is sitting on top of me." The question then arose: "Am I the one who is sitting on the stone, or am I the stone on which *he* is sitting?" This question always perplexed me, and I would stand up, wondering who was what now. The answer remained totally unclear, and my uncertainty was accompanied by a feeling of curious and fascinating darkness. But there was no doubt whatsoever that this stone stood in some secret relationship to me. I could sit on it for hours, fascinated by the puzzle it set me. (p. 20)

Despite the problems the stone caused him to contemplate, Jung claimed that the time spent on the stone calmed and comforted him, freeing him from other doubts. Whenever he imagined that he was the stone he felt all human uncertainties melt away as

inconsequential and fleeting. Jung related that this early contact with stone allowed him to access the part of himself that was eternal, unceasing: “I was but the sum of my emotions, and the Other in me was the timeless, imperishable stone” (p. 42).

This other self was not the young school boy, but an older self, separate from all people, in touch with nature and God (Jung, 1961/1989). The knowledge of this second personality existed in Jung as a profound secret in his childhood. It inspired him to try and give it shape and expression of some kind. He wrote, “I always hoped I might be able to find something—perhaps in nature—that would give me the clue and show me where or what the secret was. At that time my interest in plants, animals, and stones grew” (p. 22). In one attempt to give form to this secret, Jung kept a hidden pencil case in the attic that contained a carved manikin and a smooth stone which he had painted in two halves. The stone “belonged” (p. 23) to the manikin, and was his life force. Later, Jung connected this little doll to the archetype of Telesphoros, and the stone to the soul stones of Australia (p. 22). Much later, in a vision described in *The Red Book*, he sees “to the right it is dark night; to the left it is bright day. The rock separates day and night” (2009, p. 251). This image may be connected to the alchemical stone that reconciles all opposites, thus symbolizing the self, the sum of consciousness and unconsciousness (Jung, 1955-1966/1977, p. 371 [CW 14, para. 524]).

Jung’s (1961/1989) youthful fascination with stone continued when he encountered the immense Gothic cathedrals. He was able to witness spirit embodied: “The infinity of the cosmos, the chaos of meaning and meaninglessness, of impersonal purpose and mechanical law, were wrapped in stone. . . . My kinship with stone was the divine nature in both, in the dead and the living matter” (p. 68).

Decades later, after establishing his career and after his complicated break with Freud, Jung returned to the realm of stone in what he called his “confrontation with the unconscious” (1961/1989, p. 170). Knowing not where to go next in his life and feeling as though he knew nothing, Jung allowed himself to be pulled by the “impulses of the unconscious” (p. 173).

The first images to strike Jung (1961/1989) were of the castles and villages he used to build as a boy. With a sense of humiliation and resignation at first, Jung returned to the aimless play of childhood: “I began accumulating suitable stones, gathering them partly from the lake shore and partly from the water. And I started building” (p. 174). An expression of pure childlike delight appears in his memoir as he describes the chance finding of a stone for his small church’s altar by the lake: “I caught sight of a red stone, a four-sided pyramid about an inch and half high. . . . I knew at once: this was the altar!” When he placed the stone in his little church, he recalled an important childhood dream. He said, “This connection gave me a feeling of satisfaction” (p. 174).

His deep engagement with the figures of inner vision culminated in Jung’s (2009) *The Red Book*, his large leather-bound journal. Stones appeared frequently in the fantasies, and the physical impact they had on Jung’s visionary body is astonishing—hot red rocks burned his feet (p. 267) and jagged rocks cut them (p. 277). Stones become smeared with the blood and brains of a murdered child—his soul (p. 290). He knelt upon a rock to eat a piece of the girl’s liver, a healing act commanded from the representative of his soul herself (p. 290). In another episode, painted stones, stone spearheads, and stone clubs were among the objects Jung’s soul brought back to him after plunging into dark floods (p. 305).

Within his visions, Jung (2009) encountered a crystal that gave off a cold reddish light. In a corrected draft Jung wrote that the stone must be “conquered, it is the stone of torment” (p. 237 n.). He also commented that it was like the “stone of wisdom” (p. 237 n.), perhaps referring to the alchemist’s stone. No one can accuse Jung of escaping into wistful fantasy in these visions, for what was beheld was often torturous—the very shadow of human existence itself. With the vision of a red crystal, Jung beheld the bloodshed that was to come in the First World War: “Blood shone at me from the red light of the crystal, and when I picked it up to discover its mystery, there lay the horror uncovered before me: in the depths of what is to come lay murder” (p. 239). On Christmas night, 1913, Jung envisioned a giant’s boot that “crushes an entire city” (p. 254), the mourning of a crucifixion, and the streaming of blood down a mountain. In his reflection on these images, Jung wrote that the crystal symbolized the “unalterable law of events that comes of itself. In this seed you grasp what is to come. . . . I knew to interpret this sign for myself as nothing but the fact that something bloody and dreadful lay before us” (p. 254).

In a more benevolent vision involving stone, Jung (2009) found himself in the desert, basking in the sun. He reflected on the eternal quality of the stones existing there: “They reflect the glow of a hundred thousand past suns—these small grains of sand have rolled in fabulous primordial oceans, over them swam primordial monsters with forms never beheld before” (p. 271). He was even compelled in the vision to speak a prayer to this “mother stone”:

O mother stone, I love you, I lie snuggled up against your warm body,
your late child. Blesséd be you, ancient mother.
Yours is my heart and all glory and power—Amen. (p. 271)

Jung experienced these desert stones as “living” (p. 271) and watched them as they appeared to find an order of their own, deliberately gathering and appearing to “form states” (p. 271). Jung is convinced that the stones were “bound to speak” (p. 271) to the anchorite, an old wise man who lived in Jung’s desert within.

Eventually, in his inner journeys, Jung (2009) was met by some peculiar entities that he said belong to the smallest and lowest of existence on Earth, the Cabiri. Jung had been known to stress the more transcendent aspects of human beings while minimizing the psychological significance of sex, death, and other factors that cause one to be more embodied (Downing, 2007). The Cabiri seemed to assist Jung in recognizing the importance of the base elements of the soil, of fertility, and the slow-moving nature of matter itself. Jung wrote that they knew the “lethargy of matter” (2009, p. 320), which they claimed Jung always wanted to “pull up with . . . [his] own force what can only rise slowly, ingesting itself, affixed to itself from within” (p. 321). The Cabiri stated that they, “carry up what slumbers in the earthly, what is dead and yet enters into the living. . . . We hauled things up, we built. We placed stone upon stone. Now you stand on solid ground” (pp. 320-321). Jung felt this solidity, but only from which to “stretch upward” (p. 321). Later, Jung’s soul advised him to form thoughts with matter: “Touch the earth, press your hand into matter, shape it with care. The power of matter is great. . . . Is matter not the filling of emptiness? By forming matter, I shape your salvation” (p. 345).

Working with physical stone became an intimate practice of Jung later in his life. Along with writing and drawing pictures, Jung hewed stone whenever he “came up against a blank wall” (1961/1989, p. 175) within himself. He claimed that these behind-the-scene projects contributed significantly to his later works such as “The Undiscovered

Self,” “Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth,” and “A Psychological View of Conscience” (p. 175). His work with stone also helped him deal with the loss of his wife. He stated, “The close of her life, the end, and what it made me realize, wrenched me violently out of myself. It cost me a great deal to regain my footing, and contact with stone helped me” (p. 175).

Over time, Jung built a dwelling place for himself in Bollingen that he called “The Tower” (1961/1989, p. 223). He felt he needed a “kind of representation in stone of my innermost thoughts and of the knowledge I had acquired. Or, to put it another way, I had to make a confession of faith in stone” (p. 223). Section by section, over the years, he added to this dwelling near upper Lake Zürich. There, chopping wood and pumping his own water, he felt closest to nature, and to himself.

In 1950, for his 75th birthday, Jung (1961/1989) created a monument in stone as an offering of thanks to the Tower and to express what it had meant to him. He told how, when receiving a shipment of stones for the garden wall, he received a cornerstone with the wrong measurements – a cube instead of a triangular stone. The angry mason was about to have it sent away when Jung stepped in and said, “No, that is my stone. I must have it!” (p. 226). He immediately thought of the rejected stone of the alchemists, and a verse by alchemist Arnaldus de Villanova ended up being the first words to be inscribed:

Here stands the mean, uncomely stone,
 ‘Tis very cheap in price!
 The more it is despised by fools,
 The more loved by the wise. (as cited in Jung, 1961/1989, pp. 226-227)

Jung said that as he worked on the stone block, the stone’s surface dictated to him what was to be carved. In the natural surface of the stone, he saw the shape of an eye; it was

looking back at him. He carved the eye and then the figure of a small man emerged, not unlike the manikin of his boyhood (p. 227).

On the side of stone facing the lake, Jung wrote that he had “let the stone itself speak” (1961/1989, p. 227), followed by words in Latin which he also connected to alchemical ideas: the stone as orphan, old man, and as possessing opposites. This inscription also captured the capacity for the stone to exist both outside of a human and within:

I am an orphan, alone; nevertheless I am found everywhere. I am one, but opposed to myself. I am youth and old man at one and the same time. I have known neither father nor mother, because I have had to be fetched out of the deep like a fish, or fell like a white stone from heaven. In woods and mountains I roam, but I am hidden in the innermost soul of man. I am mortal for everyone, yet I am not touched by the cycle of aeons. (pp. 227-228)

From the beginning, his Tower dwelling served as a sort of womb where he could mature. At the Tower, he could be truly present while being in touch with antiquity and the possibilities of the future. With stone at the Tower, he could touch a bit of eternity. Jung stated, “It gave me a feeling as if I were being reborn in stone. It is thus a concretization of the individuation process” (p. 225).

The image of the stone returned to Jung (1961/1989) in a near-death experience after a heart attack. For Jung, the vision held something of what lay for him beyond life itself. Floating in space, above the Earth, Jung saw a large, black stone that had been hollowed out, resembling the granite temples he had witnessed once on the Bay of Bengal. As he neared the entrance of the temple, he had the feeling that his entire earth existence would be stripped away and that all he ever needed to know about his life would be revealed to him in the antechamber. He wrote, “[My life] seemed to have been snipped out of a long chain of events, and many questions had remained unanswered. . . .

I felt sure I would receive an answer to all these questions as soon as I entered the rock temple” (p. 291). Though it is impossible to know what awaited Jung after his death, his legacy of stone continued to impact and mystify the lives of the living.

Individuating With Stone

Jung’s legacy in stone played a major role in the individuation process of Maud Oakes (1987), an artist, anthropologist, and writer. She encountered Jung’s garden stone in Bollingen while recovering from a brutal car accident in Peru. Her record of the relationship with the stone’s images also illustrated Jung’s method of active imagination.

Oakes described how a photograph of the stone, seen while lying in a hospital bed in New York “seemed to say, ‘I am a Stone that heals, makes whole, if you become aware of my significance for you’” (1987, p. 13). The carvings seemed mysterious, and she wanted to discover their meaning. The stone had a powerful effect on her languid state: “It was like turning on the light in a dark, stale room” (p. 13).

