

## Autoportraits from an Earlier Era

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Michael Scharf  
Spring 2015

## The *res poetica*

I.

A *relation* is a real thing, i.e. has a physio-neuronal instantiation between minds and in brains, traceable through Positron Emission Tomography.  
The *res poetica* is a relation realized through poetry.  
It's a space akin to what George Oppen had in mind when he, following Shelley, called poets "the legislators of the unacknowledged world."  
It's not like "a city upon a hill" (which "cannot be hidden").

2.

Poets are real: poets make poetry, or its algorithms; they think of themselves, and represent themselves, as poets.  
Poets can't help making poetry.  
The *res poetica* is the set of relations poetry creates, affirms, or destroys.  
In defining the limits of the *res poetica*, place Wallace Stevens' claim "We live in the mind" beside Elaine Scarry's demonstrations of the ways mind can be reduced, with violence, to body.

3.

Poets come out of what Bishnupriya Ghosh calls "local struggles" which cannot be represented from any one perspective.  
The production, dissemination, and reception of poetry partially project the space of such struggles into another space, the *res poetica*, a model state.  
FORM IS NEVER MORE THAN AN EXTENSION OF CONTENT, and is thus open to evaluation.

4.

Anne-Lise François, following Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, calls an *open secret* "[a] gesture of self-canceling revelation [that] permits a release from the ethical imperative to act upon knowledge" within environments of threat.  
An open secret is "an essentially preventative or conservative mode of communication that reveals to insiders what it simultaneously hides from outsiders,

or, more specifically, protects them from what it is in their power to ignore.”  
Poetry can be an open secret,  
“a way of imparting knowledge  
such that it cannot be claimed and acted on.”  
As an open secret, poetry “makes nothing happen.”  
“No  
one listens to poetry.”  
It can be used as a cover.  
It can be used for personal profit.  
It can transmit and maintain knowledge  
in the face of tacit or explicit threat,  
through articulation or non-articulation.  
All of these functions are part of the *res poetica*.

5.

Vivek Narayanan calls Shrikant Verma’s *Magadh*  
“one of the most highly regarded books of Hindi poetry from the 1980s”  
and says it is “among the best books of poetry I have ever read.”  
*Magadh* contains “ambiguous invocations of half-mythical South Asian cities”  
that remind Narayanan of Borges and Cavafy, but  
“there is also a canny and even bitter political outrage”  
that makes me think of Mandelstam and of Robert Duncan’s *Passages*.  
Narayanan reads *Magadh* as an open secret:  
“Bizarrely, Verma was a senior Congress Party functionary  
under Indira Gandhi in the late 70s and early 80s”  
(which entails complicities that can glimpsed in Mistry’s *A Fine Balance*).  
“It’s hard, for me at least, to resist reading *Magadh* as his way of speaking  
about some aspects of that close-up experience in the only way he could.”

6.

Shrikant Verma’s  
“*Corpses in Kashi*”  
in Rahul Soni’s translation

Have you seen Kashi?  
Where corpses come and go  
by the same road

And what of corpses?  
Corpses will come  
Corpses will go

Ask then, whose corpse is this?  
Is it Rohitashva? No, no  
all corpses cannot be Rohitashva

His corpse, you will recognize  
from a distance  
and if not from a distance

then from up close  
and if not from up close  
then it cannot be Rohitashva

And even if it is,  
what difference  
does it make?

Friends, you have seen Kashi  
where corpses come and go  
by the same road

and this is all you did –  
made way and asked,  
Whose corpse is this?

Whoever it was  
whoever it was not  
what difference did it make?

7.

It is the *res poetica*, rather than a poem or poetry, that brings together  
local struggles, medium, other poems, local reception,  
author and author function, reader.  
Despite Auden's epithet and Spicer's uncharacterizable lament,  
the *res poetica* is discernible as what Mina Loy called "the level of cool plains"  
and in what David Kyuman Kim calls "melancholic freedom."  
It's the state induced by a reading, *explication du texte*, or any other reception.  
Like sex, political action, and religion, and the self-determination  
they can afford, the *res poetica* is not the province of the individual.  
It's projects local struggles into shared space.  
It's momentary, fragile, temporally continuous or discontinuous,  
but materially real.  
It is not different in kind  
from nationalisms (cf. Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*)  
from religious feeling (cf. Warren L. D'Azevedo's *Straight With the Medicine*)  
or from constructs such as "The United States" or "India."  
(which Narendra Modi describes as having a "natural relationship").  
It's just differently realized, and enforced.

8.

Seyla Benhabib contends that

“since the UN Declaration of Human Rights in 1948,  
we have entered a new phase in the evolution of global civil society,  
which is characterized by a transition  
from international to cosmopolitan forms of justice.”

According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,

“[t]he nebulous core shared by all cosmopolitan views  
is the idea that all human beings, regardless of their political affiliation, do  
(or at least can) belong to a single community,  
and that this community should be cultivated.”

Benhabib continues

“[W]hatever the conditions of their legal origination,”  
cosmopolitan forms of justice “accrue  
to individuals as moral and legal persons in a worldwide civil society...  
their peculiarity is that they endow individuals  
rather than states and their agents with certain rights and claims.”

Cosmopolitanism seeks to transcend the state via ideas of individual natural rights.

10.

