Vertiginous Space: Poetics of Disorientation
in Charles Olson, Susan Howe, and Steve McCaffery

by

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Abstract

This dissertation is a critical study of how representations of space in selected post-war North American avant-garde poetry produce a poetics of disorientation. Reading space as a characteristic of postmodern experience and a medium of subjectivity in the globalizing stage of late capitalism, this study analyzes spatial poetry and the theory of the spatial turn as forms of knowledge that disclose the changing perceived spatiality of the globe and of the subject. The spatial turn to the postmodern supplies an analytic frame through which to trace a reemphasis of space in particular avant-garde poetics, including the work of Charles Olson, Susan Howe and Steve McCaffery. Engaging with the socio-cultural, geographic, political and psychological effects of spatial poetics as interventions in social space, this study investigates an aesthetic that alternates dialectically between a sense of spatial disorientation and a process of cognitive mapping. These representations track the development of a doubly decentered spatial subject, displaced in Marxist-geographical terms with respect to the space of the planet, and displaced in psychoanalytic terms with respect to the subject's own intention, meaning, and self-coherence.

Keywords: Poetry; Space; Geography; Psychoanalysis; Theory; Philosophy

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Theories of Space and the Spatial Subject

Introduction

> There is no longer a simple origin. For what is reflected is split in itself and not only as an addition to itself of its image. The reflection, the image, the double, splits what it doubles. The origin of speculation becomes a difference. What can look at itself is not one.
>
> (Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 36)

> Space,
> they say, and think a several
>
> dimensioned locus
>
> (Robert Creeley, *Pieces*, 44)

In December of 1968, as three NASA astronauts entered lunar orbit and looked back at the world they departed, they described a "blue marble" suspended in inky space beyond the curving horizon of the moon in the foreground. Although it did not appear on the mission plan of Apollo 8, astronaut Bill Anders took a photograph of the sight. The image known as "Earthrise" recorded the first time anyone had seen Earth in full frame; widely publicized, it became a familiar instance of an initially unfamiliar perspective on the planet—an indexical representation of terrestrial space that expanded both a literal worldview and the imagination of its inhabitants. The image, which astronaut Bill Anders called "the first statement of our planet Earth," shatters a form of spatial ideology that had rendered the planet invisible. As Anders explained, "After all the training and studying we'd done as pilots and engineers to get to the moon safely and get back, [...] what we really discovered was the planet Earth" (*Guardian,* 20 Dec 2008).

From a distance of 240 000 miles, "It was hard to think that that little thing held so many problems, so many frustrations," wrote Apollo astronaut Frank Borman. "Raging nationalistic interests, famines, wars, pestilence don't show from that distance" (*Life* 17 January 1969). Given the focal length of "Earthrise*,*" the planet appears not as a stable signified, but as a radically ambiguous signifier eliciting contradictory views of the planet. Some see a fragile world in a lacquer-thin bubble of atmosphere, while others glean from the same image a robust God-given world which has survived all of humankind's onslaughts without any visible degradation.

I begin with the irruption of a total view of the planet because it marks a shift in spatial thinking that ultimately affects both society and subjectivity. If, as Martin Heidegger argues, "The fundamental event of the modern age is the conquest of the world as picture," then "Earthrise" represents the realization of modernity's dream (Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track* 71). "Earthrise" functions as a *gestalt* representation, standing in for a totality that provokes the spatial imagination; more than a revelation, this view of Earth, which David Harvey called "an icon of a new kind of consciousness," arguably represents a revolutionary paradigm shift. Although this iconic photograph is two-dimensional, it implies the third dimension of the globe more clearly than any previous image had done. As David Harvey notes,

> the geometrical properties of a globe are different from those of a two-dimensional map. It has no natural boundaries save those given by lands and oceans, cloud covers and vegetation patterns, deserts and well-watered regions. Nor does it have any particular center. It is perhaps no accident that the awareness of the artificiality of all those boundaries and centers that had hitherto dominated thinking about the world became much more acute. (*Spaces of Hope*, 13-14)

Rather than the planet being seen as a *container* of life and objects, Earth appears in this image as *contents*, as an active moment within social process (*Spaces of Global Capitalism*). This image of the global totality forms a postmodern sequel to Heidegger's

"world picture": not a picture of the world, but the world conceived as a picture.[1] In this way the image evokes the concomitant *spatial turn* of critical theory that reemphasized spatial analysis and thinking, emerging through work by French theorists and philosophers including Henri Lefebvre, Michel Foucault, Gaston Bachelard and Michel de Certeau.

My dissertation is a critical study of representations of space in selected post-war North American avant-garde poetry and poetics which oscillate between disorientation and what Fredric Jameson calls an aesthetic of cognitive mapping. Reading space as a characteristic of postmodern experience and a medium of subjectivity in the globalizing stage of late capitalism, this study analyzes spatial poetry and the theory of the spatial turn as forms of knowledge that disclose the changing spatiality of the globe and of the subject. While the spatial turn to the postmodern supplies an analytic frame for reading what is often described as "difficult" poetry, I trace a reemphasis of space in particular avant-garde poetry which also extends and clarifies the spatial turn. While engaging with the socio-cultural, geographic, political and psychological effects of spatial poetics as interventions in social space, I investigate an aesthetic that alternates dialectically between a sense of spatial disorientation and a process of cognitive mapping, each produced by poetic representations of space. Through these representations I track a problematic that subtends the spatial turn: the development of a doubly decentered spatial subject, displaced in Marxist-geographical terms with respect to the space of the planet, and displaced in psychoanalytic terms with respect to the subject's own intention, meaning, and self-coherence. In subsequent chapters I explore how the fragmentation and indirection of avant-garde poetry, specifically the radically spatial poetics of Charles

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[1] The global totality is a consummation of the scopic drive to see all in what Donna Haraway called the "god-trick," a transcendental position which is "both the view from above, an elevated two-point perspective bird's-eye-view, and an all seeing eye that views everywhere at the same time" (Pickles, *A History of Spaces*, 80). John Pickles seems to confuse the specific parallax view in this "god-trick": as will be clear later, the dual perspective takes in both the in-situ, "embodied" view of surroundings, and a god's-eye view of everything else, including that first locus. As I explain, this mirror-situation of seeing myself seeing myself is identical with what Lacan specifies as self-consciousness.

Olson, Susan Howe and Steve McCaffery, produce this subjective decentering[2] while also establishing dialectical links between a spatial imagination and a spatial poetics, and between symbolic space and signification. To prepare the ground for an analysis of poetry and spatial theory, I will first give an overview of the revolution in spatial thinking that is referred to as the spatial turn.

