

"I am making a mappemunde":  
Prolegomena to the Study of Spatial Translations  
in *The Maximus Poems*

by

Jason Vernon Starnes

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Department of English

We accept this thesis as conforming  
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

December, 2003

## Library Authorization

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Jason V. Starnes

Name of Author (please print)

12/01/2004

Date (dd/mm/yyyy)

Title of Thesis: "I am making a mappemunde":  
Prolegomena to the Study of Spatial Translations in  
The Maximus Poems

Degree: Master of Arts

Year: 2004

Department of English

The University of British Columbia

Vancouver, BC Canada

Abstract:

Charles Olson's *The Maximus Poems* are discussed in terms of their spatial references to the specificity of Gloucester, Massachusetts. Embedded references to early nautical explorations (including those implicated in Homer's *Odyssey*) involve *Maximus* in a network of "spatial translations" which it manipulates through poetic revisioning of links between topography, myth, history, and typographic and cartographic representations.

Olson's innovative Projective Verse is coupled with his intense allegiance to Herodotean history, or "what you find out for yrself" as the poet explores and discovers the spatialized past of the port city he called home. Michel de Certeau's theories of *space* and *place* are deployed in explication of patterns of repetition which form *mises en abyme*, a fundamental figure that describes the scaling nature of Olson's historical and topographical explorations.

Moving through multiple visual perspectives, a link is ultimately established between the orienting dynamism of cartographic operations and the smaller-scale orientations of the individual body in space known as proprioception. In *Maximus*, individual movement makes *space* of static *place*, and self-similar patterns extending from the scale of the body to that of the universe are illuminated by the central *mise en abyme* of the map, within which the mapmaker is visible, producing that very map. Myths, the "spoken correlative" of actions, are processed and recreated by *Maximus* as it posits humans in a continuity of space- and self-exploration.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii.
Table of Contents.....	iii.
Intro.....	1
Section I. "Polis is / eyes".....	8
Section II. Juan de la Cosa's eyes.....	28
Section III. Olson's eyes.....	44
Outtro.....	60
Works Cited.....	74

## intro

Charles Olson's book *Call Me Ishmael*, a study of *Moby Dick*, began the development of a spatial poetics he pursued through *The Maximus Poems* for the remaining years of his life. When *Ishmael* was published in 1947, exactly twenty-three years remained. The very opening of *Ishmael* illuminates the germ of a poetics he attributed to Melville, but would eventually practice and refine himself:

I take SPACE to be the central fact to man born in America, from Folsom cave to now. (...) It is geography at bottom, a hell of wide land from the beginning. That made the first American story (Parkman's): exploration. (*Collected Prose*, 17)

I read *The Maximus Poems* as an extension and a product of Olson's profound sensitivity to spatial relations, exhibited first in *Ishmael*. While *Maximus* is immune to most generalizations, I take SPACE, both topographical and typographical, as *Maximus'* central fact. I deploy the multivalence of the phrase "spatial translations" to refer to the multiplicity of Olson's spatial operations: in one sense, the spaces of Gloucester are *translated* into poems—Olson's walks and researches among the particulars of his city can be shown as the direct impetus and organizing principle of many poems. In a related sense these movements are also *spatializing* translations: Olson's vectors through the areas of Gloucester actually produce the space he describes in a paradigm engaging navigational oscillation among the forms of map and tour. One more sense of *translation* covers the multiple scale and vector translations orchestrated in *Maximus*: the configuration of Gloucester as an island offshore of a larger island (and with smaller islands off its own shore) is one important example of scale translation through self-similarity, while the frequent juxtapositions of Gloucester with Mediterranean spaces such as Tyre are an example of vector

translation, wherein forms separated by distance are configured as congruent.

*The Maximus Poems* generates a pattern of orientation and measurement spanning scales from the bodily to the galactic as Olson, often in the form of Maximus, a prosopopoeia of historical exploration, describes, maps, and configures his surroundings. Maps and descriptions of spaces, of objects and people marking space, absolutely suffuse the three volumes of this epic. As topographical features of various magnitudes (from a depression in Olson's front yard to the shape of the Atlantic coastline) are rendered, or translated, onto the page, the land itself is concurrently transformed by the description and juxtaposition of perceived spaces into poetic patterns of homology and difference, harmony and dissonance. *Maximus* explores and develops modes of spatial translation through a mythographic historical practice implicating and orienting the poet's being in the geographical world and the historical continuum. The present study begins an exploration of the vast implications of Olson's spatial poesis, and is intended to survey representative forms in advance of further analysis, rather than provide any comprehensive prescription.<sup>1</sup>

*Maximus* is a poetic work of history, an archeological and anthropological analysis of the early stories of Gloucester's foundation. For Olson, historical traces are recorded by forms in space; he follows the model of historiography propounded by the ancient Herodotus, a method, he explains, that privileges the individual inquiry:

...Herodotus may have been conscious of a difference he was making when he did add the word 'history.' ... 'istorin in him appears to mean 'finding out for oneself,' instead of depending on hearsay. The word had already been used by the philosophers. But while they were looking for

---

<sup>1</sup> Robert von Hallberg's *The Scholar's Art* explains that forms of closure are necessarily contrary to the nature of Olson's work:

He felt that his poetry must engage the flux of reality. He believed—and found confirmation of this belief in Heraclitus and Whitehead—that reality is an unceasing process which undermines all static achievements. Hence, all preconceived forms, in fact all closure, is unfaithful to reality. Olson engaged this matter in moral terms: in order to fulfill its moral obligation, art must commit itself—no matter the painful uncertainty—to process, to open form. "The morality any of us is led to, if we stick it, is by tales, to reveal anew, the humanism that art is the morality of. And that it is only to be discovered in the medley of one's own event by driving that content toward a form unknown even to the maker in the making. In other words I don't know what I am up to! And must stay in that state in order to accomplish what I have to do." (72)

truth, Herodotus is looking for the evidence. (*Special View of History*, 20)

Olson's practice in Gloucester is consumed with the pursuit of this evidence, which begins to construct a complex of human *being*:

One could put it this way; history is the continuum which man is, and if a man does not live in the thought that he is a history, he is not capable of himself. (SVH, 28)

*Maximus* functions as an orientation of the poet, and of the poet's notion of the American being, within this historical continuum, a past Olson literally charts in space.

Research of the city is the initial impelling force of the poems; some are indistinguishable from research notes, the material trace of Olson's compulsive "finding out for oneself". Olson was testing objects, attending to the stories they offer: "by inquiry. The knowledge / so obtained ... & the written account / of one's inquiries (a sense / first traceable in Herodotus." (SVH, 19) Often resembling the notes of some detective, the works display this real-time quality of one in the midst of research, led on by successive revelations:

And what I write  
is stopping the battle,  
  
to get down, right in the midst of  
the deeds, to tell  
  
what this one did, how  
in the fray, he made this play, did grapple  
with that one, how  
his eye flashed (I.97-98)

As early as 1959 Olson expressed an interest in returning to Herodotean history. That year, Elaine Feinstein found herself the recipient of a letter from Olson explicating his view:

I am talking from a new 'double axis': the replacement of the Classical-representational by the *primitive-abstract* .... I mean of course not at all primitive in that stupid use of it as opposed to civilized. One means it now as 'primary,' as how one finds anything, pick it up as one does new – fresh/first.

(The Hopi say what goes on over there isn't happening here therefore it isn't the same: pure 'localism' of space-time, but such localism can now be called what you find out for yrself (*'istorin*)

keeps all accompanying circumstance. (reprinted in *New American Poetry*, 398-399)

This emphasis on the *localism* of "yrself" supports the radical subjectivity and perspectivism generated by the poem. Whereas his rival Thucydides excluded the oral histories from his investigations, finding them unreliable, Herodotus allowed myth into his historical investigations. As David Grene explains, the lack of a written record of the period Herodotus intended to chronicle was no barrier to the historian:

To this vast area of the past Herodotus had no key, or almost none, other than oral tradition; for there were few written records and, for such as existed, he almost certainly lacked the necessary languages to understand them. Probably most of his informants as to myths and folklore were either Greeks settled in Asia or native inhabitants, probably a considerable number, who spoke Greek. This oral tradition constituted for him the imaginative record of the past as it mattered to the present. (*Histories*, 2, trans. David Grene)

*Maximus'* mode of modern mythography has its roots in Herodotean practice. Olson not only adopts this method, but also makes frequent recourse to other historians the poet saw as Herodotean: Pausanias, Parkman, and Jane Harrison, among others, are important precursors of the inquiries Olson pursues in *Maximus*. "Herodotus goes around and finds out everything he can find out, and then he tells a story," said Olson at a 1963 reading in Vancouver. "It's one of the reasons why I trust him more than, say, Thucydides, who basically is reporting an event. ... Not too long ago, if you went to war you had a story" (*Muthologos* I: 3). War will always "produce Thucydidean literature," Olson holds, "[b]ut a good old-fashioned man like Herodotus, he just went to find out ... what was said about the thing" (I: 3).

The spatial patterns of *Maximus'* historical formulations are elucidated by Michel de Certeau's theories in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. De Certeau's theoretical models of space description, namely the space/place alternations discussed in "Walking in the City," supply a conceptual framework descriptive of *Maximus'* complex patterns of spatial poesis. These spatial patterns are explicated when viewed as a device of multi-scale self-orientation: the self, the subject, is related



to the city, the continent, and the universe.

Given the scaling nature of Olson's inquiry into spaces both large and small, the analogy of proprioception opens the spatial register of *Maximus* to exploration. One of the main conceptual problems dealt with by *Maximus* is the relationship of the human measurer to the space he measures: Olson's theory of proprioception in *Human Universe* is a scaled corollary of the larger orientations and explorations *Maximus* engages. Olson's definition of proprioception fastens on the recursion or feedback of the sense organs generating sensations:

the data of depth sensibility/the 'body' of us as  
object which spontaneously or of its own order  
produces experience of, 'depth' Viz  
SENSIBILITY WITHIN THE ORGANISM  
BY MOVEMENT OF ITS OWN TISSUES (181)

More specifically, proprioception is the sensibility of spatial orientation by movement.

If you've ever attempted to touch your nose with closed eyes, you have used proprioception.<sup>2</sup> The body "as object" produces the experience of its subjective being,

---

<sup>2</sup> This task is difficult when one's senses are impaired, (and thus is used as a test of sobriety,) but proprioception isn't any *one* of the senses. We don't have a sufficient category of this kind of perception among the 5 accepted senses of western humans: some theories hold that proprioception is the (a) sixth sense.

its existence as tissue.<sup>3</sup> *Maximus* engages spatial orientation by movement in a process analogous to proprioception: in the examples to follow, Olson's movements through Gloucester and its ruined, abandoned counterpart, Dogtown, generate space-patterns as these areas are explored, recorded, and compared with other spaces exhibiting topographical harmonies. This epic exploration of the poet's home-city, ultimately referred to as a "mappemunde," is simultaneously a meditation on his relationship to his local space. *Maximus'* valences are to the very large and the very small, the radically interior and the exterior at once. The fact that the Olson's spatial operations upon the forms of a small town are seen to produce a world map is emblematic of this scaling nature.

Each chapter to follow takes up a specific visual perspective. Section I analyzes the spatio-visual character of Polis, exploring the resonances of the titling assertion, "Polis is / eyes". Section II then adopts the perspective (what Olson calls the eye-view) of Juan de la Cosa, famed cartographer of Columbus's voyage to the new world, who (according to *Maximus*) made the first "mappemunde". This perspective is

<sup>3</sup> Merleau-Ponty's theory of the body's experience calls into question the Cartesian tradition that Olson would also jettison. This tradition defines the body as the sum of its parts with no interior, and the soul as a being wholly present to itself without distance. ...[W]e have the transparency of an object with no secret recesses, the transparency of a subject which is nothing but what it thinks it is. ... There are two senses, and two only, of the word 'exist': one exists as a thing or else one exists as a consciousness. (*Phenomenology*, 198)

And yet Merleau-Ponty's inquiries into the perceptual relationship of the body to its space open an alternative to this disappearance of the subject:

The experience of our own body, on the other hand, reveals to us an ambiguous mode of existing. If I try to think of it as a cluster of third person processes—'sight', 'motility', 'sexuality'—I observe that these 'functions' cannot be interrelated, and related to the external world, by causal connections, they are all obscurely drawn together and mutually implied in a unique drama. Therefore the body is not an object. For the same reason, my awareness of it is not a thought, that is to say, I cannot take it to pieces and reform it to make a clear idea. Its unity is always implicit and vague. ... Whether it is a question of another's body or my own, I have no means of knowing the human body other than that of living it, which means taking up on my own account the drama which is being played out in it, and losing myself in it. I am my body, at least wholly to the extent that I possess experience, and yet at the same time my body is as it were a 'natural' subject, a provisional sketch of my total being. Thus experience of one's own body runs counter to the reflective procedure which detaches subject and object from each other, and which gives us only the thought about the body, or the body as an idea, and not the experience of the body or the body in reality. (198-199)

compared to that of Pausanias, chronicler of ancient spaces using the form of the tour in contradistinction to representative visual maps. In the third and final section I examine *Maximus'* oscillations between de Certeau's descriptive devices of map and tour, which emulate the technology of cartography, navigation, and orientation. I'll demonstrate that Olson's movement through Gloucester, and the translations across other harmonic spaces "produces experience of 'depth'" in Gloucester, exploring its position in space, and in the historical continuum, and Olson's relationships to these registers.

# I.

## "polis is / eyes"

At 142 Prospect street in Gloucester, Massachusetts, a small wooden schooner is held aloft in the left arm of a statue of a Lady. Flanked by two towers atop Portygee Hill, Our Lady of Good Voyage stands sentinel over a panorama of Gloucester, the Harbor, and farther off, the Atlantic Ocean. Her raised hand blesses the local fishermen as they depart, and hails their return. With her back to the rest of the nation, the Lady commands a sweeping view of territory that is charted and translated by Olson's poetic practice. By invoking her as muse on page two of *The Maximus Poems*, Olson appeals to her as so many fishermen do: "the poem is a voyage," he said, "and I want a good voyage" (*Guide*, 11). Over the course of this odyssey, Olson returns repeatedly to the area occupied and surveyed by the Lady's statue.

Maximus' journey begins in defense of Gloucester, a small city originally established by 14 English men of the Dorchester fishing company in 1623. Olson began to learn and internalize the spaces of Gloucester as a child while his family spent summers in a cabin in its Stage Fort Park. This early experience no doubt planted seeds of the mythology Olson would construct around (and upon) Gloucester's space. As George Butterick explains the symbolic register of Gloucester in Olson's imagination, the significance of the place can be seen to outstretch the banality of its present identity:

What made Gloucester a model or source of possibility for Olson was that he conceived of it as actually an island in the Atlantic, separated from the mainland (and mainland culture) by the Annisquam River, a tidal estuary that connects Gloucester Harbor with Ipswich Bay in the north. Until the mid-sixties its regular population (not counting the summer influx) had remained the same for nearly seventy years. ... But what Olson was able to offer was an image of a city, a *polis*, a sacred *temenos*, in his words a "redeemable flower that will be a monstrosity forever, of not a city but City." He writes among his notes: "The interest is not in the local at all as such—any local; &

the choice of Gloucester is particular—that is the point of the interest, particularism itself: to reveal it, in all possible ways and force, against the 'loss' of value of the universal." (*Olson's Gloucester*, x.)

This originary space, early site of English settlement, represents something pure and untainted in the imagination of Olson, who referred to New England as a "newing land" (*Guide*, xxxii). This purity upheld against the corrupting, universalizing influence of the mainland, threatening incorporation, furnishes Olson with one of the primary spatial patterns of the epic.

Olson's own words, written in 1960 in application to the Guggenheim Foundation, describe the social design of the early *Maximus Poems*:

Quickly, the poem is a man 'Maximus' addressing a city 'Gloucester' to induce its people, himself among them, to see and take life in and be a scale of which they... are better examples than any outside of 'universal' reference; that the relevance lies in what is nearest, and most familiar, that the smallest or least can be lived in.... The whole intention of these poems in the earlier period was to address them as letters both to Mr. Ferrini (literally, I mean, in person) and by him to a whole social number of human beings which we really ultimately can call a city. (qtd. in *Guide*, 9)

With the exaltation of the "nearest, and most familiar," Olson is sharply focused on the value of the local. Gloucester is a seat of particularity for Olson, a unique space that was born of the unique actions of its settlers. Gloucester's site was the chosen port of the English Dorchester fishermen (who preceded even the famed pilgrim, Miles Standish), a detail that apparently inspires Olson's concept of that city as originary, navel-like, developing later into a homeomorphic omphalos.<sup>4</sup> But these originary qualities are under attack:

o tansy city, root city  
let them not make you  
as the nation is (l.11)

The origin, the *root city* of the nation is turned upon by the forces of capitalist greed,

<sup>4</sup> Clearly, Olson's interest in *Maximus* is Anglocentric, and the appearances of aboriginal people in the poems are seldom salutary. However, as Maximus recovers the perspectives of early settlers through journal entries, letters and town records, it is often possible to discern his view from those of the xenophobic settlers, whose dramatic narratives are played up to enhance the sense of mutual danger at the site of Anglo-Aboriginal contact. Olson's work is not proportionally concerned with equal treatment across cultures or genders: the narrow subjectivity of the poetic persona is not only frequently obvious, this perspectivism is an orchestrated motif in the work.

flourishing in the mainland and coursing back to choke the coastal birthplace of the (poet's imagined) nation.<sup>5</sup>

What Olson calls 'polis,' an ideal communal coherence of citizens, he finds assailed in Gloucester by the encroachment of capitalist greed from the rest of the nation. *Polis*, Greek for both the city and the concept of a city, retains both meanings in *Maximus*: Gloucester is conjured both as specific place, and symbolic space. The polis of Gloucester is eventually identified with an examination of spatial particulars that Olson will extend to the mytho-cartographic forms and contents of his poems, developing a geo-poesis which impels and shapes the epic. While Robert Creeley, the mentor-poet to whom *Maximus* is dedicated, has called Gloucester "the grounding element for all of Olson's material," (*Sel. Poems*) I argue that the city is more than the ground, more than elemental in the poem. Hugh Kenner's demonstration of patterned energies in *The Pound Era* is instructive in theorizing the city's function in *Maximus*. Among many examples, Kenner borrows that of a simple overhand knot in a length of rope:

Slide the knot along the rope: you are sliding rope through the knot. Slide through it, if you have them spliced in sequence, hemp rope, cotton rope, nylon rope. The knot is indifferent to these transactions. The knot is neither hemp nor cotton nor nylon: is not the rope. The knot is a *patterned integrity*. The rope renders it visible.

