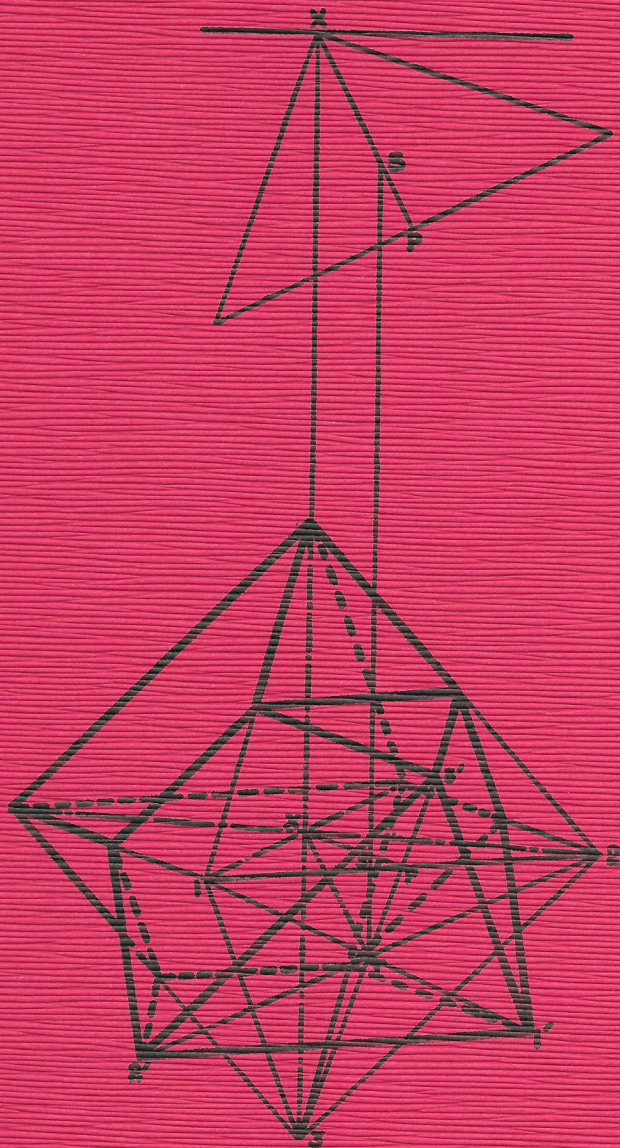


THE CRYSTAL TEST





T H E

(AFTER CLARK COOLIDGE)

CRYSTAL

BY CRAIG DWORKIN

T E X T

The moment at which a text or depiction reaches out most irresistibly to a thing seen or expressed is also the moment at which it mobilizes the accidents and duplicities of markmaking most flagrantly, most outlandishly — all in the service of pointing through them, and somehow with them, to another body that is their guarantor.

— T. J. Clark

The rose quartz quarters on my desk. It obligates. It obliquates. Around an axis the crystal twists. The crystal finds an assestation in this text. The rock assesses — and corrects. Smoothing from the cut a curve of surface caresses and assents. It stays assayed. A true bequesting must remain unsaid. The crystal is oblique. The crystal was obliged. It is expressive, biomorphic and easily anthropomorphized, and yet, at the same time, the most remote and indifferent to human wishes ... the most like a body the least like an organism. It is always more important, more interesting, more capable (full of rights): it has no duty to me whatsoever. The tone is fading imperceptibly as I watch. The opalescence spreads with the color's obsolescence. The rock is a clock. It marks; it keeps; it bides; it takes. It weighs like something else on her mind, but it can wait. The skin's elasticity calibrates a kind of long-term dermal chronologue. Impurities in the massive material fibre the fleshy hue. The rock's muscle relaxes. The rock is clastic. Edges distress the desk. The crystal scrawls where the base has scraped the laminate. The rose leaves lesions along the plastic. The quartz abrades.

It banns. It banks. The stone upbraids me when I look away. The rose abates. The stone projects. The top counters. Each cleave desperates the hopes of cohesion. Nearing close, the cliff looks treacherous and steep. The crystal stalls. The rock is rested, completely intensified, intense. The larger wall is composite, disparate. Some pockets hollow when the gravel falls. At last the local clasp collapses. Two sides wrinkle like a ball of crumpled paper. The rock swivels, thick-wristed in its partial pivot. The crystal bevels against the level and plumbs. The crystal riddles. Ridges nick. White streaks striate the flank like nail marks. The cirrus thins. The crystal clouds. It casts. The rock includes. Lamina flake like keratin from the glassy margarite. Nacre under lacquer suspends. Salmon settles to a turbid fathom. The rose is saturated to a depth. The rose arises from titanian traces. Before it rights the rose twists sinisterous. The crystal faults. Some helicities of salt cause a delirium. The crystal is lit. The crystal is limned. Planes grade against the rim like an angle of sinking. The waves rock. The rock logs, and lists. The crystal tilts and skews. The rose takes on, and sizes. It whelms and tanks. It fails to avoid.