Given Lefebvre's centrality to the reemphasis of space in theory and philosophy, I begin with a review of his work and its impact on spatial thinking while comparing his theorizations of space with the thinking of Heidegger, de Certeau and others. I will argue the spatial theories of Lefebvre are ideologically aware in a way the previous iterations of romantic description and place-making, including the thinking of Descartes and Heidegger, were not. In Lefebvre I mark a self-reflexive theorization of space that preceded and provided a model for the spatial turn of the humanities and critical geography. I then turn to examine the decentering of the subject in two realms: the linguistic and the non-metaphorically spatial, both of which I configure in psychoanalytic terms. Through the linguistic, I explore a subjective decentering through the chain of signifiers, while through a material examination of spatiality, I track the intermittent connection of body and space in postmodernity. Here I also propose a critical synthesis of Lefebvre's redefinition of space with what I argue is Jacques Lacan's spatialization of the subject. Exploring the subjective process of cognitive mapping in the work of Fredric Jameson as a reaction to disorientation, I explore how the postmodern abstraction of the global totality enables (but also frustrates) the grasping of a spatial ideology characterized by contradiction, alienation and fragmentation—conditions which are as relevant to philosophy (Jameson) as to politics (Agamben), and which I argue are intervened in by the avant-garde poetics of Olson, Howe, and McCaffery.

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[2] This decentering involves a productive paradox in which the anthropocentrism of language is deployed poetically to disclose a fundamental disjunction and disorientation. Spatial prepositions, for instance, are inherently anthropocentric, and yet are powerful means to an evocative decentering (see Tuan, *Space and Place*, 45, who cites Merleau-Ponty).

The Spatial Turn: The Production of Space and Scale

The spatial turn of theory, which aims to address the subordinate position of spatial investigation relative to the hegemonic historical and chronological orientations of knowledge, illuminates a deep shift in the awareness of space that would come to be associated with postmodernity, testing the effects of this shift on subjectivity and society. Paramount in the spatial turn is the effort to counter the ideological attenuation of space, and to resist master narratives that support the apparent objectivity of epistemology. As Denis Cosgrove argues, this turn

> corresponds to post-structuralist agnosticism about both naturalistic and universal explanations and about single-voiced historical narratives, and to the concomitant recognition that position and context are centrally and inescapably implicated in all constructions of knowledge. (*Mappings* 7)

Edward Soja's *Postmodern Geographies* further establishes the historical situation in which the humanities privileged temporality, which eventually produced a desire to counter an attenuation of spatial information and theorizing. A "historicism of theoretical consciousness," as Soja put it,

> has tended to occlude a comparable critical sensibility to the spatiality of social life, a practical theoretical consciousness that sees the lifeworld of being creative located not only in the making of history but also in the construction of human geographies, the social production of space and the restless formation and reformation of geographical landscapes...". (*Postmodern Geographies*,11)

Building on the work of French thinkers including Michel Foucault, Michel de Certeau, Gaston Bachelard, and primary among them, Henri Lefebvre, Soja's work aims to reemphasize the spatial over the dominant temporality in critical theory by extending the significance of Lefebvre's crucial insight, that "(social) space is a (social) product" (*Production* 30). In the face of the "pragmatic and anti-speculative historicism" that had gripped institutional geography, Soja would illuminate the influence of what he termed

the "socio-spatial dialectic," a mutually determining relationship of space and society (*Postmodern Geographies*, 55-57).[3]

Rather than denigrate the temporal, the spatial turn produces an analysis of objects and events in a robust space-time; Harvey and Jameson have characterized this as an adjustment of the ratio of space to time in the analysis of culture, society and economy (*Spaces of Hope*; *Postmodernism*). With their integral critique of historicism, the spatial theories of Lefebvre, Harvey, Soja, and others extended Louis Althusser's corrective re-articulation of the temporal dialectic in Marxism. Althusser rebuts the idea that Marxism is a historicism, wherein politics and philosophy are treated as the direct results of specific historical periods (*Reading Capital,* 93; 119ff). In the historicist schemata, a "crucial misunderstanding" which became accepted as a dogmatic interpretation of Marxism, had, according to Althusser, uncritically applied what he calls "Hegelian historical time" to Marx's thought (*Reading Capital* 92). Althusser holds that one "particular concept of history" has often been stamped onto Marx's dialectical materialism, introducing "as a theoretical solution a concept ... which, far from being a solution, is in reality a theoretical problem" (93). This Hegelian concept of time is linear, homogeneous, continuous, and reflective of the "the essence of the social totality of which it is the *existence*" (*ibid.*). "Historical time" (*ibid.*) ignored the Marxist distinction between historical and dialectical materialism, seeing philosophy as "the self-knowledge of the historical process," and reducing dialectical materialism to the historical method (*For Marx* 252). Althusser addresses this temporal monism by arguing that the structured levels (the economic, the political, the ideological, etc.) of the Marxist whole each develop within their own "peculiar time and history" (*Reading Capital* 100).

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[3] The reemphasis of spatiality in this turn is also an extension of the critique of everyday life that sprang out of the anti-modernist, iconoclastic 1960s (Harvey, 38). In Lefebvre's *Critique of Everyday Life* (1961)*,* the "everyday" is posited as a concept that is both ubiquitous and ephemeral, often disappearing the moment it becomes an object for theory; in this way, the everyday is similar, as an object for theory, to space—it is everywhere once it is brought to awareness.

       Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1980) established the formal features of both the democratizing movements of the masses through city geography, and the distinctions between place and space, map and tour, and strategies and tactics. By 1984 Certeau's poetic study had been translated into English by Steven Rendall; in 1987 Alice Kaplan and Kristin Ross edited *Yale French Studies* #73, an issue dedicated to extending the French studies of space and everyday life in the US.

Time had been assumed as "the privileged category of the dialectician, because it excludes and subordinates where space tolerates and coordinates" (Ross, 8; qtd in Harvey, *Hope* 55); in addressing this assumption, spatial theory critiques the way historicism masks the contradictions of capitalism. In this spirit, Soja's *Postmodern Geographies* attempts to escape

> the rigidly historical narrative, to break out from the temporal prison house of language and the similarly carceral historicism of conventional critical theory to make room for the insights of an interpretive human geography, a spatial hermeneutic. (*Postmodern Geographies*, 1-2)

In response to the perceived difficulty of being dialectical about space, David Harvey proposes a related "historical-geographic materialism" in order to more cogently examine "the class significance of processes like globalization and uneven geographical development" (55). Spatial investigation thus formalizes patterns of social space and analyses contradictions as they appear in space, both concretely, for instance in the geographies of resource exploitation (including "human resources"), as well as immaterially, in the form of the maintenance or elimination of trade barriers, for example.

These theorizations respond to the hyper-spatiality of the postmodern moment, examining what makes contemporary space different from other space-times. The condition of "late capitalism" is common to many perspectives on this question. Seizing on the revisionary political-economic potential of the French reemphasis of space in the work of Lefebvre, Bachelard and de Certeau among others, the diverse field of radical or critical geography gives rise to the theorization of uneven geographical development by Neil Smith and Soja, culminating in a North American spatial turn that addresses "the annihilation of space by time" that Marx had established in the *Grundrisse*.[4] The phenomenon of uneven geographical development, in concert with neoliberalism's appetitive commodification of everything (Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism*), manifests across the urban, the regional, and the continental. Each of these scales features a

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[4] "Capital by its nature drives beyond every spatial barrier. Thus the creation of the physical conditions of exchange – of the means of communication and transport – the annihilation of space by time – becomes an extraordinary necessity for it" (*Grundrisse*, 524).

different concrete manifestation of the unevenness that has, in diachronic terms, been the product of specific histories of industrialization, exploitation, and resource extraction.

