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## When Poetry and Phenomenology Collide

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### ABSTRACT

In recent years several scholars have wrestled with the term “poetic thought,” suggesting in various ways there is something distinctive about the nature of meaning as it occurs/unfolds through poetry. In this paper I suggest, in part following the lead of Simon Jarvis, that one of the most fruitful lines of inquiry for exploring this idea lies in a consideration of poetic works through the lens of Heidegger’s early phenomenology. Specifically, I argue that one of the keys to understanding poetic thought lies in a flaw within Heidegger’s ontological divisions between substances, equipment and Dasein, as presented in *Being and Time* (1927). Through an analysis of three poems by Frank O’Hara, I argue poetry that examines and represents the physical world presents a problem for Heidegger when he suggests equipment in the world must necessarily “withdraw” in order for us to engage with it authentically. To address this, the term *environment-at-hand* is introduced to describe the relationship between artists and the surrounding environments used for their work. Poetic thought is here conceived as the point where poetry and phenomenology collide; where poetry reflects and enacts the fact that humans are inherently engaged meaning-makers. In this way poetry does not only show us new ways of looking at the world, which it surely does, but it can help us understand the nature of being itself.

### KEYWORDS

Martin Heidegger;  
Frank O’Hara; poetry;  
phenomenology; poetic  
thinking; Dasein; being

No matter how lofty and abstract our thoughts are or how complex our systems might be, all of it is rooted, finally, to the human body’s mutual relationship with the physical environment.

—Andrew Hinton<sup>1</sup>

In the literature on poetics of the last decade, a wonderful phrase has popped up, in various forms and in the work of various theorists. The phrase is “poetic thinking” (or any number of slight variations on this theme),<sup>2</sup> and Simon Jarvis, J.H. Prynne, Helen Vendler and John Wilkinson—among many others—have each wrestled with it, pinning the concept down variously on prosodic, cognitive and linguistic grounds.<sup>3</sup> As Vendler writes, “the relation of poetry to thought is an uneasy one,”<sup>4</sup> and I will not presume the ability to make it easy here. But for my part, I wish to suggest that a (re)emphasis on early Heideggerian phenomenology may offer the most fruitful avenue for understanding poetic thought.<sup>5</sup> Not only can Heidegger assist our understanding of poetry, but poetry can and should assist in correcting core insights from phenomenology on the nature of being itself.

Poetries (and artworks more generally) that examine and represent the physical world present a problem for Heidegger when he suggests in his early work in *Being and Time* (1927) that equipment in the world must necessarily “withdraw” [zurückzuziehen]<sup>6</sup> in order for us to engage with it authentically. To address this, I introduce and employ the term *environment-at-hand* to describe the relationship between artists and the surrounding environments they use as fuel for their art. Creativity, and particularly literary creativity, should be understood as a propensity to ascertain and exploit artistic affordances in the world. Resulting poetic works should then be understood as linguistic crystallisations that simultaneously articulate and afford a certain kind of thought—that thought which underscores the self-definitive nature of our embedded, embodied creative nature.

Poetry plays a crucial role in Heidegger’s later thinking and writings on art, particularly in *The Origin of the Work of Art* (1950)<sup>7</sup> and *Existence and Being* (1949),<sup>8</sup> where he considers the work of Friedrich Hölderlin. Though these texts play a supplementary role in this paper, I choose to examine Frank O’Hara’s work for much the same reason Heidegger examines Hölderlin, whom he considers “the poet of the poets,” namely because his work reflexively examines the nature of its own creation; poetry which is “borne on by the poetic vocation to write expressly of the essence of poetry.”<sup>9</sup> Though Heidegger expands and elaborates (and indeed revises) his early phenomenological work in later texts, aspects of his divisions of being as presented in *Being and Time* offer the most promising insights for examining poetry philosophically (and philosophy poetically). A consideration of these divisions alongside contemporary poetic works may help us get to the heart of what distinguishes poetic thought, and may steer recent discussions in fruitful new directions.

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Throughout *Being and Time* Heidegger attempts a dramatic reconceptualisation of metaphysics since at least Descartes, putting the nature of being itself at the core of metaphysics. Briefly, Heidegger contends that in asking questions of the form “what is  $x$ ?”, traditional metaphysics has presupposed and failed to question the nature of Being (*Sein*) itself (i.e. what *is* is), and that in order to redress this (and following Husserl), we need to examine the phenomenon of being (*Seiendes*).<sup>10</sup> Phenomenology cannot observe Being itself, for the simple reason that Being is only made manifest through *beings*—the *isness* of the table is only apprehendable through Dasein’s apprehension of the table itself. Consequently, in order to ascertain the nature of Being we must examine the character and interaction of beings, and question what constitutes how it is that they are what they are.<sup>11</sup>

In Heidegger’s phenomenology as presented in *Being and Time*, he distinguishes between three modes of being, which roughly correspond to self-sufficient entities; entities as they are in use; and the users of those entities, namely us.<sup>12</sup> In the first instance, and partially in keeping with the philosophical tradition of Aristotle through to Descartes and Kant, Heidegger considers one mode of being as that of *substances*.<sup>13</sup> This category includes anything that is real and self-sufficient, and exists in the world as either a physical object or conceptual whole (such as words and numbers). Secondly, Heidegger points to the ways in which we interact with our environments, suggesting that the being of certain objects only reveals itself through our *use* of that thing. The pen only reveals what it is to be a pen, for instance, when we pick it up and begin to write with it. This mode of being Heidegger calls *equipment*. The final mode of being is the distinctly human mode of being-in-the-world, which Heidegger terms *Dasein*. We are, for Heidegger, uniquely beings *whose Being is at*

*issue for us*, and it is through our purposive use of equipment, he suggests, that we partake in the distinctively creative, human mode of existence.<sup>14</sup>

Dividing the category of equipment further, Heidegger notes that equipment can either be inert, as when we are not using it—the hammer as it is in the toolbox—or it can be *as it is in use*—as when we are hammering. The distinction here is, respectively, between equipment *present-at-hand* (inert) and *ready-to-hand* (in use). The important characteristic of equipment as ready-to-hand is that, according to Heidegger (and as highlighted by Dreyfus), it “withdraws” [*zurückzuziehen*].<sup>15</sup> When one is skillfully using equipment, as a tennis player uses a racket, the physical properties of the object become increasingly unnoticeable. The more authentically one engages with equipment, according to Heidegger, the more such properties recede into the background as the object becomes like an extension of the user’s body. As Heidegger writes, “the peculiarity of what is proximally *ready-to-hand* is that, in its *readiness-to-hand*, it must, as it were, withdraw [*zurückzuziehen*] in order to be *ready-to-hand* quite authentically.”<sup>16</sup> This will be crucial to the arguments that follow.