Imagine, next, the metabolic flow that passes through a man and is not the man: some hundred tons of solids, liquids and gases serving to render a single man corporeal during the seventy years he persists, a patterned integrity, a knot through which pass the swift strands of simultaneous ecological cycles, recycling transformations of solar energy. At any given moment the knotted materials weigh perhaps 160 pounds. (*Era*, 145-146)

These theories are inspired by Buckminster Fuller, genius inventor of the geodesic dome, but they resonate, as Kenner intuits, with the thinking of another genius, one of

---

<sup>5</sup> To specify, highliner fishing (see references to "Gorton's" in the poems) corrupted the once-simple form of fishing that fed the fisherman's family and a little more for commerce. Also, roads like route 128 were widened and bridged over once-serene riverside parks, sending roaring diesels overhead. Gloucester had begun to exist simply, and had begun the nation (again, in Olson's conception), but was now complicated and corrupted by capitalist "progress".

literary invention whom Charles Olson called "Master" (*Guide*, 125):

Now Ezra Pound (1914) on the poetic image: "a radiant node or cluster; ... what I can and must perforce, call a VORTEX, from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing." (146)

Gloucester is the principal "VORTEX," the radiant node of *Maximus*. It is the object, the container, and the lens of the poem's operations. People, the matter of civilization, shape the city; it shapes them in turn: people is the medium in which City propagates, and patterns form in their mass. "Like molecules of water in fountain or vortex, particulars of the pattern mutate; the pattern is stable, an enduring integrity, shaped by movement, shaping it." (*Era*, 147) The particulars of the City are inextricable from their form. One of Olson's guiding poetic principles, recorded in "Projective Verse," is extensible to patterns of civilization: "FORM IS NEVER MORE THAN AN EXTENSION OF CONTENT. (Or so it got phrased by one, R. Creeley, and it makes absolute sense to me..." (*Collected Prose*, 240) In Olson's poetics of the city, form and content are similarly interlaced; the people persist in a structure they know as the city, but their presence itself is the constituent stuff of that city. These patterned accretions of civilization are visible from a low earth orbit: cities found in any geographic area will tend to be organized around a body of water, where it is available, to replenish the drinking supply and transport or hide waste. Increase the magnification factor of a satellite's disembodied eye, and finer patterns emerge: concentrations of industry, matrices of residence ordered around places of worship. At further magnification, affluent versus depressed neighborhoods are visible. Sea-ports as old as Gloucester are organized in a visibly different way than the bedroom communities ringing Boston are: Gloucester's very organization is unique, and Olson, as Herodotean historian, builds a series of poems out of his examinations of the city's uniqueness:

that thing you're after  
may lie around the bend  
of the nest ...

Harmonic patterns in spatial forms are one of the dominant themes of Olson's epic.

Polis itself (both the material *city* and the *concept* of civilized organization) is the first such pattern established in *Maximus*. Polis is a "weave", (I.3) a network of interrelated objects such as that which forms the "nest", the city.

Encouraging the citizens to find "that which matters, that which insists, that which will last," (I.2) Maximus exhorts the people to *see*, and to be a scale or measure of the specific world they inhabit, one the speaker finds increasingly taken for granted and caught in systematized worsening, or *pejoracracy*, a term borrowed from Pound. Olson's polis, made of these attending, measuring citizens, is finally associated with the attuned senses, aware of and engaged with the material particulars of existence. While the early *Maximus* relates polis to the ears, ruling the distracting "musickracket" of commercialism, later poems render polis as overwhelmingly spatio-visual, and eyes become the privileged organ:

polis is / eyes (I.26)<sup>6</sup>

Eyes,  
& polis,  
fishermen,  
& poets  
or in every human head I've known is  
busy  
both:  
the attention, and  
the care [...] (I.28)

Polis is abstracted into the visual attention to one's surround, a special connection with immediate space. Polis is this personal, radically private view from each individual's perspective, which levels the people, making one perspective as important as another:

There are no hierarchies, no infinite, no such many as mass, there are only  
eyes in all heads,  
to be looked out of (I.29)

<sup>6</sup> "Poets have something wrong with their eyes. Later we come to be comfortable with them."  
—Barrett Watten (30, *American Tree*)



This great leveling of the horizontal eye-view is a motif that structures both large and small components of the work: straining against the "pejoracracy" he sees encroaching on Gloucester, the political gravity of his call to (specifically visual) attention is never far from the work's surface. Olson's definition of civilization may explain the preponderance on eyes in these early poems: "Civilization is freedom of action in three dimensions, and it depends upon man's delicately adjusted stereoscopic vision" ("Definitions by Undoings", 8). In *Maximus*, civilization is spatial freedom, and eyes exercise it. Those who refuse the freedom (and responsibility) of their private perspective, who refuse to appreciate the unique position of Gloucester as sea-side origin and unspoiled "newing-land", live in a torpor *Maximus* relates in notes of woe:

And a man slumped,  
attentionless,  
against pink shingles

o sea city) (l.2)

Olson applies Heraclitus' theory of the familiar and strange to the citizens of Gloucester: "Man is estranged from that with which he is most familiar." *Maximus* exhorts the citizenry to become reawakened to their space by seeing it as unfamiliar, and deploys one means of attaining this reawakening in the adoption of the imagined perspective of discoverers of the "new world".

In theorizing spatial attentions, Olson comes to define *polis* as the human form's relationship to its space; the human as basic unit of measure sets up a scale of relation in *Maximus*, related to Vitruvius' diagram of proportions which Olson sees as a gauge with dual function: "The classic proportional figure of man, bound by a circle, legs and arms spread to cut the circle into four arcs—a sudden geometric and annunciative man measurer and to be measured" ("Apollonius of Tyana," *Human Universe*, p. 26). The projective human, participant in a transfer of energy and acting as the means of

that energy's direction, appears frequently in the work:

The old charts  
are not so wrong  
which added Adam  
to the world's directions

which showed any of us  
the center of a circle  
our fingers  
and our toes describe (l.60)

Bodying forth his theorizations of human geometry, acting as "the center of a circle,"

Olson goes forth to measure spaces of Gloucester.

I measure my song,  
measure the sources of my song,  
measure me, measure  
my forces (l.44)

The people of Gloucester, as any people, are defined by their shared memory as much as their shared place. The city they form is a machine for organizing and recording their activity. "The great city is the best organ of memory man has yet created," Lewis Mumford asserts, even while it is also "the best agent for discrimination and comparative evaluation, not merely because it spreads out so many goods for choosing, but because it likewise creates minds of large range, capable of coping with them" (*City in History*, 562). The city creates capable minds, attuned to the wealth of particular, material evidence of the continuity of humans in *civilization*, which describes a level of organization. To the extent that every *thing*, every structure is the meeting point of actions,<sup>7</sup> the city is a repository of acts, an archive of transpirations.

But if the city propagates in the medium of massed humans, patterns them, the human has also patterned the city. Of course, in the sense humans built it. But what have they *built-in*? "In 1957," Butterick records, "shortly after Olson had returned to Gloucester after years of absence, he would identify the city as 'a form of mind.'" (*Guide*, 8) Six years earlier, Williams had written of *Paterson*: "I have no

---

<sup>7</sup> Olson first read Fenollosa June 1945 (*Reading*, 64)

recollection when it was that I first began thinking of writing a long poem upon the resemblance between the mind of modern man and a city" (*Paterson*, xiii). Again, a reflexivity of poetic implication patterns the city to its inhabitant: the city, made of minds, is subsequently described as a mind. *Maximus'* explorations of polis are simultaneously explorations of this public-private dialectic: the community of the public is made of private individuals.

The city as a machine, building patterns, is visible only in the emanations of its patterning force. The poem, another patterned integrity, has been described by Williams as a small (or large) machine made of words. Both are generative, and display, machine-like, the nature of their construction, *techne*, thereby expressing something of the mind of the maker of shapes.

one loves only form,  
and form only comes  
into existence when  
the thing is born

born of yourself, born  
of hay and cotton struts,  
of street-pickings, wharves, weeks  
you carry in, my bird (l.3)

In *Maximus*, the city's form, its algorithm of patterned accretion + entropy, is manifested in the poem through both linguistic and typographic registers. As in polis, where the accreting individuals form the *Gestalt* of the city, Olson's works effect paratactic additive sequences, bewilderingly allusive and apparently disconnected, but resolving into cohering themes and motifs. These paratactic associations deployed by the poems are spatially motivated as the poet's perambulations sequence the ideas. These spatial figures can thus elucidate the wealth of idiosyncratic data in the poem.

The poems contain material traces of real spaces such that they can be charted on a map, or found out for oneself.

Olson's spatial poesis in *Maximus* bears an important relationship to his earlier spatial practice on the smaller scale of the page. In his seminal essay "Projective Verse," Olson drafts a system for scoring the breath-rhythms of his poems, recording time data of pauses and tempo changes through the spatial disposition of text on the page:

It is the advantage of the typewriter that, due to its rigidity and its space precisions, it can, for a poet, indicate exactly the breath, the pauses, the suspensions even of syllables, the juxtapositions even of parts of phrases, which he intends. For the first time the poet has the stave and bar a musician has had. For the first time he can, without the convention of rime and meter, record the listening he has done to his own speech and by that one act indicate how he would want any reader, silently or otherwise, to voice his work. (*Collected Prose*, 245)

Olson envisions "the typewriter as the personal and instantaneous recorder of the poet's work." (*Collected Prose*, 246) The Projective field resulting from this process represents a complex of spatialized information, wherein spatial distribution is meaning-bearing through relative location and production of rhythm.

If a contemporary poet leaves a space as long as the phrase before it, he means that space to be held, by the breath, an equal length of time. If he suspends a word or syllable at the end of a line ... he means that time to pass that it takes the eye—that hair of time suspended—to pick up the next line. If he wishes a pause so light it hardly separates the words, yet does not want a comma—which is an interruption of the meaning rather than the sounding of the line—follow him when he uses a symbol the typewriter has ready to hand:

What does not change / is the will to change (*Collected Prose*, 245-46)

The projective field is a record of the poet's breathing,<sup>8</sup> and a guide to its repetition: a

---

<sup>8</sup> The forms on the page-space, beyond and before being records of compositional instants, are also records acting as the memorial trace, the *memory* of the poem, just as the forms in Gloucester's space, in an analogous way, constitute an organ of memory. These time-space relations are the ultimate focus of my current research, but the size-constraints of this project limit my current area of inquiry to the spatial patterns of *Maximus*.

stave and bar, a score.<sup>9</sup>

Olson's projective manifesto demands that one perception lead instantly to the next: years after the writing of "Projective Verse," the *Maximus* poems can be seen as a system of energies in patterned relationships. As aural patterns are disposed typographically, sound becomes object: the graphemic forms of *The Maximus Poems* are often "spatialized" according to what I term Olson's late-projective poetics. Typographic elements disposed in shapes evoke conceptual threads or distinct voices, and often emulate the iconic, representational form of maps. Olson's page *embodies* the ephemeral moment of oral/aural composition, as Kenner explains:

For all that it is shaped by breath, in typographic space the poem becomes an object, giving an unexpected twist to the formulae of the Objectivists. (The collage of the Cantos undergirds this principle also, open to prime Information, newspaper clippings, quotations. So does Williams' undertaking in *Paterson*, where we find guidebook excerpts and whole letters.) The achieved tranquility the Objectivists stressed is a tranquility proper to objects, things made, and such poems enter a world of things made, strange things, radial tires, lunar modules, combination locks, .... (*A Homemade World*, 180)

While the present field of inquiry is limited to three-dimensional space, I do consider ways that these spatial registers of *Maximus*, the three-dimensional and the typographic, are interrelated, especially as the typography takes on a cartographic character.

There can be no doubt that the typographic forms evoked in *Maximus* are the result of Olson's deliberate intention. The typographic forms are never random or haphazard: seventeen years after he wrote *Projective Verse*, Olson is still creating forms inextricable from content. In the Cape Goliard printer's proofs of *Maximus* Vol II,

<sup>9</sup> The rhyming forms of mnemonic necessity are outworn for Olson and his sometime mentor, Pound: "... he and I distinguish / between chanting, / and letting the song lie / in the thing itself." (l.82) "(as it was said to me in the dream [by the same master who instructed me throughout, & whom I celebrate—properly, I believe—as Grandfather] between chanting and letting the song lie in the thing itself and there canting off what the poem turns out to be." (*Guide*, 125)

For the ear, which once had the burden of memory to quicken it (rime & regular cadence were its aids and have merely lived on in print after the oral necessities were ended) can now again, that the poet has his means, be the threshold of projective verse. ("Projective Verse," *Coll. Prose*, 246)

The visual technology of the typewriter actually revivifies aural poesis for Olson.

Olson corrects the initial layouts of the printer with specific instructions regarding alignment. A "Note on typesetting," accompanies the proofs, dated December 4, 1967:

The problem here is the disparateness of the whole work: the book depends upon these kooked balances throughout.

Each poem needs to be set individually for itself on each page, irregularly though that may seem, and going against normal justifying.

I have in as many instances as possible included or had xerox'd my original mss. so that all space between words as well as between lines--as well as location on the page may be followed.

(Cape Goliard manuscript, underline in original)

Olson shows the original manuscripts so that the typesetting will reflect the spatial disposition materialized in the moment of composition. His sharp attentions correct the printer's first attempt on nearly every page of the proofs. At (II.51) we find the following reminder:

[Printer:  
Spacings here are  
most exact: lines,  
+ words]

(Cape Goliard manuscript, 50)

And, encouraging fidelity to the original cascading lines of "off-upland / only Ubaid" (II.116):

[Printer:  
Exact spacing to a 't' please!

While I focus in this study on works that deploy map-like features, many typographical forms in *Maximus* are more readily compared to terrain than to the cartographic, in that graphic shapes in the page-space demand interpretation, translation into registers of intellection. Often, multiple voices are synthesized, blocks of text aligned at tabular points along the page. Other forms are less readily decoded, but show the generative interplay of spaces linguistically and typographically evoked:

the Head of the Harbor, Gloucester  
at the place where Dutches Sloo drained in (II.144)

Maximus refers to a point in space (between Water and Pearce streets, Butterick offers,) where a slough empties into the head of the Harbor; on the page, two extra spaces separate "where" and "Dutches", as though to picture this opening in the coast, even as a pause is required by projective principles. The minute focus of his attention on spatial arrangement is evident in the note accompanying this typescript; Olson draws an arrow to this small feature, and assures, "Printer: space here is correct" (Cape Goliard manuscript, 144). Although this epic, years after "Projective Verse," shows an evolution of Olson's poetics, a form of mapping is still the dominant paradigm.<sup>10</sup> In *Maximus* three-dimensional space is charted in the method of ancient historians such as Pausanias and Champlain. As Olson explores Gloucester, tour-like descriptions orient the figure in space while map-like forms are also generated in the field of the page.

Throughout this Herodotean project of "finding out", the textual *material* of Olson's historical research is exhibited in *Maximus*: specific documents, recorded speeches and actions of historical figures, and the idiosyncrasy of place and spatialized experience make up the content of the works. The sheer concentration of place-names, locations, and compared geographic and geological histories creates a network of spatial forms, both local and distant, small and galactic, the interrelationships of which resolve many of the poems' details into patterns. Interpretive strategies attending to spatial relationships in *Maximus* reveal comparisons of Gloucester to ancient Corinth, for instance, and show its landmarks as

<sup>10</sup> The projective "stave and bar" is a paradigm that Olson may still have in mind in 1967 when the poet makes the following note on the Cape Goliard printer's proofs (held at SFU Special Collections) to the poem beginning "out over the land skope view..." (II.126):

This poem suffers so badly from the double of the Bembo [typeface]--plus no 'feeling' in the resetting proportionately, I can only beg you to go back to the original--the mss. is one of the carefulest 'graphics' in the book--like a Webern score-- and *please* do anything--everything you can to simply accomplish its equalization!

