

The Writing of Stones – Roger Caillois



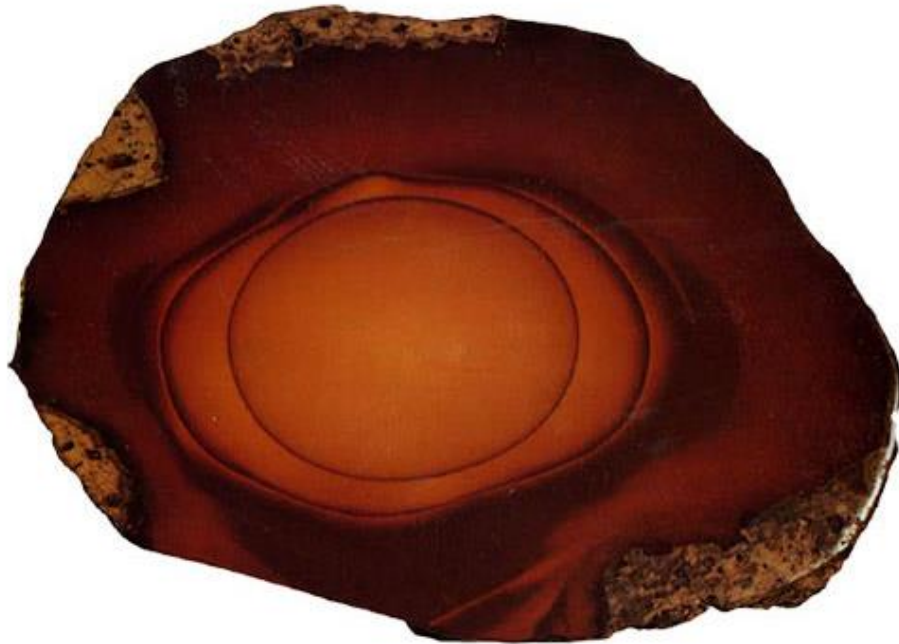
Agate – Smithsonian Institution

Surrealist and Sociologist Roger Caillois was known for his writings on [biomimicry](#), especially within the insect world, pareidolia and lithic scrying. His latter interest provided us with [The Writing of Stones](#), a book in which he unravels the ‘unfathomable graphic madness’ etched onto the rocks contained within the ‘archives of geology’. Each chapter of the book is dedicated to a species of rock – in each he channels ever increasingly dense, extravagant, and at times morbid tales from the authorless inscriptions each stone contains.

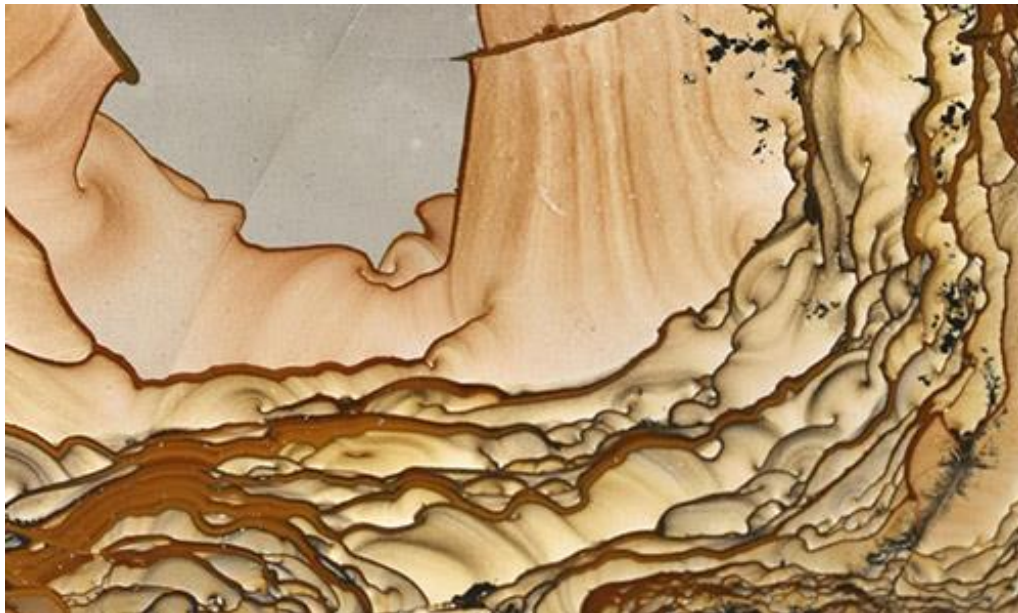
‘An Agate may shadow forth a tree, a forest, a whole landscape....clouds, lightning, a great sea full of fleeing galleys....Such objects may resemble a mountain or a cave – they reduce space and condense time’

‘The Jaspers of Oregon are unrivalled for the complexity of their carved designs [...] Universe of scrolls, branches, pleura [...] sand rhythmically modulated by wind’. On the Idaho Jaspers (one he names ‘Orbit’) he says ‘they proclaim the circuits of planets or electrons around their invisible centres or nuclei [...] The are like the rings of armillary sphere, with their zodiacs and ecliptics and equinoctial zones – bracelets for cosmographers or nuclear physicists’ Long before the invention chaos theory and fractal mathematics he realises that ‘they reflect the phantom revolutions which, alike on a vast and microscopic scale, unflaggingly repeat the same pattern’

Of the Septaria he remarks that ‘occasionally they open out into ravines lined with little crystals and that ‘they form patterns which explode; showers of many sided cells, sprays of dodecahedra, cobwebs spun in the void containing no lurking spider’. Intoxicated further by these glyphs he finds ‘floating phantoms, demons with eyes on stalks, a Sabbath of spirals or Bacilli’ and later on ‘elemental columns of chromosomes, protozoa and centipedes.