In the first year, Oakes (1987) meditated on the image of the stone, seeing it as a map to her own psyche. She approached the stone and its engravings in a way similar to that of the medicine men of the Navaho, with whom she had lived and studied with extensively. She described the stone as providing a “necessary focus and discipline” (p. 15) to the healing process, which was psychic as well as physical. She worked on understanding the stone, and it, in turn, was working on her. She wrote, “At times it was a difficult and subjective experience not unlike an analysis, for it seemed that I had made a transference to the Stone in the way an analysand transfers expectations for a basic change onto the analyst” (p. 15).

In 1956, Oakes (1987) exchanged letters with Jung about her process with the stone. She came to the conclusion that she must encounter the meaning of what the stone meant for her as opposed to speculating about what it meant to Jung. For the stone to speak to her she needed to sense, in herself, the stone's "texture and even its pulse" (p. 28), for she claimed that, to her, "every object, animate or inanimate has its own beat" (p. 28). By employing active imagination with the images inscribed on the stone, Oakes discovered and developed the inferior parts of her personality. These parts were termed *inferior functions* by Jung (1921/1976 [CW 6]) in his theory of personality types, in which he identified four personality functions—thinking, feeling, sensing, and intuition—along with an orientation towards either introversion or extroversion. He stated that every person, out of necessity, develops one or so of these functions, leaving at least one function as inferior. For the process of individuation to proceed, he claimed, the inferior function must be accessed from the unconscious and developed. Through her contact with stone, Oakes (1987), who was extroverted and sensate, was able to access her intuition and the capacity to be introverted. She started gradually replacing literal, external guides (Indian medicine men, analysts, and even Jung himself) with an inner guide (Hermes), and found that a doorway opened into her psyche.

With Hermes as her inner guide, represented by the little man carved on the stone, Oakes (1987) was able to make contact with the "spirit of the stone" (p. 31) and was lead into "a fearful, fascinating land full of mystery" (p. 31). Combined with an undertaking of analysis, this journey allowed her to have her own confrontation with the unconscious and to better understand her own intricate nature. The stone and its images, which had held meaning for Jung, also was meaningful to her and could therefore, she believed,

potentially have meaning for any person. She had connected to the archetypal, a deep inner pattern existing for all people. Some of the dialogue between Oakes and Hermes illustrates her process and the universality of the stone:

“I am the Spirit of that Stone. When Jung carved the Stone,” said Hermes, “he drew forth from within himself the symbols that pertained to his own life experience. He told you this himself when he said, ‘I need not have written any books; it is all on the Stone.’ Well, I am the Spirit of that Stone, but archetypes, as you know, have countless interpretations. They speak to mankind on many different levels.”

“You are suggesting to me that there could be more than one answer to the riddle of the Stone, depending on the seeker and where he stands on his life path?”

“That is correct. And since you recognized me as an Opener of the Door when you first saw me at Bollingen, I can now convey to you clues about the meaning of the Stone that apply to you, yourself. I can do this only if you ask for them, and if you not only recognize them when they appear, but also do something consciously about them.” (p. 88)

Like Jung, and in the true spirit of active imagination, Oakes had to become playful, in touch with her inner child, to access the path to wisdom that occurred via the stone. After finding meaning in the accident she suffered in Peru, she said that, “Looking at the mandala on the Stone, I now feel as I did in the beginning, but am graced with a new conviction: harmony and order exist” (p. 130).

This chapter glanced at the history of soul in psychology and how it may be seen again in the world. Discovering the intimate interactions Jung and others have had with stone, existing both in the psyche of inner experience and the psyche in the world, reveals that possibly anyone may tap into and experience its numinosity. Though the archetype of stone may be universal, the experience of it must occur in an individual way, in specific and personal imagery. The remainder of this thesis is dedicated to one kind of rock in particular, the Imaginal Stone, and how its rare and unique imagery came into contact with the lives of human beings.



Figure 4. "Butterfly." Photograph by Cyndera Quackenbush.

CHAPTER IV THE BILLION-YEAR-OLD ART STONE

Silent Stone upon the hill,
Blackened by the years.
Wonder Stone, lying still, of God's Pioneers
Wonder Stone we are seeking,
Oracles you hold!
Laughing Stone, Never Speaking,
Why Have You Not Told?

Honegger, personal communication, January 6, 2009

After the previous chapters' exploration of myths and beliefs surrounding stones, as well as the archetype of stone, it is appropriate to explore a particular kind of rock and how it eventually had an impact on human lives. The story of the Imaginal Stone reaches 1.3-1.7 billion years back into the Earth's history. With this history in mind, this brief chapter bridges over a billion years of time: from when the Imaginal Stones formed in the Earth to 1975, when they were uncovered. First, a geological description of the rock's formation is provided, including quotes from geologists that authenticate both the age and rarity of the Imaginal Stones. The section that follows contains the story of James F. Quackenbush's and Peter Spoecker's discovery of the stone, along with the journey that followed.

Billion-Year-Old Rock

To understand the story of the Imaginal Stones, it is necessary to know where they fall within the larger story of the Earth's formation. The Earth is approximately 4.5 billion years old. Since it is often difficult to grasp this amount of time, it is helpful to

represent the Earth's history with a 24-hour clock. If the Earth formed at midnight, the oldest rocks would have formed at 3:20 a.m. The earliest of human kind would not have arrived until 11:59 p.m. and 26 seconds (American Museum of Natural History, 1999).

In order to assist my understanding of how Earth's rocks were formed, geologist Ray Pestrone of San Francisco State University described to me the process of how the Earth was created. The materials that formed the Earth came from distant supernovae, exploding stars, which shot out all kinds of elements into space (personal communication, November 16, 2009). These materials became attracted to each other by the force of gravity and eventually formed planets around the Sun, with the help of other small bodies such as meteors, comets, and asteroids. In the first period of Earth, the Hadean, the surface was molten. In the first geologic period, the Precambrian, the first rocks were formed as a cooled crust that created the first supercontinent, Rodinia. Death Valley, which holds nearly every kind of rock from all the great eras of geologic time, has metamorphic rocks that are part of "the older part of the continental crust of North America" (Hunt, 1975, p. 89).



Figure 5. "Creation of Earth." Photograph by Cyndera Quackenbush.

Over a billion years ago, in what is now Death Valley, sediment began to accrue over this basement rock (United States Geological Survey, 2000). First, a layer of muddy debris was laid down. Then the land was flooded by a shallow sea, which added layers of limestone and dolomite. The Death Valley region alternated between rising above sea level, collecting terrestrial deposits, and then sinking below the water again. This sequence in geological history created what is called the Pahrump Group, consisting of sandstone.

Amongst the Pahrump Group exists the Crystal Springs Formation: sedimentary rocks that metamorphosed only slightly from the pressure of many layers over time (Hunt, 1975). What I have named the Imaginal Stones were inspected by F. W. Dickson, Professor of Geochemistry at Stanford University, amongst others. It was concluded that these stones are originally from this formation, dated to be about 1.3 to 1.7 billion years ago (personal communication, May 29, 1979). Complicated life forms, beyond the existence of primordial algae at the time, had yet to develop.

The Imaginal Stone is a fine-grained sedimentary shale, made from either clay particles or volcanic ash which collected, layer upon layer, over time (Dickson, personal communication, May 29, 1979). These layers, said Dickson, compacted and the rock was formed deep within the bowels of the earth. Forces within the earth then joint-fractured the rock, allowing spaces for water from the seas to percolate through. He explained that this air-saturated water decomposed iron and manganese minerals in the matrix and sent them sprawling into the fractures throughout the rock. Hydrated oxide, a manganese mineral, gave the rock its black banding and limonite (composed of goethite and hematite) gave the yellow, orange, and red pigments.

One of the characteristics that this process produced was a phenomenon called *dendrites*, a general term for branching which is a recurring pattern in nature (Pestrong, personal communication, November 16, 2009). In one of his Earth Art presentations at San Francisco State University, Pestrong, showed a picture of a tree, a delta, and dendrites in stone—all governed by the same laws of branching. In the Imaginal Stone, the dendrites can be interpreted as trees, bushes, meteorites, or birds flying in formation.

Associate Professor at USC, Robert M. Arkonne, said that even though dendrites and color banding are fairly common features in sedimentary rocks, the “intensity and variation of color banding in these specimens coupled with the occurrence of well developed dendrites make these very unusual specimens” (personal communication, May 23, 1979). He added, “Indeed, I find these samples to be among the most beautiful rocks I have observed.”

Similarly, Dickson wrote, “I have seen many rocks with the same minerals developed similarly, although not in such artistic forms” (personal communication, May 29, 1979). Most recently, Pestrong stated that he also had never seen such intricacy in stone before (personal communication, November 16, 2009). Referring to himself as a *geologist*, he also commented on the stones’ fineness, their tiny scale: “There’s something significant to me about looking close at the Earth, looking closely to see all the detail that typically we often pass over. And so, you have a whole world here.” Eventually, forces from within the earth brought the rocks to the surface, which, after millions of years of baking in the sun, could then be found by human beings. Recognizing that humans have only been around for roughly half a million years is one way to put the stone’s billion-and-a-half-year age into perspective.

James F. Quackenbush and His Discovery

In the sweltering summer of 2002, my father is dying within our house in Joshua Tree. Now, permanently in bed, he has been unconscious for a long time, perhaps to never reawaken. One afternoon, however, something surprising happens. He is wide awake. With a little help, he sits completely up in bed. He requests some fruit juice, which is brought to him in a clear glass. He holds the vessel and looks at the dark liquid in amazement. With his face wide with awe, his eyes filled with wonder, he says, “The whole universe is in this glass!”

This memory of my father, capturing him with a foot already in the world beyond, also reveals who he was quintessentially—someone ceaselessly enthusiastic about the mystery of life. After interviewing my mother, Joan Quackenbush, and reading over the decades of letters and newspaper articles that encompassed his life’s work, I have come to know him, as if for the first time, as so much more than a dad. I have discovered him as an artist, writer, philosopher, and educator. To aid the telling of the story of this multifaceted man, I refer to my father and other family members by their common names.

In 1974, Jim was 25, the same age that I am now. He had been living with my mother, Joan, and their first son, Joshua, in the Mojave Desert for a couple of years. He had worked at odd jobs up until then, including a gardening job in which he built a wall of stone and was also able to earn a solid enough income for a house loan. My mother said the wall he built still stands today, and it seems significant to me that my father was already working with stone before he ever made the billion-year-old art stone discovery.