As a paid speaker at a conference, Jacques Derrida, elaborating an idea of cosmopolitanism,  
finds that the conference-goers have defined for themselves  
the task of “bring[ing] about the proclamation and institution of numerous,  
and, above all, autonomous, ‘cities of refuge’, each as independent from the other  
and from the state as possible, but, nevertheless, allied to each other  
according to forms of solidarity yet to be invented.”

Bishnupriya Ghosh critiques Arjun Appadurai’s opposition  
of “ethnic collectivists who lack... global imagination”  
to cosmopolitans who, by contrast,

“relish non-national nomadism and celebrate migrancy, hybridity, and mobility.”

Ghosh cites the critiques of Revathi Krishnaswamy and Aihwa Ong,  
who find such formulations of cosmopolitanism reflect  
the experience of “transnational elites” who

“fetishize their marginality as migrants,  
while synchronizing the global flows that underpin the new world order.”

Without the movement of elites, the *res poetica* can underpin a solidarity  
of the kind Derrida imagines.

12.

Sheldon Pollock writes against the seeming “single desperate choice we are offered:  
between, on the one hand, a national vernacularity

dressed in the frayed period costume of violent revanchism and bent on preserving difference at all costs and, on the other, a clear-cutting, strip-mining multinational cosmopolitanism that is bent, at all costs, on eliminating it.”

Revanchist vernacularity is the same in Salzburg and in Surat.

Pollock wants to “conceive of the practice of cosmopolitanism as literary communication that travels far, indeed, without obstruction from any boundaries at all, and, more important, that thinks of itself as unbounded, unobstructed, unlocated — writing of the great Way, rather than the small Place.”

At the same time, Pollock wants to “think about cosmopolitanism and vernacularism as action rather than idea, as something people do rather than something they declare, as practice rather than proposition (least of all, philosophical proposition),” and also as a *choice*, one which in turn “enables us to see that some people in the past have been able to be cosmopolitan or vernacular without directly professing either, perhaps while finding it impossible rationally to justify either.”

At the time of its dominance, Latin was a cosmopolitanist idiom, and English, Spanish, German and Italian were vernaculars.

At the time of its dominance, Sanskrit was a cosmopolitanist idiom, and Hindustani, Tamil, Kannada, Javanese, and Marathi were vernaculars.

13.

Monolingual speakers of English can access re-representations of vernacular FORMS but often not the chains of meaning associated with them.

A response to lack of access to all of the conventional meanings of, for example, Tamil film musicals, is to use the tools at hand to appropriate the forms of the vernacular into a kind of super-ordinate neo-cosmopolitanist idiom, via, for example, heightened cuts, homophonics, or pasted voice-overs, which are forms of, among other things, simulating accessibility and discursive mastery.

The failure of global capital to fulfill its implicit promise of total access is not quite ironized in much of this work.

The failure of a vernacular to signify across kinds of divides — i.e., that language, and its attendant assumptions, expectations, forms and conventional meaning structures doesn’t “translate” — seems to be made the languages’ problem.

The author function can work to incorporate the ironies of the work, producing (and this is what makes it lyric) a kind of pathos, which can be beautiful.

Without permission, however, implicit or explicit, the work can read like appropriation and attempted dominance.

10.

Poetry has its own particular modes of reception, rather than a fixed and identifiable set formal characteristics.

Reception, as defined by Auerbach, is a “subjectivistic-perspectivalistic procedure,” one that, under certain conditions, allows the present to become accessible to the past.

The production, dissemination, and reception of poetry, is, even in negation,

an act of attempted affirmation, one that creates a relation, the *res poetica*.  
A mode of communication is like S&M: without permission,  
without mutuality, it becomes violence.

Pleasure in disgust, and pleasure generally, can freak people out.  
The *res poetica* requires constant renegotiation of forms of permission  
to create forms of solidarity.  
Deriving pleasure from disgust and deriving pleasure from re-iterating stereotypes  
can, during discontinuous communicative acts, look like the same thing.  
I once published a poem that contained the lines  
The Asian woman sat eating Tam crackers.  
I laughed.  
This stuff is endless.  
I thought I had framed the lines: they were spoken by a schizophrenic  
as a kind of comment on how U.S. subjects are made,  
or I had been made, pseudo-schizophrenic.  
When I first read the poem at Halcyon in Brooklyn in 2000,  
a member of the audience had a visible visceral reaction,  
and the *res poetica*, running like a current through that moment,  
was damaged and reduced.  
Poetry is capable of sustaining any form of ironic communication.  
Confusion about permission is racism.  
Poetry can attempt to recapitulate and reiterate stereotypes  
without the poem's author function seeming to be a node  
for drawing pleasure in discharge from the stereotypes themselves.

10.

Maharashtra was created in 1956, four years after Nissim Ezekiel's first book,  
*A Time to Change*, was published, without translation, in English.  
Arun Kolatkar published more than 15 books in Marathi;  
*Jejuri*, written in English, was published in 1976, when  
Kolatkar was in his 40s.  
The book is a serial panorama of a sacred Hindu site in Maharashtra,  
incorporating numerous ironies that play the site's actual physical state  
off its accepted spiritual significance.  
Kolatkar's second book written in English, *Kala Ghoda Poems*, was published in 2004,  
a year after his death.  
His third, *Sarpa Satra*, a retelling of a tiny piece of the *Mahabharata*,  
was published that same year.  
Kolatkar's writing in English may have been an open secret,  
with regard to putting Maharashtrian and Hindu nationalism  
within a perspective within English-speaking India.  
Kolatkar's "Pi-dog," from *Kala Ghoda Poems*,  
set in the Kala Ghoda section of Mumbai,  
ends when day breaks, and, the stray dogs, who have ruled  
small sections of the night roads,  
"surrender the city  
to its so-called masters."