In addition to the concept of uneven geographical development, the concept of scale is crucial to this differentiation. In the midst of a critical moment that would become known as the scale debates, Sallie Marston demonstrates the proliferating definitions of the word *scale*:

> *Cartographic scale* is the relationship between the distance on a map to the corresponding distance 'on the ground'. *Geographic scale* refers to the spatial extent of a phenomenon or a study. *Operational scale* corresponds to the level at which relevant processes operate. Finally, scale also refers to measurement or the level of resolution, such that large-scale studies incorporate coarse resolution while small-scale studies are based upon fine resolution. ("The social construction of scale" 220)

According to Marston, scale is not only the result of capitalist production: the space of the household, for instance, is socially as well as economically produced. In what she calls a "constructivist framework," Marston foregrounds "the rejection of scale as an ontologically given category" (Marston, 220). Rather, *the production of scale*[5] is the result of economic and political processes, including "the geographic strategies of capitalist firms, of political institutions such as the nation-state, and of labor organizing to improve livelihood conditions in the face of challenges posed by capital mobility and/or state strategies" (McMaster and Sheppard, *Scale and Geographic Inquiry*, 16). While Neil Smith explicates the scale-shifts of uneven development, moving from regional to localized scales, Erik Swyngedouw develops the concept of "glocalization," describing "political economic forces driving globalization that are simultaneously making both the global scale and also subnational metropolitan regions more important scales in the geography of economic change, whereas the national scale is becoming less important" (*ibid.*). Spatial theory addresses both the problems and the opportunities posed by this scalar deviation: Harvey and Swyngedouw argue that a politics of scale can operate at

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[5] Space is simultaneously the medium of planetary orbit at the scale of the solar system, the realm of polis at the national scale, and of the neighbour at local scale. This simultaneity is the productive and paradoxical kernel of relational scale: as the development of fractals in mathematics shows, events and conditions at the very large and the very small scales are often interrelated, but can also radically diverge (Smith, "Scale Bending and the Fate of the National," *Scale and Geographic Inquiry* (2004)).

multiple scales simultaneously, even in contradictory ways. Dilations of scale, or jumps across scales, can open spaces of activism and critique (*ibid.* 17). As I have indicated above, the Earthrise photograph represents this turn away from even Earth as a given scale, initiating a new relationship to imagined space.

The dialectical analysis of the fluidity of scale characteristic of the spatial turn has been developed in relation to the cultural and economic changes brought on by globalization. As Neil Brenner argues, "scalar shifts are in fact one of the most important distinguishing features of contemporary globalization" (McMaster and Sheppard, 16). In this framework, the macro scales of globalization also embrace the most micro scale of the body, as Harvey asserts (*Spaces of Hope*, 15). As dialectical ends of a spectrum, the globe and the body entail a scalar continuum completely devoid of concrete divisions that might distinguish everyday life from the abstractions of high-finance capital, or from the planetary threats of global warming or radioactive fallout. And yet, distinctions of scale do materialize in social space; as Neil Smith explains, "the differentiation of geographical scales establishes and is established through the geographical structure of social interactions" ("Contours of a spatialized politics," *Social Text* 33, p73). Scale, following Lefebvre's revolutionary observation regarding the production of space, is also shown to be a social product; an outgrowth of human behaviours, activities and events. The proliferation of variant scales, and the "jumps" or "bends" that connect or disjoin them, contribute to the overwhelming spatiality of postmodernity and a resulting disorientation in the face of simultaneous, nested levels of complexity. What is the subjective experience of this complexity? Contemporary space is often represented as an over-proximity, an overload of the subject's sensorium which is absolutely immune to interpretation (Jameson, *Postmodernism*). This proximity is no longer merely horizontal: the production of scale as a vertically nested series embracing the spatial levels subtending globalization, and its redefinition as a relational construct (Marston), is no doubt responsible in part for the decentering and disorientation of subjectivity that obtains in postmodernity.

In the context of both postmodernism and globalization (arguably two sides of a single phenomenon), the seamless zoom among scales (recently exemplified by Google Earth software) performs a fantasy of smooth translation toward and away from the planet, with image resolution fluidly matching the simulated distance from the surface.

Although its radical fluidity and ambiguity generate disorientation, scale is nonetheless perspicuously visualized by *Powers of 10* (1968), a short film directed by Charles and Rae Eames which explores both the interrelations and disconnection between the personal scale of space and the macro- and micro-universe. A mind-bending example of scalar poesis, the film structures an educational tour through exponential scales, beginning at the everyday focal distance of a couple resting on a picnic blanket, and extending to the extremes of scientific understanding: the range of both galactic bodies and infinitesimal subatomic particles in space. The zoom itself between these universes is formalized as a visual poetics, symbolizing with reference to human scale a phenomenon that challenges representation itself. *Powers of 10* is nonetheless an exemplary representation; not a map of an area, but a moving chart of a scale continuum along which relationships and discontinuities are in evidence.

The bewildering revelation of relational scale produces conceived space in previously blank interstices as the film orients the human scale to the macro vastness of the known universe, then reverses course toward the micro, quantum universe. Conceptually echoing this existential zoom, the present study of the poetics of disorientation and the subjective attempt at cognitive mapping will traverse these relations, moving from the phenomenology of the human body out into built space toward the architectural and Lefebvrean urban revolution, and from Heideggerian dwelling to the Jamesonian global totality.

In order to establish the context of spatial theory and thought, I focus here on the work of Henri Lefebvre, who achieves a crucial break from the reigning Cartesian understanding of space. I review first how Lefebvre redefines space as a material, non-neutral register of life and representation that is produced in the crucible of capitalist and statist activity, thereby opening a new view of spatial contradiction and ideology. I explicate Lefebvre's revolutionary ideas through comparison to others who established a basis for the spatial turn. In order to trace the development of postmodern subjective spatial disorientation, I contrast Lefebvre's thought principally with Heidegger's philosophical intervention, exploring how Lefebvre annihilates the abstraction and metaphysics that inhere in this early poetic-philosophical rendering of space. Later in this chapter, by deploying a synthesis of Lefebvrean and Lacanian thought, I show how the postmodern subject combats disorientation in space and society through registration in a

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spatial symbolic fabric, a process that I argue certain avant-garde spatial poetics may be uniquely able to represent and problematize. In order to study how space redefines the subject, I will first review Lefebvre's crucial redefinition of space.

Henri Lefebvre:
Spatial Production, Representation, Revolution

The most catalytic and compelling thinker of the reemphasis of space in theory, Henri Lefebvre is a radical, Marxian and metaphilosophical theorist of space whose work spans the dynamic period from approximately 1940-1990.[6] Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (1974; English translation 1991) introduced the titular concept as a simple but radiant application of a marxist insight: that space is a social product, and that the true character of the capitalist production of space is sublimated, hidden from conscious perception. Lefebvre's work opens by reviewing the deep shifts underway in the concept of space: "not so many years ago, the word 'space' had a strictly geometrical meaning: the idea evoked was simply that of an empty area" (*Production*, 1). As Andy Merrifield explains, Lefebvre configures this "emptiness" as a spatialized version of the Marxian fetish: just as in the commodity fetish, the fetishism of space presents an object which elides from view the activity that produced it (*Metromarxism*, 89). For Lefebvre, to the extent that it appears as a void, space conceals the fact that it is produced. One of Lefebvre's goals then is reversing this perceived emptiness, this cause-less character of space; this establishes a fundamental exemplar of spatial ideology critique, uncovering the unconscious qualities of unthought or misrecognized space.