Jim had befriended Peter Spoecker, an inventive, long-bearded ex-hippy, who had left an education in biology to pursue a life of artistic creation. He had a sharp sense for

making money, despite his many interests off the beaten path. He painted colorful, cosmic paintings of distant worlds, and was a talented jeweler. He collected stones from across the world, from Mexican opals to Indian gems. Jim began to work with Peter, learning from him how to silversmith and selling jewelry in out-of-town craft shows. Peter, whose character was to be brutally honest and always to the point, appreciated Jim's ability to have friendly, enthusiastic exchanges with just about anybody. Jim was a dreamer, Peter a businessman. Together they enjoyed long philosophical discussions and desert hikes scrambling through the Mojave Desert mountains. They were also intrigued by different kinds of picture rock, such as jasper, beautiful in its depiction of simple desert landscapes.

In search of similar kinds of rock, Peter and Jim backpacked out to a remote location in the Southern California desert, now known as Death Valley, and found a particular kind of shale (See Figures 6 & 7). In repeated trips by dune buggy, they brought back 40 tons of the rock. In a letter to prospective audiences to whom they would present their discovery, Peter wrote, "The number of vehicles worn out in this process and the amount of unbelievable physical labor involved in this phase of our work might make us appear like fanatics" (personal communication, n. d.). They did not know what to expect, but dedicated nearly sixteen months to an initial slicing and grinding with diamond blades at Peter's workshop. Warm reds, oranges, browns, and black emerged throughout seams of the slate, forming what looked like abstract images. In a letter Jim also wrote for prospective audiences, he described that the "strange shale had more variety, color and detail than any stone ever found" (personal communication, n. d.). Whereas there appeared to be an infinite amount of subject matter in the imagery

revealed in the stone, he had “unwittingly stumbled into one of Nature’s hidden universes, but not without paying a price.”



Figures 6 & 7. James Quackenbush, left, and Peter Spoecker, right, mining rock in Death Valley. Photographs by David Kerr.

This price that he spoke of, in addition to the painstaking process of finding these palm-sized “masterpieces,” was the task of bringing this discovery to the world. Jim’s patience, perseverance, and his recognition of an aesthetic in-dwelling intelligence in the stone distinguished him from the rock-hound community. Though a few sold pieces of this rock under the name “Indian Paint Rock,” my father felt sure he was “collaborating with Mother Nature on some sort of long range art project. Our arrangement was quite simple—She supplies the raw materials, I supply the perception and imagination, and together we create Billion Year Old Art” (personal communication, n. d.). An anecdote, recorded by journalist Ken Heiman years later, captured the painstaking process of grinding through stone, whereby just the removal of 1/1000th of an inch of slate could result in the loss of a masterpiece:

Quackenbush told of the time he was sanding a stone that appeared to present an Arabian shiek’s head emerging from the sands of the desert.

“I wanted to get the image a little clearer, so I kept sanding,” he recalled. “But I sanded for a second too long and the image was completely wiped out. I’ve lost as many masterpieces as I’ve found.” (1987, p. 9A)

The stone was speaking to Jim. It was speaking with the use of images, specific or abstract: animals, religious symbols, natural phenomena, historical events, mythological beasts, even pictures of the desert where the stone had come from. Concerning this uncanny capturing of the landscape, Jim said:

“To me, it’s incomprehensible—it just makes me feel that I’m working with something a lot bigger than my ego and myself. This discovery further proves to me that it’s a privilege to do. . . . I’m working with something that’s true, beautiful and, for all practical purposes, eternal.” (as cited in Heiman, 1987, p. 9A)

Jim brought slabs of stone home to continue the search for perfect images, using a pencil and stencils to encircle the pictures. My mother remembered him running out from

his back room to exclaim excitedly, “Look! It’s a lighthouse!” Like Adam, who named the creatures of Eden, Jim eventually realized that the stones deserved to be named individually: “Indian Messenger,” “Woman in Reflection,” “Startled Elephant,” “Moon Over Mojave,” and “Monet’s Bridge” are some of the names that came forth.

Peter and Jim began calling the growing stone collection “Desert Majesty.” With Peter’s computer technology, they made a slide-show film showing the images, and did public presentations in Tahoe, California. Jim wished to present a story of the cosmos with images instead of words, so that its connection to humankind would be universal. In the first newspaper article that reported their work, just 18 months after the discovery, the images within the rocks were described as a trip through time, holding pictures of earthly existence even before it had transpired: “It’s almost as if the rock being formed those eons ago were acting like modern-day film, taking pictures of this period of evolution in one corner of the globe and then storing it safely away” (Emerson, 1977, p. 14).

Project Billion-Year-Old-Art had one catch, my mother remembered. The sale of stones, usually as pendants, was the only way to fund the project, and was not making enough profit. For Peter, this was a necessary component for projects in which so much time was invested. Also, his diversity of interests was drawing him elsewhere. He wanted Jim’s personable salesmanship to accompany him, but Jim had a vision for the stones and wanted to continue working with them.

Meanwhile, Jemma, the second son, had been born, and the family suffered from the lack of money. Having no car in the desert was exceedingly difficult. Though unquestionably supportive of her husband’s vision, Joan spoke up, suggesting that the stones be put “on the back burner” while he tried some other ways to bring in money. Jim

appeared to be stubborn in his dedication to the stones, but he did not lack self-questioning. In the letter cited previously he wrote, “Compared to the astronomical age of these stones, I’m afraid I’ll be abandoning them before they’ve scarcely noticed my existence. So, why should I even try? Why should I even bother with this project?” (personal communication, n.d.). The answer was, simply, because he had to.

For 14 summers, Jim ventured to Tahoe and Stanford University to sell pendants. The craft show life was not easy; he faced the constant threat of theft, indifference and, most annoyingly for him, the frequent disbelief that the images were natural. He eventually posted a sign that stated: “I know it’s hard to believe, but these stones are not painted, DAMN IT!” However, several connections were made during this time including support from an art gallery. Lee Gwynne, owner of the Gwynne gallery, wrote in a letter of recommendation that “scenes within the stone resemble Gobelin tapestries; others look like cosmic scenes of Salvador Dali; others look like landscapes from the Sung and Ming Dynasties. I could go on but the Desert Majesty can only really speak for itself” (personal communication, July 14, 1977).

A notable string of synchronicities for one woman, Barbara Honegger, occurred after she purchased a stone pendant from my father at Stanford. In a letter to my father, she described the stone, which featured “a red landscape, like Mars, in which the ‘sun’ in the distance has onion-like rings around it” (personal communication, March 4, 1980). The very evening she made the purchase a business partner, a head engineer at NASA-Ames, invited her to witness the first images of the surface of Mars to come in from the Space Shuttle. Jumping out of bed early the next morning with the stone around her neck, she saw the first picture to come in. She wrote in the letter,

Jim—it was the image on the stone around my neck! Because of the properties of the lenses used by the landing craft on Mars, the sunrise, or sunset—I don't recall right now which it was—had those same onion-peel-like concentric circles around the sun! And the red soil was just as in the Art Stone. (March 4, 1980).

In 1980, Jim received an invitation to present Project Billion-Year-Old Art at Thatcher high school in Ojai, California. This event foreshadowed the work he would pursue more than a decade later. In a letter from Thatcher to my father following the event, the reviews were tremendously positive. An astronomer on the faculty stated that it was a “challenging and imaginative journey into the core of the earth . . . and our own imaginations” (personal communication, February 15, 1980). A mathematician stated, “The exhibit made me more aware of the organization of beauty in nature. Previously I saw our environment without perceiving it.” The letter also contained a scientist's note (rather comically) on my father's capacity to have a long-term plan: “Very valuable for our young people to have met someone who has made a 20-year commitment to a goal. This tended to give perspective to their inability to think more than a day in advance. The presentation was fantastic!”

Perhaps the most exciting public development since the discovery happened in 1984, when the Billion-year-old Art stones were featured on the television show *Ripley's Believe it or Not!* (Ripley, 1982). The whole family was ecstatic at this exposure. My brothers had a great time interacting with the television crew, and the resulting clip portrayed my father's work convincingly. The difficulties with money continued, however, and with another child (me) on the way, the financial strain began to weigh more heavily on my dad.

“Well, I'm really interested in the education of children,” Jim said one night, my mother remembered. With an animated ability to tell bedtime stories, he had enjoyed

capturing the imaginations of his sons. He also had a killer Donald Duck impression.

“Maybe I can try substitute teaching for awhile,” he told her.

Two years of substitute teaching lead to five years of teaching second grade. During this period of time, the letters about the project ceased. The stones, the 175 masterpieces my father had framed and named, were temporarily laid to rest. In the meantime, Jim pioneered new teaching techniques. He kept an exercise chair in the back of the classroom for hyperactive kids disrupting the class. Not bothering to take the hour break provided by the physical education teacher, he designed his own Frisbee physical education class. He used this time outdoors to work out behavior problems and eradicate bullying. He had the kids act out storybooks, such as *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963). He had the best attendance record at Twenty-Nine Palms Elementary School.

The Billion-Year-Old Art Stones re-emerged in 1993 at the Joshua Tree community center. The front-page local newspaper article displayed a huge photograph of “Bird at Sunset” and introduced the stones this way:

Over a billion years ago, nature knew what life on earth would be like today.

The progression of man, the space shuttle and even the Loch Ness Monster were all anticipated, as was the eventual indifference of man to nature’s beauty.

So nature began to chronicle what was forthcoming in the most brilliant, magnificent and everlasting way possible.

Nature worked fervently to form vivid pictures of the most beautiful and unusual aspects of life, then and now, and tucked the images away in rock for man to discover on his own.

Hundreds of millions of years later, local teacher Jim Quackenbush stumbled upon this work of nature. Looking for art in its truest form—the art developed by nature, Quackenbush found the images that would change his life and he hopes will change the future of education in America. (Murphy, 1993, p. A1)

The imagination and reflection within this newspaper article, personifying Nature herself, reads almost like a myth. Here, the stones are ascribed with a magical quality of prophecy and storytelling—such a far cry from the trained objectivity of most headline journalists!

The art stones had awakened from their rest, as my father was ripe for a whole new phase with the project.

Jim combined the words “cosmos,” the universe, and “osmosis,” which means “merging into,” to create his traveling educational event, “Cosmosis.” The three-day event challenged students with a question, a great mystery: “How did the images get in the rock?” Cosmosis was multi-dimensional, encompassing the use of mathematics, science, history, art, reading, and writing. Elementary school kids were assigned hands-on tasks such as Polaroid photojournalism, camera videotaping, conducting interviews, leading guided tours of the exhibit, and grinding-and-finding their own masterpieces. Students could become owners of a stone if they mailed in illustrated stories about the stones or stone images. A 1996 newspaper article reported, “‘I think it’s amazing that when you grind it, you find pictures,’ fifth grader Tanya Hand said, holding up a quarter-inch thick square of stone. ‘In this little rock there could be over a thousand’” (Orloff, 1996, p. A1).

Described as “a bespectacled and bearded Pied Piper” (Yarborough, 1998, p. 4) and as having “a touch of the fervor of medicine men of old” (p. 4), Jim’s enthusiasm was infectious with the kids, teachers, and parent volunteers. Watching videotaped footage from these events, I witnessed how children were given the trust and responsibility of adults, and how adults could return to a place of childlike wonder. The newspapers captured the reactions of the kids:

Chelsea felt a bond with the piece “Sundancer,” which depicts an Indian dancing under the sun, because “my great grandmother was Apache Indian and every time an Indian mother gave birth the father would go out and dance in the sun.”

