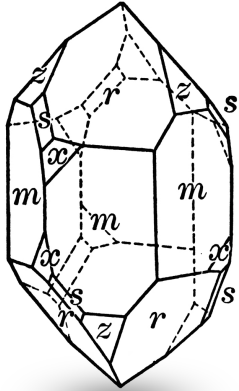


POETRY & POETICS



Poetry & Poetics
No. 1

Craig Dworkin
No Medium & "The Crystal Text"

Edit Publications | October 9th 2012, 7:30pm

Series Editor: Danny Snelson

Penn Poetry & Poetics Group support graciously provided by
the English Department of the University of Pennsylvania.
Edit Publications made possible by the Kelly Writers House.

Edit Publications
Penn Poetry & Poetics Series
<http://dss-edit.com>

Set in Collator font designed by Vince Lo in 2012
<http://practicefoundry.com/collator.html>
<http://collator.tumblr.com/archive>

Printed in variable editions
Also available in Create Booklet and Scroll PDF format
<http://pennpoetics.wordpress.com/>



from *No Medium*

(forthcoming: MIT Press, 2013)

Concerning his forthcoming book-length study, Craig Dworkin has written: "Specifically, this book will look at a number of ostensibly blank works and the negative spaces of their absent materials—silent musical compositions, clear films, de-emulsified and overexposed photographs, the architecture and sculpture of excavated or emptied space, smooth phonograph discs and blank CDs, monochrome white canvases, the poetry of erased pages, blank books published as literature—demonstrating that even the most abstract and cerebral works of conceptual art cannot be separated from their material and technical supports." The passage concerning Aram Saroyan's Kulchur Press ream excerpted here follows a discussion of Nudisme, a fictional literary movement depicted in Cocteau's film Orphée (1950), and precedes the first chapter's concluding remarks on "that middle space—that medium—where alert listeners can hear the echo of all the laughter provoked by the nakedness of media." [DSS]

[...] In other instances, however, unmarked pages have in fact been put forward as literature, looking very little like *Nudisme* but nonetheless behaving more like the avant-garde challenge proposed in Cocteau's film. In the late 1960s, with New York's Second Avenue coffeehouse Le Metro standing in for the Café des Poètes, Lita Hornick simultaneously played both the princess and Orpheus to Aram Saroyan's *Cégeste*. Hornick's Kulchur imprint had begun to promote a Lower East Side aesthetic from an Upper East Side address by publishing a series of New American Poetry titles: *Poems Now*, an anthology edited by Hettie Jones; *Screen Tests / A Diary*, a collection of "poems plus film strips" by Gerard Malanga and Andy Warhol; and *Bean Spams*, a collaboration between Ted Berrigan and Ron Padgett. Those publications were followed by a five-hundred-page book bearing only a price (\$2.00) and a copyright notice stamped across its cover: "© ARAM SAROYAN 1968 KULCHUR PRESS."¹ Or, to be precise, those stamped lines were the only text added to the factory-supplied wrapper, which also read, on one end: "STATIONERS Seal of Satisfaction / 500 SHEETS / 8½ x 11 / SUB. 16 / GR. LONG." Saroyan, already the author of several books, including one from Random House, referred to the Kulchur Press publication as his "first real book of work."² Despite that avowal, and the genuinely unconventional list Kulchur had already established, even Hornick remained unconvinced. Like *Cégeste's* patron, she financed the publication

¹ In the Kulchur Foundation Records archived at Columbia University, the book is catalogued as untitled (as Saroyan himself refers to it); in

² See the contributors' notes to *Poetry* 110, no.6 (1967): 435.

with an extravagant generosity; like Orpheus, she bitterly dismissed the whole enterprise. Years later Hornick recounted her predicament with candid paranoia and still-vivid spite:

I "published" a ream of blank typing paper by Aram Saroyan, the son of William Saroyan. I didn't really want to do it, but I had a commitment to Aram. . . . I thought he was trying to sabotage my newly successful book publishing venture by forcing me to back out of my commitment and telling everyone I had gone back on my word because I was too bourgeois to understand Dada. Rising to the challenge, I went ahead and "published" the wretched little thing. My distributor wouldn't touch it; so I sold twelve copies myself and, after saving two copies for history, I threw the rest out in the garbage. I didn't even bother to save the paper for typing.³