Lefebvre argues that the perception of space as empty, as a container for subjects, objects and activities, is a function of its ideological character which made it mostly immune to critical thought: "The theoretical error" in studies of space, he claimed,

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[6] This astonishing half-century of Lefebvre's major work saw World War II, the Holocaust, the Manhattan project and the deployment of nuclear weapons; the space race and extended space exploration; many (attempted) revolutions, including Mao's expulsion of the Nationalist party (1949), the Cuban revolution (1956-59), and the French students' and workers' revolt of May 1968; and the decline of state communism and Fordist-Keynesianism with the rise of neoliberalism.

"is to be content to see a space without conceiving of it..." (*Production*, 94). For Lefebvre, the uncritical perception of space fuels its effect as a fetish-screen, covering actual relations and characteristics. The perceived neutrality of space is one consequence of theory's temporally privileged tradition of telocentric historicism, a situation that partly explains the intractability of that temporal emphasis (Soja; see also Merrifield, Schmid). "(Social) space is a (social) product," Lefebvre claims, admitting the near-tautological appeal of the phrase (*Production* 26).[7] The relationship of space and the social is so intertwined, according to Lefebvre, that any intervention in the roots of capitalist contradictions is first of all spatial: "A total revolution [...] seems to be in the offing, as though already immanent to the present. To change life, however, we must first change space" (190). Lefebvre's theories would, especially with their belated translation into English and other languages, effect this change; to fully understand Lefebvre's critical notion of space as a conscious relational field with social effects, however, it is necessary to visit the deeper bedrock of the spatial turn in the work of Martin Heidegger.

While Stuart Elden argues the work of Heidegger is important in understanding Lefebvre's intellectual project, this argument requires (as he admits) a particular reading of Heidegger against the grain ("Between Marx and Heidegger: Politics, Philosophy and Lefebvre's *The Production of Space*," *Antipode* 36, no. 1 (2004) 86–105).[8] Granting a number of instructive similarities in their work, I counter that the comparison rather

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[7] Social space is different from both the mental space of philosophers and the physical space of perceived 'nature': "...[S]pace has taken on, within the present mode of production, [...] a sort of reality of its own, a reality clearly distinct from, yet much like, those assumed in the same global process by commodities, money and capital" (26). "...[T]he space thus produced also serves as a tool of thought and of action; ... in addition to being a means of production it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power..."(26). Lefebvre explained that what is exceptional about space, what he termed the illusion of transparency and the illusion of opacity, each had to do with vision (*Production*, 27-29).

[8] A review of Elden's article on its own terms reveals a curious quality (which may be a flaw or a virtue). While it begins with a claim that Heidegger's work is a largely silent but crucial influence on Lefebvre, it concludes by appealing to Lefebvre's work to demonstrate the "possibilities of a left-Heideggerianism," thus appearing to draw a reflexive influence from Lefebvre to rescue Heidegger from his many troubling connotations and associations. Heidegger is, as Elden notes, difficult to turn toward a practical critique of capitalism without Lefebvre's retroactive influence. As I review briefly above, however, Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* already functions as a crucial turn toward the material and non-metaphorical spaces of the political.

highlights a compelling, fundamental distinction between the perspectives of Heidegger and Lefebvre on space.

Heidegger's philosophy originates at the scale of the human body, creating an alternate phenomenology[9] based on interactions between the body and site. To some extent this extrapolates the infamous Cartesian split: with the invention of the "body" as a distinct entity paired with the "mind," Descartes had opened a mental interiority, establishing a dichotomy of inside/outside crucial to twentieth century philosophy, and yet one proven spurious and illusory from the later postmodern perspective (with which I deal later in this chapter). Heidegger would, however, attenuate his sometime mentor Husserl's strict distinction between subject and object, or "consciousness and reality" as he detoured through phenomenology toward a discovery of the meaning of being; "to ask about *the* meaning of being is to ask about *our* understanding of being" (Carman, in *Being and Time*, xix). Fundamental to Heidegger's thought, and to the more properly spatial theory that followed it, is his claim that "*dasein ist raumlich*": being is spatial. But while Heidegger's ontology prepared the ground for the spatial turn, it also relies on a definition of space very different from the one that Lefebvre initiates, and which is further developed in the spatial turn.

> What the word for space, *Raum, Rum*, designates is said by its ancient meaning. *Raum* means a place cleared or freed for settlement and lodging. A space is something that has been made room for, something that is cleared and free, namely within a boundary. ("Building Dwelling Thinking," *Poetry, Language, Thought* 152)

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[9] Heidegger's phenomenology is alternative in this way to Husserl's, as Taylor Carman explains:
For Heidegger, phenomenology would be a description not of subjectivity to the exclusion of the world, but of the world as such, as it manifests itself. It would be a study not of appearances internal to consciousness, as distinct from the external things appearing, but of the external manifestation of things themselves. If we had to define phenomenology as a study of *appearance*, in some sense of that word, we would have to add that the relevant contrast is not between appearance and reality, as it was for Husserl, but between appearance and *disappearance*—showing up and hiding, revealing and concealing. (Foreword, *Being and Time,* xviii)

The scale and function of all architecture for Heidegger, from the Greek temple, to the *schwarzwaldhaus,*[10] to urban bridges, is motivated by dwelling, by humanity's way of being in the world, and thus interconnects the body, architecture, and the broader environment in a unique phenomenology. The theoretical space Heidegger illustrates is grounded by an embodied subject for which the act of dwelling[11] is the crucial fundament of all spatial activity: "We do not dwell because we have built, but we build and have built because we are dwellers" (*ibid.* 148). In the Heideggerian model of dwelling "only something that is itself a location can make space for a site," and the body[12] effectively establishes these loci in space (*ibid.* 151-152). In a function resembling what Edward Casey calls "embodied emplacement" (Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 15), the body presupposes a place, a location where it finds itself: "Thus nearness and remoteness between men and things can become mere distance, mere intervals of intervening space" ("Building," *Poetry, Language, Thought* 153). The relative positions of "men" constitute a space in this model. But, being composed of "mere distance, mere intervals of intervening space," Heidegger's space thus remains Cartesian in its spare simplicity: its innocence of relational space awaits a dialectical treatment of its characteristics beyond empty distance between the objects of human attention. Heidegger's reliance on the ancient resonance of *Raum*, "something that is cleared and free, namely within a boundary," is *precisely* the strain of spatial abstraction that Lefebvre is determined to eradicate.[13]

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[10] The Black Forest farmhouse is idealized in "Building Dwelling Thinking" in Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought,* pp. 143-159; see also Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture,* 152ff.