The hull of the rock lies heavy in the silt. The horizon slews. The larger structures suffer with a catastrophic loss. Conchoidal fractures spread from impact like ripples from a stone dropped into water. Arrayed, concentric, the ocean's repetitions rime; its heaves, sorry, endlessly vent. Dry land looms as a *memento mare*. From tailings piles quartz accrues. The lonely stone strips ply from ply. Wreathing wave upon wave, light lattices on water. Laced oscillants plait as the nascent pleats, implacid, pleach, reach out and overlay. The reflectance decks. Crestings braid the ceaseless weaving of uneven waves. Surges hail from the air; tides allide the coast; each swell chills the surf as it leaves; the sea sieves the sand to sift the silted slurry's lees. Strands lather. The rim clouds. Troughs roughen. The surface reeves. A backwash reparates the beach's polish. Lustrant saline deperates the rock. Rounded pebbles roke. The quartz is centered. Electrons spin with angular momenta; their charges quantize. The quartz enlarges. The rock is washed in salts. The crystal cleanses. The dust breeds. Molecules waltz and halt. Minerals spirit. Volatiles solve. The crystal oscillates at a frequency I feel but

cannot see. Vibrations sympathize. Standing waves resonate and cancel. Vibrations ratio. Sinical light casts a clinical glare. The rock is loud, though it resounds too low for me to hear. The crystal is slow. The crystal is frequent. I think of it tuning as it turns. The crystal can only transmit, but no one is listening. The stone insists but is never urgent. The rose encodes. The crystal quills. It evinces a will to formation, and the impossibility of forming *any other way*. The court's report demands its deposition. The discourse of the quartz records soliloquies of ice, speaking ceaselessly of the beauty of its own snows. Folds drape like glaciated crinoline with a glycerined sheen. The silken swikes. It rises to the light. The passerine weeps at each appearance. The sun swipes at the rose in passing sweeps. Mica glints. Phases shift across gaunt ellipses. Shade swerves. Shadows circle the base in a sciatic sway. Their shapes, for a moment, leave Lissajous curves. The desk serves as an oscilloscopic screen, picturing the frequency of unheard solar sounds. Filaments in interference elongate, slake, foreshortening, and fade. The crystal is a lens. The crystal lends. It colors. The crystal as a prism imprisons certain

shades. Its polar optics set selective spectra free. It smoothed so you may play. A sinusoidal period repeats. Curtained apertures curtail the erasures from halation that might whiten out the frame. Lassed wind slats the window-glass. The shade staggers, wobbles and rocks. Acclivious clouds curtail in their upward slope. Through a half-drawn sash the rose is stoked; the tender tawny rokes remember in a flash; the crystal surprises the vestal sunrise. The crystal's photographs cycle daily. Fuscal purples temper while the festal blushes rise. The silicate thresholds in the dusk. Its pairs share oxygen. The silicon is still again, its bands akin to holding hands. The iron impurities profess a kind of faith. They stipple the base. The rock's stenography courts a short reporting. Sodium chloride in its halide cubes is well allied with quartz. The rose, immobile, corresponds. Molecules resile and collide. Structures rebuke forms. Stones sink and rise, through the magma and the crust. They melt and then grow cold. The crystal glances. The crystal glaces. Up close one can see a crease in the crystal where it seems to fold: the erotics of the rock. Rust spots macle on the bottom block. The rose, aroused,

glistens. The crystal winks and lustres. It sheens where it has not been sheared and underneath the fingers feels slick. The rock absorbs the oils from my hands. Out of the cool the crystal's surface sweats. The crystal films. The skin thins. The crystal crafts occasions. The rose proposes new arrangements. My placement is assigned. Deficiencies in the grid split chips to sand. The crystal is a siren. The crystal is a sign. The crystal sings, refrains, reprises. The rungs of its lattice ring in rounds. Phonoliths lithe the silence like a cipher. The tone lures the aire. The rock rinks when I knock it. The block proves strong; its brink assays, is hale and sound. Stimulated, in circles, the stone sings its synchronous song. At the centre of the rose, its secret: an absence; the delicate folded structures cup nothing with such care. I have limited myself here to the crystal, to everything among the missing. The rose is the moment toward which everything is drawn. In its reflection, the crystal is a twin, split between my eyes. In the waning light the stone looks wan. The rock intrudes. The rock was composite. The crust quenches. Trenches thrust. Feldspar sponges and pumices the granite. A stratum plunges. The valley summons. Fieldstones,