8.

I couldn't organize with a bloc I thought was mine  
because it wanted to be violent, and it didn't have a plan.  
Its members have a lot of justifications for violence,  
but not a lot ideas about running a water supply at scale.  
The air has run out of the piety market.  
Anne Boyer's daughter recently said that the choices are  
basically shut-in or revolutionary.  
I've become a shut-in out of fear, justified by plan-ism,  
but finally just too invested.  
Models, opiates, refuges, by-products, iterations:  
the staging of voice can be revelatory  
for what it is worth.

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*The Res Poetica* a work in progress.  
Meena Alexander suggested Sheldon Pollock's work after reading a draft of a thesis  
prospectus that contained pieces of this work.  
If the Pollock quotations could be dropped or substituted for, this work would be  
composed using only internet resources, and without utilizing any pay-window enabled sites.  
O. Mandel (1961) and Wendy Steiner (1981) have used the term *res poetica*, which may need  
to be replaced.

"Metaphysical blippety-blips  
while sucking candor lozenge?"  
— "The Cosmopolitans"  
Sianne Ngai and Brian Kim Stefans

\*\*\*



'my'  
Materialism

↓  
the Soul { Aristotle

Don't hate  
yourself much

Gentry as  
'stomach'  
in Coriolanus

Coiling railroad yard of ~~mile parent~~  
mile  
Mike  
much  
Duganovich



"We created a monster out of Le Corbusier's utopia," Mr. Huyghe says. "When people first arrived in these buildings, there was a very strong positive expectation, but the density was too powerful, and they became more and more violent."

The energy generated in the dialogue between the two towers, and its final dissipation, is both a historical narrative and a collective memory — the sum of a thousand small glances on a single event. The result is neither fiction nor history but a kind of hyperrealism. "It's about a symphony; not one voice but a number of points of view on an particular event," Mr. Huyghe says. "It is through the montage, the way we combine and relate them, that we can create a representation of the event that is more precise than the event itself."



Courtesy of the artist and the Marston Goodman Gallery, New York

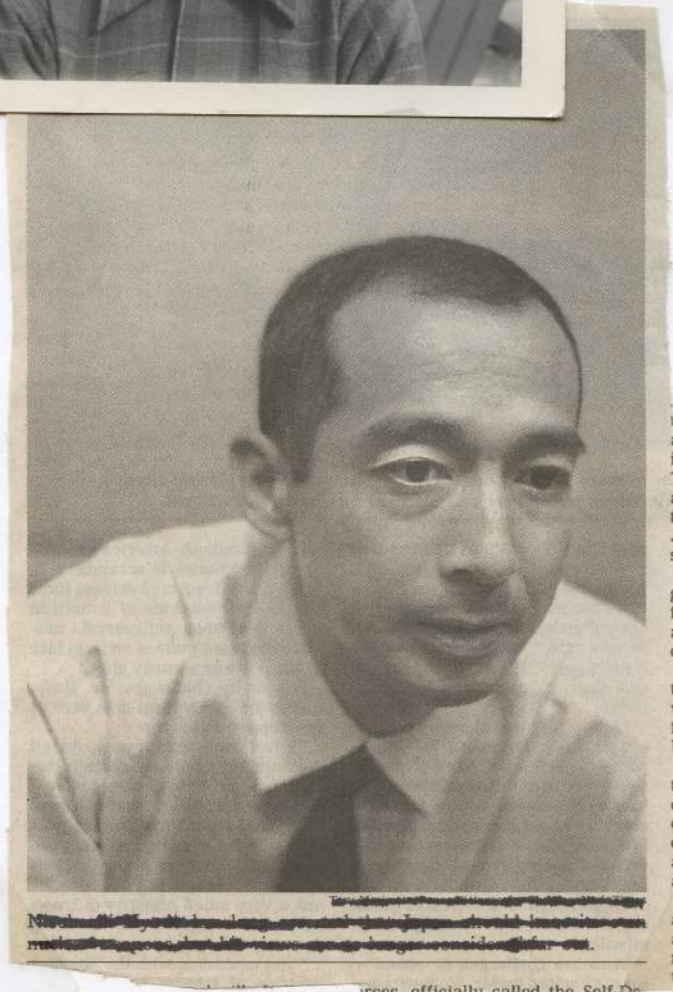
# **Pierre Huyghe**

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Avenue and 89th Street.  
Jan. 24 through May 4.

"Les Grands Ensembles," created in 2001 for the French pavilion of the Venice Biennale, is one such film. In it, two towers are shrouded in a shifting fog. First one, then several lights flicker on and off in the windows. The towers communicate in digital Morse code at an increasingly frenetic pace, resembling a first-generation super computer. The sound is a cross between what you might hear in a techno club and in the sewer just underneath, a pulse, a boom, a blackout.

Though void of any realistic sense of time and place, the film addresses a specific, if inglorious, slice of

postwar French History. Les Grands Ensembles is the euphemistic name given to the large housing projects that in France, as in the United States, attempted to realize a modernist ideal of efficiency and ended up as icons of desolation and decay.



forces, officially called the Self-De-

## Camping

What have I been doing? I can't call it camping.

## Value

The relationship of commodity producers and consumers to the commodities they produce and consume.