[11] Dwelling is a scale-fluid concept for Heidegger: we dwell in a shack or apartment, but dwelling simultaneously embraces the planetary in an important forerunner of ecological criticism:

> however hampering and bitter, [...] the real plight of dwelling does not lie merely in a lack of houses. [...] The real plight is this, that mortals ever search anew for the nature of dwelling, that they must ever learn to dwell. What if man's homelessness consisted in this, that man still does not even think of the real plight of dwelling as the plight. (qtd in Harries 166)

In Heidegger's view, humans are thrown into the world: we dwell on Earth, and yet we are not at home. Katherine Harries insists this problematic state is persistent: "[w]hat [Heidegger] calls 'the real plight of dwelling' is not something to be got rid of. We cannot really be at home in the world as long as we fail to accept that we are wayfarers, nowhere fully at home" (166).

[12] This founding bodily logic is also apparent in the "to-hand": a system based on instrumental proximity, a criteria related to the category of equipment for Heidegger.

[13] Lefebvre's disdain for abstraction is ultimately based in a Marxist critique of capitalism:

Elden points out that Heidegger and Lefebvre overlap in many general areas; crucially, I would add their agreement on the spatiality of *Dasein*, as described by Heidegger: "Space is not to be found in the subject, nor does the subject observe the world 'as if' that world were in a space; but the 'subject' (Dasein), if well understood ontologically, is spatial" (*Being and Time* 111). Similarly, Merrifield illuminates one of Lefebvre's surreptitious nods to Heidegger in *The Right to the City:*

> To inhabit meant to take part in a social life, a community, village or city. Urban life possessed, amongst other qualities, this attribute. It bestowed dwelling, it allowed towns-people-citizens to inhabit. It is thus that 'mortals inhabit while they save the earth, while they wait for the gods ... while they conduct their own being in preservation and use.' Thus speaks the poet and philosopher Heidegger of the concept to inhabit" (76; qtd in Merrifield, *Henri Lefebvre*, 68)

But Heidegger's concepts, while foundational to the philosophical and theoretical engagement with place, are critiqued and sublated by Lefebvre, whose textured readings of everyday urban space oppose Heidegger's idealized space of the nation.[14] While Heidegger's later (1934-35) descriptions of space respond to Hölderlin's statement "poetically, man dwells on the earth," (principally in *Poetry, Language, Thought*) Lefebvre penetrates this abstraction as well, excavating a virulent class distinction. Comparing the valence of *dwelling* to the word *residence* versus its "functional abstraction" *housing*, Lefebvre agrees "[t]he idea of *residing* has a poetic resonance...

> yet this cannot obscure the fact that for many centuries this idea had no meaning outside the aristocracy. It was solely in the service of 'the great'—nobles and

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"Abstract space functions 'objectally', as a set of things/signs and their formal relationships.... The signification of this ensemble refers back to a sort of super-signification which escapes meaning's net: the functioning of capitalism, which contrives to be blatant and covert at one and the same time" (*Production*, 49). Heideggerian *space* is also clearly innocent of the distinction of *space* versus *place* that Michel de Certeau would develop in his *The Practice of Everyday Life*, by which contrast Heidegger's *space* appears closer to what Certeau theorizes as *place*.

[14] See Jeff Malpas' *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World* for a survey of readings of Heideggerian dwelling that extract a disturbing nationalistic identification with prewar Germany (19). Malpas generalizes the criticism of Harvey, Massey and Leach among others as arguing "that notions of place and dwelling are politically reactionary because they are somehow intrinsically exclusionary. Yet there seems very little in the way of any general argument that is advanced to support this claim. [...] particularly in relation to Heidegger's thought, place has indeed emerged as politically problematic" (20-21).

priests—that architects built religious edifices, palaces or fortresses. (*Production* 314)

Not only is Heidegger's embodied place transcended by Lefebvre's crucial elaboration of space as a concrete product of capital's activity; Lefebvre also annihilates both the abstraction and the metaphysics of Heidegger's account, positing concrete material bases for the understanding of space (and its sometime ideological invisibility) that include the functions of the market and a spatial version of the commodity fetish in place of Heidegger's "fourfold" of earth and world on one axis and man and gods on the other, perceived by devout mortals who wait under the heavens (see Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology* 225ff). Lefebvre redefines Heidegger's empty and abstract *place*[15] by establishing *space* as something actively produced that yields concrete effects, rather than a neutral emptiness that hosts objects and events; it evokes the political situation of "users" of cities rather than citizens of an abstract nation. This is an extension of Lefebvre's objection to the pervasive model of Cartesian space that geometry foisted on the collective imagination. With these fundamental distinctions from Heidegger in mind, I return now to Lefebvre's redefinition of the basic parameters of space.

Lefebvre's critical rethinking of space in the context of urban everyday life and state power responds directly to the capitalist mode of production, which is always-already spatially organized. Lefebvre's project foregrounds a directly political aim with his argument that a "whole set of errors, a complex of illusions," can "cause us to forget completely that there is a total subject which acts continually to maintain and reproduce its own conditions of existence, namely the state (along with its foundation in specific social classes and fractions of classes)" (*Production* 94). Confronting this identity of the state as a total spatial subject, Lefebvre aims to describe the "already completed destruction" of spatial codes, and construct a new code: to reverse the dominant tendency by appealing to a Marxian "movement from products ... to production" (*Production* 26).

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[15] *Place* as concept has appeared to wane in contemporary theory (see Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology*, 20-21 for instance). But Timothy Morton notes that the sense of place that we seem to have lost is a phantasmal object of nostalgic melancholy: "What if, delving more deeply, we couldn't *lose* place because we never had it in the first place? What if the idea of place as a substantial "thing" with clear boundaries was itself in error?" (170).

> Once brought back into conjunction with a (spatial and signifying) *social practice*, the concept of space can take on its full meaning. Space thus rejoins material production: the production of goods, things, objects of exchange - clothing, furnishings, houses or homes - a production which is dictated by necessity. (*Production* 137)

Similar to Marx's argument that the fetishization of commodities obscures the social relations of production, for Lefebvre objects in space (or even the vacuum of apparently empty space) obscure the production of space (*Metro-Marxism* 89).

Concomitant with his revelation of fetishized obscuration is Lefebvre's "reconstruction of a spatial 'code' — that is, of a language common to practice and theory, as also to inhabitants, architects and scientists" (*Production*, 64). This code forms a theoretical baseline later deployed by Smith, Harvey and other spatial theorists and radical geographers. Lefebvre's "conceptual triad" consists of

> 1. *Spatial practice*, which embraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation. Spatial practice ensures continuity and some degree of cohesion. In terms of social space, and of each member of a given society's relationship to that space, this cohesion implies a guaranteed level of competence and a specific level of performance.
>
> 2. *Representations of space*, which are tied to the relations of production and to the 'order' which those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs, to codes, and to 'frontal' relations.
>
> 3. *Representational spaces* [or *spaces of representation*], embodying complex symbolisms, sometimes coded, sometimes not, linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life, as also to art (which may come eventually to be defined less as a code of space than as a code of representational spaces). (*The Production of Space* 33)

Lefebvre calls this theory "the perceived-conceived-lived triad (in spatial terms: spatial practice, representations of space, representational spaces)" (40). As Christian Schmid notes, Lefebvre's intervention in the binary dialectic features a denaturing third term: "the fundamental dialectical figure in Lefebvre's work can be understood as the contradiction between social thought and social action, supplemented by the third factor of the creative, poetic act" (*Space, Difference, Everyday Life* 33).