A depiction of a crucifix on a hill was James’s favorite artstone and led to this observation, “I think God gave this to us for a reason and to Mr. Q. not just for artwork.” (Gast, 1994, p. C1)

The fact that my dad traveled and carried out these events (over 60 schools) completely on his own still amazes me. Depending only on school staff and parent volunteers, he would sometimes set up the whole event on his own if their help fell through. Despite his positive attitude in the face of an entire school, there is no doubt that these assemblies were stressful and took their toll. I have often wondered if this stress was partially responsible for his diagnosis with colon cancer.

In going through this family history, I realize for the first time the success my father achieved. He never made a fortune, but his independent career, with a vocation he loved, kept our family afloat. Another journalist quoted my Dad when he said: “I am lucky and rich. I am doing something that I absolutely love and believe in. It’s even better than winning the lottery. And if I did win the lottery, I would still do exactly what I am doing now” (as cited in Corral, 1995, p. A8). These are words from a man who undoubtedly followed his bliss.

On July 11, 2002 my father died. By his own request, no memorial service was held and his ashes were scattered into the Pacific Ocean. Peter Spoecker was found three years later, floating in Evolution Lake, located on the John Muir Trail in California’s King’s Canyon National Park, considered to be one of the most beautiful sights of the Sierras. Peter spent his last day also in the view of the tallest summit of the area, Mount Darwin. Though this was like losing another member of the family, there was something about this end that felt beautiful, almost serene for this artist explorer, my father’s best friend.

The stones, having waited in the Earth for over a billion years, had found a new form in the perspective of human beings. Polished, framed, and named, 175 in total,

made up the masterpiece collection. They held possibility and mystery; they held a story. Though my father's relationship with them had lasted for only a blink of an eye in the time of their total existence, the stones held a promise to prevail indefinitely, as perfect as the day they were formed. In that way, within the stones, pieces of my father's perspective remained intact, captured and frozen forever. When I look at them, it is like he is silently looking back. The stones still captivate and command human attention, and under the gaze of ancient stone, how could I deny their calling?



Figure 8. Walking the Path. Photograph by David Kerr.

CHAPTER V

THE IMAGINAL STONE

Let me persist in divine astonishment,
so that I am ready to behold your wonders.
Let me lay my head on a stone before your door,
so that I am prepared to receive your light.

Jung, 2009, p. 238

The Next Generation of Discovery

It was like waking up one day to discover the story of a universe lay in my lap: a story that was merging with my own story, the story of my family before me, and a story that had existed far before any human story was ever told.

As my father had begun to tour the nexus of schools in California, in my 11- year-old mind, I was sure he would be known in every school in America. As his successor, I would learn Spanish and bring the stones to all the children of the Americas, and, if I had time, to the rest of the world. My father's smile was warm and enthusiastic when I told him this; he allowed not a shred of realistic doubt discourage my ambitious plan.

When he died shortly after my high school graduation, I discovered mortality, and the aimlessness of my youth became short-lived. I realized how brief life could be and, therefore, felt the limit of my own time on Earth. There was no question that I would go to college; I followed my interests in drama, writing, and mythology. The stones were in rest, waiting for me. In what ways would my own interests and gifts carry this inheritance?

Like a mantra the responsibility followed me: What will I do with the stones? How will I use the stones? After carrying these questions around for a long time, they began to change. Instead of “What will I do with the stones?” I began to ask, “What do the stones wish to do? How can I carry out their will?”

I moved to San Francisco and brought not only the masterpieces but also stones I had collected from around my father’s old workshop. On many of the stones remained penciled circles from my Dad’s plastic stencils. It was a wonder I was able to fit so many boxes of raw rock into my tiny apartment cupboards.

I eventually found myself at Pacifica Graduate Institute studying counseling psychology, with hopes of finding a different capacity in which to approach the stones. Could interacting with something so ancient, beautiful, and strange be healing? Could these billion-year-old art stones play a role in psychotherapy? If interacting with the stones could be healing, then there was only one person with whom to begin.

The Dream

It was not and still is not easy to approach the stones. To pull them out from the felt pouches my mother made, to see their familiar faces, is always emotional. Since my father had no memorial service or funeral, I often felt as though I had never properly grieved his death. For the past seven years, I have carried a constant choked-up feeling in my throat, as if some words were never expressed, or some reality never swallowed. I felt that the stones could become the portals through which I might heal, access my imagination, and perhaps even find my path towards a life-calling, a vocation. This is the story of that discovery’s beginning.

It began with a dream:

It is night and a giant owl, my father, visits me. I am fascinated by the beauty and largeness of his being and his multi-colored feathers. I am moving closer to touch him, his feathers, but he says, "Beware, for I am also a snake." He suddenly turns into a half-human, half-serpent being and whirls around my head so fast I am overwhelmed. I sense danger in the air, and I beg him to become Owl again so we can go to safety. He does this, and I fly on his back to a secret room. My father has returned to his human form. He gives me one of the stones and says with great emphasis, "Hold onto this stone."

"I will!" I promise. He disappears. Outside the window of this room, my past friends are digging a deep hole to bury themselves in the earth. (Author's journal, June 4, 2004)

This is what could be called a big dream. In my early understanding of dreams at the time, I did not know what to make of it. The owl's numinous impact on me was undeniable, and it was by far the most profound of all the dreams of my dad since his death. Why was my father coming to me in the form of an owl? What did the equally numinous, though terrifying transformation into the snake mean? There seemed to be a dualism of wisdom and danger in the dream. What did it mean to hold onto a stone—was this literal or figurative? For me, it felt like a call to adventure—to what exactly, I was not sure, but the stones were certainly involved.

One thing I had realized by this time was my identification as a father's daughter. Physically, I had always taken after his side of the family and, especially after his death, had emphasized his influence in my life. This fact, tied with the owl in the dream, made me think of the Goddess Athena. Upon my graduation from high school, a month before my father died, I even received a Barbie version of Athena, complete with owl. Having been birthed from Zeus's head, after he swallowed the pregnant Metis, Athena is the quintessential father's daughter (Murdock, 1990). Dressed in full armor she operates in the world of men, distantly in touch, it seems, with the motherly.

Having had a loving and supportive relationship with my dad has benefited my life's path tremendously. Therapist and writer Maureen Murdock (1990) described how an accepting father impacts a woman's inner masculinity, allowing her to feel confident in the world. She said these women "have an inner masculine figure who likes them just as they are. This positive inner male or animus figure will support their creative efforts in an accepting, nonjudgmental way" (p. 31).

This positive masculine, nourished by both my parents, has led to my success throughout school and my high hopes for pursuing a career in a society still considered to be a man's world. Was the owl in my dream a symbol of my positive inner masculine? Is it an image of my animus, my masculine soul?

Athena—and my dream—also holds a shadow side. To idealize the masculine can often lead to the undervaluing of the feminine. As seen in her support of Orestes, who had sought revenge of his father's death by murdering his mother, Athena values the patriarchy over the motherly connection (Murdock, 1990). Only in recent years have I become fully conscious of my mother's wisdom and how crucial she was to my father's work with the stones. Her seamless presence and support was what held everything together. Whereas my father has given me a sense of vision, an enquiring mind into the nature of the cosmos, my mother has shown me how to spin the fabric of each day. "The re-membering of Athene means the rediscovery of her relation to the feminine, to mother, to Metis. . . . Metis is the original source of Zeus's wisdom" (Downing, 1999, p. 117), wrote my religious studies professor, Christine Downing.

Beyond the simplistic connection Athena has to wisdom and even beyond this labeling of Athena as Ms. Patriarchy, there is much more to understand about this

multifaceted goddess of Greece. Downing (1999) unveiled Athena's unique relation to the feminine. She has been known to weave, a traditional woman's activity, and is considered a "worker, the maker, and *as such* connected to soul, to soul-work" (p. 118). Also, in Downing's exploration of Athena, I was astounded to find that she was not only associated with owls (believed to be her visible form) but also with snakes—the other mysterious manifestation my father took in the dream. Athena was a "close cousin to the Minoan snake goddess" (p. 123) and also "closely identified with the guardian snake believed to live in the Acropolis" (p. 123). These snakes denote Athena as a "rock mother" (p. 123), as the snakes were said to appear and disappear from the rocks of the Acropolis, thus representing "soul emerging from the underworld" (p. 123). Athena is also connected to stone because of the image of Medusa's head often depicted on the *aegis* she wore on her chest. Downing believed Medusa, whose stare turned any onlooker to stone, is the darker side of Athena. The nightmarish, terrifying quality of Medusa, with her head of snakes, seems to relate to the moment of horror in my dream and also connects this dream further to the realm of stone. Blood from Medusa's head kills and heals, it raises the dead, and Pegasus, the white, winged horse of poetry, springs from the beheading itself (p. 125). Athena, born from the head of Zeus and as goddess of matters involving the head, seems suitably connected to this image. These themes would also emerge as relevant in my encounters to come. In the *Odyssey*, Athena also appears in the form of Mentor, Odysseus' son's tutor and counselor—from whence the word *mentor* originates (p. 106). To begin my journey with the stones, meeting some kind of mentor was a necessary first stage.

Meeting the Mentor: Malidoma Somé

Following the call to adventure, as the myths usually go, is the meeting with a mentor: for me, that would be someone who knows a bit about wandering lost and could point a way forward. After finding, by chance, Malidoma Somé's book in a friend's library, I discovered the Dagara philosophies concerning minerals (discussed in Chapter II). I was able to schedule a divination with Somé when he was in the San Francisco Bay Area. As a woman steeped mostly in the methods of the modern world, I wondered if there was some important piece missing in the way I saw and related to the stones. Perhaps, someone initiated in the ways of an indigenous culture would be able to guide me in an important way.

Somé was the perfect mentor to bolster my spirits and give me insights I could have never seen. When beginning on a path that is uncertain and living in a society where one's interests may or may not be acknowledged and encouraged, a meeting like the one I had with Somé felt essential. Somé had never seen anything like the Imaginal Stones before. After initially encountering the stones, and appreciating their imagery, the following dialogue ensued on April 18, 2009 (transcribed from audio recording):

Cyndera Quackenbush (Q): And there are so many images, they seem to want to be telling a story, often a story of people or nature.

Malindoma Somé (S): Yeah, it's a lot more than that, and I'm glad you want to take this on. . . . And it is an incredible . . . just . . . I've never had to *do* something like this! I could spend a whole day working with them. It is not so much what is in there as it is the energy that vibrates. It's very strong.

Q: It's a very strong energy vibration?

S: And I'm really curious as to what they would do to a human bone, and what they've already done to you, because you live with them, you've been living with them. I mean there is something about their power that is worth investigating.

Q: How do I go about that?