among alpine flowers, lie. Asteraceae bloom above the buried
gems. Covered with clay, the stone forgets, delights, makes
glad, averts dismay. Stems weave a hurdle. Eathers stake.
Les pierres précieuses s'enfouissant. Beneath the road: the beach.
Gravel skirts from erosion expose. Micæ brighten. Fissures
lode. Vents distain their distal facies. The crystal clears the
surface with a soiled breach. The rose eclodes. The precession
of crystals uncovers vistol ambits. Glaces glare. The rose
imbues. The clear cut leam lingers and scows. The scream
plows itself. Crisis pews. The rust tones, imbrues and braces.
This poem writes on a sheet of such water-logged stone. The
quartz fashions a nappe around its axis. The crystal taches
quickly from the friction. The rock is a fraction of some
other stone. Nitrides mask the etchants. The crystal was
embedded. The roche once was rached. Each face is false —
irregular, inconstant. The rock is just. The rose aches. The
cup is hastate in its jut. A ridge knaps from the back of the
neck, where it tapers to a wedge. The quartzes gestate as they
hutch. Accretions seek the furthest edge. The stone is asleep,
but not for long. The rose will not take. The quartz, when I

clasp it, forges a tache. The stocked rock squares like a fist. It holds fast. It fastens. It fits. In the end, its commitments leave me so undone. The stone deprives. It quits. Lives quiet. The crystal remembers the histories of its seeds. The bud remembers its limb. The viewer forgets his task. The crystal is sincere. Its sinuate facets pare. I stare at the crystal daily, dutifully. The cut stone fascinates. The crystal is a die. The crystal decides. It flushes and ashes. In a flash the reflection ushers in the dusk. The crystal text, diurnal, reflects. The crystal cannot die. Still, the stone sits there. The crystal is couched. Its skill facets skew. The rose arrests. It vouches and attests. Sincipital wedges brow the crown. The rose quartz functions as a skull — a *memento mori* immobile on my desk. Miners cull the gravel for the gems. Crystalline does not mean *dead*. The *vanitas* reminds. The single form reduplicates; layers tile; coverings cleave; the shingle shells clean out. The rose relinquishes and binds, leaving loans behind. A rock is a reliquary of structure. The lapidary cerns. Quartz earns its salary form. The stone scuttles, and scuttles the shallow crest. Valéry's storm stirs the waves of the sea. The rock

impinges on the loam. The gem emerges from the scree. The crystal percusses. It settles. It scores. Stones in soil immerse. The crystal misses its bed. It saddles. It ettles itself. As the water lets go of its solutes the stone sublimes and the crystals grow. Window-glass flows slowly down. Lachryma lapse with time. The rose is complicit in the processes. Any given donative cannot be resolute. The fragile crystal fractures. Quartz chips scales from the cliff. Tissues fissure. The issue ceases. A tear refracts the light to blind. With a pause across the trystal crest, it passes down along the cheek — and checks. The crystal for a moment cannot be seen. But, since the crystal itself is colorless, what we perceive when we look at it is the color and structure of the rose and not the crystal itself. The crystal as I count is a tristetrahedron. Its plicatures increase. The stone provects. We construe the beauty of the rose from its imperfections, its failures. A grid ranges, and will continue until something gets in its way. The quartz is generous. The quartz is generative. Its growth is thwarted by the given depositions. A lattice by additions accretes. The crystal assists. The crystal encysts. The crystal is discrete. Its xenophobic

structure is allergic to the stranger. The crystal is dedicated. It is given to the word. The crystal is addicting. The terms decline; the stone hands over; the beholder deposes. The rock mocks me. It scolds. It says to me, again and again, and I cannot help it: you are devoted; you have betrayed; you have been consecrated; you have been delivered. Something has gotten in my way. The rock once was cleft. It now is balanced like a heart to the left. The crystal is motionless when I write on it. The heart abstracts itself. The crystal obliterates. This rock once was rifted. The crystal sits. The crystal seems uprighted when placed on its thinnest face. The profile is drawn. Adjacent sides appear uneven from above. The edges blunt. This crystal would be dorsal if it were a blade. The rose makes its presence felt. It gives time, times and takes. The rock was obliterated. It obviates all debts. The crystal was a gift, and so it should suspend the present — holding open a space that can only await: a delay in quartz (as one might say *a poem in prose*). The crystal's commissures craft raphes. Facets afaite. Until the moment it was seen it seemed to be agraphic. The rose shows a continuous multiplication with identity.