The ideas of proportion and equalization are abstract, and are rarely specified by Olson. This is to say, after Projective Verse the poet does not give us specific instructions as to how to read the graphic qualities of his verse.

homeomorphic with those on Odysseus' journey. In this way Olson's inquiries into the historical continuum effect a patterning of space.

*Maximus* projects and configures the evidence of time past as it is disposed in space, often rendering "pure" evidence, quotations, lists, catalogues, directly to the page. The poems are motivated by these objects, and generate poetic meaning by the juxtaposition, association and patterning of objects into forms. As Ford notes in a study of Olson's geography, the poet incorporates

the evidence of the thing itself into the poem. thus a poem might contain a topographical representation of a harbor or a homestead and settlement, or it might be a list of the very implements used to settle a particular place, just as the catalogues of a Greek epic may be the actual list of soldiers supplied by various communities. ("Olson and Sauer," *Boundary 2* 1975/76, p.148)

*Maximus* is made of fine details, "feather to feather added"(l.2), a welter of objects that spring to the eye and accrete in a weave, the way a nest is built: "the form / that which you make, what holds, which is / the law of object, strut after strut..." (l.4) The poem is an object born of many objects held in the mind at once. The "thing" is

born of yourself, born  
of hay and cotton struts,  
of street-pickings, wharves, weeds  
you carry in, my bird (l.3)

The poems are fragmentary and allusive: objects, quotations, historical traces, all are ranged in paratactic association, orchestrated in accretative units that create *Gestalt* patterns, like the nest:

(and what is mineral, what  
is curling hair, the string  
you carry in your nervous beak, these  
  
make bulk, these, in the end, are  
the sum (l.1)

Olson's typography is a "score," but more comparable to the score of a partially-



improvised jazz piece<sup>11</sup> : there may be a directive record on paper, but each performance, responding to the influence of the graphic article, may be as idiosyncratic<sup>12</sup> as the first energy transfer the score translates. Olson compared one poem in particular to a Webern score, and while the "graphic" is incredibly detailed, this information is not a self-evident syntax, but a nuanced register of data for interpretation. Variation in Olson's response to the printed (or manuscript) page as he reads does not mean that the page fails to record the "listening the poet has done".<sup>13</sup> Jazz compositions may arise from a score, but, as the product of semi-improvised practice, will never be replicated. Ed Dorn's response to the poetics indicates his view that *Maximus* is less about counting than connecting: "Anyway, it must be obvious, it is the matrix which interests me rather than the metrics" (*What I See*, 17). *Maximus'* fragmentary, dispersed nature is inextricable from the near-archeological quality of its research: records, like ancient objects, are found, but only in pieces. *Maximus'* only formula is paratactic juxtaposition of associated elements.<sup>14</sup> The poem generates

<sup>11</sup> In extant recordings of Olson reading his work, typographical forms are consistently responded to in oral performance, even if the exact pauses and breaths per line are somewhat freely interpreted with each reading. This is the basis of my analogy of Olson's typographical forms with terrain: they require/inspire a response, but this may be different with each rereading, just as a space is never traversed the same way twice.

<sup>12</sup> One's movement through a space is a response to an unsharable perspective on that space, and the movements are spatializations, as Michel de Certeau explains, a kind of inscription producing the space. Olson configures space in the linguistic register, juxtaposing, describing, ordering, but also arrays his spatialization in carefully arranged typographic shapes.

<sup>13</sup> "I take it that PROJECTIVE VERSE teaches, is, this lesson, that that verse will only do in which a poet manages to register both the acquisitions of his ear *and* the pressures of his breath."

<sup>14</sup> Eric Havelock's formulations of the Homeric ear, memory, and syntax as they relate to bodily action (*Preface to Plato*, pp. 168, ff), to which the poet was introduced early in *Maximus'* composition, offer valuable insight into Olson's poetics (Thanks to Peter Quartermain). The syntax of *Maximus* often deploys the characteristically oral structure of repetition with difference, as well as the linkage of scenes and objects through paratactic, additive sequence rather than cause and effect.

It is as though Olson knew men had lost the Homeric ear, but he saw the techne of the typewriter as conquering the need for rhyme, memory's crutch. Through technology Olson is returned to the possibilities of Homeric structure: the verse needn't rhyme, it is recorded, remembered by the machine. Olson accordingly redeploys the Homeric parataxis of associated elements, not necessarily linked by cause and effect. Only actions can be rendered to the oral record, as Havelock argues, because complex concepts are not reducible to the terms in which an oral culture could preserve its details. It is for this reason, Havelock explains, that Achilles's wrath is personified, acting out the tragedies that, in Homer's *Iliad*, were caused by a complex chain of events beyond the capacities of the oral record: the chain is elided, but its effect is preserved by the use of personification/prosopoeia.

relational meanings: much of *Maximus's* poesis inheres in the juxtaposition in which its objects are arrayed.

there is no other issue than  
the moment of  
the pleasure of  
this plum,  
  
these things  
which don't carry their end any further than  
their reality in  
themselves (l.42)

While the typographic shapes of the poems enforce notice of their spatial character, their relay of energy to the eye, Maximus exhorts Gloucester's citizens to examine their own spatial relations in the multiple dimensions of experienced reality in its dynamic nexus with the past: things, objects, are traces of the past persisting in time. Olson's attentions *are* the poem: orientations in and of space are the primary *generator* of the epic. Prospect Street, curving around Portygee hill, is often returned to, as though it holds some secret:

[...] Only the lady  
  
has got it straight. She looks  
as the best of my people look  
in one direction, her direction, they know  
it is elements men stand in the midst of ..." (l.6)

From her static nexus in space, the statue's gaze embodies, literalizes the crucial spatio-visual register of the poems. The Lady establishes a radiant force, static but all-seeing, and yet embodying the ontological mystery of where, universally speaking, we are. The figure gazing into the plane of the sea, on land but fixated off-shore is a recurrent icon; elsewhere Maximus stares likewise: "It is undone business / I speak of, this morning, / with the sea / stretching out / from my feet". (l.53)

Maximus' pervasive and minute spatial attentions are exemplified as he moves through specific spaces of Gloucester:

the light, there, at the corner (because of the big elm  
and the reflecting houses) winter or summer stays  
as it was when they lived there, in the house the street cuts off  
as though it were a fault,  
the side's so sheer

they hid, or tried to hide, the fact the cargo their ships brought back  
was black (the Library, too, possibly so founded). The point is  
the light does go one way toward the post office,  
and quite another way down to Main Street. Nor is that all:

coming from the sea, up Middle, it is more white, very white  
as it passes the grey of the Unitarian church. But at Pleasant Street,  
it is abruptly  
black

(hidden  
city

(I.5)

The countless idiosyncrasies of Olson's spatial moves and descriptions often send a reader to Butterick's *Guide* for explanation of oblique references, where we find the exact address of the "house the street cuts off": 90 Middle Street, at the corner of Middle & Dale. "At Pleasant Street," Olson is charting the quality of light in relation to a historical note: "it is abruptly / black" because he has reached the site of a building which used to house African slaves, a blot in the historical space of Gloucester. (*Guide*, 17) Years later, in *Maximus* Volume II the same roads are still being paced out, the Lady and the white house on Middle street again ordering the poem through their perceived interactions with light. Olson's perambulations through the shapes of the city *make space*:

I'm looking  
at how the Virgin  
does dominate  
her Hill and place  
between the Two Towns

From the East to North fall  
of Main, at Water, right angle  
Paul Oakley, directly down Main she  
in the same direction & picking up the same light

as 90 Middle, the gambrel  
which is sliced off

(II.181)

The Lady, staring into the unbroken line of the sea, her back to the mainland, is a reminder of Gloucester's insularity, surrounded by remnants of elemental chaos in the ragged contention of land and sea. Those who look in her direction see something of the human condition: "it is elements men stand in the midst of." Individuals are island-like.

The spatial form of the island is perhaps the most insistent pattern established by the early poems, and will persist through even the last Maximus poems. The insular is independent, an autonomous unit against its surround, yet threatened with digestion, incorporation by a larger corpus, in this case the nation. The human individual becomes symbolized as insular, just as Gloucester is imagined, and a dichotomy of island versus mainland oscillates as it is complicated by a shift in scale. The island is a scaling device *par excellence*: "(the island of this city / is a mainland now of who?" The city is at once an island on a mainland's periphery and a mainland itself, hosting other islands in its space: "Isolated person in Gloucester, Massachusetts, I, Maximus, address you / you islands / of men and girls." (l.12) This pattern is a generator of patterned self-similarity— a continent, a city, a citizen: these are all islands. Just as the collective is found in the individual above, a mainland persists in the character of every island, just as any mainland, any continent, is perforce an island itself, at a higher magnitude. Spaces patterned: the island, on the coast of the mainland, is itself a mainland at a smaller scale: off its coast, "Ten Pound Island," a landmark frequently referenced in *Maximus*, extends the pattern. Each iteration is diminished, like the infinity of regressing shapes seen in two opposed mirrors. An island/city is a scaled iteration of a mainland/continent. Its participation in the patterned integrity of forms is a result of its self-similarity: scale change results in no qualitative difference in the form, so it resonates at multiple scales. There will be

larger and smaller iterations of the original, which is only an arbitrary starting point.<sup>15</sup>

And islands live upon the island:

you islands/ of men and girls (l.12)

Maximus addresses "Newfoundlanders, / Sicilianos, / Isolatos," (l.12) the last name a borrowing from Melville: "Isolatoos' too, I call such, not acknowledging the common continent of men, but each Isolato living on a separate continent of his own." (*Moby-Dick*, I, 149; qtd. in *Guide*, 26) This insular group, addressed by *Maximus*, attains a heroic status in their isolation. Polis, as a network of private perspectives, arrays the individual in commune: deploying the perspectivism of one with polis in his eye, Maximus attends to the pattern made of all those individuals arrayed in networked perception. The city/center is made of centers, each circumscribed by the arc their limbs make.

The pattern of polis in Gloucester is then patterned to other emanations of polis, other sea cities through time which Maximus configures as homeomorphic to his town. Gloucester, in turn, is one emanation of the *sea-port* pattern seen in an array of sea-cities that appear to the eye perusing *Maximus*: Marseilles, Venice, Corsica, Corinth, Cyprus, Malta, Tyre... all port cities, centers of trade, hubs of exploration. Polis is eyes, I's, islands. This recurring insular pattern involves the poems' namesake: Maximus of Tyre is the little-known second century A.D. Greek eclectic philosopher, a neo-Platonist whom Olson had encountered by chance while researching Sappho. The real Maximus' writings are probably irrelevant to the poems that bear his name; at a reading in 1962, Olson would remark: "I've tried to read his *Dialethi* and found them not as interesting as I expected." (qtd. in *Guide*, 5-7)

While it has been suggested that Olson lit on the name Maximus because the

---

<sup>15</sup> This poetic of self-similarity might be described today as fractal. Quartermain has noted a similar iterative scaling in the *Cantos*. Pound didn't have access to the word 'fractal' or its attending theory (which is only approximately twenty years old,) but Kenner has also noted scaling harmonies in Pound's poetics. (*Era*, 149)

word connotes the bulk of the giant poet, he proceeds to find significance in the Tyrian connection. For Olson, Tyre represented 'the last hold-out against Alexander the Great's expansionist conquests.<sup>16</sup> When Olson found that Tyre was originally an island which only fell when bridged from the mainland, a kind of harmony appeared. The analogies between Tyre and Gloucester exist primarily on this spatial plane. The two have insularity in common, and in Olson's imagination, both were under siege from the mainland. The threat of re-incorporation by the mainland is faced by both insular entities. Maximus explicitly compares the two cities' position as the mole used by Alexander to finally conquer the city is transposed to Massachusetts, and Gloucester is exchanged for its sister seaport:

128 a mole  
to get at Tyre (ll. 80)

Completed in 1959 as Olson composed his first Maximus poems, the A. Piatt Andrew Memorial Bridge arches Route 128 over the Annisquam River and into Gloucester, bringing traffic, corruption, pejoracracy from Boston. (*Guide*, 232-33) These spatial symmetries are set up in homeomorphic spaces, but of course these avail themselves only to the constituents of Olson's polis, those with an eye for detail, an attention to the spatial patterns effected and fulfilled by their own location.

A larger pattern of human movement is also bound into the unique particularity of Gloucester's space for Olson:

why I chose to use Maximus of Tyre as the figure of speech, figure of the speech, is that I regard Gloucester as the final movement of the earth's people, the great migratory thing ... migration ended in Gloucester. The migratory act of man ended in Gloucester ... the motion of man upon the earth has a line, an oblique, northwest-tending line, and Gloucester was the last shore in that

<sup>16</sup> Carroll F. Terrell notes the recurring appearances of the same Alexander (356-323B.C.), king of Macedon, in Canto 85, (line)88: "His act of largesse to his troops becomes a recurrent musical figure in the later cantos. Pound believes the fall of the Macedonian empire was as great a loss to Western civilization as was the later fall of Rome. Dante placed him among the world's foremost bestowers of largesse, which contrasts him with Bertrams de Born." (*A Companion to the Cantos of Ezra Pound*, p. 472)

Given the complex relation of Olson to his erstwhile mentor Pound, it is interesting that Olson sees Alexander the Great as an evil, a proponent of universalization of the world, and fights to save Gloucester, as it were, from him and the invasion of the 128 bridge.

sense. [...] And I of course use it as a bridge to Venice and back from Venice to Tyre, because of the departure from the old static land mass of man which was the ice, cave, Pleistocene man and early agricultural man, until he got moving, until he got towns. So that the last polis or city is Gloucester. (*Muthologos*, II, 161-62)

For Olson, Gloucester is implicated in a migrational space-pattern of large spatial and historical scale: the poet sees the city as the terminus of a line through space; it ends a continuum of aggregate movement of Europeans, a *translation* that *Maximus* traces from the conscribed world of the Mediterranean, through the Strait of Gibraltar and west to the "last shore" of the Atlantic coast. As *Maximus* reaches back through time, the poems manifest Olson's earlier gesture toward the "primary" perspective he mentions in the Feinstein letter: seeking the origins of Gloucester, he begins to recover and imagine the perspective of the European explorers who "found" the New World, whose outward drives (largely left unspoken by the poems) bring them finally from ignorance of the "new land" into enlightenment.

In the next chapter *Maximus* attends to these states of ignorance and discovery as they are bodied forth in maps. From the examination of Gloucester's polis, figured as spatio-visual interaction, *Maximus* translates to an older pair of eyes, one that saw the rays of exploration reach the "primary view" of land previously absent from his world-view, beyond the ordering gaze of cartographers.

## II.

### Juan de la Cosa's Eyes

Off-shore, by islands hidden in the blood  
jewels & miracles, I, Maximus  
a metal hot from boiling water, tell you  
what is a lance, who obeys the figures of  
the present dance (I.1)

The first line of *Maximus'* opening poem establishes a location: "Off-shore" is the aspect of the ancient seafarers, explorers, and fishermen bound into the universe of Olson's epic.<sup>17</sup> *Maximus* sustains the investigation into earth/ocean dynamism Olson began with *Ishmael*: the words "Off-shore" begin an epic fugue of navigation, discovery and cartography, an orchestration of archeological details that disposes forms and forces according to a mythologizing process which is inherently spatial.

Just as the projective line suggests idiosyncrasies of intonation and rhythm, a terrain to be moved through, the terrain of Gloucester itself (as any terrain) guides movements, dictates perambulation: one moves through space, as well as one can, and no movement through space will ever be replicated. Maximus's explorations in space are increasingly aligned with historical concerns, as the polis he begins by mourning the loss of is traced back in time to the English settlement of Gloucester, and concomitantly traced to specific points in his local space that locate this history.

Sometime in September 1948, about two years prior to the first *Maximus* poem, Olson wrote the following, apparently as notes for his first lectures at Black Mountain:

Space is the mark of new history, and the measure of work now afoot is the depth of the perception of space, both as space informs objects and as it contains, in antithesis to time, secrets

<sup>17</sup> The excursion is a model exhibited by many epic poems. The Cantos begin with going down to shore, to the waiting ship, then a voyage: "And then went down to the ship, / Set keel to breakers, forth on the godly sea" .... Many resonances are discernible in *Maximus* to the work of Olson's mentor.



of a humanitas eased out of contemporary narrows."

(A treatise on dimensions, springing out of non-Euclidean geometry, would be as contributory to art now as Piero della Francesca's treatise on perspective was in the 15th century, out of Euclid. ... A creative man's researches and formulations would add moral purpose to the design.) ("Man is Prospective", 2)

"Space informs objects and ... contains ... secrets": Olson urges an attention to space through history which can be seen specifically deployed in *Maximus*. In Olson's work space and time are often interconnected as at a navel: he explores the durational qualities of objects in space, giving static objects a chronological dimension.<sup>18</sup> Orienting perspectives on space through history are arrayed in the poems I'll discuss in this section: while the first main example involves the production of a map, the second manifests a descriptive tour.

