

particle poetics: a collider workshop

What is particle poetics?

Particle poetics is a term that blends *particle physics* (the study of matter and how subatomic particles interact) with *poetics* (the study of poetry as a literary art, an act of making and and of creation). See also: quantum poetics, quantum lyrics.

Poem or atom?

“ We should be wary of all descriptions that seek to reduce the [redacted] to a list of its effects; a [redacted] has a compositional integrity which cannot be addressed piecemeal. Any 'effect' that has emerged naturally from the compositional flux will also, to some degree, reflect [redacted]. We should instead encourage [redacted] to think of each salient element as a means through which the sense of the whole [redacted] can be experienced, much as every part of a broken hologram contains the complete image.

”

“ According to [redacted] the [redacted] was diffuse [redacted] like a cloud, and it oscillated like a wave trapped between the walls of a pool. But was that [redacted] a real phenomenon or merely a trick that allowed one to [redacted] from one moment to the next? Harder yet to understand was the fact that his equation showed not a single [redacted] for each [redacted] but an extraordinary variety of them, superimposed.... those multiple waves would be the first glimpse of something completely new, each a brief flash of a universe that was born when t [redacted] branching out to populate the infinite, like the jewels of Indra's net.

”

the particle-wave duality in poetics

Thinkers in the realm of quantum physics have taught us that the reality of nature at the smallest level (so far as we've discovered) seems fairly likely to be: **indeterminate** (particle vs. wave duality), **relational** (there is no preferred frame of reference), and **granular** (infinity is possible in mathematics only? TBD).

Scholars of particle poetics have brought to bear on their poetry and poetics the above ideas, using them to explore the "spacetime" of verse on the page (Catanzano) and various phenomena of the lyric genre (Armantrout, Albright, Lewis). While they have different goals, each has confirmed that poetry behaves in way that aren't as intuitive as we might think.

Daniel Albright & the Modernists

"The investigations of physicists into the nature of elementary particles gave strength to one class of poet: the poet-researcher, the poet-engineer, carefully and consciously following the inward path into the ultimate sources of artistic power" (Quantum Lyrics 18).

"The investigations of physicists into the phenomena of radiation gave strength to another class of poet: the poet-rhapsode, compulsive and convulsive, uttering irresistible words in a trance of inspiration" (Quantum Lyrics 19).

particle poetics

- emphasis on nouns
- cherishes specificity
- "a deliberate **tessellation** of tiny precious stones" (Albright)
- spends more time in realms of the personal/private
- privileges the poem

wave poetics

- emphasis on verbs
- cherishes abstraction*
- "**tends to abolish** boundaries" (Albright)
- spends more time investigating the universal
- privileges the manuscript or the poet's entire oeuvre

1. the nature of [poetry] [things]: indeterminate: translate a “particle” poem

“ In quantum physics, it is at the moment of the observation that an object being observed comes into existence. Before the subatomic particles of an object are observed, they exist as all possible configurations in a superposition of their quantum states. In quantum theory, the observer is not a static subject position, just as a reader is not a static subject position....Since what is observed is based on the position in space and time of the observer, or the reader, that which is being observed-- the particle or the text-- is not considered to have an independent existence. —Amy Catanzano, “The Reader as Quantum Observer,” *The Imaginary Present* ”

Attempt to use these “trots” to be the closest possible observer/reader:
translate a haiku by Japanese poet Yosa Buson

- 初雪の底を叩ば竹の月 (hatsuyuki no soko wo tatakeba take no tsuki)

Trot: “Hatsuyuki means first snow; soko is bottom; tataku is to beat; take is bamboo; tsuki is moon”

- 初雪の底を叩ば竹の月

Google Translate says: “The bamboo moon strikes the bottom of the first snow”

- hatsuyuki no soko wo tatakeba take no tsuki

Google Translate says: “When I hit the bottom of the first snow, I hear a bamboo pole”

- If parse the phrases according to the line break traditions followed by other translators into English,

Google Translate says: First snow /Hit the bottom / Bamboo