As a final piece of necessary terminology, Heidegger suggests that all equipment, when it is in use, has a “towards-which,” meaning that purpose which its use is directed toward achieving. The hammer has a “towards-which” of hanging an artwork, or building a house; the racket of hitting a ball, of playing tennis, of winning a match.

Taking stock, the three modes of being Heidegger distinguishes can be (somewhat crudely) summarised as follows:

- substances objects, both real and abstract, which are within the world and are self-sufficient;
- equipment objects in the world as they are in use. These can either be present-at-hand (not in use) or ready-to-hand (in use); and
- *Dasein* the distinct human mode of existence, by which we define ourselves through our purposive use of equipment within the world.

Frank O’Hara’s poetry expresses and enacts a mode of being-in-the-world that this early ontological picture cannot adequately account for, namely by engaging with equipment in a way that brings its properties to the *foreground*—precisely the opposite of making it withdraw. The three poems that I consider have been chosen with the intent of, respectively: (a) introducing what I term the environment-at-hand; (b) elucidating the potentiality of the environment-at-hand for creating (possible) meaning, and (c) exploring the environment-at-hand in reference to some of Heidegger’s later thought.

### ***Interior (With Jane)***

Written in 1951, *Interior (With Jane)* is one of several poems written about or inspired by O’Hara’s close friend Jane Freilicher, a popular representational painter who befriended several of The New York School poets, including Ashbery, Schuyler and Kenneth Koch (with whom she shared a kitchen in the same apartment building in the Lower East Side of Manhattan).<sup>17</sup> Freilicher had painted O’Hara’s portrait before his arrival in New York in 1951, the year this poem was written, and welcomed O’Hara (along with Ashbery and others) with a tour of his new home city.<sup>18</sup> O’Hara had in turn written a number of poems inspired by and dedicated to Freilicher, including a concrete poem shaped to resemble her face.<sup>19</sup> Freilicher remained O’Hara’s muse for several years during O’Hara’s time in New

York,<sup>20</sup> and the resulting poems speak to a shared preoccupation with the physical environment as inspiration for their art. The example of concern here, in its entirety, is as follows:

**Interior (With Jane)<sup>21</sup>**

The eagerness of objects to  
 be what we are afraid to do  
 cannot help but move us Is  
 this willingness to be a motive  
 in us what we reject? The  
 really stupid things, I mean  
 a can of coffee, a 35¢ ear  
 ring, a handful of hair, what  
 do these things do to us? We  
 come into the room, the windows  
 are empty, the sun is weak  
 and slippery on the ice And a  
 sob comes, simply because it is  
 coldest of the things we know

We find in *Interior* a blurring of the distinction between subject and object that takes place through an inversion of the poetic subject and the physical environment, such that objects in their “eagerness” are willing to *be* motives for action—something the subjects afraid to *do*. The tautological structure of the third to the fifth line has a doubling, reiterative effect on the objects in the room as driving forces, since “the eagerness of objects to / be what we are afraid to do / cannot help but move us” amounts to saying, “the eagerness of objects to [move us] / cannot help but move us.” Here the “us” is universalised beyond Freilicher and O’Hara to represent the human subject *per se*, suggesting that *objects* (and not subjects) are the affective (if not agential) half of the subject/object relation that the poem initially supposes and subsequently begins to dismantle.

The reification of subject/object continues, and is compounded in the rhetorical question “Is / this willingness to be a motive / in us what we reject?” There is in these lines considerable ambiguity in the attribution of “this willingness,” leaving it open to at least two (and conflicting) referents. The willingness could refer to, on the one hand, the *object’s* willingness to be a motive in us (which is to say *for* us). Or, alternatively, it may refer to our willingness (*in us*) to be a motive (as reflected by the object). Here we have an instance of rhetorical polysemy, wherein agency becomes ambiguous and subject and object become reified; the process of artistic creation is brought under its own scrutiny.

*Interior (With Jane)* is at its most compelling in its final, slightly elusive lines:

do these things do to us? We  
 come into the room, the windows  
 are empty, the sun is weak  
 and slippery on the ice And a  
 sob comes, simply because it is  
 coldest of the things we know

To what does the last line of the poem refer? What is it that is the coldest of the things we know—the ice, presumably, or could it be the sob? Or both? Here again the lines are deliberately vague. Marjorie Perloff describes lines such as these as employing “syntactic

ambiguity,” points in O’Hara’s poems that deliberately obfuscate (possible) meaning.<sup>22</sup> For Perloff these points “destabilise the meaning,” while for Hazel Smith they create multiple possibilities; “an overlaying of different meanings.”<sup>23</sup> Here coldness serves as a metaphor that overlays colour and touch with associations of insensitivity and melancholy. In cognitive linguistic terminology it serves, importantly, as a conceptual metaphor.

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson have written extensively on conceptual metaphors, suggesting that physical embodiment underpins all cognitive mapping of the world. In *Philosophy in the Flesh* (1999) Lakoff and Johnson produce a table of primary metaphors—those metaphors that “pair subjective experience and judgement with sensorimotor experience,” and which form the basis of complex metaphors via conceptual blending. In this table, Lakoff and Johnson’s first listed primary metaphor is “affection and warmth,” combining the subjective judgement of affection with the sensorimotor experience of temperature.<sup>24</sup> Conversely, of course, *low* temperature corresponds with a *lack* of affection (as when we say someone is being “cold” or gives an “icy” glance). One of the key progenitors of cognitive poetics, Reuven Tsur, has also drawn strong connections between metaphors of temperature relating to emotion and corresponding physiological changes. Citing research by various psychologists, Tsur notes that one of four core features of emotions is “deviation from normal energy level: increase of energy (gladness, anger), or decrease of energy (sadness, depression, calm).”<sup>25</sup> In analysing Shelley’s lyric “A Song,” Tsur notes that “the verb ‘freeze’ denotes exceptionally low thermal energy,” and straddles both the literal and the metaphorical.<sup>26</sup> There is ultimately, these theorists argue, physiological grounding for all primary metaphors, and certainly those involving temperature.

Returning to the poem at hand, the *coldness* of the *weak* sun on icy windows, then, brings together the perceptual experience of coldness, the conceptual metaphor of a *lack* of emotion (insensitivity), the *presence* of emotion as melancholy (in both the sob and the conceptual metaphor of sadness as a lack of energy; as weakness) and the visual associations of coldness as shades of “cool” blues and greys. The poem thus blends, via conceptual metaphors, the somatic, the visual and the auditory with the physical environment as the source (and site) of emotional experience and artistic creativity. In so doing, O’Hara blurs the boundaries between subject and object, interior and exterior.