In 1968, a ream of typing paper cost about one dollar. Considering the advance paid to Saroyan, Hornick, accordingly, lost about \$1,500 on his book (or around \$10,000 today, adjusted for inflation). With a potlatch to trump the Dada gesture she perceived in Saroyan's submission, Hornick ensured that most of the paper from the project would remain, as she was: unimpressed. But with that *dépense* she also acknowledged the force of Saroyan's project, which was not just the idea of a blank book, or of blank paper, but a particular kind of paper that was not to be used as intended. Saroyan's book may be without substance, in the sense of literary "subject matter,"

³ Lita Hornick, *The Green Fuse: A Memoir* (New York: Giorno Poetry Systems, 1989), 45. Alternately, Hornick might have suspected that the proposal was a commentary on whether even the small readership for avant-garde poetry actually reads the books at all. Contemporaneously, a not particularly funny humor column proposed that since most professors never really read the dissertations they claim to vet, prospective doctoral candidates might "merely attach a Deluxe Title to a ream of blank typing paper and turn it in" (Rudolf Harvey, "What to Do until the Doctorate Arrives," *Music Journal* 25, no. 4 [1967]: 62).

"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.

NOTES

"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...." *Ibidem*, 97-98.

"Some helicities 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.

"...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.

but it does indeed have substance in the sense of the stationer's *terme de métier*: the weight measure of the sheets (in this case, as the manufacturer's label states, "sub[stance] 16," indicating a sixteen-pound manufacturer's ream, or four pounds when trimmed to the long-grain business-bond letter-size chosen for the Kulchur Press edition). In fact, although any given sheet from Saroyan's book might look nearly identical to any given page from *Nudisme*, the details, as always, are telling, and they demonstrate how equally unmarked pages can nonetheless enact distinctly different significations. Unlike Cégeste's conventionally bound codex, Saroyan's loose-leaf book takes the form associated with prepublication. With a weight and trim unsuited to commercial printing but optimized for typewriting, the Kulchur Press publication presents paper as if it were coming to the writer, not as it comes from the binder; it is the form of a book *to be*. As William Saroyan, Aram's father, wrote:

God, how I loved paper and still do. What a delight it is to open a whole big ream of clean white typing paper and to behold the stack. Why, though, why do I love paper? Why is it a delight to open a wrapped ream? Well, seeing all that unused paper permits me to believe I can fill every sheet with writing, and not only with writing but with the kind of writing only I can do.⁴

Written some years after Aram had presented his father with a wrapped ream as a finished literary work, this passage not only speaks to the symbolic status of a ream of paper, but it also betrays the smug tone of counter-oedipal contest, insisting with spirited glee on removing the wrapper—the one thing that could distinguish his son's publication from an ordinary ream of paper—and then reasserting a unique authority by shifting the terms of value firmly back to literary style. "Unlike my son,

⁴ William Saroyan, "Perhaps You Know Ann Danford," in Saroyan, *Where the Bones Go*, ed. Robert Setrakian (Fresno: Press at California State University, Fresno, 2002), 50.

who cannot fill *any* sheet with writing," the passage seems to imply, "I can fill *every* sheet with writing. And what's more, where anyone might have put their name on a package of paper, my use of that paper would be something that *only I can do*." As I will suggest, Aram Saroyan's work anticipates both charges, displacing the very grounds of a personal style with a work that would not in fact have the same resonance if signed by just anyone. But for the moment it is worth recalling that typewriting, for William Saroyan, had long been both the means and the subject of a story. In "Myself upon the Earth," for example, he writes: "Day after day I had this longing, for my typewriter. That is the whole story."⁵ Already by the end of the 1930s the image was a cliché: "William Saroyan sits at his typewriter and writes about sitting at his typewriter without anything to say."⁶ Decades later, his son's book, even more resolutely, has nothing to say, but in not saying anything beyond an assertion of copyright it boasts that Aram Saroyan can be an author without even typing. Rendering moot Truman Capote's legendary Parthian shot at Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* ("It isn't writing at all—it's typing"), the Kulchur Press book requires a rejoinder at a further remove: it isn't typing at all—it's publishing.

By invoking the specter of typing, however, the format of Saroyan's book not only underscores its affront to the expressive output of previous modernist generations, but it also firmly places the publication within a series of books in which Saroyan sent up the heroic mythos of those modernist typewriters with a wry understatement, replacing their macho athleticism ("I can fill every sheet") with a stoner minimalism of one-word poems. And yet, for all their whimsical irony, none of Saroyan's minimalist books—including the ultimate *reductio* minimalism of the blank page—quite registers as merely a joke, or as the

of the lamber shadows; it goldens as it goes. The rock is out of time. The crystal was beheld. The crystal is beholden.

⁵ William Saroyan, *The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze and Other Stories* (New York: New Directions, 1997), 66.