## Whistle-blower

~~I was told~~ The Chinese often put lead in the glaze of the coffee mugs they produce. We have pulverized several, and tests confirm the presence of lead.

## Transparency

Society exists and progresses only if the messages circulating within it are ~~information-rich~~ rich in information and easy to decode.

## The world's energy problems

~~It was~~ A tremendous organic  
build-up over eons dissipated  
in a match-strike, our era.  
matrix-like                      scaled

## Doubt on the part of scientists

produces narrative distortions,  
~~or noise~~ a factor of opacity  
or "noise."

## Agonists

Every utterance should be thought  
of as a move in a game, where  
~~the great adversary is~~ ~~our~~  
moves that compose the social band.



# Positron Emission Tomography —

The difference between  
what Marx called  
'private' and 'personal'  
property —

is it possible to maintain the latter  
and not the former without  
contradiction — ?

Tentative yes — the kind of catnax is  
with 'personal' property —  
sweaters, stuffed animals, cups,  
pots and pans, a chair —  
is of a scale that is  
materially universalizable —  
six billion cups  
six billion cooking pots —  
completely imaginable

The brain's evolution  
operating  
a body  
in  
space —

You arched  
your neck  
and  
articulated — what about six billion acres?  
[what is the acreage  
of the world?]

Using affective energy  
for disambiguation  
does not discount  
the possibility  
of discrete  
semantic  
processing — [what is the agrarian  
acreage needed to  
sustain a person  
in a partic.  
climate?]

Fractals

Factorial,

line

Parents walking  
to the library  
hand to wrist behind  
in late May,

inferior  
occipital  
and

Parietal  
areas —

mapping  
power

geodically —  
epipsychidion —

How many windows do I have to have open in order to make any  
Passing

Marxist, *si marxisme = ..., alors je ne suis pas un.*  
Marr, David. Eeyen.

Aritcles;  
Poem Begnning 'The' as pinned wriggle;

rickles stickles rictus wrinkled scrunch of 'the'  
white medullafoldiana

unfulfilled cateye leftunborn midwestern  
step-great-grandmother

M is in Oman--[M's update about Omani Indian food] --  
having flown into Dubai--[M's pic of airport]

Lunch at Saravana Bhavan before he leaving  
[no, at the place that's now Tamil Nadu Bhavan alveolar "Tdahmil"],

reverse-engineering the braised cabbage with mustard seed,  
and some Hasids came in, since it's dairy,

Mildred's people and how dark they were Gwenne says  
and all die Mandelaugen and how all the Russian

Jews were raped by Tartars and Mongols and Bashkirs 23 and me  
"the chinkiness," says the Princess, "is very strong,"

Published, like finch down, en deux, meaning that both files will, toward death, be forever  
linked,

Like the horrid backing vocals on the fourth track of  $\Upsilon$ , sounds like she replied  
"suck my dick on a cherry stone," as if they're facing each other naked on a cherry stone

do you masturbate to vinyl exclusively, produce your own record cleaner, having drawn,  
from the coal lumps, white drips that fall back and settle inside a clean behind.

Steve gives a cat toy to my heart.  
Terence Stamp Terence Mallick, Terence nihil human alienum est.

Or Kazars disproven are 'we' Kazars, and who Tankoos, Graecius,  
the pure sun who throws off, throws the giraffe in the liffe, protesting his innocence

And George Steiner talking about who, about the poems that might now, may now, might  
now,  
might now not, may not now, now have,

Here's the humidifier,  
itch on the supple skin of the hips,

Third wheel, fifth column,

bicycle, car, two triangles

carmel, caramel, camel, pack,  
oaxaca, nulle part, bulle ogier

Most of B incommunicable,  
and Deiharryrdre gives me the enzyme



The moment in La Chinoise,  
shot, I guess before  
the Six Day War, where  
Godard betrays some  
tenderness for a  
Jewish ~~man~~ of  
situation

That film as a whole  
predates his involu-  
ment with the realit  
ailleur

But more significant  
the turn that  
toward group  
experience

He is the Annus a

The turn that  
takes against  
its movement  
morality

The moment in La Chinoise,  
shot, I guess before  
the Six Day War, where  
Godard betrays some  
tenderness for the  
Jewish side of  
situation

That film as a whole  
predates his involu-  
ment with the realit  
ailleurs

But more significant  
the turn that  
toward group  
experience

He is the Annus a

The turn that  
takes against  
its movement  
morality

He is the one who  
The turn that ~~about~~ she left  
takes against Israel because of  
its movement from oppressed  
immorality to oppressor  
class ~~about~~ - oppressor

One is always harshest with  
one's own (Hitlers) —

One is always his own (Hitler)  
Thus the violence of the hatred, which does draw on latent anti-semitism - with a "majority" at having indulged in a possible.

He is the ~~Ann~~ ~~ch~~  
The turn that all of the left  
takes against Israel because of  
its movement from oppressed  
minority to oppressor  
class - class-oppressor -

One is always harshest with  
one's own (Hitler) -

Thus the uterine of the hatred,  
which does draw on latent  
anti-semitism - with a majority  
of the people at having  
indulged  
a parasite.

relationships  
of  
genre to  
political  
horizon  
in

and with  
roles, also  
essential  
to groups,  
which animals  
seem to ~~have~~  
acquire.

Masks are  
play with  
transference,  
which is an  
unalterable  
Structural  
element of

which is  
denied

consciousness,  
a constant doubling or tripling.

where the seasons haven't  
been named.