The description and orientation of *periplum*, a word Pound deploys repeatedly in the *Cantos*,<sup>19</sup> is a crucial facet of *Maximus*' geopoesis. The *OED* defines *periplus* as both "the action of sailing round, circumnavigation; a voyage (or journey) round a coast-line, etc.; a circuit,"<sup>20</sup> and "a narrative of such a voyage." The journey and the story of that journey are both subsumed by *periplum*. Note Pound's definition from the *Cantos*: "Periplum, not as land looks on a map / but as sea bord seen by men sailing." (*Cantos* lix. 83 [p.324], qtd in *OED*) That Olson's old master defines the view of *periplum* in opposition to the map-view is of special significance: from its opening position, "off-shore," *periplum* is aligned with the landscape view, in opposition to the map-aspect on terrain. Olson's spatial practice generates an alternation among these views.

<sup>18</sup> Given its wealth of spatial inquiry, one can't help but speculate whether *Maximus* was conceived to answer the demand for a "treatise on dimensions".

<sup>19</sup> Pound: "the great periplum brings in the stars to our shore." (*Cantos*, 445) This is a large-scale sailing round of the stars, perhaps.

<sup>20</sup> This quote clarifies perhaps the type of circuit the Greeks had in mind: "The harbour of Epidaurus is long. Its periplus or circuit has fifteen stadia." (Chandler, *Trav. Greece*, qtd. in *OED*) Of course, as the Spanish, Portuguese, sought the Western passage they spent much time attending to the harbours and coves of North America's East coast.

Periploi were produced by the ancient mode of geospatial exploration: sailing within reach of shores, always with shapes of land nearby for orientation. Periplus is mythical, and inextricable from the Greek conceptions of storytelling, one 'genre' of which was known as *nostoi*, or returns home<sup>21</sup> (*Epic Geography*, 6). In many key ways, *Maximus* is ordered by periplus, what is called the "Phoenician view" of the shore and city from the sea. The frequent appearance of explorers and navigators return the shore-bound poet's imagined perspective to the "off-shore" position. *Maximus* pursues the tradition of explorers charting previously unmapped space, summoning a long line of discovery. Many of these are literally navigators — Hercules, Odysseus, Pytheas, Columbus, and the sea-dominating Phoenicians in general. All of these figures share the practice of *'istorin*: they find out for themselves. Olson patterns these ranging cartographers, interconnecting their related efforts, synthesizing a continuous migration from their disconnected lifetimes. The pattern of compulsive exploration Olson charts through their movements and the resulting maps shows them all driven in the same way, to move and map, like automata, one by one, in their own allotted packets of one long lifetime. It is this continuity of spatial orientation that *Maximus* joins as he charts the course of aggregate migration represented by the several movements of those preceding him in space.

Even while the periplus-perspective recurs in *Maximus*, the poem is also suffused with maps, beginning with the three reproduced as covers of the volumes and extending to an insistent concern with the processes of exploration and cartography and those compelled to order and extend the known universe in this manner. Within sight of land, periplus of continental forms serve to orient the seafarer, but outside of this range, with fixed points only above, in the slow whirl of stars, and below, in the

<sup>21</sup> Although Olson held a deep, perhaps competitive disdain for the work of James Joyce, *Ulysses* and *Maximus* share an important source in Victor Berard's *The Phoenicians and the Odyssey*. While Michael Seidel's *Epic Geography* traces Berard's spatial data in Joyce's *Ulysses*, Berard's conviction that the *Odyssey* could be located in space is an obvious influence on *Maximus*, the implications of which have yet to be fully explored.

menace of an unseen bottom, the value of maps to sailors cannot be overestimated. Like all objects, maps are shaped by forces: they represent the results of geological activity; figuratively, they are shaped by the contention of human and landscape. Scenes of disorientation recur in the narrative: sailors off their reckoning embody the profound drive to locate oneself concomitant with the discovery and location of "new" land. As Olson recovers and hypothesises the early settlers' spatial interactions with their "new England," Maximus steps into a continuum of cartographers who orient themselves to space and vice-versa as they chart coastal shapes.

Maximus, "off-shore", but close enough to "hear," locates himself on the water in relation to Gloucester, seeing it as "seen by men sailing":

The nest, I say, to you, I Maximus say  
under the hand, as I see it, over the waters  
from this place where I am, where I hear,  
can still hear... (l.4)

The nest is simultaneously "over the waters" and "under the hand", almost as though it were seen at once in two dimensions on a map and in three dimensions before the eyes. *Portulans*, coastal charts drawn from sailors' actual experience, bear witness to periplum at great risk<sup>22</sup>, and chart the dangerous verge of sea and land, the inland thereby inferred from this record of movement through space, simultaneously a guide to its repetition.<sup>23</sup> In the welter of mapping explorers forming the lineage Maximus joins, Olson praises Captain John Smith, an early explorer of New England coast, for his preternatural sense of orientation, even without maps: "it's a different thing, to feel a coast, an ancient thing ... what men had to have before Pytheas, to move..." (*Coll. Prose*, 320). Pytheas is repeatedly invoked in this lineage, an early cartographer who charts undiscovered area, but also represents the threat of existential disorientation that results from an inability to distinguish. Butterick draws attention to the "sludge" of

<sup>22</sup> *Maximus* does not completely romanticize the colonial over the indian, but there are certainly unflattering portraits. Olson manifests concern and fellow-feeling for the aboriginals, and there may be some irony in his recollection of playing cowboys and indians as a child.

<sup>23</sup> Victor Berard has a chapter on these in his book *Did Homer Live?*.

undifferentiated primal matter Pytheas encountered as he sought new land:

[Pytheas] reported, according to Strabo, an island called Thule, which he described as northernmost of the British Isles, six days north of Britain, a region "in which there was no longer any distinction of land or sea or air, but a mixture of the three like sea lung, in which he says that land and sea and everything floats, and this [that is, the mixture] binds all together and can be traversed neither on foot nor by boat" (Stefansson, *Great Adventures and Explorations*. qtd. in *Guide*, 94)

Pytheas' sludge is a threatening chaos that erupts repeatedly in the poems, defining, through allegory, the dangers attending exploration of undiscovered land as well as the ultimate goal of the exploration: to distinguish land from sea, to chart the edge of their contention in the shape of the coast.

"The first to navigate those waters, thus to define the limit of the land."

Olson's study of those who explore and map foregrounds the fact that coastal exploration is a delimiting process; the orientation of the mapping body in space is accompanied by the discovery of new bodies of land. "On first Looking out through Juan de la Cosa's Eyes" (l.77) establishes an important emanation of the explorer/cartographer pattern: the perspective of La Cosa provides the next set of mapping eyes. The poem begins with the name of one of Maximus' heroic cartographers, Martin Behaim,<sup>24</sup> a globe maker suspended in the page's space, near the middle, a stranded continent. Then, an absence: "and nothing / insula Azores to / Cipangu"; we are 'shown' an incomplete map, Behaim's globe, which featured nothing from the Azores to Japan, the entire new world yet uncharted, making unfinished a thing whose very spherical form suggests completeness. In the gaping Atlantic, "one floating island:" St. Brendan's, of legends.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> The space would have held the New World on Behaim's Nuremberg globe is contracted: Butterick notes the eastern coast of Asia is only about eighty degrees distant from the Azores. (116)

<sup>25</sup> Carl Sauer, a geographer Olson revered and used repeatedly in *Maximus*, deems it possible that the mythical St. Brendan's island is actually Sable, an island SE of Halifax, which appears on the succeeding page. It is alone in the void of Atlantic on Behaim's map.

"Juan de la Cosa's Eyes" continues the earlier comparison of Gloucester to Tyre: the resonance of the spaces is embodied in the shared activity of the fishermen of present and antiquity: "(As men, my town, my two towns / talk".(l.77) Through their talk the ancient and contemporary fishermen conjure a *portulans*, a map of their experience: they speak of Gades and Cash's, fishing grounds off the coasts of Tyre and Gloucester, respectively. Here two patterns, two cities overlaid: Tyre and Gloucester's fishermen talk of navigation, emanations of the same figures, translated across the Atlantic, speak of their fishing ground. This harmony of the two cities, the twin coasts and axes of the ancient deep-sea fisheries, is specifically spatial: entities compared, related through physical rhyming of form, this spatial relation giving rise to the poesis by which they are brought into concurrence, when once disjointed in time. The common situation of their fates on the perilous ocean, tempered by the "talk" of their community, conjoins them in the poem. Just as the *portulans* periodically given Odysseus are always the product of oral communications, or *muthos*, the fishermen use the same ancient tradition of oral description and orientation through lived experience. These *portulans* and *periploi* are simultaneously shown to produce new stories as they guide geopoetic movements.

In harmony with the cartographic content of the poem, the form of "La Cosa" orders elements in registers of typographic space on the page: horizontal arrangements at tabular points array words sometimes in distinct voices, sometimes in threads of related concepts: "Behaim—and nothing" begins the first stanza indented some 20 spaces, with the final three phonemes of the stanza drifting down and to the right. After the interlude while the "two towns / talk," the eye is drawn back toward the middle of the page, to the exact longitude at which Behaim appeared, where the next mapmaker, the poem's namesake, now appears to inscribe a form on the empty Atlantic of the flawed globe:

But before La Cosa, nobody  
could have  
a mappemunde (l.77)

All world maps were incomplete until the space between the Azores and Japan was discovered. The explorers of Columbus' voyage are terrestrials afloat on the floodplain seeking more dry territory: they are in quest of the western passage to Asia, imagined between North and South America, and so must scrutinize every bay and cove. La Cosa determines the dimensions of the land, the world new to the Europeans.<sup>26</sup>

The title's allusion to Keats' "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" resonates with the influence of Victor Berard's Homeric studies on Olson's mythographic project.<sup>27</sup> In Berard, Olson read of the spatial trajectory of Homer's *Odyssey*. Berard's mapping of the journey shows the hero moving through real spaces in an itinerary with symbolic meaning embedded in its compass direction and spatial, geographic forms: a spatial sentence is reconstructed from the story.<sup>28</sup> Butterick ascribes the following detail to Olson's reading of Berard's *Did Homer Live?*:

(What he drew who drew Hercules  
going by the Bear off from Calypso

Now, it would be breakers, Sable! (l.82)

Berard describes Greek intaglios of Herakles of Tyre, the precursor to the Herakles of Hellenic legends and myths: "This Herakles-Melkart had been an earlier visitor to the very waters visited by Odysseus and he had sometimes used the same kind of sea craft: tradition had it that, like Odysseus, he had made rafts." (*Did Homer Live?*, 189)

<sup>26</sup> Sauer tells us La Cosa's North Atlantic map is very precise for its time: "One of the ship captains, Amerigo Vespucci of the Florentine intelligentsia, made celestial observations of longitude that were close to reality. On the Cosa map the eastern tip of the continent (the shoulder of Brazil) is shown as being on the meridian of the Azores, only four degrees off true position. In one year these so-called 'minor voyages' had established the existence and position of South America, though that name was given later." (Sauer, *Sixteenth Century North America*, 8. see 9 for La Cosa's N. Atlantic map)

<sup>27</sup> Note also that Keats compares his reading of Chapman with the primary vision of the explorer Cortez: "...like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes / He star'd at the Pacific... / Silent, upon a peak in Darien." (*Major British Poets*, 1013)

<sup>28</sup> Meanwhile, Jane Harrison's *Themis* confirmed for Olson that myth was the spoken correlative of the acted rite.

(You could go any coast  
in such a raft as she taught,  
as she taught him, favoring him

with cedar, & much niceties. (l.78)

*She* is Kalypso. Berard's studies of the spatial reality nested in Homer's epic are a crucial precursor to, and influence upon, Olson's explorations with *Maximus*. The poet explains:

Berard's point is that the *Incidents* in the *Odyssey* result from the *Place-Names*, in other words not fiction in any humanistic sense but that the process of the imagination is from 1) a place person thing event—to-2) the naming of it—to-3) the reenactment or representation of it, in other words  
object<---->name<---->image or story (*Bibliography on America*, 9)

By ordering objects, names make myths. By working from the "image or story" of the *Odyssey*, Berard felt he could reverse Homer's process and locate the objects in space, the original spatial impulse of the journey, related through the spoken word to the blind poet. Olson uses the same process Berard found in Homer: the objects patterned in space that make up Gloucester are named, are given identity in the space of the page, and the story, objects arrayed in historical pattern, is made in the ancient form of the *Odyssey*, episodes paratactically linked and, after Dante, after Pound, the *Odyssey* is once again made new.<sup>29</sup> Olson extends the tradition of Berard as he catalogues mythographers, explorers, seafarers that discover and name the storied world. In the manner of Herodotus, *Maximus* treats history as myth, and myth as history, challenging the Thucydidean rejection of *muthos* which (Olson believes) has affected history to this day.

*Maximus* pursues many of the spatial triangulations seen in the work of Victor Berard on Homer's *Odyssey*. Describing a narrative of a voyage "beyond the pillars of Hercules," Berard avers, "It was, I believe, a *periplus* of this type which gave rise to the tale of Odysseus' adventures in the Western Sea" (*Did Homer Live?*, 142). As in

<sup>29</sup> The egocentrism of this position is perhaps not beyond the level Olson commonly lived up to, fully expecting to out-do his old masters. See Olson-Creeley letters.

Homer's treatment of the myth that preceded him, Ulysses undergoes a spatial translation: as he moves through a world, the resulting narrative functions as a kind of cartography. Similarly, Maximus's mythic patterning is of a spatial order, and records movements in, translations through space.

Opposing modes of *naming*, of spatial description and orientation, are juxtaposed in "la Cosa's Eyes": the poem tells of a world-map produced by navigational experience, of knowledge produced by periploi some unnamed sailor "drew ... / with a finger, in beer, a portulans". The following page posits an unnamed intaglio artist who "drew" Odysseus sailing "by the Bear off from Calypso" taken from the studies Berard had made of Odysseus-Melkarth, who appears to Berard to have been the model for the Homeric Odysseus. Multiplying instances of mapping, of navigation: the duality of the men of the "two towns" mapping fishing grounds, and the intaglio showing an ancient model of the sailors' forebear, finding his way by starlight, and by the pattern those stars make.

The new-found land of America was referred to by Portuguese as Bacalhaos, the word for cod, because of the plentiful numbers of those fish along the rich waters of the northeast coast (*Guide*, 120). In *Maximus*, this new space materializes out of the condition of indistinct chaos, seeming to rise from the chaos:

...The New Land was,  
from the start, even by name was  
Bacalhaos  
there,  
swimming, Norte, out of the mists  
(out of Pytheas' sludge  
out of mermaids & Monsters (l.78)

A concrete reality is seen forming out of the myths that filled the imagined absence to the Europeans' west: the emptiness can now be charted, and the abyss dispelled.



Near its end the poem demonstrates the associative network of the poet's present and the spatialized past: after focusing on the perilous journeys made by Spanish explorers and cartographers, the work oscillates toward the heroes local to Olson's space-time, the modern navigators who, in turn, risk their lives, mapping shoals and deeps as they seek fish, not terra firma, and as they stand in the pattern sent down from the Phoenicians, the Portuguese, the English. The poem closes with a disturbing juxtaposition of past and present seafarers, afloat on the same water and facing the same dangers:

No worms. Storms,  
Ladies &  
to the bottom of the,  
husbands, & wives,  
little children lost their

(4,670 fishermen's lives are noticed." [...] (l.80)

And in the stanza beginning "(4,670 fishermen's lives are noticed", eight commas, excluding the first, create a tidal, steady frequency, slowing the tempo to the somber rhythm of the waves that carry memorial flowers out to sea when Gloucester's citizens hold a ceremony for lost fishermen each August (*Guide*, 223).

Olson's Maximus returns to the discovery of the New World and the foundation of New England, so that he may look as these foreigners looked on the land for the first time, an end to their line's insistent pursuit of the elusive West. Members of the Cabot voyage of 1497 took possession of the discovered land "on the coast of northern New England, the return crossing from Cape Race. At the place of their landing 'they found large trees from which masts were made' and evidence that the land was inhabited, but had no sight of people. ... Cabot gave the name Seven Cities to the new country, for the legendary island of the western sea in the medieval lore of Spain and

Portugal." (*Sixteenth Century North America*, 6) The land is already named for a legend, and an *island*: space is caught up in the *process* of mythology, and is thus recorded, in a special sense.

Olson engages in dialogue with Carl Sauer's geographical scholarship throughout the composition of this work: Sauer finds that Cabot reportedly planned "to keep [west] along the coast from the place at which he landed, more and more to the [Far] East, until he reaches an island which he calls Cipango [Japan], situated in the equinoctial region, where he believes that all the spices of the world have their origin as well as the jewels." "Like Columbus, Cabot was unaware that he had come to the New World" (*Sixteenth Century*, 7). Cabot thought he had found the backdoor of Japan: this is one among *Maximus'* many instances of geographical disorientation, an erring sense of self-position mired in Pytheas' disorienting chaos.

Again, the "primary view" of discovery is the crucial perspective. Traces of those Europeans who knew the land earliest are pursued through the historical record:

Terra nova sive Limo Lue,  
he wrote it who knew it  
as only Corte Real (the first known lost  
as Bertomez (as Cabot?  
Who found you,  
land,  
of the hard gale? (l.79)

In the first line excerpted above, "terra nova" is the name given Newfoundland by Hieronymus Verrazano, an Italian cartographer.<sup>30</sup> Corte Real is the surname of two brothers who were both lost in the the discovery of Newfoundland: when the first didn't return, his brother went to find him and also vanished. Bertomez is the name of a hypothetical cartographer that Olson thought he read in indistinguishable orthography, inscribed on the Maggiolo map of 1519. (*Guide*, 121) Cabot was a Venetian explorer

<sup>30</sup> Although he mapped Newfoundland, Verrazano isn't actually one who "knew it", : he made his map from notes of his brother's explorations, the Italian mariner who explored the Atlantic coast for France between 1523-24. (*Guide*, 120)

sailing in the service of the English, and also discovered Newfoundland in 1497 (*Guide*, 122). This accretion of names lists those whose eyes first took in the land from a position of periplum, and first charted the shapes of the Atlantic coast that would become New England. Records and traces of cartographers swarm in the space of the poem. "La Cosa" closes with an oath that might be pledged by the historian, and shared by these voyaging mapmakers: one owes the dead nothing other than the truth (l.80).