This an instance of what Hazel Smith has described as a prevalence of “hyperscapes” in O’Hara’s work. Smith describes the hyperscape as “a postmodern site characterised by difference ... distinguished by the co-presence of opposites ... low and high culture, sexual and racial difference, the local and global, modernist innovation and postmodernist appropriation.”<sup>27</sup> *Interior (With Jane)* constitutes what can be understood as a hyperscape of subjectivity, in which divisions between the physical and the mental, subject and object and interior and exterior are inverted, subverted and undermined. It is even unclear, for instance, from whom the sob of the penultimate line comes:

are empty, the sun is weak  
and slippery on the ice And a  
  
sob comes, simply because it is  
coldest of the things we know

The division between O’Hara and Jane is blurred in the ambiguous attribution of sob in “a sob comes.” Where does the sob come from? Jane? The speaker? Through the windows? If we read the sob as coming through the windows they are hardly “really stupid,” but have an explicit role

as the source of agentive emotional response, inverting the subject/object dichotomy and so fracturing the poetic “I” between self and object. Yet, several lines later we get “it is the coldest of the things *we* know,” which may suggest the sob comes from both Jane *and* the speaker. The result in this reading is simultaneously a fracturing of the self (again)—as the poetic “I” collapses under the weight of syntactic ambiguity—and a synthesis of selves, as both Jane and the speaker merge as potentially co-agentive in the penultimate line.

Moreover, the lack of attribution on the noun (rather than the verb) of “sob” not only detaches it from specific human agency, but abstracts the action altogether; it places the sob in the ether of subjective objects and objective subjects that the poem establishes, where a sob just *is*. All this works against a division of the internal and external worlds, placing intangible emotion on the same ontological plane as physical reality, as the objects in the room. Accordingly, any psychoanalytic interpretation that takes the exterior to be revealing O’Hara’s (or the reader’s) “interior” misses the point entirely. When Peter Schwenger, for instance, applies a Freudian interpretation on the poem and takes it to be presenting objects as “an outward projection of what is repressed in our own ‘interior,’” he takes the poem to articulate what it deliberately obscures.<sup>28</sup>

To bring this all back to Heideggerian terminology, in the above ways O’Hara’s poem works to underscore the interrelation of Dasein and the physical world of objects. This amounts to far more than simply saying that the subject/object dichotomy is an oversimplification. Rather, echoing Heidegger, the poem suggests the *interrelation* of subject and object, to the point that our very mode of being not only depends upon but is *constituted by* those beings which we use for our purposive actions within the world. As Heidegger puts it in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (1927):

World is a determination of the Dasein’s being. This is expressed from the outset when we say that Dasein exists as being-in-the-world. The world belongs to the Dasein’s existential constitution.<sup>29</sup>

When O’Hara thus uses the surrounding environment for the sake of writing a poem (with an ultimate purpose—what Heidegger calls a *for-the-sake-of-which*—of being a poet), the environment is constitutive of his very mode of being. The answer to the question “what do these things do to us?” then, is that “these things” make up part of the very fabric of what it means to be “us.” The objects in the poem are not merely external objects for O’Hara’s subjective use, nor do they merely make up a part of his subjective experience. Insofar as “being a poet” (as a mode of Dasein) relies on their existence and skilled use, and insofar as “the world belongs to the Dasein’s existential constitution,” the objects must be understood as a part of that Dasein that engages with them creatively—which is to say as part of O’Hara himself.

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Heidegger’s profound rejection of Cartesian dualism (and all theories of mental representation that followed, including Husserl’s intentionality)<sup>30</sup> is based on his insistence that our way of being (Dasein) is as engaged users of equipment, wherein we experience the equipmentality of equipment in a dynamic process of disclosing spaces for action and creativity within the world. We are not separate (subjects or minds) for whom the world is a static set of things that we use to create or observe meaning. Rather, we are always-already thrown into a world of dynamic webs of meaning through the readiness-to-hand of equipment. As Heidegger writes in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*:



Intentionality belongs to the existence of Dasein. ... To exist then means, among other things, to be as relating to oneself by comporting with beings. It belongs to the nature of Dasein to exist in such a way that it is always already with other beings.<sup>31</sup>

And, in *Being and Time*:

Being-in-the-world ... amounts to a non-thematic circumspective absorption in references or assignments constitutive for the readiness-to-hand of a totality of equipment.<sup>32</sup>

Note that it is “the nature of Dasein” to exist in such relations, in which we are always “absorbed” in a world in which things matter to us and *matter to us through their use*. This rejection of the subject/object relation and emphasis on engaged action (later to become *embodied* engaged action in Merleau-Ponty) constitutes one of Heidegger’s fundamental concerns throughout much of his early work, including in *Being and Time*. As Dreyfus notes, “Heidegger’s attempt to break out of the tradition [of Descartes through to Husserl] is focused in his attempt to get beyond the subject/object distinction in all domains, including action.”<sup>33</sup> O’Hara’s poetry likewise enacts a mode of being-in-the-world that demonstrates the insufficiency of the subject/object distinction (even as it engages with it), but also, as will be shown, the insufficiency of Heidegger’s early revisionist ontology.

## Affordances

O’Hara is questioning the place of physical objects as catalysts, both for artistic creation as well as cues for emotional response. In the field of ecological psychology this has been a central question, and one to which its founder James Gibson has offered the concept of *affordances*. An affordance is a property of an object or aspect of the world that opens itself to specific action, in a given context and to a particular organism or individual. As Gibson puts it, “it implies the complementarity of the animal and the environment.”<sup>34</sup> When we look at chairs we do not see, or do not only see, a set of physical properties—a curved piece of wood or plastic attached to four legs. Rather, we see *something to sit on*. We do not see the vase, we see *something to put flowers in*. An affordance is the organism-specific potentiality of an aspect of the environment. This model stresses the inextricability of the subject and object in acts of perception, since perception is the confluence of an actor with their environment. As Joanna McGrenere and Wayne Ho write, “by cutting across the subjective/objective barrier, Gibson’s affordances introduce the idea of actor-environment mutuality; the actor and the environment make an inseparable pair.”<sup>35</sup>

## The environment-at-hand

The concept of affordances, combined with Heidegger’s distinction between equipment and substances, begins to offer a lens through which we can understand the relationship between the poet and their external physical environment. Consider O’Hara entering the room, seeing weak light on the window, having an emotional response and experiencing the inspiration for a poem. In this instance the window instantiates an affordance for emotion and artistic creation, while language functions as equipment for Dasein’s self-expression. The window is not withdrawing, but rather its artistic affordances as emotional resonance for the poet come to the fore, and so act as equipment ready-to-hand without withdrawal.