⁶ Halan Hatcher, "William Saroyan," *English Journal* 28, no.3 (March 1939): 175.

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

repudiation Hornick took his Kulchur book to be. Indeed, the critiques they wager are bought at the cost of insisting on literary value, not negating it. Moreover, as scenes in a sorry family drama, each of those early books asserts Aram Saroyan's own right to be identified with the typewriter, however long the shadow cast by his celebrity father's own identification with the machine. While one would expect a mimeographed small-press publication such as his 1967 book *Coffee Coffee* to be printed directly from typed stencils, both of Saroyan's commercially published Random House books also reproduce typewriter typefaces, even though they are printed offset.⁷ Moreover, with their otherwise undecorated covers starkly emphasizing the bold exaggeration of the enlarged typewriter typefaces used to set the titles, all three books—published one after the other in close succession—distinctively branded Saroyan's poetry publications. Accordingly, in his correspondence with Hornick about the production of the Kulchur Press book, he wrote: "I'd like to use this typewriter face, in red, on the spine—blown up to about twice its size here."⁸ That typewriter face was more than just a signature look, however; Saroyan also claimed it was responsible for the fine points of his signature minimalist style. His statement for the back-cover copy of *Pages* expounds: "I write on a typewriter, almost never in hand. . . The typeface is a standard pica; if it were another style I'd write (subtly) different poems."⁹ An even bigger influence on

⁷ Aram Saroyan, *Coffee Coffee* (New York: 0 to 9, 1967); *Aram Saroyan* (New York: Random House, 1968); *Pages* (New York: Random House, 1969). For an archaeology of the typewriter, see Darren Wershler-Henry, *The Iron Whim: A Fragmented History of Typewriting* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).

⁸ Kulchur Foundation records, 1936–1994, Columbia University Libraries Special Collections; Series I: Correspondence, 1961–1993; Box 5: Folder 23, Letter No. 10, Aram Saroyan (12 November 1967).

⁹ One should note that within *Pages* the fonts are varied (or, more probably, the typescript was photographically enlarged to varying degrees). Additionally, although both are typewritten texts enlarged to the point of revealing the imperfections of the metal letterforms' inked impressions, the cover of *Pages* is in "another style" than *Aram Saroyan*; indeed, the style of the cover text differs from the typeface of

his poetry, Saroyan claims in the same statement—recalling Henry James’s preference for a specific brand of typewriter—was the machine itself: “an obsolete red-top Royal Portable.”¹⁰ This seemingly extraneous aside further corroborates the association of the Kulchur Press publication with typewriting and links it more directly to Saroyan’s other poetry books. Originally, he recalls, the book would have matched the color of his typewriter, standing in for the inspiring machine itself, which had been rendered unnecessary by the wordless project: “My initial idea for the book was that it should be entirely, wordlessly, red—red cover, back-cover, endpapers, and all pages, with a copyright notation the only printed content.”¹¹ Although it could not have been read in any conventional way, and may never have garnered an enthusiastic audience, the book would have always been literally “red” from cover to cover. As published, his book retains a trace of that red in the manufactur-

its own back-cover copy and interior poems. Presumably the designers at Random House worked from their own mockup of the title page, typed on a different brand of typewriter. The typeface, significantly, is different again for the collection of these works in Saroyan’s *Complete Minimal Poems* (Brooklyn: Ugly Duckling Presse, 2008).

¹⁰ Saroyan, *Pages*, back-cover copy. In her memoir, Theodora Bosanquet, James’s amanuensis, recalls:

Indeed, at the time when I began to work for him, he had reached a stage at which the click of a Remington machine acted as a positive spur. He found it more difficult to compose to the music of any other make. During a fortnight when the Remington was out of order he dictated to an Oliver typewriter with evident discomfort, and he found it almost disconcerting to speak to something that made no responsive sound at all.

Theodora Bosanquet, “Henry James at Work,” *The Hogarth Essays* (London: Hogarth Press, 1928), 248.

¹¹ Saroyan, “Contretemps.” The Kulchur archives indicate the other possibilities Saroyan initially entertained: “1. A completely visual book, employing larger than standard type face. This is my favorite idea so far. 2. A chronological selection of my work—from early ‘regular’ poems on out, and out. . . . 3. A book of short poems and visual works from the last year or so.” Kulchur Foundation records, 1936–1994, Columbia University Libraries Special Collections; Series I: Correspondence, 1961–1993; Box 5: Folder 23, Letter No. 8, Aram Saroyan (21 October 1966).