This creative supplement creates a triad, a poetic model which is deformed and necessarily incomplete—and which is thus material and generative in a way Heidegger's

Raum of dwelling is not. This surplus fundamentally interconnects Lefebvre's practice with poetry and poetics. Schmid further interprets this schema as the "three dimensions" in which (social) space can be analyzed (37). In spatial practice, social space appears as "an interlinking chain or network of activities" which "rest upon a determinate material basis (morphology, built environment)." Representations of space serve as "an organizing schema or a frame of reference for communication, which permits a (spatial) orientation...". Finally, in spaces of representation, "the material 'order' that emerges on the ground can itself become the vehicle conveying meaning," developing a (spatial) symbolism "that expresses and evokes social norms, values, and experiences" (37).

The non-binary character of Lefebvre's triadic method, the fact that three terms militate against categorical simplification, is no accident. As Merrifield explains, "spatial practices" form a dialectical interface with the two types of spaces: "Representations of space & representational spaces are 'secreted' by spatial practices, which ensure that conceived and lived space coexist in dialectical unity" (*Metromarxism* 90). Given that "representations of space" are the conceptualized spaces constructed by architects, geographers, and city planners, and "representational space" is the lived space of everyday experience, "spatial practices" can be thought of as the perceptions of the world which "structure everyday reality and broader social and urban reality" (*Thinking Space* 175). Lefebvre thus borrows a sense of the phenomenological "lived world" developed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty in *Phenomenology of Perception,* to maintain a fundamental, material "everyday life" against Heidegger's attribution of "primitivity, triviality and anonymity to the notion" (Elden "Between Marx and Heidegger" 91).

Lefebvre holds that representations of space sometimes span ideology and knowledge within socio-spatial practice, a condition he deploys in his analysis of space and society:

> The area where ideology and knowledge are barely distinguishable is subsumed
> under the broader notion of representation, which thus supplants the concept of
> ideology and becomes a serviceable (operational) tool for the analysis of spaces,
> as of those societies which have given rise to them... (45)

Through this theory of spatial representation supplanting ideology, Lefebvre intimates the full implication of the socio-spatial dialectic for critical theory is not just that

society produces space, and that space influences the activity of society: it is that the particular space produced in turn affects the thinking of society. Lefebvre argues "that representations of space are shot through with a knowledge (savoir) – i.e. a mixture of understanding (connaissance) and ideology – which is always relative and in the process of change" (41). This is the basis of ideology in space, and of a spatial ideology critique, a procedure to which I will return below in the context of Jameson's interactions with Lefebvrean thought.[16] First, however, this coordination of representation and ideology presents a schism that must be taken up in the field of subjectivity. Lefebvre's revolutionary Marxist redefinition of space can now be related to a re-spatialization of the subject.

The Subject as a Spatial Body

Terry Eagleton notes that the relative paucity of spatial theory in Marxist critique is "ironic, because for Marxism, at least, it is that eminently spatial object, the human body, with which everything begins and ends. Marxism tells a story that tracks the body all the way up from the opposing thumb to the military-industrial complex" (Introduction to Kristin Ross's *The Emergence of Social Space*, xii). For Lefebvre, "The body serves both as point of departure and as destination" (*Production*, 194): this body-centrality is crucial to the construction of a Marxian spatial theory on elements of Heideggerian philosophy while replacing the metaphysical in that paradigm (the "fourfold") with a relentless pursuit of the concrete-material (everyday life).

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[16] Not all spatial theory is radical, Marxist, and leftist, of course: neoliberal capitalism has its own set of theories, demonstrated by the work of Richard Florida: everything, including cultural production, aesthetics and creativity itself, is subordinated to the growth of cities, here narrowly defined as the propulsion of the profitable dialectical oscillation between abject slum and gated enclave.

By contrast, Lefebvre's many books, including *The Critique of Everyday Life*, *Right to the City*, and *Urban Revolution* make clear the connection of his theory and practice. Lefebvre's intervention in New Belgrade is a model of self-management which radically questioned capitalist goals by re-imagining what it would be to "live well," and leaving the meaning of this phrase to be specified by each individual community (*Autogestion*/*Plan for New Belgrade*).

For Lefebvre, the body not only "produces and reproduces" a world, it is also produced by it (199): "[a] body so conceived, as produced and as the production of a space, is immediately subject to the determinants of that space: symmetries, interactions and reciprocal actions, axes and planes, centres and peripheries, and concrete (spatio-temporal) oppositions" (195). This body is active in a feedback loop between the production and the influence of space,[17] a position that is dominated, that is structurally *subject to* space: "…the spatial body's material character derives from space, from the energy that is deployed and put to use there" (195). As he explains the dual nature of social space, Lefebvre also asserts the spatiality of the subject: "On the one hand, one relates oneself to space, situates oneself in space. One confronts both an immediacy and an objectivity of one's own. One places oneself at the centre, designates oneself, measures oneself, and uses oneself as a measure. One is, in short, a 'subject'" (182). This subject-object problem marks a productive point of intersection between Lefebvrean, Lacanian and Jamesonian interventions in space that each contributes to a redefinition of subjectivity and self-consciousness.[18]

While not the focus of *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre's interest in the subject is nonetheless a crucial contribution of the book. Lefebvre claims the theoretical promise of surrealism is "to decode inner space and illuminate the nature of the transition from this subjective space to the material realm of the body and the outside world, and thence to social life" (*Production*, 18; qtd in Gregory, "Lefebvre, Lacan and the *Production of Space*," 21). Derek Gregory holds that this decoding is also "the object of Lefebvre's own 'spatial architectonics'" ("Lefebvre, Lacan and the *Production of Space*," 21). Gregory has explored the understudied interconnections between the projects of Lefebvre and Lacan, noting previously ignored parallels, including the fact that both were fundamentally influenced by Kojeve's Paris lecture hall, especially his recuperation of

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[17] This is a feedback loop in which Charles Olson's *Maximus* is fully enmeshed, as I elaborate in the following chapter.

[18] These theories of subjectivity are distinct from those of Paul Smith, for instance, which use a Derridean temporality to distinguish the subject from the agent: "[...] the state of being a 'subject' is best conceived of in something akin to a temporal aspect–the 'subject as only a moment in a lived life" (*Discerning the Subject* 37). Alternatively, Elizabeth Grosz offers an important spatial-feminist reading of the subject as an "internal or psychic inscription on" the "lived body": "As pliable flesh, the body is the unspecified raw material of social inscription that produces subjects as *subjects of a particular kind*." (*Space, Time, Perversion* 32-33).