'Orbits' Jasper – from the Writing of Stones



Oregon Jasper

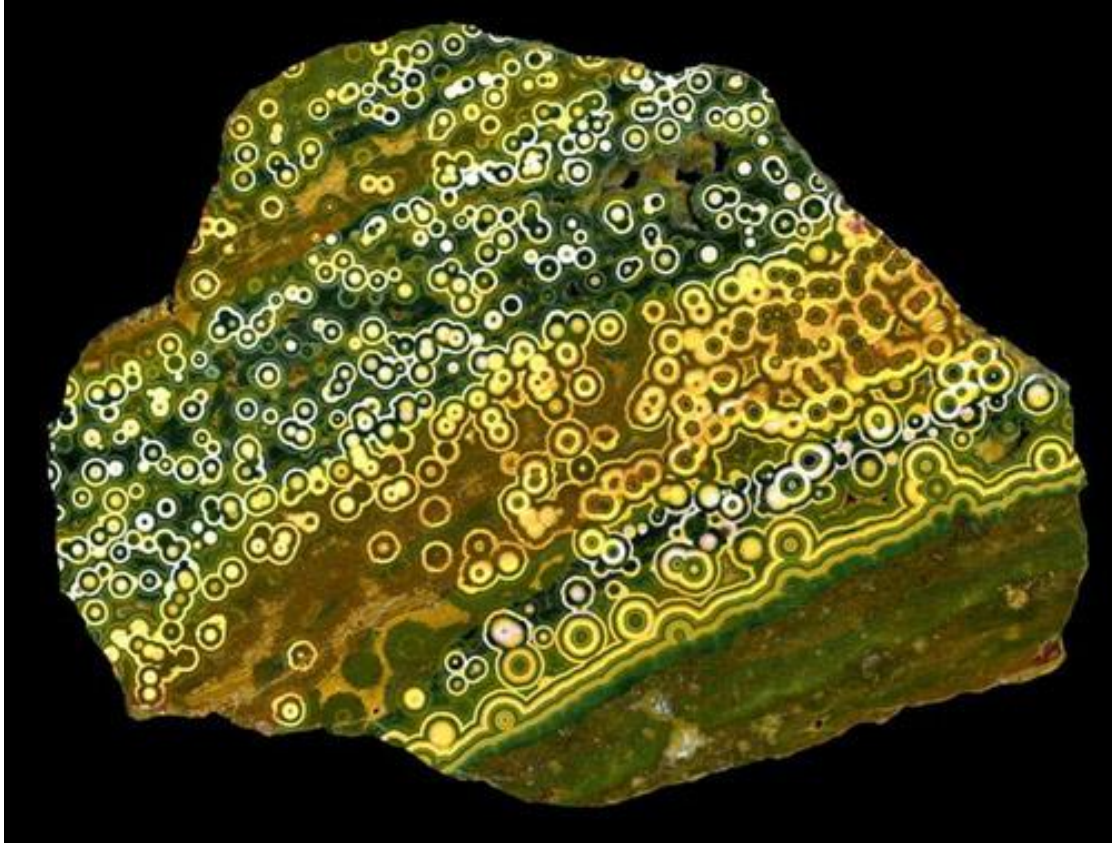
As the book goes on, the inspection and introspection shift from empirical references to more outlandish ones, his isomorphisms eventually dissolve discretion and to gravitate towards the morbid. Uncensored geopoetic beautiful reveries are gradually displaced by grotesque fantasies –

petrified mutilations and putrefactions. Caillios invites to us dwell on ‘muscles laid open in their cavities of bone...lopped off breasts...gnarled phalluses...frogs crucified by galvanic currents...eruptions of boils or buboes on an infected skin...intestinal worms glistening with the biles and juices digesting them...rotting shell-less molluscs...gobs of spit and knuckle bones softened by acid’. We enter a ‘a mauve and lunatic life, proliferating without law or limit, feverishly breeding goiters; a ravenous, shifting universe in which details are so clear it is almost endless’

In one section Caillios identifies Cubist structures reflected in one particular stone and shows that its our contact with the works of Braque and Picasso that forces us to see these patterns accordingly. So the lithic pareidoliac must rely on her database of memories to make sense of these patterns and forms.



Septaria – R. Warin



Ocean Jasper – Marco Campos Venuti

‘To be moved by the patterns one needs to know already the secret it unveils or recalls, one needs to have learned from scientific works of the thousands of patterns which this one brings together, and without which it would remain what it is really is – chance curves providentially assembled by another chance and randomly colored by metallic deposits’

Caillois’s own database was one defined in pre-digitised World. A re-reading of those very same stones today might bring to light new kinds stories riddled with algorithmic organisms or species born of New Aesthetic, where Boids trace trajectories defined by the chaotic parabolas of a Lorenz Attractor and Cellular Automata riot into ever shifting and unpredictable grid patterns.

Source: <http://www.dataisnature.com/?p=1990>

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