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

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 scries 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

er's label, but the wrapped loose leaves cannot even be examined without destroying the cover. And here we can start to see the logic behind the copyright symbol stamped on the paper wrapper. If it cannot be read in the conventional sense, word by word and page by page, Saroyan's work can still be read as a book, as a cultural object, according to the material specifics of its format. Had Hornick produced this title as a conventional codex, like the other books published by her press, it would have lost its paronomastic countersignature. The standard commercial packaging of the typing paper means that the book is "a ream"—a tidy paragram of "Aram."

The same punning proximity to a proper name recurs in the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures delivered by designer Charles Eames just one year after the publication of Saroyan's book. Unavoidably evoking the name of his wife and collaborator, Ray Eames, he effused about "reams" of paper: commercially packaged paper, he touchingly declared, is "absolutely beautiful stuff. Whatever you do with a ream of paper can never come up to what the paper offers in itself."¹² To do something with the blank paper of Saroyan's ream one would have to remove the wrapper, the one thing that makes it a book rather than merely

¹² Quoted in Paul Goldberger, "The SkyLine: Charles and Ray Eames, Multimedia Pioneers," *New Yorker* 75, no. 11 (24 May 1999): 98. Eames's position recalls Ludwig Wittgenstein's aphorism: "In der Kunst ist es schwer etwas zu sagen, was so gut ist wie: nichts zu sagen [in art, it is hard to say something better than saying nothing]" (*Vermischte Bemerkungen* [Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977], 50). Or, as Ulises Carrión would write: "The most beautiful and perfect book in the world is a book with only blank pages, in the same way that the most complete language is that which lies beyond all that the words of a man can say. / Every book of the new art is searching after that book of absolute whiteness, in the same way that every poem searches for silence" (Carrión, "The New Art of Making Books," *Kontexts* 6–7 [1975]). Carrión, in turn, echoes Mallarmé: "L'armature intellectuelle du poème se dissimule et tient—a lieu—dans l'espace qui isole les strophes et parmi le blanc du papier: significatif silence qu'il n'est pas moins beau de composer que les vers [The intellectual armature of the poem disguises itself and takes place—posits itself—in the space that isolates the stanzas among the white of the paper: significant silence which is no less beautiful to compose than verse]."

some packaged office supplies; and so its status as a book ensures the nonpareil beauty Eames identified in the sheer material stuff offered by the paper itself. By presenting what the paper offers in itself—a monochrome four-pound block—Saroyan brought his book into dialogue with the design aesthetic and artistic concerns of its time. A prefabricated unit of standardized geometric mass, the uniformly wrapped format of his book situates it further from *Bean Spasms* (or any other work of contemporaneous poetry) and closer to something like the dull white rectangular units of Carl Andre's 1966 series *Equivalent I–VIII*: neat, variously permuted arrangements of unmortared calcium silicate firebricks direct from the construction supply plant. Insisting on its blunt physical presence rather than disappearing as the transparent conveyor of some linguistic message, the ream rhymes with the various modular geometric solids that minimalist sculpture proliferated throughout the 1960s. Furthermore, by using a readymade consumer object, with the label still attached, Saroyan entered his work into a direct dialogue with some of the most instantly recognizable sculpture of the period. In 1964, Andy Warhol had featured rectangular blocks of consumer packaging in his exhibition of Brillo boxes at the Stable Gallery (New York), and by 1968—the time of his first European retrospective—they dominated the entrance to the Moderna Museet (Stockholm) because the simulated grocery boxes had become, in Arthur Danto's assessment, Warhol's most "iconic work."¹³ With the colorful swirls of James Harvey's design, the boxes made a campy commentary on all the other, more austere cubes and rectangles that had been stacking up in galleries under the sign of minimalism. If you really want clean surfaces, Warhol's boxes seem to insinuate, here are "24 Giant Size Packages" of scour-

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 is 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

¹³ Arthur C. Danto, *Andy Warhol* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 52. In *Smithsonian Depositions* (New York: Vehicle Editions, 1980), 10, Clark Coolidge brings the rectangular ream into proximity with the cardboard box, emphasizing the mass and weight of the paper in the process: "500 sheets of Substance 20 8½ x 11 Sphinx Aristocrat Mimeo Bond (white stock) lain on a slab of plywood propped on cardboard moving-boxes in a corner."

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

ing soap pads.