Among *Maximus'* many mapping explorers is Pausanias,<sup>31</sup> one who appears in the poems not explicitly, but through the *form* of his histories, which Olson borrows from the old historian. Pausanias strode through ancient cities, along roads radiating from central points of civilization, noting the disposition of various evidence of past acts. A pattern is established when Olson's larger epic also deploys Pausanias' method in a reflexive spatial poesis: Olson adopts Pausanias' model of perambulation and spatial description, and configures space in relation to mythic resonances.

Pausanias' reports of ancient cities follow a topographical order. W. Jones, translator of Pausanias' *Descriptions of Greece*, explains the *modus operandi* of the ancient investigations: "The general method of description seems to be to describe the road to some central spot, such as the market-place, and to make this a starting point. Pausanias first gives the chief objects of interest at his centre, and then, taking in turn the chief roads leading from it, describes the sights to be seen along each, returning after a while to the starting point to begin again with a fresh road." (*Description*, xvi)

Olson's configurations of the physical space of Gloucester are generated by the poet's perambulations through the roads of the city. Many poems make explicit reference to street names and landmarks that allow one to precisely locate Olson's

---

<sup>31</sup> Pausanias is a historian from approximately 170s AD, of whom anthropologist Sir James Frazer said "without him the ruins of Greece would for the most part be a labyrinth without a clue, a riddle without an answer." (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15th ed.) Olson called his *Description of Greece* "the bible, you can't read it, but for gawd sake own it..." ("Bibliography on America", *Collected Prose*, 302)

movements. "Bk ii chapter 37" is one such poem, but here a spatial translation mixes Gloucester's landmarks into a Grecian city plan, making Gloucester and the ancient city of Lerna confluent. The work is a citation, with alterations, of Pausanias' own chapter 37, from Book II of *Description of Greece*<sup>32</sup>:

I. Beginning at the hill of Middle Street the city  
which consists mostly of wharves & houses  
reaches down to the sea. It is bounded  
on the one side by the river Annisquam,  
and on the other by the stream or entrance  
to the inner harbor. In the Fort at this entrance

are the images of stone and there is another  
place near the river where there is a seated  
wooden image of Demeter. [...] (II.84)

Notice that this area, patterned by landmarks such as the image of Demeter taken from Pausanias, is actually the poet's home in Fort Square. The Lernean monster, appearing in Pausanias, is patterned to the modern-mythical reports of a sea-snake spotted off Gloucester.<sup>33</sup> The spatial harmonies between the described areas are striking, as Pausanias' original is imagined to accurately describe the features of Gloucester. Just as Pausanias before him, Olson pursues *polis* in the evidence he can find for himself by researching town records, coastal charts, and walking the roads that shaped Gloucester. We are to imagine a view toward Prospect street, and a familiar statue: "The city's own / wooden image of the goddess is on a hill / along the next ridge above Middle Street / between the two towers of a church called / the Lady of Good Voyage." (II.84) This movement is oriented by the statue of Our Lady again, at 143 Prospect St., this time seen as though through ancient Pausanias' eyes, seen in the

<sup>32</sup> See *Guide*, 366 for the original translation of Pausanias (Frazer trans., I, 129) used by Olson.

Notice that Pausanias's method of description is anchored around people, the land and the people are intertwined, each feature named after someone with a story. Thus, the land shares a history with the people, whose markings on the land are still extant, in the form of statues, memorials, graves, etc.

<sup>33</sup> Butterick surmises that evidence indicates Olson had been reading of the Lernean Hydra in Graves' *Greek Myths*, and went to Pausanias as the source of the stories. The work that Olson adapts is a description of Lerna, near Argos in Greece.

past, or in the future anterior: Gloucester, a "recent" city, "new," will one day be so old and storied, so crossed with vectors, as the ground of Greece Pausanias covered.<sup>34</sup>

Maps avail themselves to Olson as a way to reconcile past and present in the perceived static endurance and duration of physical geography. Using maps of Gloucester in his exploration and research of the city, Olson's practice makes events through history locatable in the relatively static features of the space around him. One geodetic survey map of an old part of Gloucester called Dogtown was mounted on the poet's living room wall. Olson pasted onto this chart the information he collected regarding geological makeup, original settlers, development of roads, reservoirs, etc. He called the resulting work a "topographical creation".

The oscillating character of *Maximus'* spatial description is an aspect of cartographic and spatial operations theorized by Michel de Certeau. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau outlines his distinction between space and place: "A place,

<sup>34</sup> Later the topography of Portuguese hill, the prominence on which the Lady stands, is configured as a representation of Andrew Merry's bull; the pet he wrestled and was killed by represents an unboundable power, an individualistic resistance to control:

into the light  
of Portuguese  
hill Dogtown

Dogtown's  
secret  
head  
& shoulder ...

lifting Portuguese hill into the light

the body  
of Dogtown  
holding up Portuguese hill into the light

Our Lady of Good Voyage sitting down on the front of the  
unnoticed head and body of Dogtown secretly come to overlook the City

the Lady of Good Voyage held out there  
to keep looking out toward the sea  
by Dogtown

the Virgin

held up  
on the Bull's horns

(II.145)

An abstracted image of the bull's horns is visible in the two towers of Our Lady of Good Voyage church, between which the statue stands.

is ... an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability."

"A *space*," on the other hand, "exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. [...] In short, *space is practiced place*" (117).

"In other words," de Certeau summarizes, "description oscillates between the terms of an alternative: either seeing (the knowledge of an order of places) or going (spatializing actions). Either it presents a *tableau*..., or it organizes *movements*...." (119).

Imagine a two-dimensional plan of the area presently surrounding you: on the plane of such a map, you would see the dimensions, the shape of the area from the top down; a representation of place, or *topos*. If you were asked to locate yourself in your surround, to pinpoint your orientation on the map, you could only comply by oscillating between these terms of "seeing" and "going." Glancing at the two-dimensional map, then the area, a relation of this plane information to the three dimensions around you could only attain any precision through a method of measure, furnished perhaps by pacing out the room's dimensions. In this case the scale is you, your stride. Navigation by maps requires this dynamism between place and space. *The Maximus Poems'* geopoiesis actuates this orienting oscillation as it patterns generative movements through, and configurations of space. De Certeau interrogates the oscillation of the horizontal, spatial engagement and the view from above afforded by a map, or represented by his (newly-poignant) view from the tower of the World Trade Center:

When one goes up there, he leaves behind the mass that carries off and mixes up in itself any identity of authors or spectators. [...] His elevation transfigures him into a voyeur. It puts him at a distance. It transforms the bewitching world by which one was "possessed" into a text that lies before one's eyes. It allows one to read it, to be a solar Eye, looking down like a god. The exaltation of a scopic and gnostic drive: the fiction of knowledge is related to this lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more. (*Everyday Life*, 92)

The map posits static space and fixed spatial relations; this static, objective quality is

only the illusion granted by the ascendant, mapping viewpoint. The dominating god's-eye-view was, as de Certeau reminds us, imagined before it was technically achievable, and is elided as one *reads* the text of a map. De Certeau recalls the beginning of map consciousness:

The desire to see the city preceded the means of satisfying it. Medieval or Renaissance painters represented the city as seen in a perspective that no eye had yet enjoyed. This fiction already made the medieval spectator into a celestial eye. It created gods. ... The same scopic drive haunts users of architectural productions by materializing today the utopia that yesterday was only painted. The 1370 foot high tower that serves as a prow for Manhattan continues to construct the fiction that creates readers, makes the complexity of the city readable, and immobilizes its opaque mobility in a transparent text. (*Everyday Life*, 92)

De Certeau holds that the will to map obeys the scopic lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more. In contrast, Olson's polis / eye is embodied and mobile: the *body's* relation to space, not just the eye's, is the crucial measure. The private perspective on space-relations is determined (in both senses of *found* and *established*) by the moving embodied eye.

While "...la Cosa's Eyes" puts the cartographic imperative into question, it also rejuvenates the periplum-perspective of the cartographer. The eye-view of la Cosa is imagined as the static map is spatialized, the eyes attending to space-patterns replaced where the map had elided them. Turning now to the imagined perspective of Olson's eyes, the following chapter examines the a patterned oscillation between de Certeau's terms of spatial description as the major geopoetic device in *The Maximus Poems*.

### III.

#### Olson's eyes

... the mainland hinge  
of the 128 bridge  
now brings in

what, to Main Street? (I.160)

With these words *Maximus'* Volume I ended with Gloucester facing onslaught: early in Volume II, a shift in spatial concentration indicates that, like Tyre before it, Gloucester has fallen to the universalizing, incorporating mainland:

the Sea – turn yr Back on  
the Sea, go inland, to  
Dogtown: the Harbor

the shore the City  
are now  
shitty, as the Nation

is – [...] (II.9)

Turning from the city, which is now infected by the “mole” of route 128 just as Tyre was “universalized” before it, Olson withdraws to the ruin of an early concentration of settlers, even ancient by “New World” standards. North of the city, an abandoned space of elevated, uncultivable rock called Dogtown is the next “radiant node or cluster” of Olson's explorations. Maximus, abandoning the conquered polis who now share fate with the ancient Tyrians, pursues the earliest space of Gloucester patterned by polis' organization and memory functions. A kind of microcosmic Gloucester, Dogtown is an early prototype of English civilized organization on the new land. Although its roads and common areas are some of the earliest on Cape Ann, little trace of its polis-pattern remained when Olson saw it. Once populated by early settlers and fisherman, then their widows, Dogtown is spatialized as the poet anchors polis to



the space it organizes: orienting the tales of past lives in the space he presently explores.

Maps not only suffuse Olson's work, but are an intrinsic part of his practice. The charts Olson employed included those in Nathaniel Shaler's "Geology of Cape Ann," and Roger Babson's "Cape Ann Tourist's Guide": we might imagine Olson composing as he walks these maps back onto the shapes of the land—spatializing the *place* represented by the maps.

Olson's Dogtown poems were composed with the assistance of a survey map of the area, hung in his Fort Point living room. When asked about the textual markings and figures written on this map, Olson indicates the idiosyncratic and careful nature of his work:

Well, each one of them [entries on the map] is the extent of the property of each of the houses that I was able to start with, the exact location in rods and poles of this marvelous fellow named Barchelder, who did this with chains—they called them chains—for measurement. (They do still.) [...] So that you could be... I just found that I could be extremely precise about something.... (*Muthologos* I: 188)

Olson is explaining a method of surveying property, the units of which he has adopted in order to determine the dimensions of the settlers' plots of land. The highly researched nature of *Maximus*, illustrated here by the compelled precision of Olson's geographical research<sup>35</sup> certainly aligns it in the tradition of the *Cantos*: both works are manifestations of knowledge, sending the persistent reader repeatedly to the library. In pursuing its poetic configurations of space, *Maximus* can send one to the Atlas just as often as elsewhere.

It is not by accident that the cover of Volume II again bears a map: the covers of each volume of *Maximus* were selected deliberately by Olson, as he explains at a

<sup>35</sup> Olson was surprisingly precise when it came to his mapping of Dogtown's early settlers, for instance: he cross-checked sources and literally tested the maps he found in Babson's *Tourist Guide* and Shaler's *Geology of Cape Ann*. Whereas the image of Olson spouting drunken hot air across campuses in the mid-sixties has earned the poet a reputation for imprecision, there is ample evidence that his geographic and topographic researches were most competent.

reading in Berkeley:

Actually, this book which I'll read from is the second volume of this poem, the *Maximus Poems*. And since two years ago I've been trying to get a cover. The first volume had an actual U.S. Coast and Geodetic survey of the Harbor of Gloucester, and I want this new cover, if we can make it, to be the earth as it was when it was one in Devonian time. (*Muthologos* I: 190)

Butterick speculates that the scope of Volume II "is suggested by the map on the cover of the volume," a map "based on Alfred Wegener's theory of the origin of continents, although Gloucester continues to be the centripetal force whereby all is held in sway." (*Guide*, xi) Indeed, the poems' scale widens geographically and mythologically, but their particularism is if anything sharpened. Names, particularities are mined from maps, city records, archives, ships' registers with even more attention to interrelated detail, and with a distinct historical drive: turning from the sea, and apparently failing polis, Olson follows the traces of the first English to live on Cape Ann.

Referring to Volume II of *The Maximus Poems*, Olson claims a geopoetic design as its structure: "...the poem actually is the Dogtown ... the statistical or metrical base of the poem is the two roads of Dogtown" (*Muthologos* I: 190). The pattern of spatial inquiry Olson probes<sup>36</sup> and propagates in the area of Gloucester can explain and extend the significance of this "metrical base." Through *Maximus'* map-terrain

<sup>36</sup> Map-based orientation is a pervasive device and a function of many *Maximus* poems. Here Olson quotes Nathaniel Shaler, *Geology of Cape Ann*, (a report for the United States Geological Survey) and indicates that he compared the map to the territory:

Shaler says: "On Dogtown Commons  
several of these areas of kame deposits  
were during the period in which this  
district was inhabited brought into  
the state of tilled fields; and now  
appear as small pasture lands destitute  
of boulders." (II.148)

When he read this in Gloucester, 1966, Olson's remark shows a geological comparison of Dogtown with Stage Fort Park, the area Olson explored each summer of his youth:

This is of course identical with Stage Fort Park, of which the highest point is exactly Shaler's statement of the highest of such deposits—65'. (*Muthologos* I: 179)

These verbatim citations of Shaler will no doubt turn off the reader looking for the high-energy discharge of Olson's early projective poems, but that reader might not observe that a new interaction with energies is giving rise to this poetic register: the poems engage with the space of Gloucester on the primary level of its geological identity. The geologic registers of *Maximus* have a complicated relationship to its historical and spatial realms, as geological forms represent a shift in time-scale and a shift in the magnitude of spatial inquiry.

interactions, which emulate the representative technology of the map through hybrid typography and reflexive structures, "the poem actually is the Dogtown".

The two roads, Commons Road in the north and Dogtown Road in the south, are parallel East-West vectors along which the early pattern of civilization was established. Olson's study of *when* English settlers were *where* gathers archeological detail as he explores the area and the records pertaining to it: scouring sources such as Babson's *History of Gloucester*, Olson matches settlers' names to properties that are now empty cellars open to the sky, the last traces of a ruined, lost pattern of people. Olson's "Bibliography on America" defines archeology as the "science of beginning" (*Collected Prose*, 305), and here he pursues the beginnings of English/American settlement.<sup>37</sup> Herodotean historical inquiry impels Maximus' mobile eyes, perambulating bounds and "chomping off distances", locating and configuring space patterns with the attention of one of the polis. Gloucester and Dogtown are the poems' "two towns," and Olson, escaping from the corruption of one, seeks the originary moments in the ruins of the other; its patterned integrity already dispersed, it lays in waste, but Olson goes to find its story for himself.

Searching for the primary, original patterns of polis, Olson finds the earliest forms of spatialization. *Maximus* undertakes a compulsive location of people, and *location* applies in multiple senses; to fix, *and* to survey:

One has then  
a placement:  
a man, & family,  
was on the River,  
just above the Cut,  
by 1635. And for  
10 years. (II.59)

One can hear a flag planted, a correspondence noted, as on a map; a fact is found that orients, acts as a "placement" of historical trace. Olson's vectors through Dogtown

<sup>37</sup> On an application form Olson once designated his profession "archeologist of morning," doubling the sense of primary exploration, early fathomer of beginnings. That Olson lived out the size of his personal mythology is perhaps not as interesting and enlightening as the egotistical character of that myth itself.

seek to discover the primary perspective, the eye-view, that was beheld by the settlers. He effectively *spatializes* this ruin by *replacing* the settlers' names on the land. Olson's own spatial practice is elucidated by consideration of its similarities to Pausanias' practice of mapping the traces of civilization along main roads. This notion decrypts somewhat Olson's comment that the Upper and Lower roads of Dogtown are the measure of the poem. As will be seen in "Letter May 2," the roads themselves are measured by Olson's steps: the self-reflexive nature of Olson's work leads it ultimately to chart the measurer.