The geometry of the rock reforms. The back of the face is oblate. The cropping corners must have been pared. The rock leafs. The rose laments. A focal conic generates a quadric. Tiers factor. The quartz stems. Parallel aments range with woeful poses. Petals ravel. The rental pends. The crystal as a gift forecloses most exchanges. The crystal stipulates and will not bargain. It refuses to edit its obligatory rates of interest and estrangement. The crystal scribes a small circle in scratches. Its benefactor, a signatory, credits and ascribes. The crystal chooses. Seeds propagate to shoots. New buds jumble, bejeweled with bulbous dew. Gemmæ scale scars and stipules, noting the growth of the rose. The edges dent and ripple. The crystal is a scribe. Its pumicing scumbles the imitation grain. Rain pummels the clay; it pocks and washes. The rose will not come clean. In the plot I write the path of the rock is sinuouse. Gravel marks the border of the lot. The crystal is oblivious, intransitive. It causes me to waver. Its planed arrangements stagger. Lids occlude in droop as the recludent muscles flag. Periorbitals bolden. The crystal is duplicitous. It clears and confines; throws

open and thwarts — *vighnakarta*, *vighnaharta* — the quartz removes obstacles; the stone obstructs; it locks out; it shuts in. The stone recludes. The rose is holden. The crystal does nothing to everything. It refuses to object. I try to bestow the stone; it hands right back. It remains a gift. The crystal's indifference makes me wistful. The rock is constant. This crystal is my proof. Only it can know how accurate and imprecise I have been here — the extents of my unfaithfulness and simultaneous fidelities. The rosary beads with polished stones. The prose concedes its meter. The bank, in cycles, rents. The airy cirrus rises where the stream is prone to speed; it streaks the shrinking daylight, pinks and patterns like the strata of the stone. Beyond the pane the branches bar the darkling with their arch and weep. The crystal damps. The quench tapers. The rose quartz quells. A luminance is almost spent. The sunset steep; the crystal dyes the passing brightness. The glow grows lambent; the balance of the lamber shadows; it goldens as it goes. The rock is out of time. The crystal was beheld. The crystal is beholden.

“The moment at which a text or depiction reaches out most irresistibly....”
T.J. Clark: “Phenomenality and Materiality in Cézanne,” *Material Events: Paul de Man and the Afterlife of Theory*, ed. Tom Cohen et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001): 99.

“It is always more important, more interesting, more capable....” Cf.
“L’objet est toujours plus important, plus intéressant, plus capable (plein de droits): il n’a aucun devoir vis-à-vis de moi.” Francis Ponge: *La Rage de l’expression* (Lausanne: Mermod, 1952): 11.

“the most remote and indifferent to human wishes....the most like a body the least like an organism....” Clark, *op. cit.*, 97-98.

“Some helicies of salt cause a delirium.” Clark Coolidge: *Smithsonian Depositions and Subject to a Film* (New York: Vehicle Editions, 1980): 43.

“The lonely stone strips ply from ply.” Cf. Stéphane Mallarmé,
“Remémoration d’Amis belges,” *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945): 60.

“...the ceaseless weaving of uneven waves.” Cf. Charles Reznikoff:
“Aphrodite Vrania,” *The Poems of Charles Reznikoff: 1918-1975*, ed. Seamus Cooney (Jaffrey: Black Sparrow, 2005): 25.

“...a will to formation, and the impossibility of forming *any other way*.” Cf.
Francis Ponge: *Tome Premier: douze petits écrits* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965): 94.

NOTES

“...the beauty of its own snows.” Cf. Arthur Symons: *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1918): 18-19.

“I have limited myself here to the crystal...” Clark Coolidge: *The Crystal Text* (Los Angeles: Sun & Moon, 1995): 111.

“Les pierres précieuses s’enfouissant.” Arthur Rimbaud, “Après le déluge,” *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972): 122.

“Crystalline does not mean *dead*.” Clark, *op. cit.*, 98.

“Valéry’s storm stirs the waves of the sea.” Cf. Walter Benjamin: *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999): 453.

“But, since the crystal itself is colorless...” Gregor Maehle: *Ashtanga Yoga: Practice and Philosophy* (Novato: New World Library, 2006): 147.

“The crystal was a gift, and so it should suspend time...” *et passim*. Cf. Jacques Derrida: *Donner le temps 1. La fausse monnaie* (Paris: Galilée, 1991).