Hegel's *Phenomenology* (Gregory, "Lefebvre…" 21). This comparative interrelationship is one I would like to draw out here, specifically by comparing Lefebvre and Lacan's treatment of the subject. The interposition of Lefebvrean and Lacanian thought illuminates the ways not only that space is often unconscious, but also that the Lacanian unconscious is spatial.[19]

Although he theorizes a spatial subject, Lefebvre does not apparently support the project of psychoanalysis. While he makes references throughout *The Production of Space* to psychoanalysis, the majority of these are decidedly negative estimations of its utility to his project: "explaining everything in psychoanalytic terms, in terms of the unconscious, can only lead to an intolerable reductionism and dogmatism; the same goes for the overestimation of the 'structural'" (36).[20] While he considers the possibility of a "psychoanalysis of space" intriguing (99), Lefebvre is unwilling to commit. In one example of this, while commenting on Heidegger's philosophical approach to the *mundus* in *Being and Time*, "a sacred or accursed place in the middle of the Italiot township," Lefebvre describes an ambiguous pit which "encompassed the greatest foulness and the greatest purity, life and death, fertility and destruction, horror and fascination." He then asks "Might a psychoanalysis of space account for this strange and powerful presence-absence?" before answering:

> Undoubtedly, but does it not make more sense, instead of engaging in *a posteriori* rationalizations of that kind, to envision a slow process of 'historical' secretion, a laying-down and superimposition of strata of interpretation, along with their attendant rites and myths, occurring as the Italiots localized and focused their fears in the abyssal realm? That a void should be placed at the

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[19] I should acknowledge that while Kanishka Goonewardena, Christian Schmid, et al. have noted fatalistically that "attempts to integrate Lefebvre with Lacan's linguistically inflected psychoanalysis are recognized to lead to failure," citing Schmid, Gregory, and others (*Space, Difference, Everyday Life* 21n61), the comparison of the two thinkers' oeuvres is so generative as to encourage further attempts.

[20] His resistance notwithstanding, Lefebvre also admits the possibility of a crucial psychoanalytic contribution to the theory of physical, mental and social space: "Yet structures do exist, and there is such a thing as the 'unconscious'. Such little-understood aspects of consciousness would provide sufficient justification in themselves for research in this area. If it turned out, for instance, that every society, and particularly (for our purposes) the city, had an underground and repressed life, and hence an 'unconscious' of its own, there can be no doubt that interest in psychoanalysis, at present on the decline, would get a new lease on life" (*Production* 36). I argue this lease has been renewed, generally, in the recent work of Ernesto Laclau, Slavoj Žižek and Alain Badiou, for instance.

centre, and indeed at the centre of the conception of the 'world', is surely too strange a fact to be explained solely in terms of psychic realities...". (242)[21]

Lefebvre discloses an intriguing resistance to a psychoanalytic reading of space; one can imagine a productive explanation of the *mundus* that combines the alternatives of historical and psychic influence, as indeed many of Freud's early analyses of neurotics did. Is it unthinkable to Lefebvre that a feedback loop (a dialectic, even) obtains between space and the psychic energies which inhabit it? Elsewhere, Lefebvre considers a directly Lacanian interpretation of social space before reporting a perceived flaw in the theory:

> ...one might go so far as to explain social space in terms of a dual prohibition: the prohibition which separates the (male) child from his mother because incest is forbidden, and the prohibition which separates the child from its body because language in constituting consciousness breaks down the unmediated unity of the body – because, in other words, the (male) child suffers symbolic castration and his own phallus is objectified for him as part of outside reality. (*Production* 35-36)

After sketching this very cogent Lacanian perspective on spatial and linguistic alienation, Lefebvre is again unwilling to accept this mode of analysis because it privileges language over space:

> The trouble with this thesis is that it assumes the logical, epistemological and anthropological priority of language over space. [...] The pre-existence of an objective, neutral and empty space is simply taken as read, and only the space of speech (and writing) is dealt with as something that must be created. These assumptions obviously cannot become the basis for an adequate account of social/spatial practice. (36)

Here the objection turns on a dichotomy of space and language which, while initially intuitive, is in fact unnecessarily limiting.[22] Regardless of the generalization that psychoanalysis prioritizes language, I argue the pair *language* versus *space* is not contradictory given the materiality of the signifier, and especially since the signifier and

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[21] The properly psychoanalytic perspective might question why this "too strange" fact shouldn't be the very reason to turn to analysis of the apparently irrational idiosyncrasy.

[22] The encounter of language and space here is endemic to the problem of spatial metaphor, pursued by Neil Smith and Cindi Katz in their influential essay "Grounding Metaphor: Towards a Spatialized Politics," (in *Place and the Politics of Identity*, Eds M. Keith, S. Pile (Routledge, London) pp 67-84) a piece I comment on further in my Conclusion.

its relationship to the unconscious in Lacanian psychoanalysis is itself fundamentally spatial.[23]

Psychoanalysis in Space: Mapping and Subjectivity

The spatial turn traces the dialectical but often unconscious relationship between the postmodern subject and space. To fully explore this relationship, and to unfold the subjective spatial disorientation associated with postmodernity in both theory and avant garde poetry requires a reemphasis of the spatiality of Lacanian psychoanalysis. The fundamental spatiality of Jacques Lacan's thought cannot be overstated: from the productive spatio-visual illusion of the mirror stage, to the intersubjective topology, to the rotation of the discourse mathemes, Lacanian analysis develops a flexible spatial logic able to productively unpack the spatial turn and to analyze, by extension, the spatial poetics that track representations of space.

While Fredric Jameson argues (as I expand later) that decenterment and alienation establish the ground zero of postmodern subjectivity, a radical disorientation was superadded to this through the derangement of the conceived space in which the subject had been alienated. Spatial disorientation began to take hold at the most fundamental level with the advent of Einsteinian relativity: the *New York Times* ran a conciliatory headline in late 1919, attempting to reassure those readers whose existential bedrock would be shaken by the news: "Lights All Askew in the Heavens: …Stars Not Where They Seemed or Were Calculated to be, but Nobody Need Worry...". While Heidegger's spatial *Dasein* implies that we are homeless even with respect to the planet, Einstein's relativity would displace the presumed location and orientation of the wider galaxy itself. Suddenly a law cut across previous scientific knowledge and hypotheses, asserting *there is no privileged frame of reference*. Irrupting after Copernicus's, Marx's and Freud's great demotions of human egocentrism, Einstein's radical decentering discards the model of *centricity* altogether. The concept of *centre* is

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[23] See Soja, *Postmodern Geographies* for further discussion of the "relations between space and language" (16-18).

not only obsolete in Einsteinian space: it is spurious and nonsensical, just as it is in Lacanian subjective space as well.

Although psychoanalysis has been spatial from its very inception, this aspect has received relatively little critical notice.[24] Sigmund Freud's topographic/structural model established a sedimentary id, ego and superego, stratified in a two-dimensional depth paradigm. Although Freud's schematic structure in which dreams form the "royal road" to the unconscious and his obsession with the proxemics and demarcations involved in the over-present *neighbour* are evidence of a spatialization of the Freudian psyche from the beginning, his engagement with space would remain predominantly superficial.[25]

Drawing on Hegel's dialectic as well as Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology to revise Freudian psychoanalysis, Lacan's topological model would jettison the depth-psychological paradigm of an internal ego, super-ego and id, instead articulating the subject itself in a constitutive space. As Bruce Fink explains, "Lacan defines the subject as a position adopted with respect to the Other as language or law; in other words, the subject *is* a relationship to the symbolic order" (*The Lacanian Subject* xi-xii). This can be understood as a spatial relation to the symbolic order: while Freud's topographies[26] are associated with the modernist death of the subject, asserting a decentering of the ego relative to its conscious intentions, Lacan's analytic practice performs a paradigm shift on Freud's model, producing a second-order displacement of the subject.