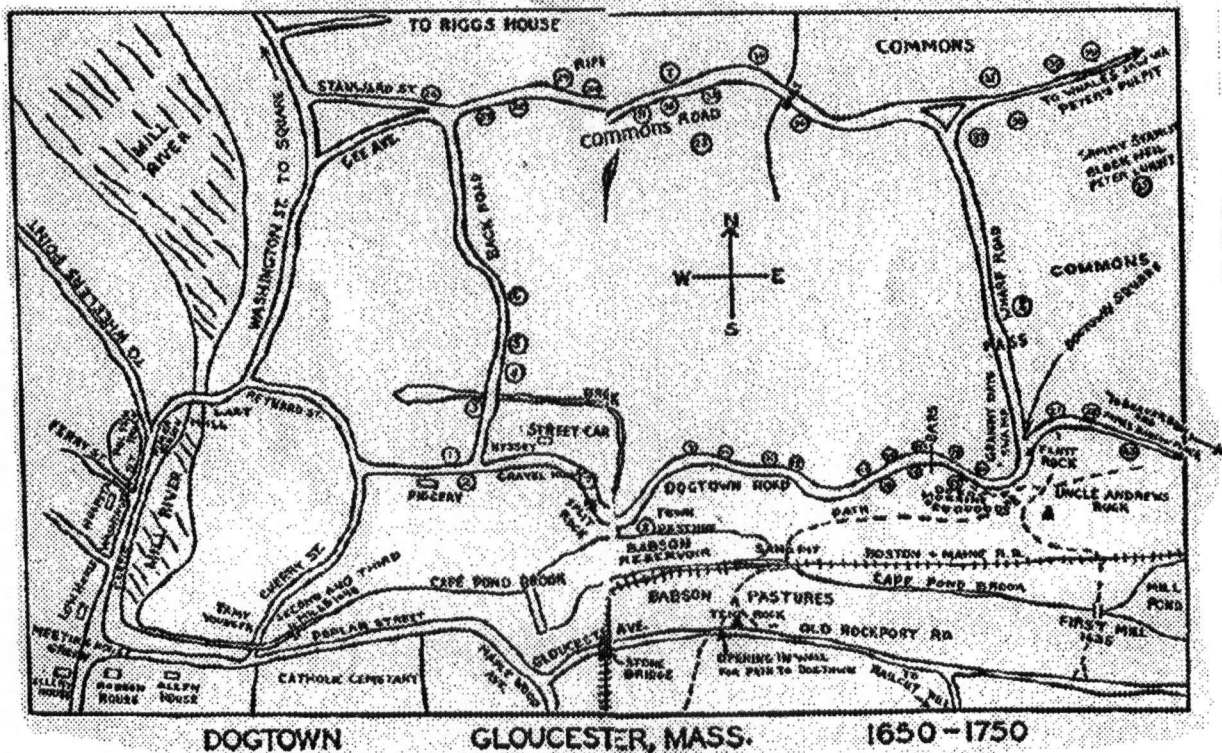
In his exploration of the area's origins, orienting Dogtown to himself and vice-versa, Olson employed and annotated Roger Babson's *Cape Ann Tourist's Guide* (first printing 1936), a volume that contains a detailed map of Dogtown. The map features numbered locations of cellars still visible and the names of the erst-while inhabitants. (*Reading*, 245) Effectively, the book constitutes in earnest historical terms the very placing of names in space that Maximus pursues. I open it at page 20, to find a tour-description reminiscent of Pausanias' perambulations through Lerna:

Retracing our steps to the above-mentioned old piggery and going up Gravel Hill to the right, we come to the site of an old street car to the left just beyond which there is a large turn in the road. At this turn, on the right, is "Split Rock" which makes a break in the stone wall bordering the road.

Directly beyond Split Rock was the town pasture thru which a brook runs. On the Split Rock side was located the William Pulcifer (8) or Jeremiah Millet place.

Between the old street car, which is on the left, and the Split Rock, which is on the right (a distance of half a mile), is a cellar on the left directly in the road. The uninitiated might take this as a pile of rocks in a natural hole, but it is the cellar (7) built by Benjamin Stanwood whose house was later occupied by the Davis family. [...]

Like Pausanias and Babson, Maximus uses perspectival directions, as in the *tour* of de Certeau: "going up Gravel Hill to the right ...street car to the left ... on the right is 'Split Rock'..."



Note the main east-west lines of Commons and Dogtown roads, along which many of Cape Ann's earliest "properties" were once arrayed. The lower, Dogtown road, bends at the center of the map to travel around "Gravel Hill," the recurring feature that functions later in *Maximus* as an omphalos,<sup>38</sup> rising from the sea in the space Olson mythologizes and orchestrates.

In the examples above, Olson pursues a map-based orientation of geography. "Letter, May 2, 1959" (l.145) effects another spatialization of Gloucester's early movements and settlements, but this time both de Certeau's alternative orders of spatial description, the map and the tour, are components of the poem. Beginning with Olson's pacing-measurement of an area that held the settlement's first meeting-house, the poem propagates an orienting oscillation between these orders of place and space, map and tour.

"Letter, May 2, 1959" appears to begin and end with representations of maps, but upon closer inspection the spatial operations transcend simple cartography. This

<sup>38</sup> See especially *Maximus* ll.160-162

poem compounds and multiplies the alternatives of spatial description found in isolation elsewhere: beginning with a tour, Olson paces the dimensions of meeting-house green, one of the first gathering places of Gloucester's polis. This mode then modulates into a map as the typography places names of property owners in the relations Olson has found in his research and located in space. A rock-wall is represented by the pattern of O's on the page:

Letter, May 2, 1959

125 paces Grove Street  
fr E end of Oak Grove cemetery  
to major turn NW of  
road

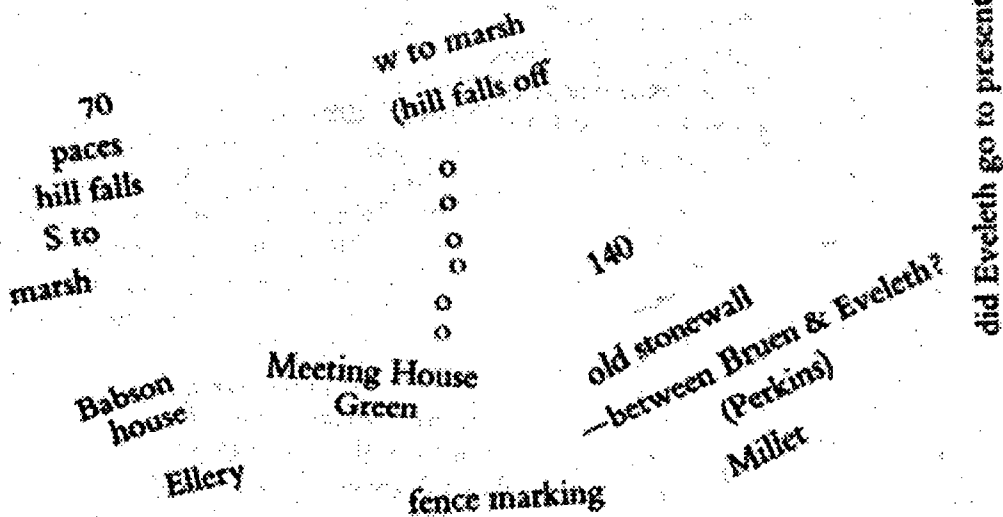
this line goes finally straight  
fr Wallis property direct  
to White (as of 1707/8)

- (2) 125 of curve
- (3) 200 paces to Centennial

(4)  
47 90 90 st  
230 paces

c 300 paces  
Whittemore to the marsh

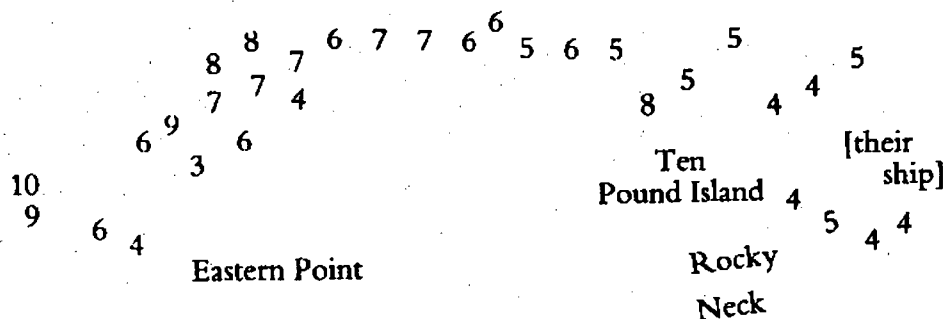
Kent's property/ Pearce



What did Bruen want? He had already shifted from Piscataqua to Plymouth, then to Gloucester and now to New London and would go from New London to found Newark, N.J.

Spatialized by Olson's steps, the area is organized by the toponymy of long-past ownership. The typography slowly changes register from "simple" linguistic sign to iconic, symbolic mark. This cartographic register overtakes the field of the page, placing "Babson house," the "Millet" property, and areas where the hill drops away to the south and west. These orientations of the poet, bodied forth, can be followed by the reader: Robert Duncan writes of *Maximus* "as a magic opus—not as magical or imagination but as a recipe that had to be followed, paced out to a locus as in "Letter, May 2, 1959...": (qtd. in *Guide*, 296) This representative field is then interrupted by Maximus's pursuit of another itinerary, the past movements of Obadiah Bruen, one of the early settlers and landowners, who is followed "from Piscataqua / to Plymouth, then to Gloucester and now to New London and / would go from New London to found Newark, N.J." (l.145) These migrations align Bruen with the transient explorers in Maximus' lineage. As the poem ends the typography modulates again from the realm of sound-signification to space-representation, showing the fathom-measurements of the harbor in meters that appear on Champlain's map: the numbers ranged in space make a *tableau* of the harbor Olson's own home overlooked. Multiple responses to space, separated by time, are juxtaposed on the page:

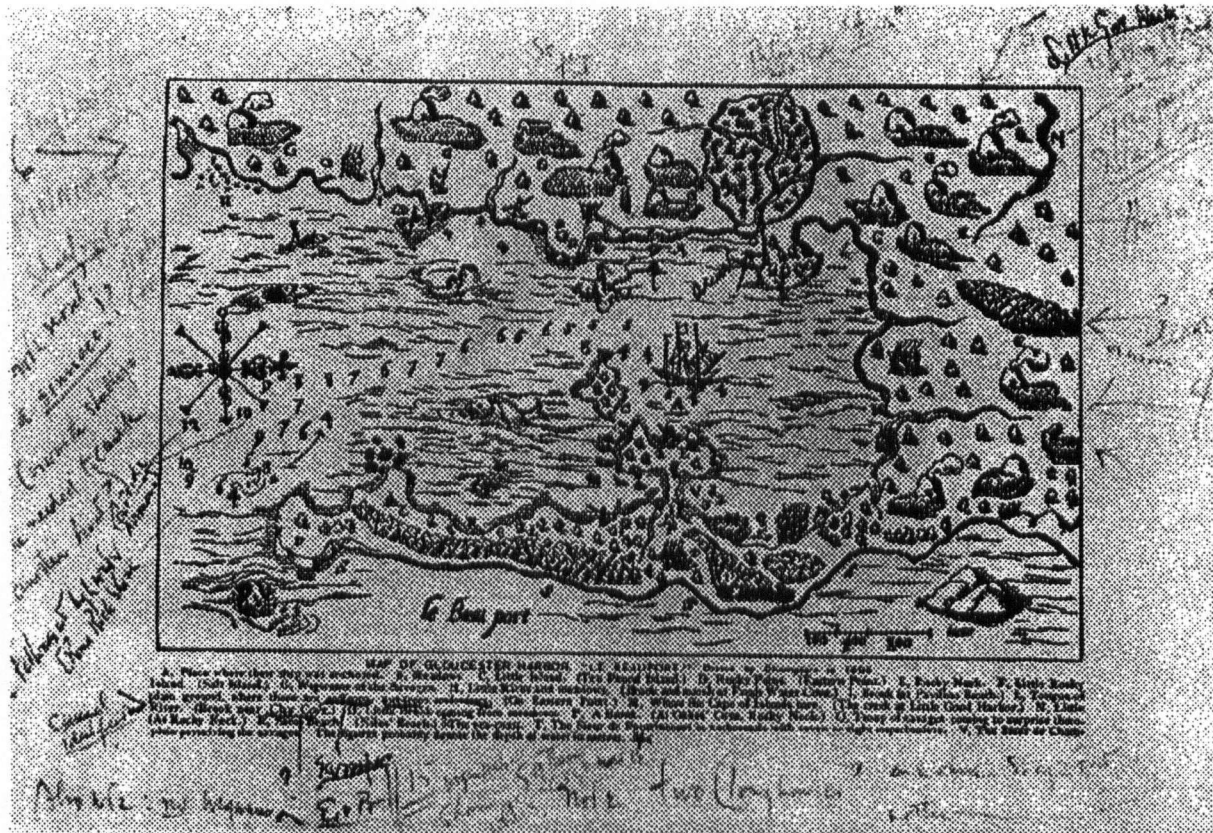
the depths of the channel more interesting as from Eastern  
Pt and the compass rose thus:



Compare the above with Champlain's original 1606 map, (Olson's copy of which is reproduced in Butterick's *Guide*, showing the poet's copious marginalia). Note the



features of Champlain's map Olson chose to represent:



Samuel de Champlain's map of "Le Beauport" (Gloucester Harbor) in 1606, from Olson's copy of Pringle, *Book of the Three Hundredth Anniversary . . . of Gloucester*. See *Maximus* I, 151; also III, 85 and 100.

Champlain's ship is included by him in his map, seen near the center of the image, and is included in turn by Olson in his representation of that map ("their ship"). The ship, this node of mapping technology producing place, creates a *mise en abyme* as the mapper is literally charted in his map. As de Certeau elaborates, the map-view, in its ascendant scopic lust to be nothing but a viewpoint, ultimately buries the trace of the tour:

No doubt the proliferation of the "narrative" figures that have long been its stock-in-trade (ships, animals, and characters of all kinds) still had the function of indicating the operations—traveling, military, architectural, political or commercial—that make possible the fabrication of a geographical plan. Far from being "illustrations," iconic glosses on the text, these figurations, like fragments of stories, mark on the map the historical operations from which it resulted. Thus the sailing ship

painted on the sea indicates the maritime expedition that make it possible to represent the coastlines. It is equivalent to a describer of the "tour" type. But the map gradually wins out over these figures; it colonizes space; it eliminates little by little the pictural figurations of the practices that produce it. (*Everyday Life*, 121)

Maps such as the portulans originally showed the horizontal experiences that gave rise to them: "indicating the operations ... that make possible the fabrication." The periplus, figured repeatedly as the "Phoenician view" in *Maximus*, that view of "sea-bord seen by men sailing," is one such operation; in fact, it is the operation emulated by Olson's land-bound perambulations, horizontal movements retracing the shapes represented in the map.

Not only is the explorer's ship depicted on his map, but the man himself is literally represented in the product of his explorations: "Sieur de Champlain perceiving the savages," is depicted at a point marked with a "V" at present-day Rocky Neck. With the visual techne of the mapping explorer represented in the map, which is a product of this technology, the cartographic image containing the boat and the perambulating explorer, gives rise to a regenerative, uroboric reflexivity which *Maximus* exploits. "[B]efore La Cosa, nobody / could have / a mappemunde," wrote Olson in 1954: a world map was doomed to incompleteness before his discovery that the Atlantic was not empty. Seven years later, in 1961, the following description of the itinerary of *Maximus'* cartographers toward Gloucester ends with a reappearance of the word "mappemunde":

He went to Malta. From Malta  
to Marseilles. From Marseilles to Iceland.  
From Iceland to Promontorium Vinlandiae.  
Flowers go out on the sea. On the left  
of the Promontorium. On the left of the  
Promontorium, Settlement Cove

I am making a mappemunde. It is to include my being. (II.87)

In scaled relation to the explorers *Maximus* researches and retraces, the orientations and translations he carries out in and on Gloucester become figured as a

mappemunde, a world map. As the mapmaker includes his own "being," an infinity of reflections appears: the mapmaker mapping himself, mapping himself, mapping himself, ... receding into an aporetic vanishing point. This technology of the explorers, and the accompanying order of *mise en abyme* deployed in *Maximus* forms a pattern of analogous figures at diminishing magnitudes of scale such as we find between two facing mirrors: an infinity of scaled distortions. Similar distortions of perspective and scale are operant in and crucial to the very object of cartography and navigation, wherein a ratio relates symbol to space. The patterns arrayed by Olson produce not a nihilistic abyss, but an opening of space to poetic configuration, and a process by which story (or "muthos") and space are mutually generative. The inclusion of Champlain and his ship, the presences and technologies allowing coastal cartography, symbolizes the imperative of self-orientation through oscillation among perceptions and descriptions of space. The scopic rarefaction which tends to elide the position of landscape or periplum perspective is frustrated by the presence of the viewing figure grounded in the landscape. Olson rejuvenates this "eye-view" in *Maximus'* spatial translations, all of which include, and perhaps inscribe, the poet's "being".

"For Robt Duncan, / who understands / what's going on..." (ll.37) is another work of topographical orientation rendering spatial detail to the page in the interest of locating the material history of the one-time occupants of the space. What Duncan "understands" is this cartographic practice. The poem was impelled, we know from their correspondence, by a letter from Duncan already quoted (calling the poem a "recipe" to be followed to a locus) which arrived 15 March, 1961, two days prior to the date of writing. The poem traces the southernmost of the two rays that define Olson's Dogtown, naming the land marked by cellars and wells, assigning people to the spaces they once inhabited along Dogtown road:

to go up & around Gravel Hill the road goes SE to  
Jeremiah Millett's (which is my other kame) (II.37)

Following roads then, just as Pausanias did in Greece, Olson traces personae to the spaces they mark. The method is perambulatory along the now-ruined grid of civilization:

The next important spot is Benjamin  
Kinnicum's (fr before 1717, then five  
very rocky acres, 1717) [...]