S: Oh, that's not difficult. That's not difficult. As you lay down, have some of them with you. It will come to your dream, or put them on your body, one or two or three. I don't know if multiplication of them on your body would do something far more than providing you with the imageries carried in there, but, those of this size [pointing to large stone] you can use one at a time. These, this size, maybe two, three at a time is fine.

Q: Anywhere specifically on the body?

S: As long as they can have a connection with a bone. Because some of them, like this one, is showing a landscape, laying it on the chest will generate quite a bit and you can put it right on your forehead.

Q: Yeah, the bone's pretty close there.

S: That's right, you will have a replica of the same image projected to you, and it shouldn't take a long time. Even looking at them, staring at them all of a sudden, they start to open and get bigger and bigger like a big screen. Of course, we can't go that direction now, not today, but, that's how they look like, they are inscriptions of detailed pieces of the Earth's experience prior to any kind of human intelligence. . . . And be prepared to allow each one of them to take you wherever, to wherever it has been calling. Don't expect to be seeing things like in the movies, expect to be in them, inside of them, and that is what is tricky because you'll find yourself perhaps being shocked by the idea that something like this has pulled you into something you weren't expecting.

This was what I had been looking for—a way forward, a way to work. He also advised the use of drumming and counseled that it could be a “rough ride.” I was more excited than scared. In the Dagara cosmology, as Somé informed me, I was born in the mineral year (any year ending in a four or nine), and the year I was beginning this serious undertaking with the stones, 2009, was also in a mineral year.

At that meeting, Somé also had some intriguing things to say about my father in regard to the stones and how I would approach them:

S: And he was very close to a major breakthrough. Maybe it's just as well that he didn't do it, that he didn't get there. I don't know if the face of the world would still be the way it is. . . .

You have to call on his spirit. Call him while you're in the middle of this. From there, he will have ways of administering certain details that could be very helpful to this. And so, lend him credence to the fact that he is still alive. Just that he has a different body, a different shape, but he's still alive. And let him know that his contribution, from whatever dimension he's in, will be invaluable for what you're pursuing, because indeed, what you're doing is invaluable. . . .

Q: Yeah, he spent so much time [with the stones] and I always felt like—and now in thinking about his connection to the universe, it's interesting that—now he's started a very unique relationship with it.

S: That's right. He's looking at these from a very unique perspective. And it is that perspective that you need to draw from in order to gain a much deeper understanding of what is going on. That will be very very helpful to you.

Q: And that had also been a hard thing in approaching the stones, was, like, my father, you know—it was almost like such a deeply emotional thing to be with them as well.

S: Oh, yeah, because the closer the relationship the more the heart begins to respond. To be the one most affected by them. You will get eventually to that place where you could—I don't know, it's just a strong feeling—you could hear the words of your father through the stone. (personal communication, April 18, 2009)

It felt so right that my father would be present in this process on which I was embarking. How could he not be? Whenever I had looked at the stone he had somehow been there. The interview, while confirming the journey and giving it a direction, also presented me with new questions. Was information from Somé's initiated eyes, from a different cultural lens, accessible to me? How literal was I to take his insights? He understood that my initial approach would be structured for the purposes of a project. This was only a beginning. I was excited to create the needed space to conduct these experiments. I had undertaken some shamanic journeys in therapy and felt fairly confident in my safety, though I was also, no doubt about it, still a beginner.

Psychologically, I saw this as an invitation to engage deeply in active imagination, as Jung defined it. The reason this imagining is called *active*, according to psychologist Robert Johnson (1986) is because “the ego actually goes into the inner world, walks and talks, confronts and argues, makes friends or fights with the persons it finds there. You consciously take part in the drama in your imagination” (p. 140). As I would be entering into experiences and dialogues with my psyche, the psyche of stone, this was the beginning of my own serious engagement with the unconscious.

The Owl’s Heart

In August, 2009, my husband left on a trip for two weeks, leaving me with an empty apartment. Through out this time, I had planned to fast and experiment with the stones in the ways that had been laid out for me. Though this approach was not necessary, I felt drawn to this procedure because it allowed me to separate this period of time from usual time, and to designate it as a serious undertaking. Though by culture and practice I am certainly not a shaman, I wanted to access something akin to the shaman’s nonordinary reality and perhaps awaken or invoke an inner shaman archetype. Following the master cleanse was also symbolic, as I was cleansing the colon—the organ in which my father suffered the fatal disease of cancer.

Just before my descent, a number of synchronicities seemed to be supporting the process. The evening before I began fasting, a friend had stopped in unexpectedly and reminded me of the Perseid Meteor shower occurring that night. We watched the shooting stars from my apartment rooftop. It seemed significant to me that this process was beginning when meteors, ancient stones of the universe, were burning up in the earth’s atmosphere.

Also on that first night of the meteor shower, I attended for the first time a candlelight meditation at the oldest Episcopalian church in San Francisco, where these words from a Ute Indian prayer were read: “Earth teach me stillness as the grasses are stilled with light. Teach me suffering, as old stones suffer with memory” (Wood, 1991, p. 176). The synchronicity became even more pronounced when this contemporary psalm was recited:

I will praise you, O Lord,
because so much of what I find to praise
defeats our cleverness. The broad-
cast stars, the great foreheads
of cragged stone upraised
like templates from the earth. (McNamara, 2007)

With these words, I felt a reminder that this undertaking held some suffering in it and that to access the wisdom of stones, my own humanly “cleverness” would have to be put aside. The synchronicity of both of these passages also provided a sense of assurance as I began my approach to the psyche and the psyche of the stones.

The night of my first journey, Sunday, August 15, I constructed my own beginning ritual whereby the four directions and the ancestors, including my father, were welcomed. With some of the Imaginal Stones, I built a circle within which I would have my first journey. Before laying down and covering my eyes, I symbolically released all the expectations I could imagine—I did not want any expectations to get in the way of hearing or seeing what I was meant to experience. This vision followed:

I see my bare feet walking on the forest floor. Looking up I see the tallest redwoods imaginable, reaching up towards the sun. Suddenly a raccoon appears. He leads me to a tree with a large bulbous opening. Raccoon pauses and starts to nibble on something in his paws, nonchalantly, as if to say, “Here you go; this is as far as I can take you.” I enter into the tree hole and fall backwards through darkness.

I land in damp, autumn leaves. I can feel how cool the leaves are as I lay in this dark place. The sun of the forest shimmers like a single star in the darkness above. Where am I? Is this the land of the Dead? Everything is lit as if by moonlight. Rising to my feet, I see can see a far off grassy mound and the columns of what looks like a white, Greek temple. I can see the giant owl in the distance, flying towards me. It is so massive and beautiful with its multi-colored feathers.

"Are you my father?" I ask. Owl does not answer.

Flames rise up all around me. In the flames are dark figures I know are ancestors long past. The damp leaves are what keep me from being consumed by the flames. I can feel the closeness of my father's presence in this warm place.

I call out with all my soul, "Dad!"

He finally emerges from the surrounding flames, looking just as he used to. He is calm, composed.

"This is not my form any longer, but I knew this is the form you needed to see."

"Yeah, something with skin on it," I say (this is an old family saying) and we both laugh. We sit together, and I curl up in his lap like a little girl. He hugs me strongly and tenderly—I feel this embrace in every part of my being and soak it all in. I am able to move my hands through his beard and the bit of hair on the back of his head.

"Still bald as ever," I joke. My eyes are flooding with tears.

Dad says he has been here all along, seeing me through every stage, and that he continues to be here. I stay in his lap a long, long time, crying, until I feel at peace. Then I realize that we have all along been within the Great Owl's heart.

(Author's journal, August 16, 2009)

I came away from this vision, my face dripping wet and with a very unsettled feeling of insecurity and depression. Even though what I had experienced felt profound, I also felt a kind of failure. I wanted to sleep immediately and waited until the morning to write the experience down. When I finally did so in the light of day (the depression and doubt still lingering), I wondered about these so-called visions. Did I just make all that up because I needed to feel it? Did I have an infantile desire just to curl up in Daddy's arms again? Another part of me wanted to take the experience literally. Was this my father's spirit visiting me from beyond? Was he really accessible whenever I needed him?

These questions tortured me, causing great doubt and suspicion in myself and this process I was undertaking. The only thing I could not deny was that the "vision" had

occurred, and I had felt its impact and wept real tears. Reflecting back, the depression makes more sense. I had had some hidden expectation that I would be thrust into visionary ecstasy and emerge exhilarated. This may be the way of spirit, but not the way of soul. Soul is a slowing, a deepening, a moistening. According to Hillman, soul is “vulnerable and suffers; it is passive and remembers. It is water to the spirit’s fire, like a mermaid who beckons the heroic spirit into the depths of passions to extinguish its certainty. Soul is imagination, a cavernous treasury” (1977, p. 69).

In the vision, the moist soil was not very deep below the opening in the tree. It was a safe distance for my first journey. The emotions were powerful but had not overwhelmed me. Perhaps, also, before further work could be done, this communing with my father was necessary. As Somé had mentioned, my father would be necessary in this process: *Lend him credence to the fact that he is still alive*. The stones were still emotionally stirring me whenever I saw them or thought about them. Grief work was undoubtedly part of this process, and this first vision had allowed me to do some mourning and initiate a new kind of relationship to my father. The image of being held with him along with unseen ancestors in Great Owl’s fiery heart struck me as incredibly beautiful, and the warmth of this image still works on me in a healing way, whenever I remember it.

The image of Owl appeared to be alive in my psyche, so it was time to look at the symbolism of this winged creature again. In my further research on owls, I learned that, as creatures of the night, they have often been associated with healing power, death, darkness, and prophecy (Andrews, 2000). Owls “have been thought of as the reincarnation of the dead” (p. 173). In relation to my vision of the Owl’s heart, I was also

surprised to learn that barn owls, with their heart-shaped faces, symbolized the link to heart and mind (p. 178).

Though this first experience had been profound, it also had humbled me, attuning me to the gravity of what I was undertaking. I had more of a sense of the difficulties and unknowns of this process and realized how easily doubt and insecurity could crush the whole experiment. I reached out to a friend, a wonderful writer. Trusting her sense of the nature of imagination, I asked, “How do you know if you are just making something up, or if its true imagination?” She replied, “In the end, I don’t really think it matters. It all comes from somewhere and I can’t take too much credit for the material that comes to me. I’m just not that brilliant, but whatever moves through me really is” (personal communication, August 18, 2009).

I was somewhat comforted, but still wary of getting in my own way. I knew, though, that to move forward I must engender as much trust for the process as I could. Remembering the words of Robert Johnson (1986), in his book *Inner Work*, also helped. To those who had similar plaguing thoughts about the authenticity of images in active imagination, he wrote: “From my experience I am convinced that it is nearly impossible to produce anything in the imagination that is not an authentic representation of something in the unconscious. . . . It can’t be made up from thin air” (p. 150). It was also comforting to know that even Jung on many occasions had to ask his inner figures, “Are you real?” (2009, p. 262). How patient the psychic figures must be to contend with our blindness and constant doubting of their existence! So I, too, in the next journey, found myself asking that question; however, despite clinging doubts, I was less nervous and

more natural in my approach. I did not build a circle this time; I laid down with an Imaginal Stone place on the forehead and in each hand.