The interesting thing about this poem in particular is that it is doing all this *while reflecting on the very process of poetic creativity itself*. This requires a little further unpacking.

I take it to be the case that in most instances an emotional response entails, at least in part, some appraisal about its source. Those things that make us happy we judge as in some way beneficial or useful; those things that make us frightened we also judge as things to avoid. As Magda Arnold and John Gasson put it, “emotion is a tendency towards an object based suitable, or away from an object judged unsuitable.”<sup>36</sup> The fact that emotions often involve appraisal, however, does not make such emotional responses affordances. This is because an affordance is not just an appraisal, but an appraisal of something as useful for specific action. In Heidegger’s terms, affordances have a “towards-which,” being that action they disclose as a context-specific possibility. When O’Hara has an emotional response to the interior and/or the physical items within it, the response is in part an appraisal, but it only becomes an affordance when the object is experienced as artistic inspiration—when it is seen as *something to write about*. The poem then becomes a linguistic crystallisation of an artistic affordance within equipment in the world.

As Dreyfus notes, “sometimes words are, indeed, used as equipment in the local situation and language functions transparently in a nonpropositional way.”<sup>37</sup> Accordingly, and returning to Heidegger’s distinctions, here language and the external environment are both functioning as equipment that is ready-to-hand and has a “towards-which” of generating a poem. The surrounding physical environment as it is present-at-hand (inert; present but not in use) shifts to being ready-to-hand when it presents affordances that enable it to be used for the sake of art. Here, however, we run into a problem with Heidegger’s caveat regarding “withdrawal.”

Heidegger suggests that in order for us to authentically engage with equipment, that equipment’s properties and characteristics must fall from view. What, then, are we to make of a process by which language operates as equipment while simultaneously bringing its own qualities and the latent emotional resonance of the external environment to the foreground, multiplying the potential properties of each (through polysemy and syntactic ambiguity)? If we are to follow a Heideggerian conception of being as presented in *Being and Time*, it would seem we must do one of two things: either we must reject that the objects in O’Hara’s poetry (the window, the hair and so forth)—objects for the sake of art—are equipment (since they and the language that describes them do not withdraw), or we must change our conception of equipment as it functions for the sake of art.

Rejecting the status of objects as equipment in poetry is undesirable, since they resemble equipment in all other respects (having a towards-which, being part of a system (or totality, as we will see), and being ready-to-hand or present-at-hand). Accordingly, postulating an entirely separate mode of being would create a mode of being that is not entirely separate (and therefore both implausible and unhelpful). Consequently, I wish to suggest that what we might call the environment-at-hand (by which I mean the physical environment as artistic inspiration) represents a unique possibility of being-in-the-world that reverses the usual way in which we encounter equipment as ready-to-hand.

It will help to work through another of O’Hara’s works in order to clarify what I have in mind.

**Walking to Work**<sup>38</sup>

It's going to be the sunny side  
 from now  
 on. Get out, all of you.

This is my traffic over the night  
 and how  
 should I range my pride

each oceanic morning like a cutter  
 if I  
 confuse the dark world is round  
 round who  
 in my eyes at morning saves  
 nothing from nobody? I'm becoming  
 the street.  
 Who are you in love with?  
 me?

Straight against the light I cross.

*Walking to Work* creates a tension between happiness and fear, immobility and motion. The poem begins with an ostensibly optimistic tone, using the image of sunshine and allusion to fried eggs (“sunny side”) to symbolise life’s improvement. The reference here is likely to the popular song *On the Sunny Side of the Street* recorded by various jazz musicians throughout the 1940s and 1950s,<sup>39</sup> and the title to the 1951 film *The Sunny Side of the Street*, released less than a year before O’Hara wrote the poem.<sup>40</sup> The lyrics of the song, which O’Hara likely would have known well, enact the metaphor of crossing a street—“grab your coat / get your hat / leave your worry on the doorstep / just direct your feet / on the sunny side of the street.” O’Hara borrows this imagery to serve as the literal and metaphorical grounding for the work’s sociopolitical undercurrent.

Since *Walking to Work* was written less than a year after O’Hara had arrived in New York and shortly after he had taken a job at the Museum of Modern Art (where, at this point, it is likely he was selling postcards),<sup>41</sup> it is not surprising that the walk might elicit the mood of things “looking up.” However, the remaining questions in the poem—particularly that spanning from lines 5 through to 13—betray a curious ambivalence, and a use of the environment-at-hand that invokes sociopolitical themes of inclusion and exclusion:

and how  
 should I range my pride

each oceanic morning like a cutter  
 if I  
 confuse the dark world is round  
 round who  
 in my eyes at morning saves  
 nothing from nobody? I'm becoming  
 the street.

The street is personified as the lens through which O’Hara can highlight his relative insignificance in a large new city: “a dark world.” O’Hara sees the streets as cold and “dark,” and yet defiantly asserts that although the morning street “saves / nothing from nobody,” nevertheless it’s going to be “the sunny side / from now on.” As in *Interior (With Jane)*, there

is here a blurring of subject/object, of environment and emotion, interior and exterior. But here the antagonism runs a sociopolitical course, and the environment-at-hand becomes the ground for enacting and subverting the status quo.

As Hazel Smith notes in *Hyperscapes in the Poetry of Frank O'Hara: Difference, Homosexuality, Topography* (2000), "the period in which O'Hara was writing was highly repressive, but it marked a turning point in the social position of homosexuals."<sup>42</sup> Though not as explicitly political as some of Ginsberg's works, many of O'Hara's poems engage directly with his relationships, and are situated at this "turning point" in the marginalization of homosexuals. Smith suggests that O'Hara's poetics is often radical in this sense of openly exploring and describing sexuality in a time when homosexuality was still categorised by the medical profession as an illness, while homosexuality was considered a felony in all but two American states.<sup>43</sup> Accordingly, she writes that O'Hara's work "was too radical for its time. . . . The message, that homosexuality was a matter of pride rather than shame, needed to be spelt out loud and clear."<sup>44</sup>

Returning to the poem at hand, the question "and how / should I range my pride" may then be read as exploring O'Hara's conflict between his pride as a homosexual and the oppressive social environment in which he lived. Since "range" can mean "to run or extend in a line in a particular direction," "to place oneself in opposition to" or "to travel or wander over a wide area,"<sup>45</sup> pride becomes not (or not only) an (internal) emotion but also, and more significantly, an (external) way of navigating the world—what Judith Butler calls a *performative* act.<sup>46</sup> The further "each oceanic morning like a cutter" evokes an image of a boat traversing an ocean, making "the dark world" seem particularly perilous (though "cutter" may also reference a tailor, a further sense of having to "navigate" appropriate social spaces). In each of these deliberately slippery, polysemous lines, O'Hara sees the external environment as affording a choice between particular ways of navigating the "dark world" (physically and socially), a decision that is enacted in the final line. The environment-at-hand thus becomes the core means by which O'Hara establishes a sociopolitical undercurrent within the work.