BK's a 'hero' of my work (as, on the other -North-  
road, the one went to the woodlots, I shall  
celebrate Ann Robinson and her husband Samuel  
Davis who settled Dogtown first of all, first  
before even Kinnicum: Sam'l Davis was at  
the muddy place on the N road just where it goes sharply NE towards its  
2n rise, 61/4 acres 1713: that the date  
of the origin of my 2nd 'town'. (II.37)

These personae are then patterned with reference to spatial forms, located in the land,  
even while the shapes often imply a map-view:

Kinnicum  
and Davis lie on a transverse line directly N & S of each other,  
and each road beyond their respective homes  
is the small areas made the life of the place  
for the 50-60 years it was an overlook  
of the Gulf of Maine (II.38)

While the figures that "made the life of the place" are oriented in space, dimensions  
are scaled to the personal movements of the poet:

So small the areas are  
the distances are 2500 feet from Kinnicum's  
to WM Smallmans, and 1000 feet from Widow  
Davis's (1741) to James Marsh [...] (II.38)

Olson is ultimately the instrument *and* the object of his spatial inquiries, measurer and  
measured in the orientations which generate the words in shapes on the page. As  
spaces are measured by the single spatializing human traversing space, the roads of  
Gloucester and Dogtown are paced as measure of the poem and unit of experienced  
space. As Olson explores connections and continuities between the body and space,

geographical features are anthropomorphosed:

...Gravelly Hill says  
leave me be, I am contingent, the end of the world  
is the borders  
of my being

I can even tell you  
where I run out; and you can find  
out. I lie here  
so many feet up  
from the end of an old creek  
which used to run off  
the Otter ponds. [...]

(II.161)

Maximus' world is a continuity: the space is bounded by maps, properties, and then, measured by movements, is unbounded, made a continuum. Spaces are "written" by the movements of bodies in *Maximus*, but in reflexive form, this instance patterns geographic space as a body with indistinct borders:

[...] it isn't so decisive  
how one thing does end  
and another begin [...]

[...] My point is, the end of myself,  
happens, on the east side (Erechthonios)  
to be the beginning of another set  
of circumstance. (II.161)

Maximus effects a personal orientation and coordination with past spatializations. The captains and explorers and mappers supply methods of orientation which are emulated and deployed by Olson in the historical, spatial, and personal explorations of Gloucester. Those captains like Nathaniel Bowditch are included for their innate sense of orientation, so sharp they can bring a ship to harbor in a storm by the light of a single beacon at night: "Our old man goes ahead as if it was noonday" (I.67). An internal spatialization and orientation analogous to proprioception suffuses the overarching form of Volume II: purposefully published with no pagination, this condition makes non-serial "spatial" markers crucial to its poesis (the "Fort Point section", for instance, is preceded by a blank page which acts to differentiate the

otherwise unmarked series of fields). Olson thought one should be able, by opening the book and reading at random, to sense her position therein (*Guide*, xl); in other words, location, orientation from within should be possible through attentive movement, without need of numerical indices of position.<sup>39</sup>

Olson pursues Gloucester's originary space-time nexuses along these orders of spatial record with a sense of urgency to preserve them: a poem called "Further Completion of Plat (before they drown / Dogtown with a reservoir, and beautify it)" (II.152) hurries to survey land that will be covered by the Goose Cove Reservoir, completed 1963, the year this poem was written. It begins with historical data "nominalizing" the two roads of Dogtown, portions of which are soon to be drowned and never seen again:

Lower Road, Kinnicum, before 1717, Joseph Ingersoll and Bryant houses above him by 1717, and Smallmans up at the end before 1725: eight or possibly ten years to 'settle' that

Upper Road, earlier: Samuel Davis (where reservoir probably won't reach), 1713, William Hilton where reservoir will be (in swamp directly sheared off him) before 1719, Elwell next above (on Hilton's side) 1719 – the upper end – and all of it for sure by Jabez Hunter, 1725

So, on the outside, Dogtown established 1713-1725, twelve years

(II.152)

As Olson paces out the *loci* of the early settlers on these parallel roads of Dogtown, the topography is also spatialized: place is *practiced*. The topos, marked by the recorded names of the settlers, is *composed* into *space* as Olson measures, with his own step and his own eyes, the early dimensions and shapes of this late emanation of the sea-city pattern.

From the various eye-views adopted by Olson, the work begins to crystallize

<sup>39</sup> The degree of frustration generated by such a denial of sequence and seriality may be evidenced in the copy before me, owned by UBC's library. The naked margins of the pages' fields are arresting, like canvases bound in a spine—and yet the ordering hand (of a librarian?) has lightly penciled numbers in the upper-right of each ostensibly odd-numbered page. While commentators have long since imposed a numerical standardization for reference to positions in the work, as the demands of reference-obsessed scholarship dictate seriality, mile-markers as opposed to landmarks.

around the idiosyncrasies of the poet's own spatial experiences: the interface of Olson with the area he organizes by spatializing historical names, retrieving and recording their spatial relations before these are lost to time. Today, Goose Cove Reservoir covers part of Olson's northern delimiter of Dogtown, the Commons road.

The poetic "mapping" of Gloucester's topography is modeled on the activity of *Maximus'* mapmakers who, through periploi and the resulting portulans, have responded to space, in some cases to identical space, separated only by a veil of time. Map-making effects *placement* as orientation effects spatialization.

A *space* exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. Thus space is composed of intersections of mobile elements.<sup>40</sup> It is in a sense actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it.

Space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs or contractual proximities. On this view, in relation to place, space is like the word when it is spoken, that is, when it is caught in the ambiguity of an actualization, transformed into a term dependent upon many different conventions, situated as the act of a present (or of a time), and modified by the transformations caused by successive contexts. In contradistinction to the place, it has thus none of the univocity or stability of a "proper." (*Everyday Life*, 117)

"...Space is like the word when it is spoken": in *Maximus* we witness space practiced, oriented to the sensing figure in the instant, not delimited or conscribed as by a survey. Olson's perambulatory practice spatializes the place-data he finds in maps and records, and in the oscillation between map- and tour-views a reflexive self-orientation is executed across multiple scales.

---

<sup>40</sup> Notice the similarity of this terminology to Whiteheadian eternal objects in intersection

## outtro

"if order is not the world ... then *order is man*."

(*Special View of History*, 47)

In the few examples above I share a limited but representative sample of the many poetic interactions with space exhibited by *Maximus*. Gloucester, the vortex-like pattern I called the "object and lens" of the poems, has transmuted repeatedly: across vectors to Tyre, to Lerna; and across scales as the city is patterned to the human figure experiencing it, spatializing it. And yet, it is always Gloucester, a pattern of radical particulars. *Maximus* has led through the early definition of polis ("eyes"), a scopic pattern of I's in harmonious, ecological organization. In the La Cosa and Pausanias poems, *Maximus* effects translations into the "eye-view" of historical members of a related polis-pattern who develop the radically reflexive cartography which measures and records the environment and their spatial relation to it. These translations have the double effect of mythogizing spaces while the spatial poesis of *Maximus*, often deploying an alternation among space- and place-descriptions, also orients the poet's self to the terrain.

Olson's practice, proceeding through multiple strategies, multiple maps and tours of space, is always in quest of polis. Seeking the traces of an originary, unfallen island city, Olson follows threads of history and lines on maps into the territory represented and named there. As he assumes the imagined view of an ancient Tyrian, of Pausanias, La Cosa, the eyes of *Maximus* also take up the perspective of Olson personally: his own home, the view from his window, the hill to the west of his home, these idiosyncrasies are intermingled with the historical data retrieved and disposed in new patterns of juxtaposition, and of parallax. The acts of location effected by the poems become increasingly personal as Olson continues his historical



explorations of polis in space until his death in 1970.

Maximus' antidote to the Heraclitan estrangement from the familiar is the "primary" view: space not deadened by familiarity, but fresh to the eye, demanding movement, action, participation. Moving in modern-day Gloucester, Olson recovers these views, gleaning them from what he finds out was said and done.

But just there lies the thing, that "fisherman's Field" [...]  
stays the first place Englishmen  
first felt the light and winds, the turning, from that view,  
of what is now the City—the gulls the same but otherwise the sounds  
were different for those fourteen men, probably the ocean  
ate deeper in the shore, crashed further up at Cressy's (why  
they took their shelter either side of softer Stage Head and let  
Tablet Rock buff for them the weather side: on the lee,  
below the ridge which runs from my house straight to Tablet Rock [...]) (l.106)

*Maximus'* spatial practice bears a scaled relation to that of Juan de la Cosa. Looking out "through Juan de la Cosa's Eyes," and imagining so many other points of view on space, studying myriad modes of mapping, the poet gradually attains his own perspective, and *through his own eyes* the space is oriented to his being. The mappemunde of *Maximus* is not a map *per se*, but a hybridized reconfiguration of the map to the territory, and vice-versa, a spatializing translation of Gloucester through the reflexivity of all methods of measure which map, perforce, the mapper.

Olson's primary relation to Pausanias is in this production of subjective actualizations of space—tours, and records of his movement through it. Not an inscription on the land, Olson's being is "spoken" by his practice, which does not approach finality or objective truth, but foregrounds the process of orientation. The poems' spatial attentions converge around his own house as Olson compares his perspectives on space with those that have inhabited this same area before him:

...as I sit  
in a rented house  
on Fort Point,  
the Cape Ann Fisheries  
  
out one window,

Stage Head looking me  
out of the other  
in my right eye

(like backwards  
of a scene  
I saw the other way  
for thirty years)

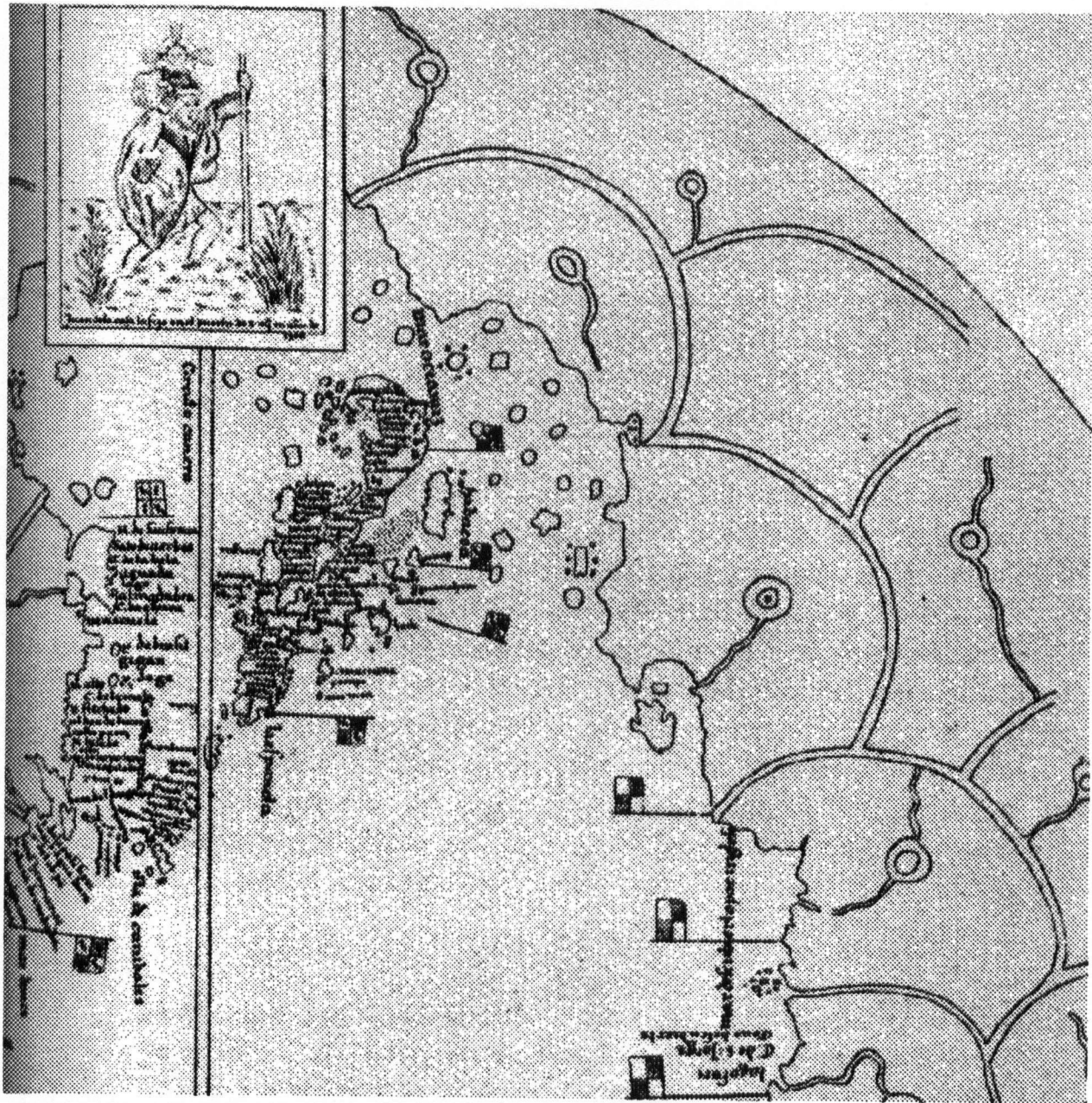
Gloucester can view  
those men  
who saw her  
first (l.107)

The features on Champlain's map that Olson reproduced in "Letter, May 2" are visible from the poet's kitchen window; the space is historical, and Olson attempts to locate himself, to find his place in both the world and the time.

Just as free, individual movement makes *space* of static *place*, at the scale of the single human body, translation or movement through space, generates proprioception. The analogy to proprioception correlates with the recurrence of patterned self-similarities in *Maximus*: recursion through the body's generation of its own sensations generates another feedback loop, or *mise en abyme*.

All my life I've heard  
one makes many

Olson called this epigraph of *The Maximus Poems* "the dominating paradox on which *Max* complete ought to stand." (*Guide*, 5) Through motifs of one in many and many in the one, the self-similar patterns of repetition and *mise en abyme* order much of the work around this paradox: within the map, the mapmaker is visible, producing the static field that represents his vision; thus, Champlain's ship is depicted in the map he draws while aboard it, and, returning to La Cosa's mappemunde, he is embodied in it, pictured in perambulatory cartographic process in the upper-left of his northern Atlantic chart (reproduced in Sauer, 9):



In both Champlain and La Cosa, Olson found recursive paradigms wherein the horizontal view is preserved within the ascendant survey of area: the subjective landscape view persists through the objective ambition of the map. The poetic correlation of Olson's practice to theirs should not surprise given the emulations of the explorers' records: Olson's mappemunde, pursued through personal orientations to his space and its history, "is to include [his] being."

While Maximus' perspective is unique, idiosyncratic, he speaks not in one

voice, but many, as La Cosa, Pausanias, Champlain, and many others are retrieved from the record and mobilized in space, recalling *Maximus'* epigraph, "All my life I've heard / one makes many." *Maximus* is both many, and one: the views are Olson's, but the prosopopoeia of *Maximus* also incorporates features of explorers and cartographers that precede<sup>41</sup> him in a lineage of spatializations. An incessant pattern of repetitions persists: the one to the many, the singular figure to the group, Isolato to island, citizen to City. Through the resonance with Pausanias, La Cosa, Champlain and others, Olson is *placing* himself in a lineage, a continuity of exploration and orientation evoking yet another pattern. Like an echo of past actions, Olson's spatializations borrow techniques and theories of past explorers and historians, the actors and tellers of myths.

*Maximus'* deployment of Herodotean historical inquiry combines with the ancient perspectival practice of Pausanias' spatial description to interrogate the spatial pattern of polis as it emanates in Gloucester. The (hu)man is measure in *Maximus*, locked in the centricity of the spherical being shown in Vitruvius's design, a proprioceptive body describes a sphere beyond the limits of the skin. Our dimensions produce further shapes, pattern the world around us, the natural forms and the forms we impose through accumulating city-shapes.

*Maximus* not only spatializes Gloucester, but also recovers and records the spatial perceptions of those who came before him. *Maximus* engages in second-order mapping as he locates cartographers in space. He compares his perceptions to those recorded in Champlain's map of the harbor, for instance, and to those that created Fitz Hugh Lane's periplum paintings. Space translations illuminate the larger pattern of polis Olson is studying. *Maximus'* spatial details resolve into larger-scale self-similar patterns, the iterative self-similarity of part to whole. Even though *order* is not

<sup>41</sup> Note "Maximus to Gloucester, Letter 27 [withheld]": "this / Greeks, is the stopping of the battle / It is the imposing / of all those antecedent predecessions, *the precessions / of me*, the generation of those facts / which are my words ..." (II.14, emphasis added).

established, this dynamism of scale is the major ordering principle of the poems, one compactly established with the first line:

Off-shore, by islands hidden in the blood  
jewels & miracles, I, Maximus  
a metal hot from boiling water, tell you...