The Snake Queen and the Invisible Pearl

A grand white steed appears, wearing bells. It is a bumpy ride on his back and I am laughing as I ride through the redwood forest towards the tree trunk opening. I jokingly wonder if this is what Malidoma meant by a “rough ride.” It is night this time and the air is cool and crisp, a wintry feeling, snow is beginning to fall. At the hollowed tree, Horse lurches me into the chasm and I spiral down through the darkness.

I hit the damp leaves, but this time I push through them, to fly further. Owl is there and catches me on his back. He is carrying me to a place unknown to me.

We are in the night sky—meteors fly. One shoots right past us, and Owl gets right behind it, using the speed of the meteor’s body to fly faster and farther through space. I realize that we are going a very long way.

A red orb, an unknown planet comes into view, though faintly familiar. We fly towards it and into its gaseous atmosphere. A floating woman appears, beautiful yet terrible, with snake-like features. She is Queen here and is wearing gold. She is smiling a welcome. Though I am interested in speaking to her, Owl is taking me to the core of this planet.

The core is surrounded in red clouds and lightening is striking all around it. We fly through these clouds, which are a bit chaotic—we are almost struck by a lightening bolt. But what is at the center? I can’t see anything. We rise out of the clouds and back down again. I feel a terrible sinking despair as I realize nothing is there. . . .

I see a bubble—if anything—of nothingness, a void. But the void seems to be intelligent, to have presence.

Owl flies about overhead as I rest my back on what I now recognize to be an Invisible Pearl. It speaks to me as we lay together:

“Yes, I am one, I am nothing. From one all the rest came to be. But look at it all! Look at how the multitudes expand! Is it not beautiful?”

I stare out at the universe. I see all the stars, all those worlds. It feels as though my own soul is expanding as I see them, and it fills me with the greatest feeling of awe and loneliness. I feel tears welling up.

“If you were me,” says the Pearl, “Wouldn’t you desire it all; want to know and absorb all of it?”

“Yes!” I say, weeping, “I want to know every aspect of it, intimately—it is life, though, and I can only see so much.”

“There is only so much you, with all that emotion, can stand to see.”

“But how do I even know that you are real?”

The Invisible Pearl is silent, then says, “Is what you are feeling now real?”

Feeling once again my awe, my tears, the presence of the pearl with me, I cannot deny it. “You, then—are the spirit of the stone?”

“It is only a stone that can sit and wait this long. That can be physically with all there is. That can disintegrate and coagulate without fear—forever seeing where the universe goes and when it comes back. To be part of this planet, or that, to sail through space, or be held captive by gravity, holding up nothing at all, or can rest as dust upon the living, with the memory of the stars. We settle into every perspective—endless perspectives. A perspective for every person, a perspective for every plant, all very different.”

As the invisible pearl says this I see glimpses of people, of a tropical tree waving its branches in the wind; glimpses of all kinds of creatures. . . .

With the knowledge that I could return at any time, I thank the invisible pearl and set out again on Owl’s back. Together we feel our smallness compared with the universe about us. Even Owl is small compared to all of this. (Author’s journal, August 18, 2009)



Figure 9. “The Egg.” Photograph by Cyndera M. Quackenbush.

In the Invisible Pearl vision, I felt as though I was being opened up to a multiplicity of perspectives. It felt like a paradox: through the one perspective of stone, I was gaining the appreciation of a myriad of entities' viewpoints. Stone, so still, is present through the unfolding of the cosmos. Perhaps this is why significant stones in ancient cultures were thought to be the navels of the world. All creatures are made from the dust of stars, and this dust has been with the Earth since its beginning. The matter within us, outside of us, constitutes the essence of eternity.

A pearl is a piece of grit that lies caught within an oyster. Coated over time, it slowly becomes the precious jewel. Hillman wrote about the symbolism of the pearl, paralleling it to painful symptoms that, only when engaged for a long period of time far away from view, finally begin to show to their luster: "The idea of the pearl also states it is a 'goal hard to attain'—it must be worked at as does the oyster, and it must be dived for, deep into dissolving waters" (1993, p. 236).

The Invisible Pearl also was also egg-like, embryonic. All that was, had come from it. Stones, linked to the birth of gods and to human fertility and also often possessing a similar shape, can be compared to eggs. Earth works artist, Andy Goldsworthy, who creates extensively with stone, often makes seed- or pinecone-like sculptures with stone. When he works with stone he feels its life and the seed of growth within the stone (Riedelsheimer, 2004). When I interviewed Wiccan writer and therapist Vivianne Crowley, she stated that she has "used egg-shaped stones for clients to hold as they sought calmness and peace" (personal communication, September 9, 2009).

The Invisible Pearl vision was humbling because I could experience how small I was, a perspective amongst billions of viewpoints, each different and unique. Perhaps this

is some of the wisdom stone can share—the sitting and waiting throughout millennia, witnessing the endless change and varied perspectives and the horrific blasts of space and time. Goldsworthy wrote in his book, entitled *Stone*, “Change is best experienced by staying in one place” (1994, p. 6).

On a personal level, the memory of my father’s meditation spot comes to mind. Every morning he would arise early and meditate for two and half hours. He would then make up his “med spot” neatly, draping a brown blanket over it. It looked like a big soft, brown mound of earth. Meditation of this kind is stone-like in its essence. A person attempts to become as still in mind and body as possible. In meditation, one listens and notices what is inside without becoming ensnared by it. My mother and father gave credit for much of their daily clarity to their meditation practice each morning.

Owl had appeared three times now, in my dream and the two visions, and felt like an important protective guide throughout these experiences. The deep love I was beginning to feel for Owl—the most numinous inner image I had ever encountered—was the entity who, in His incredible beauty, was encouraging my entrance into the inner world and helping to make my uncertain travels feel safer.

Also appearing in the original dream and in this vision were these human-snake incarnations. In the dream, my father as half snake had been truly terrifying; then there was the appearance of the Snake Queen in this second vision. Growing up in the desert and having a brother who brought home friendly rosy boas, I had not been particularly afraid of snakes, in general. Despite the many negative cultural attitudes towards snakes, research into historical beliefs about them show different and conflicting connotations. Author Ted Andrews (2000), in his book on animal totems, stated that their shedding of

skin has represented death and rebirth, or transformation. He also noted the image of a snake biting its own tail, the Uroboros, as the symbol of eternity. A staff with two entwined snakes, he stated, is a symbol of healing, perhaps connected to the fact that snake venom can be used in snake bite treatments. In Kundalini symbolism the serpent represents sexual or creative energy that lies coiled at the base of the spine, and can rise up as an individual develops. In Egypt, said Andrews, the snake represented a form of the eye of Horus or the sacred eye of Ra. Its eyes are unblinking, and as it was said to have been condemned to the dust of the earth since Eden, is linked to the lowly.

Recently, at the King Tut exhibit (which happened to be visiting near my home in San Francisco and was mentioned in two newspaper articles in comparison to my father's masterpiece collection), I encountered a replica of Wadjet: a half woman, half snake goddess with wings. She seemed to me to be the owl and the serpent in one being, combining the domains of air and earth. Wadjet represented the Eye of Ra and was described in the *Book of the Dead* as doing the following:

She rises up on the left side of your head and she shines from the right side of your temples without speech; she rises up on your head during each and every hour of the day, even as she does for her father Ra, and through her the terror which you inspire in the spirits is increased . . . she will never leave you. (as cited in Lauritzen, 2007, p. 89)

I recognized at once the similarity between this and the dizzying experience of the snake swirling around my head in the original dream. In all the snake-man's terror, was he also a protector?

The image of the serpent also appeared extensively in *The Red Book* (Jung, 2009). In his visions, Jung was at first terrified of the appearance of serpents. Eventually, however, a female serpent became his "nocturnal companion, who lay with me on the

rocks through many twilights, imparting her serpent wisdom” (2009, p. 329). In one of the many dialogues with the iridescent serpent, who sits upon a red rock, she asked, “So, have you noticed that the becoming of the soul follows a serpentine path?” (p. 317). Eventually, Jung stated that he had “united with the serpent of the beyond” (p. 322), and explained, “I have accepted everything beyond into myself. From this I have built my beginning” (p. 322). After my series of visions, it was enlightening to see what a potent inner image Snake could be for another, as well as myself.

Becoming the Desert

In the next venture, this time holding one Imaginal Stone in my palm, I found myself in another distant world:

Owl and I are surrounded by sand dunes. An odd moon moves over us in the sky. It seems to be moving around this planet very quickly, so that every few seconds it arises anew. Is that how the moon moves here, or is time just moving fast?

Owl flies far off into the sky, I find myself alone on the sand dunes. I lie amongst the winds, and the sand, and that peculiar moon going by, going by, going by. The sand glows by its light and my bare skin appears pale. Perhaps it is time moving swiftly, as now my body is now a skeleton, the sand is touching the skeleton, now inside the skeleton. The sand is working on the bones, grain and wind wearing them down to dust. Who can tell the difference between the sand grains, the minerals, and the bone dust? They are all swept up into the winds. Is all this land bone-dust?

Owl is flying overhead. How will he take me back from here, all disintegrated and mixed up with the sand dunes? With just a few moves of his wings he gathers my spirit into a cloud and I am on his back again, ready to return. (Author’s journal, August 20, 2009)

The landscape in this vision was similar not only to the landscape depicted on the stone but also to the desert from which it was taken. I seemed to be experiencing a sort of death, feeling again a different way in which time may move and how particles of sand are like tiny stones, existing for eons. My human flesh had to be dried out, broken down. I literally had to become dust, to mix with the dust of the earth, and to realize that this is

what the dunes were made of, and that I was made of it. Was this to help disintegrate the old dominating human perspective in order to open up more fully to the perspective of stone? It felt initiatory—unsettling, terribly lonely, but also peaceful. This theme of stillness in stone, also in the previous vision, felt as though it was connecting me to an essential quality of stone. To be immobile is to see the movement of the world around. To be close to death is to also be close to life.

Like so many elements in nature, stone goes through cycles. Eroded by wind and water, particles are washed away and settle, layer upon layer, until sedimentation turns them to rock again. Though stone is associated with eternity and strength, it is also moved by change and time. Artist Goldsworthy works with this element. In the documentary about his work (Riedelsheimer, 2004) he gathers red river stones and grinds them into a pile of red pigment powder. The red is caused by the iron, which is also why human blood is red. He commented about the special feeling he has for the red: “When there was the realization that the color is also in me, then its this feeling of both a color and energy flowing through all things.” Thrown as a ghostly cloud into the air, or a wet, red clump into the river, the event is just a “little memory in the life of the stone.” My next encounter would happen in a dream landscape of red dust.