Moves compose the <sup>corated</sup> ~~corated~~

comprise  
prize  
ply

## (ii) Full derivation with an opaque vowel

The specification below is shorthand notation which allows these two features to be associated identically, sharing association lines. The [+round] specification is specific to the suffix. After regular association, the elements associate to eligible

[+back]      [+ATR]  
|            |  
[ [ c μ c μ c ] μ c μ ]

[+low][+round] [+high][+low][-back]

underlying repres.

[ [ kh ò p a m ] i l e ]

[+low]

low link

[ [ kh ò p a m ] i l e ]

[+low]

[+high]

regular assoc. (a)

[ [ kh ò p a m ] i l e ]

[+round]

[-back]

regular assoc. (b)

[ kh ò p a m i l e ]

bracket erasure

[ kh ò p a m i l e ]

[+ATR]

[+ATR] insertion

(redundancy rules)

[ kh ò p a m i l e ]

[+ATR]

[+ATR] spread

n/a

An alternative to proposing prelinking here is to assume an iterative rule for [+round] spread in this case. Under a 1st (1992) this would post the representation *khòpamile*. This hypothesis would have to be verified under *khòpamile* 'became crooked'



Trucks are really  
quite upright -  
look when no adverse

What Did They Use to Cut Paper in Ancient Rome?

A caesars

which really troubles

Alfred,  
Lord

Tenny Pump  
unquantifiably

to which to wit,

'razors'

'barrels'

'contortions' -

confounding liquids  
and nasals.

Ok,

Heaviest one-syllable word  
in English?

Strengths.

Heaviest rock in English canon?

Badger.

## Nocturnal threshing

My hands enter the water and sort of separate  
the wheat, gold and granular in the water.  
It does not get cold enough anymore  
to freeze the leaves. The pane shakes.  
Nay saying bedside warm click of the lamp,  
the yellowed shade, or melted yellow plastic top,  
lets hair down to the mats on the floor. Climactic  
sets of images to be read off as circled, spoked,  
tuned, forced. The teeth of each  
winding gear gapped, spaced unevenly, w/o  
two quarters to rub together in i/o  
folderol twiggy, jerry, quoit,  
let it down  
("let down  
uneas  
ily")  
Several inhaler, Creation of evidence  
spring injector, by stranded  
false leads. sample.  
Cloudy water  
in the same beaten  
pans. Red rice  
floating  
husks. Cast  
alloy.

## Second Schädel

The land's a pocket mirror; you like to hold it down  
and catch flashes of yourself.

It's teeming. Greenpoint burns off its relations.

It's a rimless procession: the sun, unbound but forced to sphere,  
tentacles marble, an absorptive French blue, with particles  
rising and falling in tandems, lolling in arcs.

Walking past the plant on Meserole, foot  
blanket tangles and lips come down, calcium white.  
Steam comes out the windows. It smells of perc.

## Neo-Malthus

The neo-Malthusian, generally alarmist story about human eco-destruction, of which neither economic optimists nor distributionists (meaning those who would like to see the square footage spread out rather than reconcentrated) have folded into recent findings about thresholds, interdependence and interactivity, can't account for the disruption of ingenuity in environments of scarcity. The violence of the appropriation of science is counterbalanced by a need to get the word out, the reflexive digression a needed point of rest. Similarly, the production of perverts like Balthus an economic effect, one that has shifted as the bourgeoisie elevates directly to gentry, already in motion before, as evidenced by the spectacle of Lizzie's purge, staged by agents told by Massoud to stay home from Conscience Point that night. Explain that. Easy. Contextual pressure nudges toward the quick hits: homemade rockets, hilltop bionics, and superraytheonics.

## Zero Point

Leading edge charged to millions of volts,  
trailing edge charged to millions of volts—

Spectacle of youth-driven memory  
remains acquisitive during development,  
adding and storing complex  
behaviors and symbol sets destined for—

planned obscenity material—arrival.

Witnesses distracted as much as possible as  
predecessors obliterated,  
capacities for bio-powered beat-based behaviors  
form the basis of distant  
mutations,  
fatal adaptation  
to Fordism.

Coats are not exchanged for coats

and your exigency cannot confront me directly  
smashing skulls on the ice repeatedly  
to facilitate carbon dating of a single example,  
relentlessly cited.

Five people not destroyed by their jobs;  
five animals destroyed.

\*

Brains wired for incredible violence  
produced directly, cut, packaged,  
shared and exported,  
or hidden and  
lied about, whatever.

Each 'culture' its own dissimulation or virtual machine  
from extrémiste littéraire to practiced flak  
to family adviser  
it really works  
just putting it out there

Parallel states  
planes above  
casting uniform  
thus difficult-to-detect shadows  
over and rays onto

the depleted skein  
never actually deployed:  
structures of representation  
rule of law  
terms of citizenship

intercourse between planes constant,  
sexless, and violent

vacuum between planes  
under development

and though the lower  
be degraded to countervailing  
construct or 'pressure valve',  
enough energy  
at points of contact  
to boil the oceans six thousand times.  
Just as a twist of the knob from 60,000 feet  
rearranges the village or Syrianan contact among princes  
and operatives,  
scaled-down attacks allow discourse  
to prepare the ground  
where poetry can still operate  
make form like choice.