Who or what is it that saves "nothing from nobody" in the lines "in my eyes at morning saves / nothing from nobody"? I suggest that "saves" here should be read as remembering (or forgetting) rather than as rescuing or sparing. This is because the syntax is ordered as saving "nothing from nobody," rather than saving "nobody from nothing." The difference here is between the world (or the speaker) saving something from people, as one saves a gift from a friend, rather than saving that friend from pain or hardship. Once again, this is slightly ambiguous, since the double negative can reverse the meaning (to save *nothing* from *nobody* can mean to save *something* from *everybody*). Colloquially, however, and particularly in New York vernacular, "nothing from nobody" would usually suggest to save no trace from any individual—making each day a fresh start. Though the lines can plausibly be read as either "the dark world" or the speaker being that which saves "nothing from nobody," in either case the emphasis is on relationships situated in a world that is difficult (for us and for the speaker) to navigate. The lines that follow—"I'm becoming / the street / Who are you in love with? / me?"—blur even further the lines between the physical world, the poetic self and the reader (is it us who are being address as "you"?). At this point in the poem the obfuscation of logical paths parallels O'Hara's struggle to "range [his] pride," the conflict between this pride (and his insistence that "it's going to be the sunny side / from now / on") with the "dark [social] world" that interrogates not only who he is in love with, but the nature of those relationships (is anything saved?).

*Walking to Work* creates a deliberate chaos of sorts that mimics both O'Hara's mind and the street itself, and this occurs not only syntactically and grammatically (as has been shown), but through uneven stanza breaks and indentation. No two indented lines are perfectly aligned, making the poem uneven and staggered in its visual form. All this serves to create a tension in the poem between a "showing up" and a retreat of the poetic self, which is brought home in the final lines:

Who are you in love with?  
me?  
Straight against the light I cross.

The walking "*straight* against the light" in the last line of the poem represents the final decisive moment in which O'Hara "ranges his pride," and all ambiguities fall under the weight of a performative act. The crossing represents a flouting of convention, not only of road rules (against the direction of a street light) but also the refusal to accept the sociopolitical reality, as a departure to "the sunny side of the street" from the "straight," heteronormative and monogamous. It is thus simultaneously an arrival and a departure; an arrival at the metaphorical light of the "sunny side" and the literal light of work (at MoMA), while a departure from the metaphorical "dark world," the literal dark of the street and the interrogations of a society that questions who one loves (and what one saves). Just as in *Interior (With Jane)*, the environment-at-hand in *Walking to Work* breaks down the subject/object divide and foregrounds the interrelationship of Dasein and world. In utilising affordances embedded in the external environment, the environment-at-hand becomes the means not only for O'Hara's (re)establishment as poet, but for (re)establishing personal and sexual identities.

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In what way, we can now ask, are the street, the [traffic] light, the traffic and the "dark world" being employed by O'Hara in a philosophically significant way? The traditional subject/object view fails to capture how the speaker is fundamentally engaged in a world of use, a world which presents affordances for action. Accordingly, we can use Heidegger's phenomenology to correct our view and see O'Hara not as a subject experiencing a world of objects, but as a Dasein enmeshed in a world of equipment and equipmental affordances. Using Heidegger's distinctions, however, again becomes problematic, given his caveat regarding withdrawal. Since the traffic light of the final line presents two alternative affordances—wait or walk—there is a sense in which the traffic light necessarily cannot "withdraw," since to use it as equipment ready-to-hand one must bring its properties—its *lightness*—to the fore. Moreover, in using it further as a metaphor, with a *for-the-sake-of-which* of writing a poem, O'Hara uses the light as equipment, while bringing its properties (the fact it was "against the light") to the *foreground*, rather than letting them recede into the background.

There are thus two levels—the level of reality, where O'Hara is actually crossing a street, and, later, the level of the poem—in which O'Hara demonstrates that, contrary to Heidegger's claim, properties needn't withdraw in order for things in the world to function as equipment, particularly when it comes to the creation of art. We should not say, as Heidegger does in *Being and Time*, that in order to use equipment authentically it necessarily withdraws into the background. Rather, there is a way of using the external environment, which I am calling the environment-at-hand, which crystallises in poetry the affordances that the environment

provides. In this way we can, and should, use O'Hara (and other poets that utilise such strategies) to correct our ontologies.

### Some possible objections

One possible objection that Heidegger may raise is a stipulation that he makes that equipment, in order to be equipment, has to be in a totality of supporting objects that serve as a scaffolding. One can use a hammer to open a paint tin, to borrow Dreyfus' example,<sup>47</sup> but since it is not *for* that purpose (and does not have supporting conceptual structures), it is not functioning *as* equipment when being used for that purpose. In the same way, one can use a window *for-the-sake-of* writing a poem, but that does not, Heidegger may suggest, make it equipment. In order for it to function as equipment it must "belong to a totality,"<sup>48</sup> just as in order for the hammer to function as a hammer it must exist within a framework of other objects: nails, wood, buildings and so forth. If this is so, the window, the street, the objects discussed so far are not even equipment, so the issue of withdrawal is not an issue in the first place.

It could be argued, however, that such a totality does exist—that poets do have a totality of equipment, broadly defined, that constitute the objects that they write "with." For the sake of argument, however, let us suppose that such a totality does not exist, and that Heidegger's "totality" caveat is a reasonable rejection of our placing the environment-at-hand in the ontological realm of equipment. Doing so, it should be clear, would merely take us back to square one, left wondering the status of objects-for-art in Heidegger's ontology. If we accept the ontological divisions outlined at the outset of this paper (substances; equipment; Dasein), we need to seriously consider where objects used *for the sake of art* fit within this ontology. I suggest that, firstly, they must be considered equipment and that, secondly (and accordingly), we must reject that equipment necessarily withdraws when we use it authentically.