Seeing With the Hands: An Awakening of Body With Stone

Unexpectedly, the stone communicated to me in a different way than the previous encounters. It started with a dream I had on Sunday, November 14, 2009. When I woke up that morning, I wanted to enter back into the dream to dialogue with a mysterious and beautiful dream figure. Presented here are the dream and the active imagination that followed:

I am in a vast desert landscape with a group of people. The color of the land is reddish. There are train tracks nearby, which go through a tunnel. Perhaps this used to be an old mining spot. The school children from the nearby town are viewing the terrain.

There is a woman with dark brown skin and long, straight, black hair. She is a bride. I wish to speak with her, but she does not speak. She begins to dance, a slow rhythmic hula-like dance. She is moving her hips, legs, and arms to the beat of a drum behind her. The bride communicates with her body, through the dance. She is different from me, with all my words, and I am silenced before the dance she is revealing. I am beginning to hear the expression in her movement. I notice that she has a henna tattoo down one of her arms, culminating towards the center of her palm as an eye. This eye is real and looks at me, changing colors—red, blue, green, and the darkest brown. (Author's journal, November 15, 2009)

During the active imagination with this dream figure, I could feel on my own palm where the eye was. Suddenly the phrase "seeing with the hands" occurred to me—to see the stone with the hands. At this point, I got up and retrieved an Imaginal Stone, rough and jagged on one side, polished on the other (See Figure 2). I sat and held it, eyes closed, feeling with my hands and fingers the edges and textures. What occurred next is difficult to describe in words, but was undoubtedly a numinous experience for me.

I felt as though the rock itself was feeling back, reaching out to me. I felt immediate connection with it: an undeniable sensation of being felt, responded to by the stone itself. It was as if the stone was a hand, meeting my hand, with its own fingers, its own warmth. My eyes began to tear; I felt an undeniable bond with the stone.

Though it was a brief moment I had not expected, there was something profound in this experience I needed to understand. I had begun with going to some very interior landscapes using the stone, but now the communication with stone felt as if it was bridging inner imagery with the outer world. More than ever before, my body was involved in this connection. The Dancer Bride, in the dream I later recognized as a manifestation of Hopoe, the tragic teacher of the ancient Hulas I had encountered while

studying the myths of Hawaii. When I had first read this myth, it had struck a deep chord within me; I felt an emotional connection, a sense of sadness and beauty never before felt so poignantly regarding a myth.

In this encounter, Hopoe had brought me to my own body and its rhythms, and thus, to actually feeling the stone. Before, I had not quite understood what Aizenstat (2009) had meant when he described talking with the stone by noticing its textures. This is an activity that can only be understood experientially.

To “see” the stones with the hands, led me to investigate the Eye in Hand motif. I had seen the Middle Eastern amulet before with a gem in the center of the hand, though I had never made the connection that the stone represented an eye. Perhaps the most significant figure I came across while investigating this symbol was the White Tara of Tibet. The White Tara has eyes in her hands and feet that represent the all-seeing vigilance of her motherly compassion (Beyer, 1973). Tara also has connection to the realm of stone: she holds a lotus of compassion with three precious jewels. Her origination story tied her and the Tibetans to stones, as they believed themselves to be descendents of a Rock Ogress (an incarnation of Tara) and a Monkey (the Bodhisattva) (p. 293).

The significance of the hands to see and express what words cannot is what makes sandplay a powerful therapeutic tool (Ammann, 1991). Ruth Ammann, a sandplay therapist, wrote: “The hands can build the bridge between our inner world and the external world. . . . The hands are the mediators between spirit and matter, between an inner image and an actual creation. By handling, the existing energies become visible”

(p. 2). I remembered my own six months of Jungian therapy. For those six months, I sat in a room with a sandtray and many interesting looking figures but never touched them once. I felt terrified to be that playful with my therapist there, just watching. Reflecting back on this, I realize how much I wanted to, but felt I could not. I wanted my therapist to leave so I could play by myself, but this was against the Jung Institute's policy.

Ammann's focus is about communication between two human beings, therapist and client, but I wondered about the communication that could happen between humans and the objects of the world, through touch. Goldsworthy commented on how he had come to know stone simply by working with his bare hands, learning a little more with the success or failure of each project (Riedelsheimer, 2004).

Stone-rubbing is "a very old activity of mankind: it contains his (or her) predecessor's soul, and rubbing it, perfects it into one harmonious round stone of the Self" ("Stone," 1984, p. 444). A technique of Eskimo shaman initiates is to spend long periods of time rubbing a stone: "The neophyte rubs his stone all through the summer, and even through several consecutive summers, until the time comes when he obtains his helping spirits" (Eliade, 1964/1974, p. 59).

This act of rubbing a stone brought back a memory of my father, from the year that he died. He had been sitting in his favorite chair in the living room, silently holding a stone—a common smooth stone. When I approached him, he handed me this stone without saying anything. It felt hot, infused with his warmth. I have kept this stone to this day, sometimes warming it up again with my own warmth. It is like bringing him and his body's warmth back to life again.

Then, I remembered two visionary figures. The first was the raccoon, who had shown up as a guide to propel the first vision forward. I remembered learning from a documentary on mammals that raccoons have incredibly sensitive hands and depend on their sense of touch as much as humans depend on sight (Attenborough & Salisbury, 2003). With the ability to create a complex picture of their surroundings with their hands they are believed to, therefore, “see with their hands” (2003). This remarkable feature allows them to be highly adaptable; as opportunistic and inquisitive creatures they have even learned to benefit from urban development (2003).

The second figure, a very endearing baby penguin, appeared in a dream I had on November 18, 2009. I come to understand in the dream that I am the mother of this “child”—a child without hands. In the dream, I am horrified. A penguin’s wings are practically useless in relation to air but in the depths of the water they soar as well as any bird can fly. I wondered about what this might mean in regard to touch. In a way, so distant from sensate, I have been “handless.” My intellect has helped me to encounter great ideas, my imagination has brought me deeply within, but my physical connection to the world has remained partially asleep since childhood.

As an introverted intuitive type, my inferior function is sensation, the “psychological function that mediates the perception of a physical stimulus” (Jung, 1921/1976, p. 461 [CW 6, para. 792]). With intuition as my dominant function, and as an introvert, I am more oriented toward the images of my interior world and receptive to images from the unconscious. In perceiving the objects of the outside world, I may be inspired by them but only in regard to the possibilities they are striking up within me. Accessing information from my physical senses I find very difficult. I live in the realm of

possibility and rarely in the here and now. I love ideas and constantly lose contact with the ground of my environment. Jung commented on this conundrum of the introverted intuitive, who often “has little consciousness of his own bodily existence” (p. 400 [para. 658]), is in danger of becoming detached from tangible reality, and may remain “unadapted to present-day reality” (p. 402 [para. 662]). Intuition’s opposite, sensation, by contrast, “conveys bodily changes to consciousness . . . [and is] representative of physiological impulses” (p. 462 [para. 793]).

All along I have been engaged with the idea and possibilities of the Imaginal Stones, and until recently, I had made very little physical contact with the stones themselves. Perhaps because sensation is my inferior function, a figure of my psyche, Hopoe, had to seduce me into interacting more directly with an object of the world outside my intellect and imagination. The stones seemed to be calling for more time spent with them physically. I felt as though I was initiated more deeply into my senses, and through them could connect with the actuality of the stone and its existence. In Jung’s view, to proceed in the process of individuation, the inferior function must be retrieved from the shadow and developed (Jung, 1921/1976). The Imaginal Stone was not only connecting me more deeply with my imagination but with this long-lost function. As someone who dwelled mostly in the airy element of mind, Athena’s territory, the Imaginal Stone was inviting me to come back to the present, into my body and closer to the Earth. I remembered a poem I had written a few years ago that tried to reconcile these opposites, called “Venus Athena”:

Aphrodite of body
Picks a fight with
Athena of mind

This is Venus
 With moans for more
 Pleasure of prime

But Athena
 The owl of the brain's voice
 Is always asking, "Who?"

These two
 Split me like a dike
 Grips of opposition

Venus wants
 To pull me down—pull close
 In her canopy bed of touch

Athena strives up,
 A fatherly mother,
 Towards the golden throne of thought.

Through the foams of conception
 I rise beyond the sensual shore
 And drop down to discovery's core. (Author's journal, December 9, 2006)

In the divination with Somé he had said that some stones contained codes and that the "code is not to be studied. . . . The code is through touch, and it is activated with touch and air" (personal communication, April 6, 2009). After these realizations, it was a surprise to then return to my father's words in my dream: "Hold onto this stone!" Perhaps the command was more literal than I had imagined.

Though the first phase of my stone exploration was ending, I had a whole new practice to undertake. The practice is simple: sit with the stone, hold onto the stone, feel it with my hands, pay attention to my body, and see what images arise. This was no one-night stand with stone, but rather a call to a deeper, longer relationship. The stone, ancient as it is, does not provide quick insights and transient gifts. It requires time and gives eternity. What it asks for may be simple, but it is slow, like the pulse of soul, which

beats steady and long with the world. I have just begun to touch it with my heart, to hear the tiniest voice, and to see with my imagination.



Figure 10. “Woman in Reflection.” Photograph by Cyndera M. Quackenbush.

CHAPTER VI CONCLUSION

Why do you want to wait for the end of this work? Even if your waiting turned you to stone for endless ages, you could not endure till the end. And if your salvation came to its end, you would have to be saved from your salvation again.

Jung, 2009, p. 309

A simple stone as well as a human being can be seen as microcosms of the world. In my studies of stone, I was fascinated to learn that the human body not only contains roughly the same percentage of water as this “blue planet” but also contains, and depends on, the same minerals that are found dominant in the rocks of the Earth’s crust (Size, 1998). Director of the Geosciences program at Emory University, Bill Size, explained that the chemical composition of almost any piece of rock is similar to the human body (1998). Minerals exist within as well as outside of human beings, both literally and psychically, which challenges a view that humans are separate and independent from the larger world.

In Chapter II, a glimpse was given into how stones were animated and had an impact on human life from its very beginning. Eliade wrote,

Above all stone *is*. It always remains itself, and exists of itself; and, more important still it *strikes* . . . Before he even takes it up to strike, a man finds in it an obstacle—if not to his body, at least to his gaze—and ascertains its hardness, its roughness, its power. (1949/1958, p. 216)

Though the beliefs and stories of old are not taken literally by the modern mind, these beliefs can still shape how the world is seen. One is left wondering how stones, and other entities in the environment, might again be experienced as alive.

The psychological assumption up until recently has been that the meaning objects hold for individuals are based on their own projections and that the meaning or wisdom in what is in front of one is found only within. Chapter III peered into the past 100 years to explore how the concern for the soul has stretched from Freud's interest in individuals' souls towards Jung's concept of a soul that binds people together, and finally back to the soul in the world recognized by Hillman, Aizenstat, Tarnas, and others. Returning to soul has meant looking within and also looking without; humans are affected by their surroundings as well as by the invisible pasts that live deeply within. Documented experiences in the lives of Jung and Oakes served as examples of this impact.