For Douglas Rothschild  
For Nick Cook

## A month of Sundays

### Sunday

All de Chirico. Limp glove. Moist. Kalt. Vaca. Late de Chirico. Still. Stay in your plaça.  
Hanging. Four boys huddled under a scaffold. High. Exit ramps like ram's horns. Stay real.  
Contribute carbon. Card. Slot. Hot. Bot. Cot. Cod. Tot. Todt. Toll. Tam. Tap. Toe. Poll.  
Poe. Pee. Pop. Pin. Clouds like needles. Clouds like explosions. Like expositions. Like roses.  
Like containers. Like pilots.

### Sunday

I had tris in my pajamas.

### Sunday

You can't say pilots anymore.  
But notice

how you can say roses.

## Malbecfast of Champions

Punto Pays 2005.  
In a big country, dreams.



Koop!

Er, flown the? Nay,  
it's what they say  
on the train to Oostende  
to collect the fare.

Er hat,  
said the German  
in the next compartment  
after I reached for my wallet  
and touched her hair.  
Hazel.

## Bouleversement

A golf club  
shoved  
upside down  
down the length  
of the esophagus ---  
club head just showing  
thought the teeth

Apartment-dwellers  
in contractor's bags  
piled at curb for 12:30am  
pickup

Other bags, filled just with blood,  
opaque,  
bulging, misshapen on the pavement,  
drained for sodium  
and pumped into  
the streetlights

All the city's dogs  
electrocuted and left stiff,  
piled.

Elevators run on long cords  
in whatever direction they are needed.

## The Prince

The prince of  
the primitive  
society touches  
his cousin,  
the princess,  
with impunity.  
A functioning Presbyterie  
heightens its  
men's cries.  
Everyone is  
getting touched  
in Mysore.  
I make films  
in which I fuck  
Indian  
girls.

## A Footpath

A footpath in Mawkynriew. A brighter brown than Roland Garros.  
We are all of the view that the area is too congested, and as soon  
as we can find a larger space to meet, we will move the group.

## Junction

Power comes into the box  
from the street. On into the building  
from the street, then is split.  
Boxed unexposed.

The wires underground spray sparks  
within capped frays and insulation  
thicker than thumbs.

## Redistribution

You understand the reeducation committee;  
you can understand me.  
The level, and then the appeal  
to equitable terms.

The white sauce thickened  
by corn starch, the reduction  
thickened by corn  
starch, the reduction  
of the stock.

Tracing out  
the argument  
as a contribution.

## John Jay

Schools should teach procedurality &  
paramilitary procedure, and science  
should be based on health-care  
chemistry and human cell functionality.

### Whimsical Packet

Medical element, preserved  
tentacles,  
strung walls, busted  
umbrellas, rice,  
lobster claws  
strained violin tops,  
scrolls, shower  
stars, lone peach with  
blossom, S.A.  
eggplant colored bath  
sticky star, hanging  
ice-cube like, isolated  
flecks, evidence of scrapes,  
more fruits and bursts  
faded and distressed.

### Movement

Instead of trying to undo  
while 'growth' mimics  
population,  
You must have self-confidence  
or you will make other people  
feel stupid  
for investing in you

### Why It Seems Strange to You

Songs arrive at the moment  
of emotional impasse, when canned dialogue  
can't sustain the emotions (thus, the plot),  
when the characters 'realize' they  
are in the thrall of bad terms

### Cerberus

When death was a master and not a miasma, not a failure  
of health care, the graveyard sat within the town, city, square block.  
When, sickened, you turned your eyes up...  
Fuck the ward and its beeps  
night as it creeps

## Circumspection

Circumspection  
    pushes outward  
        to assimilate

Fatted,  
    and then pushed  
into higher state  
    hood  
        hoos  
    hodding handling

Es gibt  
Il faut  
To a fault  
    he crept

taken token  
    too closely  
        wrapped

in 3

I, 2

## The Personalist School

Frank O'Hara's "Personism: A Manifesto" (1959) can be read as a parody of Personalism, of related strands of 1950s American psychology, and of the poetry that developed alongside them.

Gordon W. Allport (1897-1967) created and taught the course "Personality: its Psychological and Social Aspects" at Harvard in 1924.

The course was the first at a U.S. college to treat personality theory as a discrete branch of psychology.

Allport joined Harvard's psychology faculty in 1930, and, in 1937, published *Personality: A Psychological Interpretation*, which became the standard U.S. textbook of personality theory.

Allport's 1954 book *The Nature of Prejudice*, which describes prejudice in terms of "In-Groups," "Out-Groups," "ego defenses" and "rejection," arrived at the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement, and sold more than a half-million copies in the U.S. over the next 25 years.

When Allport's *Becoming: Basic Considerations for a Psychology of Personality* was published the following year, it received more attention than a set of essays on personality theory normally would.

In *Becoming*, Allport elaborates the concept of the "proprium" (or self) partially through "Personalism," a long-extant philosophical construct with multiple contradictory meanings. Allport's Personalism describes every mental function as embedded in "personal life"—there is no separable symbol processing or space perception; there are only people who have senses, feelings, and impressions.

The Personologist—a real Allport construct—asks "How shall a psychological life history be written?" and "What are the individual consistencies?"

Depth psychology "may plunge too deep"; "being in the moment" and "being present" are the keys to psychotherapy and to development.

Allport used the terms "proprium" and "Personalism" to distinguish his constructs from the nascent "Self" psychology of Heinz Kohut (1913-1981), and from work by Abraham Maslow (1908-1970).