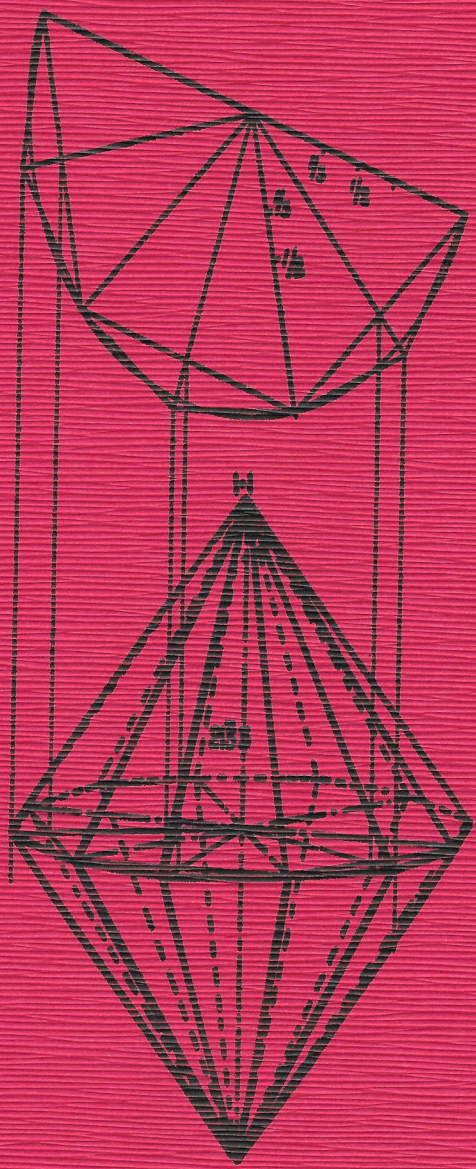
“...as one might say a poem in prose.” Cf. Marcel Duchamp: *Duchamp du signe / suivi de Notes*, ed. Michel Sanouillet and Paul Matisse (Paris: Flammarion, 2008): 63.

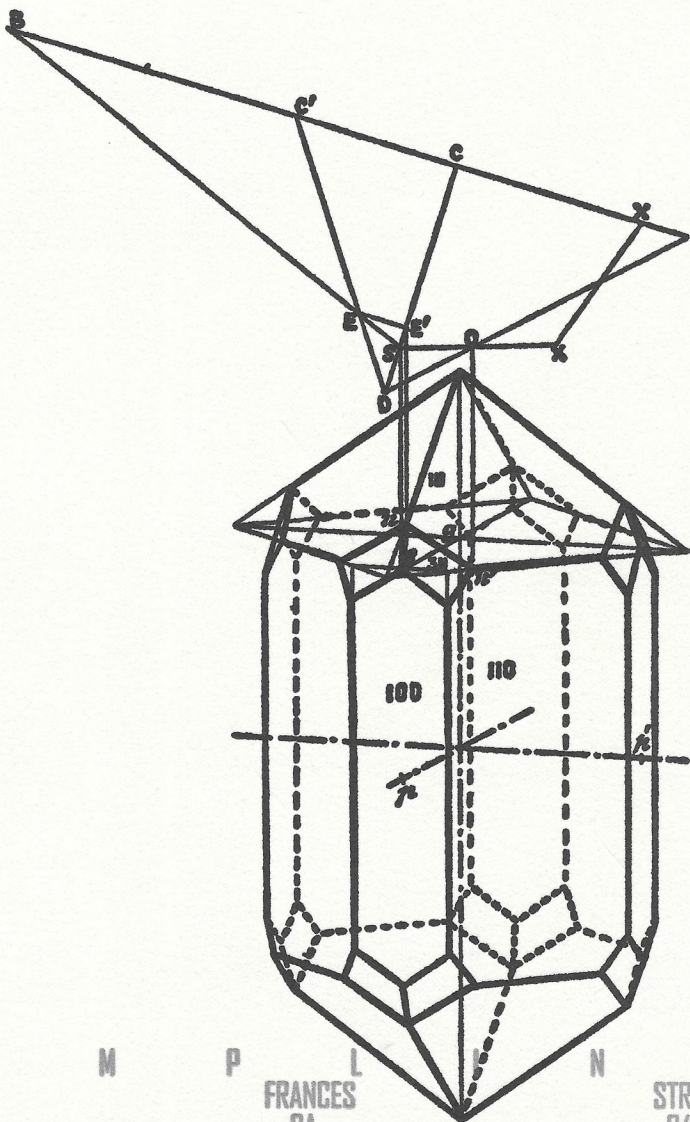
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