

A *relation* is a real thing, i.e. has a physio-neuronal
instantiation between minds and in brains,
traceable through Positron Emission Tomography.
There's *poetica* is a relation realized through poetry.
It's a space created by "the legislators of the unacknowledged world."
It's not like "a city upon a hill" (which "cannot be hidden").

Poets are real: poets make poetry, or the things behind
its generation; they think of themselves,
and represent themselves, as poets.
Poets can't help making poetry.
The *res poetica* is a relation that forms, mostly between poets,
through poetry.
It creates, affirms, or destroys.
In defining the limits of the *res poetica*, put the claim
"We live in the mind" beside experience of the ways
mind can be reduced, with violence, to body.

Poets are formed by what Bishnupriya Ghosh calls "local struggles"
which cannot be represented from any single perspective.
The production, dissemination, and reception of poetry
project the space of such struggles into the *res poetica*,
bringing together medium, other poems, author and author function,
reader and readers, reception conditions, text, performance.
It's a model state that is momentary, fragile, propositional,
temporally continuous or discontinuous,
but materially real.
It is not different in kind from what happens during prayers, or when
identifying with a construct like "The United States" or "India"
(which Narendra Modi describes as having a "natural relationship").
It's just differently realized, and enforced.

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"
in 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."
Poetry can recycle existing imperatives, and the *res poetica*

can take oppressive forms.
The *res poetica* can also transmit and maintain knowledge
in the face of tacit or explicit threat,
through articulation, or non-articulation,
within poetry.

Vivek Narayanan, in introducing Rahul Soni's translation
of Shrikant Verma's *Magadh*, refers to its "ambiguous
invocations of half-mythical South Asian cities"
and its "canny and even bitter political outrage."

Narayanan reads Verma's work as an open secret:
"Verma was a senior Congress Party functionary under
Indira Gandhi in the late 70s and early 80s" [which entails
mortal complicities]. "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."

Corpses in Kashi

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?

— Shrikant Verma
trans. by Rahul Soni

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

One recent response to lack of access to, for example,
Tamil film, is to use the tools at hand
to appropriate the forms of the vernacular
into a superordinate neo-cosmopolitanist idiom,
via, for example, heightened cuts, homophonics,
and 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 the work like this that I've seen,
which is more like a fetish.

The failure of a vernacular to signify when removed from its usual context
in made out, in this work, to be, partially, an intrinsic property
of the vernacular, one that then gets taken up by
authorial identification, so that the vernacular's failure
to signify conventionally gets appropriated by the author,
producing (and this is what makes it lyric) a kind of pathos.

The author function can also incorporate the ironies of that reading,
which can be beautiful.

Removing form from content, even in play, is a kind of attempted dominance,
rather than a query from one work to another,
one language to another.

The negotiations take place within the *res poetica*,
not within the works themselves.

In 1999, I wrote and published a racist poem.
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 can, I guess, attempt to recapitulate and reiterate racist thought without the poem's author function seeming to be a node for drawing pleasure in discharge from the thoughts themselves.

A whole movement in poetry developed out of that premise.

Or maybe it developed out of an ironic effort to drain the stereotypes of charge by the act of drawing pleasure out of disgust in re-iterating them, as a sign of self-implication, as some have said.

Pleasure in disgust, and pleasure generally, can freak people out, but deriving pleasure from disgust and deriving pleasure from re-iterating racist thought and speech are not necessarily distinguishable without more sensitive PET technology.

The *res poetica* takes the place of intent and attempts at framing.

Sheldon Pollock writes against "what often seems to be the 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."

Arjun Appadurai opposes "ethnic collectivists who lack... global imagination" to cosmopolitans who, by contrast, "relish non-national nomadism and celebrate migrancy, hybridity, and mobility."

Bishnupriya Ghosh, in critiquing Appadurai, cites 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."

Addressing a body called "The International Agency for Cities of Refuge" for money, Jacques Derrida imagines a set of autonomous polities, "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."

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, Punjabi, and Marathi
were vernaculars.

Maharashtra was created in 1956,
four years after Nissim Ezekiel's first book, *A Time to Change*,
written in English, was published. Ezekiel returned during
this period to Bombay, where he was in close touch
with many younger writers.
Arun Kolatkar, 8 years younger than Ezekiel, published
more than 15 books in Marathi.
Kolatkcar published *Jejuri*, his first book written in English, in 1976.
Poetry has modes of reception, rather than fixed and identifiable
formal characteristics, "subjectivistic-perspectivalistic procedure[s]"
that "create a foreground and a background" bringing
the past to the present, and the present to the past.
Jejuri 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.
Kolatkcar's second book written in English, *Kala Ghoda Poems*,
was published in 2004, the year of his death.
His third, *Sarpa Satra*, a retelling of a tiny piece of the *Mahabharata*,
was published that same year.
Kolatkcar's writing in English was an open secret
whose nature is only beginning to be recognized.
Within the *res poetica*, Kolatkcar's Bombay is a city of refuge
whose forms of solidarity are only beginning to be realized.
Kolatkcar's poem "Pi-dog," from *Kala Ghoda Poems*,
set in the Kala Ghoda section of Mumbai,
ends when day breaks, and the dogs,
who have ruled small sections of the night roads,
"surrender the city
to its so-called masters."

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

Anne Boyer's daughter recently said that the choices are
between shut-in or revolutionary.

The air has run out of the piety market.
The staging of voice can be model, opiate,
refuge, by-product, or iteration;
it can create relation.