The "islands hidden in the blood" evoke cells, visible under magnification. Or the insularity of the constituents of polis, an independence hidden in the "genes" of the explorers' lineage. The ocean-view, periplum, is juxtaposed with the scale of human blood. In the fractal juxtaposition of man to island to cell, patterns migrate from the recurrent to the recursive: the patterns established by human movements are ultimately *of* the human. Because Olson's "being" is included in the "mappemunde", just as Champlain includes his ship at anchor in Gloucester Harbor, the mapper is in effect measuring himself: the poet is self-composed like Vitruvius' "man-measurer" to be measured. *Maximus'* spatial patterns are not only recurrent, but also recursive: as the spaces reflected represent an invitation to see, to find out for ourselves, the forms always show the poet's "eye." This recursive paradigm of self-mapping is the device generating and arraying the iterations of self-similarity I note in *Maximus*.

The spatial register of Olson's poetic patterning can be described by another term noted by de Certeau: "proxemics", what E. T. Hall defined as "the study of how man unconsciously structures spaces—the distance between men in the conduct of daily transactions, the organization of space in his houses and buildings, and ultimately the lay out of his towns" (qtd. in *Everyday Life*, 222, n. 28). From the very small to the large, personal interior to city street to continent, a pattern propagates in *The Maximus Poems*. The small movements and shapes are scaled iterations of the large patterns intimated by the entire structure of the work.

The scaling pattern I see Olson detecting and exploiting in the city is not new. Lewis Mumford explains:

The city, as it took form around the royal citadel, was a man-made replica of the universe. This opened an attractive vista: indeed a glimpse of heaven itself. To be a resident of the city was to have a place in man's true home, the great cosmos itself.... (*City in History*, 49)

As in the repeating forms of islands at varying magnitudes, many of *Maximus'* patterns demonstrate scale independence, or self-similarity: at micro-scales of observation the patterns' level of complexity is not diminished, but may be increased. Mandelbrot explained the phenomenon of a coastline this way: at closer magnifications, the line drawn to map it must get longer and longer.

a coast  
is not the same  
as land  
a coast  
is not the main (II.24)

The early settlers Olson traces through space are manifestations of the Isolatoes, islands living upon islands. The continent to the island is another instance of this fractal pattern. In Volume II, the map on the cover reaches back to Devonian time, when the continents began their ponderous migration: meanwhile the poet walks along a glacier's path and along the rift of coast, land that once locked as a puzzle piece to some lost counterpart.

This same scaling device of small to large makes possible the technology of cartography: the scaled representation of territory enacts this dynamism among levels of scale. As Olson pursues a comparison of map to territory, scaled distortions proliferate in the process, and confer the place/space dynamism onto the larger form and process of *Maximus*. The City/polis pattern shares this scaling relation of the constituent to the whole. Part of what defines a city is a pattern of constituent parts which are conceived of as themselves forms of the city: Gloucester is "a form of mind." The city, according to de Certeau, is also defined by

the creation of a *universal* and anonymous *subject* which is the city itself: it gradually becomes possible to attribute to it ... all the functions and predicates that were previously scattered and assigned to many different real subjects—groups, associations, or individuals. "The city," like a proper name, thus provides a way of conceiving and constructing space on the basis of a finite

number of stable, isolatable, and interconnected properties. ( *Everyday Life*, 94)

The City, in multiple ways, patterns the “*many* different real subjects” to the *one* subject.

The basic materiality of the poems, their *thingness*, coexists in two terrains: one on the page, one on the coast of Massachussetts. Olson reconfigures the territory itself by moving through it and attending to its significations: “the poem” actually “is the Dogtown,” and the Dogtown is the spatializing poet. *Maximus’* geopoesis patterns forms of space, juxtaposing explorations and cartographic vision through time, relating Gloucester to Tyre and other sea-port polis patterns, employing forms on the page in the configuration of these patterns.

Island,  
to islands,  
headlands  
and shores, (ll.81)

Olson’s spatial poesis upon the idiosyncratic details of the city (in its pattern to other cities) is a scaled analog to the personal proprioception that orients his *self* in space. “Maximus to Gloucester, Letter 27 [withheld]” revivifies the earlier treatises on polis while examining a space from Olson’s childhood. Beginning, “I come back to the geography of it,” the first stanza exemplifies the orienting function of Olson’s spatial figures:

I come back to the geography of it,  
the land falling off to the left  
where my father shot his scabby golf  
and the rest of us played baseball [...]  
To the left the land fell to the city,  
to the right, it fell to the sea (ll.14)

Olson wrote Creeley regarding this poem, explaining, “what I was searching for was the simplest, to say how we do have this sense of unity with our body...” (qtd. in *Guide*, 262) In seeking this body-unity, Olson immediately orients himself in space, describing his perspective: “to the left ... to the right ...”

An American  
is a complex of occasions,  
themselves a geometry  
of spatial nature.

I have this sense,  
that I am one  
with my skin

Plus this—plus this:  
that forever the geography  
which leans in  
on me I compel  
backwards I compel Gloucester  
to yield, to  
change

Polis  
is this (ll.15)

“I am one / with my skin”: the spatial attentions that make Olson aware of the polis-pattern are a scale multiplication of this geometrical proprioceptive sense. And beyond the limit of skin, *Maximus*' poesis makes space plastic to the poet's eye: “I compel Gloucester / to yield, to / change.” Polis has become actively creative in the study represented by these examples.

*Maximus*' mappemunde is generated by the spatial translations pervading its



poesis:<sup>42</sup> vectors map and scale space, translating Tyre onto Gloucester, Lerna onto Gloucester, translating the subject from the city, through Dogtown, to the sea, away from the sea. Micheal Seidel asserts that the spatial forms in the *Odyssey* and *Ulysses*, such as movement patterns, are poetic components, responding to spatialized myths: "Geography is, finally, part of a cultural, myth-producing process. [...] Movement over spaces is geopoetic." (*Epic Geography*, xii) Olson explores and contributes to the mythic process that created Gloucester. Myths are the "spoken correlative" of action, a record of humans in a continuity exploring, discovering the last shore, and thus the limits and dimensions of their world, and thus their orientation in space.

*Maximus'* mappemunde is not a map *per se*, but a mythographic space translation, a record of movements that define, and locate, the space through which the body's vector travels. The spatial interaction with Gloucester creates for Olson a form with the magnitude of a world map, and that form is simultaneously scaled to the being of the poet:

by the way into the woods  
 Indian otter  
 "Lake" ponds orient  
 show me (exhibit  
 myself) (II.33)

<sup>42</sup> Olson saw the need for something that I think his *Maximus* is an attempt to fill:

A work which would free much of the encumbrance upon man as himself a universe—not microorganism, microcosm—would start with Hesiod, taking him as a base-line and saying anything after him as 'lost' something and that all which he does show and include is a beginning of dimension of man's place in the cosmos as it had been imagined before Homer or any such better known ways man is placed which have come on since. What I am gesturing in, is a 'literature' (of which Hesiod seems to be a conclusion) which is ... a total placement of man and things among all possibilities of creation, rather than that one alone, of modern history and politics, and science and literature, or arma, the Indo-European chariot, and virum, the old epic....(Proprioception, *Coll. Prose*, 197)

The proper name is examined again in another treatise, "Place, and Names":

a place as term in the order of creation  
 & thus useful as a function of that equation  
 example, that the "Place Where the Horse-Sacrificers Go"  
 of the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad is worth more than  
 a metropolis—or, for that matter, any moral  
 concept, even a metaphysical one... (Coll. Prose, 200)

Olson's acts of location and interrelation of the self to the city and the cosmos "exhibit" him, foreground the subjectivity exercised in three dimensions. The vectors of his movements and the patterns in his eye spatialize the experience of subjective *being* in a manner explicated by the theories of Merleau-Ponty:

We must not wonder why being is orientated, why existence is spatial, why ... our body is not geared to the world in all its positions, and why its coexistence with the world magnetizes experience and induces a direction in it. The question could be asked only if the facts were fortuitous happenings to a subject and an object indifferent to space, whereas perceptual experience shows that they are presupposed in our primordial encounter with being, and that being is synonymous with being situated. (252)

The view of history established in *Maximus*—the "originary" moments of English settlement, the larger migrational tendency of which this settlement is the culmination—these are the products of a narrow perspective, unabashedly biased and perspectivist. But the projection of this Herodotean view is one central function of *Maximus*: proprioception, understanding of personal orientation, of perspective, through movement as *being there*: the pacing perambulatory interaction with space is the heart of *Maximus'* escutcheon, the place of infinite depth generated by self-duplication of a heraldic device.<sup>43</sup>

As Berard's theory of the *Odyssey* intimated to Olson, myths are the record of humans in a continuity exploring, approaching through each discovery the last shore, and thus approaching a knowledge of the "dimensions" of their world, and thus their

<sup>43</sup> Andrea Gide is credited by the *OED* with first relating this infinite self-duplication of part of an escutcheon in heraldry to an abyss, calling it *mise en abyme*. He found this self-duplicating form in the play within *Hamlet*, comparing it to the iterated regress of the escutcheon's "heart". See *Maximus, at Tyre and at Boston* (l.93) for Olson's use of these terms in a form that configures Massachusetts/Tyre as mirror-images:

Honor, or color, point

they called it, between the middle chief  
and the heart, point

And if the nasturtium  
is my shield,

and my song  
a cantus firmus

orientation in space. *Maximus* stands in relation to the *Odyssey* as spatial mythology, even while following Pound's dictum, "make it new." The earlier epics such as the *Odyssey* cited by *Maximus* are similarly works of *location* in the double sense that they find, discover, and leave a marker, showing where they have been. *Maximus* extends this model: movements through space measure dimensions of space, but these dimensions depend on the scale of the measurer to the measured.

Names in *Maximus* are elements of creation, and are both radically idiosyncratic, and shared, private and public:

the crucialness being that these places or names  
be as parts of the body, common, & capable  
therefore of having cells which can decant  
total experience ... (Collected Prose, 200)

Names are corporeal, and as "parts of the body," Olson locates them proprioceptively.

I measure my song,  
measure the sources of my song,  
measure me, measure  
my forces (I.44)

In his detailed spatial attentions, Olson explores the relationship of humans to the spaces they create and measure by occupying. *Maximus* studies the spatial being of humans, their perceptual life within and beyond the limit of their skin, as they pursue the limits of the land. By mapping coasts, for example. The explorers gathered here are proprioceptive automata, compelled to risk everything, leave the safety of home to find the end of the world, which is the last continent to be discovered, the last shore, which Olson calls Gloucester.

the sea  
is right up against the skin of the shore with a tide  
as high  
as this one... (III.107)

As *Maximus* configures the coast as a skin, Champlain, La Cosa, and earlier, Pytheas, Odysseus, are cast as proprioceptors: the navigators, mapping coasts, thereby define

the limits of the land. *Maximus* configures the coast as a skin: the body of continental land lay beyond it. The coast is also a pattern to oppose all those man-made patterns, those orders that, when examined at low and high magnitudes, give rise to the city, and the image of *cosmos*. In *Maximus* the sea is that chaotic principle beyond the order of cosmos; the term sea-city ("C- / city") opposes two primary forces in eternal contention: the order-driven human versus the sea, engine of chaos, ring of force surrounding an island of order, its edge forever eaten away by the chaotic principle. The coastline is the site of this contest, and its place in the chaotic/fractal algorithm is striking: it is Mandelbrot's example par excellence of a figure the complexity of which increases in proportion to the scale of its visual resolution.

In attending to iterative patterns, *Maximus* does not produce one "order of the universe,"<sup>44</sup> but generates a dynamism of spatial perception, an orientation within orders, by mapping cartographic scale translations: by mapping mapping. These large orders of perception are scaled transforms of the small orders, the small world of the skin:

If unselectedness is man's original condition (such is more accurate a word than that lovely riding thing, chaos, which sounds like what it is, the most huge generalization of all, obviously making it necessary for man to invent a bearded giant to shape it for him) but if likewise, selectiveness is just as originally the impulse by which he proceeds to do something about the unselectedness, then one is forced, is one not, to look for some instrumentation in man's given which makes selection possible. And it has gone so far, that is, science has, as to wonder if the fingertips, are not very knowing knots in their own rights, little brains (little photo-electric cells, I think they now call the skin) which, immediately, in responding to external stimuli, make decisions! It is a remarkable and usable idea. For it is man's first cause of wonder how rapid he is in his taking in of what he does experience. (*Collected Prose*, 160-161)

Olson's work not only arrays the efforts of past explorers and cartographers in new configurations of homology, but also adopts and adapts many of these principles in the exercise of its own proprioceptive spatial orientation. And the visceral experience of a

<sup>44</sup> "No order of the universe can finally be seen order to it."—Zukofsky's puzzling concept seems to actualise the crux its disjunctive grammar somehow does not veil. One valence is this *ultimate seeing*, an overarching view which would subsume any smaller scale view in the *mise en abyme* of scale translation which allows the concept of mapping and of omniscience to be imagined. (*Bottom*, 164)

body in space foregrounds not the objective qualities of that space, but the subjectivity (in motion) which makes it space at all. *Maximus* does not display de Certeau's cartographic lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more: Olson's spatializing eyes do not ultimately ascend, but on the contrary, behold and measure the parallax of their embodiedness in the space ordered by the body's horizontal vectors.

Polis

is this

### Works Cited

- Babson, Roger W. and Foster H. Saville. *Cape Ann Tourist's Guide*. Wellesley Hills, Mass.: Business Statistics Organization, Inc., 1945.
- Berard, Victor. *Did Homer Live?* Trans. Brian Rhys. London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1931.
- Butterick, George F. *A Guide To The Maximus Poems of Charles Olson*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.
- Butterick, George. "Foreword", in *Olson's Gloucester*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1980.
- de Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Trans. Steven Rendall. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.
- Dorn, Edward. *What I See in the Maximus Poems*. Ventura, California: A Migrant Pamphlet, Spring, 1960
- Ford, O. J. "Charles Olson and Carl Sauer: Towards a Methodology of Knowing," in *Boundary 2*, vol. 3 (1974-75). Binghamton, New York: State University of New York at Binghamton, 1975. 145-150
- Greene, David. "Introduction", *The History: Herodotus*. Trans. David Grene. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1987. 1-32
- Harrison, Jane Ellen. *Themis: a Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion*. Cambridge: University Press, 1912.
- Havelock, Eric A. *Preface to Plato. A History of the Greek Mind*. Vol 1. Cambridge: Havard UP, 1963.
- Heath, William. *Major British Poets of the Romantic Period*. New York: Macmillan, 1973.
- Herodotus. *The History*. Trans. David Grene. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1987.
- Kenner, Hugh. *A Homemade World: The American Modernist Writers*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975.
- Kenner, Hugh. *The Pound Era*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973.
- Maud, Ralph. *Charles Olson's Reading: A Biography*. Carbondale and Edwardsville:

Southern Illinois University Press, 1996.

Merleau-Ponty, Marcel. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Trans. Colin Smith. London: Routledge, 1962

Olson, Charles. "A Bibliography on America for Ed Dorn." *Collected Prose*. Ed. Donald Allen and Benjamin Friedlander. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997. 297-310.

Olson, Charles. "Call Me Ishmael." *Collected Prose*. Ed. Donald Allen and Benjamin Friedlander. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997. 1-105.

Olson, Charles. "Definitions by Undoings", in *Boundary 2*, vol. 3 (1974-75). Binghamton, New York: State University of New York at Binghamton, 1975. 7-12

Olson, Charles. *Human Universe, and other Essays*. New York: Grove Press, 1967.

Olson, Charles. "Letter to Elaine Feinstein", May, 1959, in *The New American Poetry*. Ed. Donald Allen. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1960. 397-400

Olson, Charles. *The Maximus Poems IV V VI*, Cape Goliard manuscript/printing proofs, 1967. Held at Simon Fraser University.

Olson, Charles. *The Maximus Poems*. Ed. George F. Butterick. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.

Olson, Charles. *Muthologos: The Collected Lectures and Interviews*. Ed. George F. Butterick. 2 vols. Bolinas: Four Seasons, 1977.

Olson, Charles. "Notes for the Proposition: Man is Prospective", in *Boundary 2*, vol. 3 (1974-75). Binghamton, New York: State University of New York at Binghamton, 1975. 1-6

Olson, Charles. "Projected Verse." *Collected Prose*. Ed. Donald Allen and Benjamin Friedlander. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997. 239-249.

Olson, Charles. "Proprioception." *Collected Prose*. Ed. Donald Allen and Benjamin Friedlander. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997. 179-199.

Olson, Charles. *The Special View of History*. Ed. Ann Charters. Berkeley: Oyez, 1970.

Pausanias. *Description of Greece*. Trans. W. H. S. Jones. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1954.

- Pound, Ezra. *The Cantos of Ezra Pound*. New York: New Directions, 1998.
- Sauer, Carl Ortwin. *Sixteenth Century North America: The Land and the People as Seen by the Europeans*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971.
- Seidel, Michael. *Epic Geography: James Joyce's Ulysses*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1976.
- Simpson, J. A. *The Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Terrell, Carroll F. *A Companion to the Cantos of Ezra Pound*. Berkeley: University of California, 1980.
- Von Hallberg, Robert. *Charles Olson: The Scholar's Art*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1978.
- Watten, Barret. "Plasma", in *In the American Tree*. Ed. Ron Silliman. Orono, Maine: National Poetry Foundation, 1986. 26-31
- Williams, William Carlos. *Paterson*. 1946-1958. New York: New Directions, 1992.
- Zukofsky, Louis. *Bottom: On Shakespeare*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.