

7-15-2009

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Recommended Citation

Sparenberg, David (2009) "*Waterstone*," *The Mythic Circle*: Vol. 2009 : Iss. 31 , Article 17.
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mcircle/vol2009/iss31/17>

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WATERSTONE

by

David Sparenberg

The peerless attainment of the great work of alchemy is called lapis or philosopher's stone; or yet again "waterstone of the wise." I am, fortuitously, in possession of such a stone; although my waterstone is not a product of the alchemical alembic. Unless, that is to say, we can conceive the whole of Earth—consisting of atmosphere, land and water—as living alchemy.

I discovered my stone; if indeed it did not wait patiently and discover me; found, that is, at the outer tip of the Dungeness Spit, along Puget Sound in the state of Washington. An artifact of organic crafting, refined by the iodized perpetual motion of the Pacific Ocean, my waterstone is of solid weight, elliptical in shape, and of a size to fill an adult human palm. In coloration, it is gray, with tints and scattered patches of egg shell white, and rings that range from charcoal to black. The alteration of these colors in patterns-concentric gives to the surface an appearance of waves being viewed from a far distance, as if looked down upon from heaven. In the middle of these wavelike circles is an elevated mass that seems as if an island centered in a surrounding but petrified sea. Because this is the beauty of the stone, and in that beauty the stone's mystery, I take it to be an act of magic, inscribed with oceanographic-geography and geophysical history.

Since I now reside, in voluntary exile, in a desert place, my plant-companions here—consisting of coleus, Mexican petunia and thriving aloe vera—are frequently in need of liquid comforting and the gentle libations of rain like prayers. Because of this, I have introduced them each to my precious waterstone, and enjoy the delightful fantasy that while I sleep and sometimes dream—as one whose slumbering odyssey must cross through storms and sail, nocturnal, upon the flowing breath of shore directed crests—that while I am removed to my other life in dreaming, my waterstone; a friend this now two decades and more; tells tales to moonlighted greenery of places that do not know of dryness, being oceans vast and restless with the pulse of mythic dance.