Jung's (2009) *The Red Book* was not released until after I had finished my own two-week engagement with the unconscious. The length and extent of Jung's inner visions, confrontations, and dialogues and the profundity of his suffering showed me a glimpse into the depths of the psyche through which I have only begun to wade. I hope that the release of this monumental book will inspire a new trend of individuals' engagement with the unconscious in this new millennia. Keeping in mind that Jung's example should not be turned into a method to emulate exactly, I continue to develop my own approach to active imagination.

In a more intimate look at the relationship between man and stone, Chapter IV introduced the Imaginal Stone. The formation of the stone more than a billion years ago was described and how it came to impact one man in particular, James Quackenbush. The relationship with stone he maintained over a period of more than 25 years illustrated a way in which a modern human being may embrace an entity of nature with an open heart,

mind, and ear. By co-creating with the cosmos, my father brought meaning not only to his own life but to the many people with whom he came into contact.

My journey with the Imaginal Stones, described in Chapter V, began with my father's death, an inheritance of stones, and a feeling of wondrous questioning into the nature of the cosmos. Inspired by my father's unceasing relationship with stone and by my recognition of the disjointed relationship most Westerners feel with nature today, I began to investigate the psychological value a rare and beautiful phenomenon of nature could possess.

Implications of the Study

From the episodes of active imagination that I underwent, what can be deduced about a relationship to the soul of stone? Hillman wrote that the "soul of the thing corresponds or coalesces with ours" (1982, p. 78); therefore, without the aid of definitive scientific reasoning, I have had to remain open to the possibility that just as a dream, a vision, does not fully belong to me but to the psyche, it may share in the psyche of the world, the *anima mundi*. The stone, as necessary to life as any living thing, shares in this soul of the world. Through my dreams and visions involving stone, I began to change: I acquired a greater sensitivity towards the things of the world and my place amongst them. I am learning to listen to the stones. While editing this thesis, I took out the stones I had collected from around my father's workshop, many of which had been stored away in plastic containers. I had to free them from this confinement, and even felt compelled to fill a bath of water and wash them. In water, the Imaginal Stones really come alive; their colors and imagery ignite. I have begun to organize them more carefully, allowing them to breathe. The penciled circles my father drew do not trigger as much sentimentality as

they did before. I want the image of the stone to come through. They speak through their images, their texture, their “isness.”

The implications of this study involve the perspective with which one sees the world presently. If something as seemingly lifeless as a stone can be considered an important and meaningful entity, what can this mean for the rest of the world? The relationship with any object may be seen in a new way: What is its perspective? How does it regard me from where it is sitting? What is its impact on me and my impact on it? Bursting the bubble of anthropomorphic concerns, care for the soul in the world may be fostered as well as within the self.

What I have also discovered throughout this exploration is that to love the world it must be appreciated and accessed not just through the mind but with the love of the body. Though people may agree or disagree on the condition of the world, the future of the world, and how the world should be treated, an individual’s experience of the world’s beauty cannot be argued with. Having this sort of experience with the phenomena of nature may be what builds an attunement and thus a desire to care for it. Hillman wrote,

Without beauty and pleasure of the world, why save it? Neither shaming for past exploitations nor moralizing about future generations, nor theologizings about the great good mother Gaia, nor sophisticated scientific and economic ecologies, or romantic sentimentalisms and politically opportune greenings so moves the individual soul to re-unite with the world soul as does the Aphroditic power of pleasure. . . . Not duty; beauty, and the pleasuring in things. (1993, p. 264)

While discovering in myself the need to access and develop my sensate function, I believe the need to be in the body is also a universal call in the modern world today. With the increasing habits that numb and drown out the needs of the body, the body’s voice is not often heard: “Mind over matter,” the saying goes. That which is beyond the Earth, or transcends the Earth, is often idealized, and meanwhile, the Earth, the body, the matter of

existence are forgotten and therefore susceptible to abuse and neglect. During this undertaking with the stones, synchronistic opportunities arose, inviting me to more deeply engage my body. Seemingly by chance at a café, I met a director of acting and dance and was invited to attend a rehearsal. I could not believe the synchronicity when I found myself part of a play entitled *The Tender Stone*. The Imaginal Stones seemed to be opening up unexpected doors within my life.

Further Exploration

From the perspective of the stones, after waiting eons in the earth, perhaps they too were seeking to “individuate” with their contact with air and with humans, who can give conscious expression to the meaning they have to offer. The stones have already served as a focus, an opus, for discovery in my life. I am picking up where my father left off. The meaning unfolds as I continue on. The stones have been responsible for organizing my world in a way that would not have been possible if they had never existed. Like a poet seeking restrictions—self-imposed rules to construct an elegant quatrain or haiku—the stones provided a focus, a subject, a limitation and, in that, a world of possibility. There has also been a sense of fate in regarding them, a feeling that they have chosen to work with me and not vice versa.

Researching the stones of the world in general and the Imaginal Stones in particular has opened me up to the multiplicity of the universe. By attempting to understand a stone’s perspective, I have had to come face to face with a multitude of other perspectives. I have realized that one of the prime tasks ahead is to develop further my capacity to listen by extending it beyond humans to the myriad ways of being. Though this thesis has focused on stone, a product of nature, an equally valid study could

be done on a multitude of other objects that have existed or have just begun to exist in the world. An investigation into the significance of oil pumpjacks, telephone poles, city sidewalks, or plastic bags may be a necessary undertaking. What part do these presences play in the world soul?

It was only very recently, when taking the masterpieces from my father's frames to look more closely, that I actually realized how the stones would continue on even after my own death and the generations that lay ahead. This kind of reflection humbles the hubris of youth, which wants to live forever. I was curious as to the journey these stones will have, not only in my lifetime but also beyond it.

In the divination I had with Somé, he prophesied the following:

Once you have collected the data necessary for you to fulfill your project, you will discover yet another layer. Because the layers are so many here . . . millions of them, and each one has a specific reason for being there. This is what keeps these stones alive. This is the life force inside them. (Personal communication, April 18, 2009)

Since the instigation of my own journey with the stones, I have discovered threads in the labyrinth connecting me to my personal past, present, and future. I have also found that some of these threads are universal. What lies ahead appears more vast and mysterious than ever before. The exploration with the Imaginal Stones has helped to heal some of the unresolved grief resulting from my father's death and has also cleared a path into my future. Reaching into the recesses of soul, I feel my soul mixing with the soul of stone. The road ahead feels shielded with the overgrowth of nature, with the darkness of unlit desert. I feel lucky to have some of the voices of the wise ones as I go.

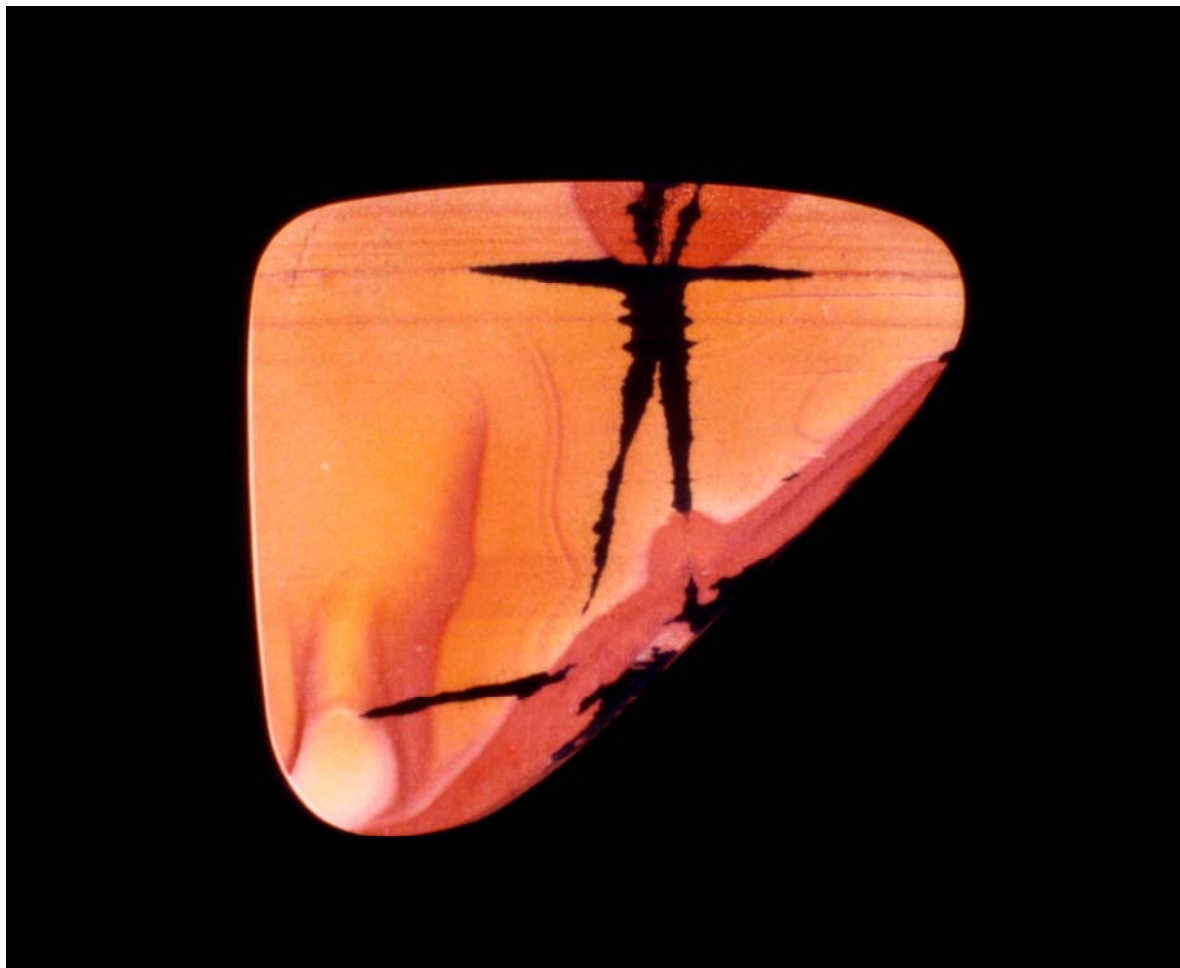


Figure 11. “Sun Dancer.” Photograph by Cyndera M. Quackenbush.

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Autobiographical Sketch

Cyndera M. Quackenbush grew up in the small town of Joshua Tree, California.

The same desert dwelling saw her birth, her father's death, and the meeting and marriage to her husband. She left the desert to major in Creative Writing and minor in Folklore and Theater at San Francisco State University. Her "roaring twenties" have seen involvements with the More Cowgirl Writer's Collective (2005-2007), Bombshell Betty's Burlesqueteers (2008-2009), and, most recently, with the Artship Dance Theatre Ensemble. With a Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology from Pacifica Graduate Institute, attained with this thesis, she has begun a practice reading tarot, dream tending, and continues to explore a relationship with the Imaginal Stones. Her website can be found at www.imaginalhealing.vpweb.com. She currently lives with her husband in a San Francisco apartment overlooking the Pacific Ocean.