"Clean" and "fresh," significantly, are also the terms idiomatically associated with blank typing paper, and although he does not mention the Kulchur Press book in this context, Saroyan's retrospective assessment of the poetry that immediately preceded the ream references precisely the field defined by the twin poles of minimalist sculpture and Warhol's pop art:

What I was doing in writing a one-word poem during the sixties has long seemed to me to be an equivalent in language to the work of Andy Warhol in painting (his instant, simultaneous, and multiple images of Marilyn Monroe) and Donald Judd in sculpture (his instant, simultaneous, and multiple metal boxes).¹⁴

Like the move from envisioning a book set in a typewriter typeface to imagining a book the color of the typewriter itself, Saroyan's contextualization corroborates the ream's status as a logical and legitimate extension of his writing practice, rather than the Dadaist break from poetry that Hornick feared. More importantly, Saroyan's historical emphasis—"writing a one-word poem *during the sixties*"—underscores a point, however obvious, that is worth reiterating: the same object signifies differently at different cultural moments. A saddle-stitched booklet orients itself as a cultural object in one way in France in 1950, where its format would have affinities with either nonliterary pamphlets and tracts or publications such as those in the annual series from Éditions Seghers, which were issued in stapled cardboard covers: the blandly politicized postwar surrealism of Paul Éluard's *Corps mémorable*; Léopold Senghor's *Chants pour Naett*; Tristan Tzara's *Phases*; or any number of less well-known names (the most resonant title, no doubt, be-

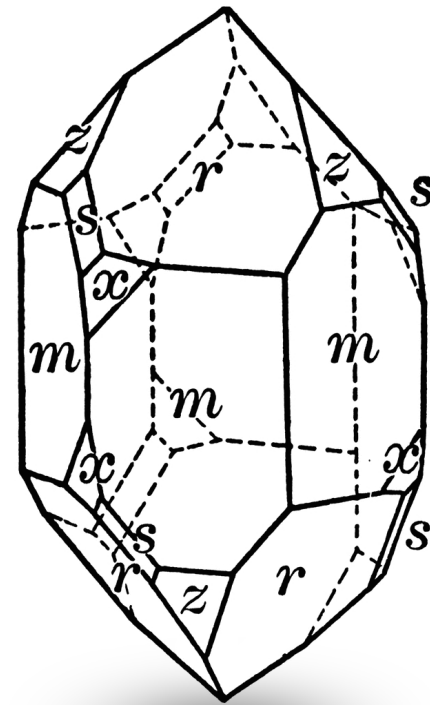
¹⁴ Aram Saroyan, *Friends in the World: The Education of a Writer* (Minneapolis: Coffee House, 1992), 84. Saroyan specifically recalls being impressed by the Warhol *Brillo Box* in Ted Berrigan's apartment (*ibid.*, 38).

ing Maurice Fombeure's *Poussière du silence* [Dust of silence]). The very same artifact, however, orients itself in another way in New York sixty years later, as the Shopsin/Fulford edition of *Nudisme* attests. There, its business-grade ivory pages suggest the copy-shop vanity press productions of the desktop publishing revolution, while its textured cover nods to the now defunct chapbook ventures of Lyn Hejinian's Tuumba Press, with its wraps of "beautiful paper . . . roughly stapled," and the similarly styled Salt-Works Press, run by Tom Bridwell and Marilyn Kitchell.¹⁵ By the same token, a ream of paper in 1959 or 1979 enters a cultural milieu in which Warhol's boxes have not yet made their statement or have already had their say. [...]

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

¹⁵ Lyn Hejinian and Craig Dworkin, "Roughly Stapled: An Interview with Lyn Hejinian," *Idiom* 3 (Berkeley, 1995): unpaginated.

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 *d e a d*. 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. 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



The Crystal Text
(after Clark Coolidge)

By way of introduction to Dworkin's "The Crystal Text," a few de-lineated questions from Coolidge's The Crystal Text: "And is this the same thing? But then what is one? How can one speak from within the thought of the thing, from the standing on the floor, from the heart? Where is the source of the center? How are the dreams connected, and where and how weighty is their index? Where bend the cards so that they may be listed in their shuffle? And how remember exactly the leanings? And what is the one's own death, locked as firmly as a bubble in a crystal? A darker line I had not seen before, product of facet angles, a more condensed clarity, is these questions? A question is a hand reaching. The crystal." [DSS]

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

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 vial 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 cusp is hastate in its jut. A ridge knaps from the back of the neck, where it

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 assectation 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

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

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 air. 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

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 sinistrous. The crystal faults. Some helicities of salt cause a delirium. The crystal is lit. The crystal is limned. Planes grade

the vestal sunrise. The crystal's photographs cycle daily. Fuscals 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. 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

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. Lashed 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

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 rame; 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 depurates 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 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