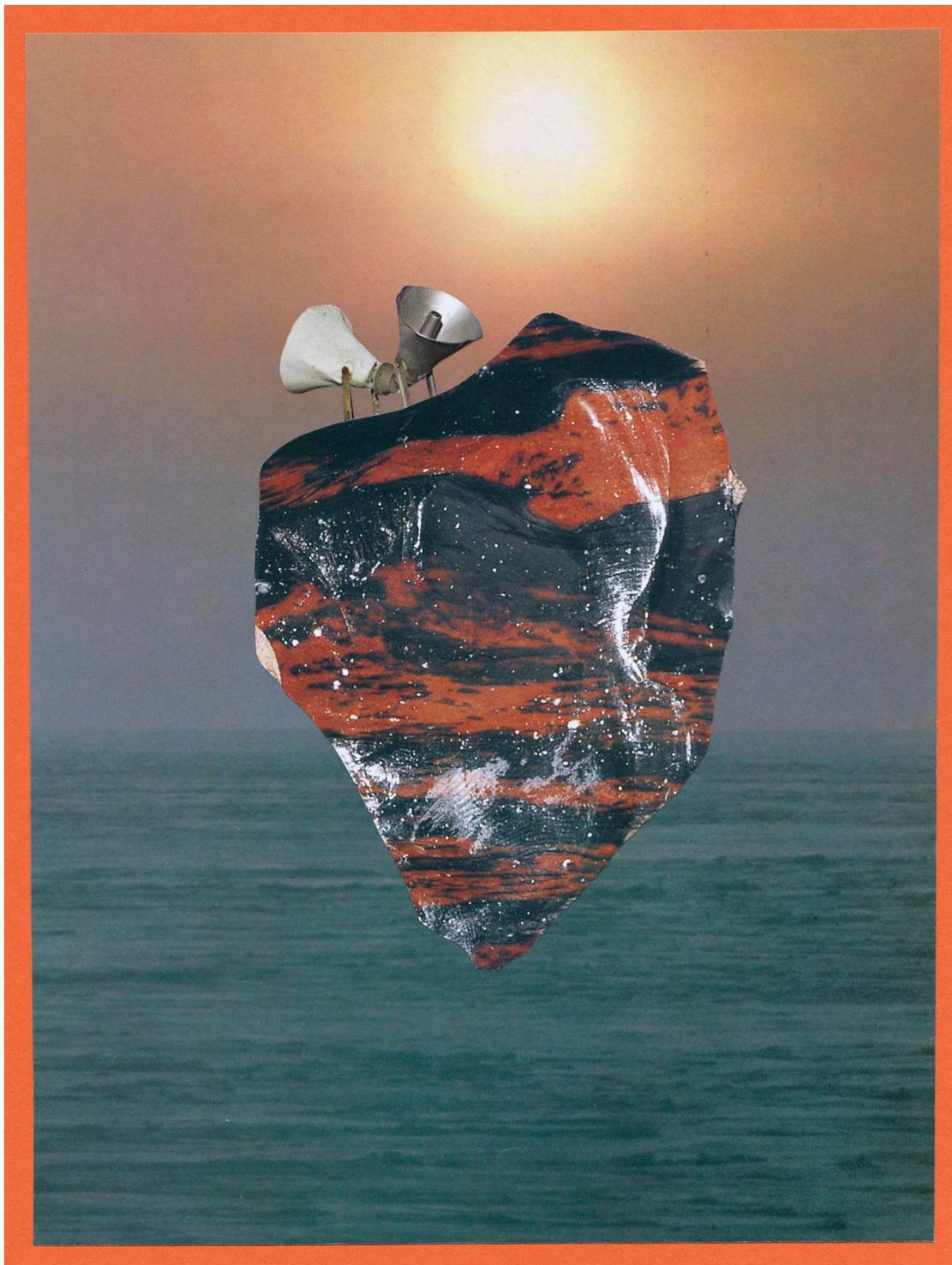


Crystal Queer

by Randy Lee Cutler

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Randy Lee Cutler *Transporter (obsidian)* 2014

Gem-like, the frozen, spiraling crystals whose cascading hierarchies of signs guide us through this mythic, organic, textual, technical, political icon.

Donna Haraway, "The Promises of Monsters:
A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/d Others"

Orientations involve directions toward objects
that affect what we do, and how we inhabit space.

Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientation, Objects, Others*

Chalcopyrite, lace agate, smokey quartz, mookite jasper, amber calcite, copper sulfate, watermelon tourmaline, amethyst geodes; these are a sampling of the geological phenomena more commonly known as crystals. Diversity permeates crystalline translucence. As mineral formations crystals are objects of aesthetic fascination and intuitive resonance, flashpoints for affective and symbolic intensities that defy categorization. The interpretative potential of these objects as scientific phenomena, philosophical inquiry, and aesthetic form thwart any singular engagement, offering up instead a spectrum of permeable spaciousness where ontology is endlessly queried, and forever postponed. Vibrating and pulsating across and between conceptual domains, crystals refract beams of light through our extraordinary desires.

"Our bodies, so alike, are yet so different."¹

Crystalline structures and processes — they can be both a noun and a verb — navigate border worlds between genres, lifeforms, temporalities, and disciplines. We are *out* in a universe where elements and substances are drawn into configurations that transgress mere classification. There are many evocative aspects to these natural constructions. They can take form over diverse periods of time, ranging from a few years or even months for rock salt to thousands or millions of years for harder formations like quartz and diamond. They are, from their beginnings, transformative; many begin as chemical liquids that comingle and solidify in response to thermal fluctuations. Structurally diverse and complex: crystalline solids are packed in a repeating lattice pattern of positive and negative ions that extends in all three spatial dimensions as if possessing desire and purpose.

We know how we want to be aligned.

Whether described as rocks, minerals, stones, and crystals, they call upon us to embrace emergent perceptions, mutable subjectivities and elastic attractions. This potentiality is reflective of the crystal itself—a borderzone composition—betwixt organic and inorganic, sometimes transparent, sometimes opaque. Some believe that crystals have intelligence but are not necessarily "living". While they possess no biological cell structure, they do have a growth pattern, a morphological field of potential expansion, amplification and responsiveness. As a noun and a verb—a form and a metaphor—these mineral-molecular substances inhabit a space on the boundary between recognizable worlds. How might we inhabit this exquisite expanse of in-betweenness? And how might this betwixt ontology call for the occupation of multiple and simultaneous facets of being and becoming?

The figure of the crystal remains an oddly elusive one. What if ...as if ...if then.

¹ Adrienne Rich. "Twenty One Love Poems", *The Dream of a Common Language*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978.

These multifaceted objects with their prismatic foldings and filigree connections challenge distinctions drawn by conventional classification systems. Crystalline structures manifest a queer taxonomy; their perfect forms propose a frozen quintessence and yet they grow in response to chemical saturation, ambient pressure, and thermal fluctuations. At once material object and metaphorical subject, they occupy a liminal space between the organic and the inorganic, blurring taxonomies, overstepping boundaries, and confusing identities. The fluid spectrum of crystals *across* and *between* orientations suggests mutable life energies where inclinations are emergent.

Crystals are a song waiting to be sung.

Possessing many facets and potential habits whether hexagonal, isometric, tetragonal, or octahedral, crystals mirror the diverse efflorescence of a queer ontology and perhaps also a queer phenomenology. By their very nature these mineral forms are the result of orientations between substances, elements, and compounds. Crystals vibrate ambiguous status, speculative embodiments, transformative identities, intersectional methodologies, agentic capacities, and performative categorizations. Intensities produce relational force fields of material agency and symbolic energy. You might be wondering how these mutable forms produce effects as they enter into compositions with other entities, other bodies, other forces, and other desires? Or perhaps you are thinking about how important and necessary metaphors are in advancing new ideas and shifting cultural paradigms? Or even how is homoerotic desire reflected in the multidimensional facets of longing? And of course at what point might chemical saturation become a chemistry of pleasure?

Crystallization is a process, an enfolding of geological time.

With their nascent ability to form under requisite conditions, crystals manifest a latent desire to converge and intersect their constituent molecules. A little known fact; we humans have crystals in our bodies. They reside in our blood, our inner ear, and our pineal gland. Even cells are liquid crystals. Our bodies are a series of intersecting crystal structures, biomineralizations that vibrate an expressive vitality of emergent piezoelectric proclivities. This geological rock song is an unexcavated territory still buried deep in the solid earth, the co-minglings of which it is composed.

I dreamed you were a crystal, falling upward.

Bismuth Spiral Iridescence

Red ruby, many facets

Orange calcite, light refracting

Yellow citrine, geological time

Green malachite, always transforming

Blue lapis lazuli, environmentally responsive

Violet quartz, high frequency vibrations

Peacock ore, pattern and purpose