Heidegger argues that the peculiar role of the artist is to draw attention to the fact we are always-already engaged in a meaningful world. However, he does not then *re-import* the artist's creative use of the environment into the ontological schema constructed in *Being and Time*, so it is left sitting half-outside his ontological framework.<sup>49</sup> If one uses the environment-at-hand as artistic affordances in the world *for-the-sake-of* art, it seems to me that our best option is to concede that one is using equipment. Since that equipment is both ready-to-hand and also not withdrawing (but rather having its emotional resonances brought to the fore), it seems we must revise Heidegger's early schema to include a category that allows such appropriation of the environment. In keeping with Heidegger's terminology, and in lieu of a more pertinent term, environment-at-hand seems to me as good as any.

It is important to note that in later works, particularly *Existence and Being* (1949), *The Origin of the Work of Art* (1950), *The Question Concerning Technology* (1954) and *Discourse on Thinking* (1959), Heidegger will expand and revise his earlier phenomenological thought, in ways that supersede much of what I have outlined here. Language will come to have a central position, and poetry in particular as that which safeguards the nature of Being (more of this will be considered shortly). Moreover, Heidegger comes to think of the environment as used for poetic appropriation in terms of technology, and objects in the world in this sense as *Bestand*—"standing-reserve"<sup>50</sup>—warning that imposing our use on the environment (enframing; *Gestell*)<sup>51</sup> is antithetical to authentic artistic creation (that kind of art, as *poiesis*,

that he sees as enacting the strife between earth and world).<sup>52</sup> Accordingly, he jettisons much of his early terminology, no longer writing in terms of “equipment” in favour of a richer, more nuanced and more complex approach.<sup>53</sup> The objection could be made, then, that it is unfair to critique early Heidegger without reference to later works in which he himself offered such corrections, though in different terms. But there are reasons to avoid merely “shifting” from the framework of *Being and Time* to later texts.

Heidegger laments in *On the Way to Language* (1959) that “the fundamental flaw of *Being and Time* is perhaps that I ventured forth too far too early.”<sup>54</sup> Indeed, there are important holes in *Being and Time* that require patching. Yet there is profound ontological insight and lucid terminology worth saving, particular for our discourses on poetic thought. The term environment-at-hand (and its grounding in affordance) is a step toward correcting early Heidegger with insights from his later texts but, more importantly, with insights that are performed poetically in O’Hara’s great work.

Having seen how O’Hara can revise our understanding of (early) Heidegger, I can now progress to the final poem for consideration here, and a consideration of how (particularly later) Heidegger can aid our understanding of the nature of poetry.

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### Heroic Sculpture<sup>55</sup>

We join the animals  
not when we fuck  
or shit  
not when tear falls  
  
but when  
staring into light  
we think

Written in 1958, *Heroic Sculpture* in scarcely more than twenty words manages to evoke themes of art, death, morality and epistemology. The “heroic sculpture” of the title and the final line is, I will argue, *The Thinker* (1901) by Auguste Rodin, whose work O’Hara greatly admired (Heikki Kujansivu calls Rodin and Cézanne the two “major thinkers influencing his thing poems,”<sup>56</sup> while the Museum of Modern Art archives feature a photo of O’Hara posing alongside—and playfully imitating—Rodin’s *St. John the Baptist Preaching* (1880) in the museum’s garden).<sup>57</sup>

At face value, the premise of the poem is that we find our strongest connection with animals not in our mutual capacity for basic, mechanistic actions, but our mutual capacity for inward, introspective contemplation. In this respect the poem can, quite plausibly, be read as a statement on animal rights. Alternatively, it is quite possible to read the last line of the poem as something of an addendum, so that we join the animals when staring into the light [or so] we think. On this reading “staring into the light” could symbolise death, and the poem could be foregrounding mortality as unifying universal (this is certainly the reading that Bob Perelman and Micah Mattix have taken, Perelman even imagining that “O’Hara inserted a thin pause ‘... we think.”)<sup>58</sup> Or, even further, we could take the poem’s title to refer to heroic nudity, that tradition of sculpture that depicts the mortal man as a divine being, and the poem then as undermining the elevation of man beyond corporeal bounds. These are plausible readings, yet I believe the poem is, or at least should be read



as, far deeper than this. This can be seen through a brief detour to consider more closely a possible reference to Rodin's artwork.

Rodin's *The Thinker* was originally conceived as a representation of Dante, the archetypal poet, staring into and contemplating his work *The Divine Comedy* (1472).<sup>59</sup> The official website of Rodin Museum explains:

*The Thinker* was originally entitled *The Poet*. He represented Dante, author of *The Divine Comedy* which had inspired The Gates, leaning forward to observe the Circles of Hell, while meditating on his work.<sup>60</sup>

For O'Hara, this may be what makes the sculpture "heroic": that it shows us that we are at our most primal not in our base bodily actions, and not *just* (as Descartes might have it) when we think. Rather, our most fundamental nature is revealed when, like Dante, we create and contemplate art: "when staring into the light / we think." The emphasis here is thus on "when staring into the light" rather than "we think." But what does it mean to "join the animals"? It cannot mean to find a connection with animals, since all shared ways in which humans and non-human animals behave (including even displaying emotion) are rejected. Rather, "joining the animals" means to find connection with our most defining acts, with that which expresses the nature of our being. An animal defines itself *as animal* when it "fucks," "shits" and displays emotion. But our mode of being, and O'Hara's identity as poet, are defined via the act of artistic creation. In the act of creating and contemplating art [staring into the light] the thinker/poet "joins the animals," in the sense of doing *that which (re)defines their essence*.

Accordingly, "Heroic Sculpture" enacts its own meaning, since O'Hara, in staring into "the light" of the poem (which stares into Rodin, which stares into Dante) metaphorically joins the primal level of artistic expression. The sculpture is "heroic" because it reveals that the very act of creative contemplation—of thinking through art—is precisely that which defines us *as us*; it serves as a mirror through which we can apprehend the transcendent nature of our experiences of art. Yet, while the sculpture itself reflects the nature of our being, it is only by appropriating the artwork, as object, *through the poem* that O'Hara is able to define his nature as poet. Though the sculpture itself can instantiate the tension between what Heidegger calls "earth" and "world," it must be employed as environment-at-hand in order to not only reflect but enact the nature of Dasein. Only then (and only through language) can poetry "establish" being. As Heidegger writes in "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry" (1949):

Being is never an existent. But, because being and essence of things can never be calculated and derived from what is present, they must be freely created, laid down and given. Such a free act of giving is establishment.<sup>61</sup>

Since being and essence cannot be derived from what is present, the act of writing "Heroic Sculpture" becomes the means for O'Hara's establishment of being. Far from having the salient properties of the sculpture withdraw, then, O'Hara utilises the sculpture (as environment-at-hand) to bring to the foreground the tension between earth and world that the sculpture instantiates. To clarify this further, it is necessary to return to Heidegger.

