



Safe haven for precious rocks

NASA stores the lunar sample collection in a specially constructed facility called the Lunar Curatorial Facility at the Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas. The priceless materials remain in a nitrogen atmosphere, which is far less reactive chemically than normal oxygen-rich air. Scientists working in the facility wear lint-free outfits affectionately known as "bunny suits," and handle the samples in glove boxes. In this photograph, Roberta Score is examining a piece of an Apollo 16 rock, while Andrea Mosie (left) looks on.

SCIENTISTS AS POETS

Scientists do not view the world in purely objective ways. Each has biases and a unique way of looking at the world. Science is not done solely with piles of data, hundreds of graphs, or pages of equations. It is done with the heart and soul, too. Sometimes a scientist is moved to write about it in elegant prose like that written by Loren Eiseley or in poetry, like the poem written by Professor Carlé Pieters of Brown University. Dr. Pieters holds her doctorate from MIT and is an expert in remote sensing of planetary surfaces. She is especially well known for her telescopic observations of the Moon. The poem first appeared in the frontispiece of *Origin of the Moon*, published by the Lunar and Planetary Institute.

The Original Moon

Four and a half æons ago
 a dark, dusty cloud deformed.
 Sun became star; Earth became large,
 and Moon, a new world, was born.

This Earth/Moon pair, once linked so close,
 would later be forced apart.
 Images of young intimate ties
 we only perceive in part.

Both Earth and Moon were strongly stripped
 of their mantle siderophiles.
 But Moon alone was doomed to thirst
 from depletion of volatiles.

Moon holds secrets of ages past
 when planets dueled for space.
 As primordial crust evolved
 raw violence reworked Moon's face.

After the first half billion years
 huge permanent scars appeared;
 ancient feldspathic crust survived
 with a mafic mantle mirror.

But then there grew from half-lived depths
 a new warmth set free inside.
 Rivers and floods of partial melt
 resurfaced the low 'frontside'.

Thus evolved the Original Moon
 in those turbulent times.
 Now we paint from fragments of clues
 the reasons and the rhymes:

Sister planet;
 Modified clone;
 Captured migrant;
 Big splash disowned?

The Truth in some or all of these
 will tickle, delight,
 temper, and tease.

— Carlé Pieters