In a 1943 paper titled "A Theory of Human Motivation," Maslow adopted Kurt Goldstein's concept of "self-actualization" and placed it atop a "hierarchy of human needs."

Maslow defines "self-actualization" as "the desire for self-fulfillment, namely the tendency for man to become actualized in what he is potentially."

Carl Rogers (1902-1987), in *Client-Centered Therapy* (1951), favors terminology whereby it is the "client" who "has within himself or herself vast resources for self-understanding, for altering his or her self-concept, attitudes and self-directed behavior," which are resources that require "a definable climate of facilitative psychological attitudes" adding up to the "freedom to be."

Allport's "person" may have also been defined against Rogers's "client."

O'Hara, who graduated from Harvard in 1950, writes that he "founded" Personism "on August 27, 1959," in conversation with Amiri Baraka.

"Personism: A Manifesto" was dated September 3, 1959 when it appeared in the magazine *Yugen*.

M.L. Rosenthal's review of Robert Lowell's *Life Studies*, titled "Poetry as Confession," appeared in *The Nation* issue dated September 19, 1959.

Rosenthal chose the term "confession" to recall Lowell's 1940 conversion to Catholicism, much discussed when Lowell won the 1947 Pulitzer Prize, at age 30, for *Lord Weary's Castle*.

In his review, Rosenthal says that *Life Studies* contains the equivalent of "a series of personal confidences, rather shameful, that one is honor-bound not to reveal," and that Lowell himself "seems to regard" the book as "soul's therapy."

In interviews at the time, Lowell said the composition of *Life Studies* was part of his psychotherapy.

"Everything is in the poems," O'Hara says at the opening of "Personism," "but at the risk of sounding like the poor wealthy man's Allen Ginsberg I will write to you because I just heard that one of my fellow poets thinks that a poem of mine that can't be got at one reading is because I was confused too.

"Now, come on. I don't believe in god, so I don't have to make elaborately sounded structures.

"I hate Vachel Lindsay, always have; I don't even like rhythm, assonance, all that stuff."

The reference to believers creating "elaborately sounded structures" is probably a reference to Lowell and the highly-wrought *Weary*, and maybe to T.S. Eliot.

Vachel Lindsay, who committed suicide in 1931 by drinking Lysol ("They tried to get me—I got them first!"), was known as a socialist, and a moralist: "Would I might rouse the Lincoln in you all!"

The parsing of poetic form using traditional metrics (rhythm, assonance) was a hallmark of the New Critics.

O'Hara often delivered similar ripostes to the generation just slightly older than his: "Memorial Day 1950" contains the line "Our responsibilities did not begin/ in dreams, though they began in bed," which inverts Delmore Schwartz's "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities" (itself a borrowing from Yeats).

Other readings of Personism [look past parody](#) (and also note its engagement with Surrealist manifesto).

At a time when Allport was still at Harvard (where he taught until his death), John Ashbery wrote his undergraduate thesis for F.O. Matthiessen on Wallace Stevens's "Chocorua to Its Neighbor."



The poem, first published in 1933, was collected in 1947's *Transport to Summer* (and is obliquely invoked in *The Pisan Cantos*).

Ashbery's use of quotation throughout *Some Trees*, selected by W.H. Auden in 1956 for the Yale Younger Poets series, echoes the vatic emptiness of Chocorua's reporting of what it heard from within a "shadow."

Stevens and Ashbery have both, in somewhat different ways, been accused of being reactionary.

Stevens's poetry was, in contemporary reviews, denounced as something like, in the self-description of John Wilkinson, neo-baroque flummery.

Robert Frost, probably thinking of Dorothy Parker's 1928 poem, said that Stevens wrote poems about "Bric-a-Brac."

And "Personism is to Wallace Stevens what *la poésie pure* was to Béranger."

The conditions that produced Wallace Stevens have disappeared; the postmodern of Ashbery, as Joshua Clover has noted, has disappeared, or is disappearing.

The mainstream, or mainstreaming process, remains the same regardless of the system to which it is hooked up.

Mayakovsky was a mainstream poet.

Every era really does get the poetry it deserves, but description is not always subscription.

Though accused of it in his moment, Stevens does not refuse what Clover has called poetry's task, or obligation: to "figure a disposition" toward "possession and dispossession."

Possession and dispossession are the poles of the "fundamental antagonism" described systematically by Marx.

For now, possession and dispossession are constitutive of, and inextricable from, the conditions in which poetry is realized, "not eternal and abstract but concrete and historical," longstanding and contingent.

The fundamental antagonism, itself historically contingent, manifests itself through sets of appearances, which are concrete, and which have been called maya, the Matrix, and the 10,000 things.

Lyric, as the discourse of constructing or staging voice (or its lack), has material dependencies, even if invisio-neuronal, like any form.

Material dependency, as the condition of poetry, entails a disposition toward the fundamental antagonism.

Material dependency renders a work that emerges from a default position, that fails to figure disposition toward dispossession, an incomplete expression.

The positions Stevens's work actually seems to take with regard to the fundamental antagonism, or the period and place incidentals in which it clothes itself, aren't what moves me in his work.

I don't respond to the disposition, or dispositions, as a possible modality (or affective modality, if disposition is affect) for our, and even his, now.

I do have a nostalgia for the particular sets of conditions that Stevens isolated in his work.

Jack Spicer's "practice of outside," a name for a disposition, projects competing false sets of givens from multiple eras to block collapse into depiction.