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Heidegger, in "The Origins of the Work of Art" and elsewhere contends that art, and particularly poetry, does have a special place in human experience. For Heidegger art, and



particularly great art, allows us to apprehend the ontological tension between “earth” and “world”; that is, between the physical world as it presents itself to us and the worlds that open up in contexts of use, meaning and understanding.<sup>62</sup> Heidegger discusses at some length the philosophical import of Van Gogh’s painting *A Pair of Shoes* (1886), and its capacity to elicit a phenomenological apprehension of our engaged ways of being.

The painting depicts a peasant worker’s shoes, tattered and worn from years of work in the field. Their owner is not depicted explicitly, but retains an implicit place in the painting, since the shoes suggest the worker’s ethic, their poverty, their *being elsewhere*, and hence their background absence is paradoxically foregrounded as a kind of presence.<sup>63</sup> As Heidegger writes, “... from out of the dark opening of the worn insides of the shoes the toilsome tread of the worker stares forth. ... The shoes vibrate with the silent call of the earth ...”<sup>64</sup>

In *A Pair of Shoes* there is accordingly an inherent and irreconcilable tension between the foreground and the background. The foreground (the shoes) draw out the background of meaning and engaged use—and as we engage with the work and bring this background to the fore, we apprehend our own meaning-making engagement through the work, sending the foreground effectively into the background. The painting thus encapsulates the tension between earth and world into which we are always-already thrown in our day to day meaning-making activities within the world.

This is one of the key reasons why, for Heidegger, the subject/object dichotomy of aesthetics fails to capture what is most crucial about our ways of experiencing the world, and in particular of experiencing art. The power and ontological import of art is that it allows us to move beyond a conception of objects in the world as inert matter that we subject to our experience, domination and control, and of artworks as treasure chests of meaning that we unpack, or containers that we fill with our ideas.

The phenomenological study of art reveals the tension between earth and world that underlies all creativity, not just of art but of meaning within the world. Iain D. Thomson puts this point most eloquently:

Our phenomenological encounter with Van Gogh’s painting shows us that its meaning is neither located entirely in the object standing over against us nor simply projected by our subjectivity onto an inherently meaningless work; instead, the work’s meaning must be inconspicuously accomplished in our own implicitly dynamic engagement with the work. Through our engagement with Van Gogh’s painting, Heidegger thus suggests, we can lucidly encounter the very process by which we are always-already making sense of our worlds.<sup>65</sup>

Similarly, when O’Hara collapses the subject/object distinction in *Interior (With Jane)*, when he crystallises environmental affordances in *Walking to Work*, and when he shows us that art is what defines us at our most basic and primitive levels in *Heroic Sculpture*, he should be understood as achieving poetically what, for Heidegger, Van Gogh achieved in paint. O’Hara’s is a poetics that at the very least lends itself to a Heideggerian, phenomenological interpretation. It is a poetics through which we might revise our understanding of Heidegger’s work in *Being and Time* (via the concept of the environment-at-hand), and it poignantly gets at a fundamental truth about reality—about what it means to live in a world of engaged use.

What, then, of poetic thought?

John Wilkinson acknowledges the limitations of the aesthetic approach that I have criticised in this paper, writing “to admire a poem as an object reduces its energy, situating reader and poem in a space already symbolic, rather than engaging them in creating meaning?”<sup>66</sup> Similarly, Simon Jarvis has in several illuminating papers urged against seeing poems as “‘texts’, containers for propositional intentions, or ‘marks’, sheer stuff.”<sup>67</sup> One alternative is to see the poem as a dynamic process of creation—what Jarvis calls a “cognitive artefact.” On this view, the poem is an experience, and everything the poet “cares” about, according to Jarvis, can be brought to bear on the intricacies of that experience.<sup>68</sup>

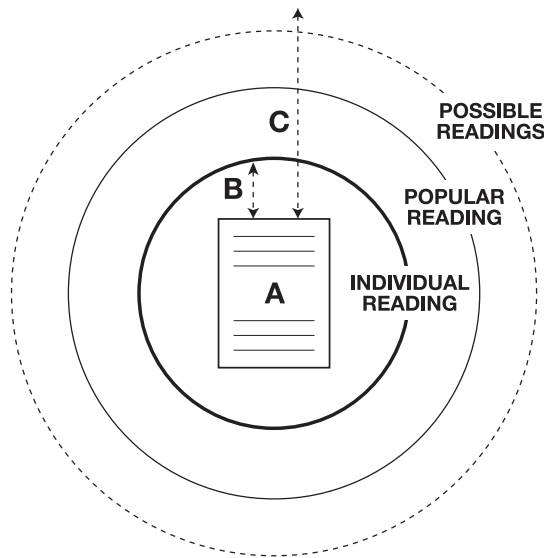
One problem with regarding the poem as a process, an experience rather than an entity, however, is that it begins to look precisely like the aesthetics we are trying to avoid, particularly if we construe that experience as a process of merely subjectivising an “objective” text. What we need is a way of accounting for both the experiential nature of the poem *and* the link between the experience of the poem and the subjectivity that (re)establishes itself through and reflects itself in that experience.

This is exactly what Heideggerian phenomenology affords—it explains not only the processes by which the poem comes into being, but how being is realised and reflected in and through that creative process, and the subsequent experience of the poem by a reader. In the writing of the poem, via the environment-at-hand, O’Hara becomes the poet, while in the creative process of reading the poem we engage self-reflexively with our mode of being as engaged meaning-makers within the world. The poem must accordingly be understood as an event of thought—a thinking-into-being of Dasein’s self-reflexivity.

There is, however, a problem with pushing the point too far. If we wish to maintain that you and I have been examining the same poems in this paper, we cannot insist that the poem is *all* process or event, for the simple fact that every experience of a poem is necessarily unique. If we say “what all manifestations of O’Hara’s *Walking to Work* have in common is the words on the page,” we return to an aesthetics that misses the point of what the poem most importantly is and does. Yet if we say “it is all an experience” we lose the cohesion required to begin our discussion in the first place. And if we say “it is what all events of its reception hold in common” we attempt to reduce the irreducible—demarcating “the poem” arbitrarily around popular readings that are necessarily culturally and temporally contingent.

Accordingly, I think we have to settle for a dialectical definition of the poem that pulls in two directions at once. A poem has to be understood as a chimera that will always exist over and above any attempt to pin it down. As Adorno suggests, and as Jarvis reminds us, poetry has a “language-character,” an infinite possibility of meanings and referents that change, develop and dissolve over time and across cultures.<sup>69</sup> The poem is *both* the text and the cognitive event of its being read, as well as the infinite possibilities of its reception. It cannot be the sum total of these manifestations, as these are inexhaustible, so the poem itself necessarily expands and multiplies over time. Accordingly, the poem always resists its own walls, saying louder and louder, to rephrase Hegel,<sup>70</sup> more than what it means.

As a summary of what I have in mind, I like to visualise the poem roughly as follows (Figure 1):



**Figure 1.** The poem as entity, experience or dialectic possibility.

At (A) we have the text itself.<sup>71</sup> The “text as experience” model conceives of the poem as existing at (B). Yet the poem itself must be seen as existing in the tension between the text and all of its possible (and expanding) readings, which is to say at (C). *Poetic thought* (not the poem) is that which occurs between (A) and (B), as a combination of text and experience.

Through “What Does Art Know?” Simon Jarvis has pushed so far as to claim that art, through thinking through technique, can *know*.<sup>72</sup> He writes of poets forming “a new way altogether of thinking in verse: a new verse sentence, above all, in whose syntax, lexicon, punctuation, rhythms, tunes, pauses, echoes and clicks thoughts previously unimaginable may be called up.”<sup>73</sup> Here Jarvis is speaking of original poetic thoughts, where I am arguing (following Heidegger) that poetic thinking—at least one aspect of it—gets to something deeper. What we are getting at here is something more fundamental: something that poetry knows and reveals about reality—about Truth per se. In this respect I agree with Jarvis that “works of art know something we do not”<sup>74</sup> (but can). Poetry knows, reflects and reveals the fact that we are inherently engaged meaning-makers, a fact (as Heidegger and other phenomenologists point out) that we neglected or forgot throughout much of our philosophical history. In this way poetry does not only show us new ways of looking at the world, which it surely does, but it can help us understand the nature of being itself.

## Notes

1. Hinton, *Understanding Context*, 60.
2. Jarvis, “Thinking in Verse.”
3. See Prynne, “Poetic Thought”; Wilkinson, “Repeatable Evanescence”; Jarvis, “Prosody as Cognition”; Jarvis, “Musical Thinking.”
4. Vendler, *Poets Thinking*, 2.
5. This is a slight redirection of Jarvis in “What Does Art Know,” Nuzzo in “What Are Poets For,” and particularly Gosetti-Ferencei in *Heidegger, Hölderlin, and the Subject of Poetic Language*.
6. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 99.

7. Heidegger, *Basic Writings*.
8. Heidegger, *Existence and Being*.
9. *Ibid.*, 295.
10. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 25.
11. Here I maintain the capitalisation of “Being” and “beings” in line with Macquarrie and Robinson’s translation, as I believe it a helpful shortcut to outlining Heidegger’s distinctions. In subsequent references I return to the common, lowercase rendering.
12. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 25.
13. Heidegger variously refers to these as “substances,” “objects” and “Things.”
14. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 96.
15. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, 64.
16. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 70.
17. Quilter, “Explicit as a Star.”
18. Chiasson, “Fast Company.”
19. Quilter, “Explicit as a Star.”
20. Gray, *Urban Pastoral*, 111.
21. O’Hara, *Collected Poems*, 55.
22. Smith, *Hyperscapes in the Poetry of Frank O’Hara*, 11.
23. *Ibid.*, 11.
24. Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 130.
25. Tsur, “The Poetic Function and Aesthetic Qualities,” 5.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
27. Smith, *Hyperscapes in the Poetry of Frank O’Hara*, p. 1.
28. Schwenger, *The Tears of Things*, p. 8.
29. Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, pp. 296–7.
30. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, p. 49.
31. *Ibid.*
32. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 107.
33. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, p. 48.
34. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, p. 191.
35. Joanna McGrenere, “Affordances: Clarifying and Evolving a Concept.”
36. Quoted in Tsur, “The Poetic Function and Aesthetic Qualities,” p. 5.
37. Dreyfus, Malpas, & Wrathall, *Essays in Honor of Hubert L. Dreyfus*, p. 317.
38. O’Hara *Collected Poems*, 126.
39. Winer, *On the Sunny Side of the Street*.
40. Quine, *On the Sunny Side of the Street* (Film). Columbia Pictures.
41. MoMA, Museum of Modern Art Official Website.
42. Smith, *Hyperscapes in the Poetry of Frank O’Hara*, 109.
43. *Ibid.*, 112.
44. Smith, *Hyperscapes in the Poetry of Frank O’Hara*, 112.
45. Steverson, *Oxford Dictionary of English*.
46. Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution.”
47. Dreyfus, *Podcast in Philosophy*, 185.
48. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 97.
49. We should remember here that *Being and Time* was supposed to comprise three divisions, and Heidegger may have intended to address this in the third, unwritten division.
50. Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 322.
51. *Ibid.*, 325.
52. *Ibid.*, 326.
53. An adequate consideration of such later works lies beyond the scope of the current paper.
54. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, 7.
55. O’Hara, *Collected Poems*, 311.
56. Kujansivu, “Returning Thirds,” 125.
57. McDarragh, “Frank O’Hara at MoMA.”

58. Mattix, *Frank O'Hara and the Poetics of Saying 'I'*, 138.
59. Dante, *The Divine Comedy*.
60. Rodin, "Musée Rodin Official Website."
61. Heidegger, *Existence and Being*, 305.
62. Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 141.
63. I am thinking here of Merleau-Ponty's insistence that there is an indeterminate being (ambiguity): "the being of the background, which is there in its absence." See Marshall, *A Guide to Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception*, 57.
64. Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 159.
65. Thomson, *Heidegger, Art and Postmodernity*, 98.
66. Wilkinson, "Repeatable Evanescence," 25.
67. Jarvis, "What Does Art Know?," 60.
68. Ibid.
69. Jarvis, "Prosody as Cognition," 103.
70. Hegel writes of how we can learn by experience that we "meant something other than we meant to mean." See Hegel and Baillie, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, 39.
71. Whether we want to include the ink, the typeface, the medium and so forth is a separate issue here.
72. Jarvis, "What Does Art Know?"
73. Jarvis, "Verse, Perversity, University," 102.
74. Jarvis, "What Does Art Know?"

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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