The desire to reject obligation or entailment of any kind, poetic or otherwise, including that of staging a disposition, drives some poetry.

Ashbery's non-staging of certain kinds of positions, as a refusal of any obligation of any kind, becomes a (well-documented) disposition in itself, one that refuses individualized transcendence as a final or outcome state.

In the commuter train sequence of Godard's *La Chinoise* (1967), talk of revolution, especially that lacking an outcome plan for governance, is staged against art-based model-state dramatizing, and against conventional reformism, as a set of stale-mated impossibilities for destroying the antagonism.

The conclusion that the film seems to reach is that "this situation must change."

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The material sites of struggle between the possessed and dispossessed are subject to mistranslation along the very lines of struggle, of antagonism.

What it looks like to be dispossessed in Patna is obviously different from what it looks like in Passy or Paoli.

Less obviously, it is, always and at every point, difficult to communicate across manifestations of the 10,000 things.

Clover writes that "we need to clutch on to absolute antagonism (its essence)" in order to approach "[t]he irreducible kernel of solidarity."

Toscano's "Eco-Strato-Static," from *Collapsible Poetics Theatre*, published by Fence Books in 2008, pulls out, like hitting the minus repeatedly on Google Maps, to show what micro-misunderstanding looks like at the macro.

Stacy Doris's *Cheerleader's Guide to the World: Council Book* (2006) shows the cyclical nature of appearance as human "formations/ and drills."

Juliana Spahr stages the sex and death of sets of misapprehension and appearance in "The Incinerator" (2008).

In *Jejuri* (1974), Arun Kolatkar dilates the gap between appearance and maladaptive ideal.

The protagonist of *La Chinoise* returns to school and we never see her again.

On the subway, on my way to work, I watch everything flick back and forth between normalcy and mass effect, like a monstrous duck/rabbit.

Cat Washington

The light is pink through the back trees  
can be pines or larches or pears

kinship terms more familiar than names can be  
distancing diminutivizing affirming unfamiliar no longer

power cut no inverter  
use the gas make tea

a smell dettol stronger than dettol antiseptic toxic  
polished granite compound brown

not the smell but the trees beyond  
can be

clay dirt carpathians cement rock woodblock pine pitched roofs  
voiced f → v it's too dark make tea

not the smell but the trees beyond can  
be thin

thin through competition which becomes domestic  
thin through taking thin through sharing thin alkaline

belt that looks like it's in inches  
measuring the land they wanted to measure right up to the drain

he demanded they measure four feet from the drain and they wouldn't  
they measured two feet from the drain

multiply 130 per sq foot by 150 by something and it  
comes to seven lakhs and something

are you accusing me of making a mistake  
it's eight

The light is still morning light  
thin but full and not paining bright

Cat *Kyntiak* later disappeared leaving  
jean thread hangings tangling attachment

missing swipes the vox-hollow bereft  
Cat *Kyntiak* motionless intent

springs forward  
curls into grass shadowed by reeds

Like citrus vapor  
the light emulsifies

micronic droplet  
flammande

*Kyntiak* intensifies muscles tighten dainty  
to articulate tip

she begins to open and close her jaws  
rapidly in a clatter

Like toy teeth hers are needles  
on a wound spring

and she in a trance flashing the teeth the jaws  
opening and closing very rapidly

from the throat an involuntary chatter an eck eck eck  
frightening until a short echo sounds

She's imitating nearly perfectly a small black bird as a kind of lure  
also in the grass staring intent involuntary

Let out in the afternoon moon  
hens

sawdust sticking to their heels  
forking

but ignored draw lines in the wet grass pushing up  
*pyrjong* mosquitos

Intimate gossamers but gossamers  
require cossetting to be expected to survive

Close the windows it's after 5 it's already two hours  
that the mosquitoes in the shallows hit the shadows

train the tongue to treat *h*  
as consonant clustering aspirationally

voiced and voiceless two character plosive  
not melded

but single-wound  
copper core

Cat as cowboy  
astride

the white chickens  
*Th* as in *thy*

thick  
compound form I

we freely  
take

Too hot to paint corrugated tin  
last month

Too wet now in back to whitewash  
or paint the doors

Entire green islands fleck off into black catchment  
Sintex yellow print

tin roof in the rain  
too wet to paint

Romanized orthography botches epenthetic lot extension  
Nature where encroachments and distortions are everywhere

Nuclear minority Romulus and Remus same she  
produces wastes

pesticidal garden pathology  
of another plot

down the garden path  
switching on the pump

Starting construction the field next door accommodates  
another giant concrete abode

outdoor tube-lights  
fail to explode

The blue scrap the bottom four shelves  
behind the bed

damp down  
mutton bone *thlone*

The house a dacha though in the city  
limits the city Salzburg *Sma ksem*

Mozart there Julie Andrews  
fashioned love out of drapes

what is it Salzburg ringed by mountains like a berserk  
Maypole

microtonic doe outpost sustaining rural health mission  
stopping youth in clime

The red light atop the black plastic speakers' subwoofer beats  
in waltz time

jaggery candy striper wound round spindle  
three men in basement rooms the *krum*

I think in America you don't see very many ladies in saris  
there is no more native dress anywhere I think only India is beautiful

Morse bill of lading  
Ezekiel trading

The light is fading  
The bed is mading

The heart is beating  
bp-bp bp-BP!

Chattering teeth  
like polished teak

repeating  
reap