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[24] Notable exceptions to this lack include Steve Pile, *The Body and the City*; Virginia Blum and Heidi Nast, "Where's the Difference? The Heterosexualization of Alterity in Henri Lefebvre and Jacques Lacan," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 14 (1996): 559–80; Paul Kingsbury, "The Extimacy of Space," *Social & Cultural Geography*, Vol. 8, No. 2, April 2007: 235-258.

[25] Freud's reflections on the commandment to "love thy neighbour" in *Civilization and its Discontents* establish a subjective space in which inside/outside and provocative proximity are intensified to uncanny extent. Even the topographical model itself can be read as a recapitulation of this anxiety of neighbours, given that the id, ego and superego are separated only by porous boundaries, through which each influences the others (a pattern in direct contrast to Lacan's Borromean knot). For further discussion of Freud's spatiality, which is beyond the scope of the present chapter, see Steve Pile, *The Body and the City*, 118-119.

[26] I consider the first and second topographies interchangeable with regard to this point.

Freud's assault on the "naive self-love" of humankind was the third of the "major blows," as he saw them, the first being Copernicus's revelation of heliocentrism,[27] proving "that our earth was not the center of the universe but only a tiny fragment of a cosmic system of scarcely imaginable vastness" (*SE*, 15, 284-5; qtd in Grigg, *Lacan, Language and Philosophy* 139). But in a detail that indicates his sensitivity to precise spatial metaphor, Lacan objects to the Copernican revolution's retention of a centric paradigm, which metaphorically implies a unified, internal libidinous id only partially reined in by the superego. While Copernicus had remained in thrall to an ideal circular orbit, for Lacan, who favoured Kepler as the true scientific revolutionary, "the crucial step was not relinquishing a geocentric view in favour of a heliocentric view of the universe but rather giving up circular for elliptical motion of heavenly bodies" (Grigg 139). Producing a second-order decentering, Lacan performs an exemplary paradigm shift, incorporating a literal reading of (the history of) science to hold the metaphor to a strict physical logic:

> [W]hat, Lacan asks, is so 'revolutionary' (*sic*) in recentering our solar system on the sun? The really radical step, according to Lacan, was to replace circular with elliptical motion. For a start, this meant breaking with imaginary notions such as the circle as the 'perfect form,' replacing it with an elliptical orbit with two foci, one of which was empty. (Grigg 139-140)

While Lacan's subject is often abstractly represented as harbouring a missing element, a lack, at its "center," the physics-aware model of the Lacanian subject establishes a metaphorical two-body gravitation with an other; a spatial interchange that escapes the centricity of the prior paradigm.[28] As Virginia Blum and Heidi Nast explain, for Lacan, "Subjectivity is spatially and ontologically *decentred;* the subject is shaped literally from the *outside* in" (*Thinking Space* 187). Lacan's *objet a*, that which structures desire,[29] is a

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[27] The second narcissistic injury being Darwin's explosion of the myth that humans were somehow special among animals.

[28] The subject's lack is constitutive, but it cannot be sited at the center of the subject: Lacan's metaphor of the empty foci at the extreme outer point of the planet's orbit posits an invisible other in space.

[29] Lacan specifies the texture of his topology when he describes the *objet a* as a "privileged object, [...] that object whose very reality is purely topological, [...] around which the drive moves, [...] that object that rises in a bump, like the wooden darning egg in the material which, in analysis, you are darning..." (*Four Fundamental Concepts*, 257).

lack we forever orbit in what becomes the circuit of drive.[30] While for Freud the unconscious was *in the subject*, buried under the sedimentary strata of awareness, the subconscious, and the repressed, Lacan argues the unconscious is outside, rather than buried within, the subject; the unconscious is distributed both in language and in the space occupied by *others*.

Lacan's triadic topology[31] consists of the Imaginary, Symbolic and Real tied into the form of a Borromean knot, an integral unit which threatens dissolution if any link is compromised. Briefly, the Imaginary is the realm of the self-image initiated by the mirror stage; the Symbolic is the fabric in which the infinite regress of signifiers is inscribed; and the Real is the unmediated plenitude of all that resists symbolization in the Symbolic. This topology transmutes Freud's quasi-strata into a space organized relationally with the *autre* and *objet petit a,* the *(small) other* and the *object-cause of*

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[30] Lacan explains the "relation of the subject to the Other is entirely produced in a process of gap," establishing a spatial interval or lack that inheres between these terms (*Four Fundamental Concepts,* 206). Žižek elaborates how this gap or lack is constitutive of the Lacanian "subject of the signifier":

> The subject of the signifier is precisely this lack, this impossibility of finding a signifier which would be 'its own': *the failure of its representation is its positive condition.* The subject tries to articulate itself in a signifying representation; the representation fails; instead of a richness we have a lack, and this void opened by the failure *is* the subject of the signifier. To put it paradoxically: the subject of the signifier is a retroactive effect of the failure of its own representation; that is why the failure of representation is the only way to represent it adequately. (*Sublime Object* 175)

In a further spatialization, drive moves in a loop characterized by Žižek as a structural boomerang. "...When I throw the boomerang, the 'goal' of it, of course, is to hit the animal; yet the true artifice of it consists in being able to catch it when, upon my missing the goal, the boomerang flies back—the true aim is precisely to miss the goal, so that the boomerang returns to me" (*Interrogating the Real* 165). This splitting of goal and aim, and the emphasis of missing, but circulating, orbiting the goal, is paradigmatic of Lacanian drive.

[31] And Lacan's is specifically a topology, a mathematical category which, as Paul Kingsbury writes, "examines how things can change shape or become distorted yet still retain properties of continuity, contiguity and delimitation" (245); see his "The Extimacy of Space," on the topological form of Lacan's spatial analysis (*Social & Cultural Geography,* Vol. 8, No. 2, April 2007). Alain Badiou explains that topology "lies at the origin of primitively vague notions such as location, approximation, continuum, and differential." It is aimed "at what happens when one investigates the site of a term, its surroundings, that which is more or less 'near' to it, that which is separated from it in continuous variations, its degree of isolation or adherence" (*Theory of the Subject* 210-211).

desire, respectively.[32] The Lacanian subject is partially defined by this presumed *other* subject's perspective on the first.

The Imaginary is initially produced in the reflexivity of the mirror stage,[33] in which a complex illusion produces a corrective image:

> The mirror stage is a drama [...] which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality that I shall call orthopaedic. (Lacan *Écrits: A Selection*, 4)

With this corrective totality the mirror stage functions "to establish a relationship between an organism and its reality," or between the *Innenwelt* (the interior world) and the *Umwelt* (the wider world outside the subject) (*Écrits* [Complete], 78). Elizabeth Grosz further illuminates this topological space of the mirror stage in which the subject and its imaginary other are produced:

> The ego is split, internally divided between self and other. It can represent the person as a whole (as in the realist view) only in so far as it denies this internal rupture and conceives of itself as the source of its own origin and unity. It maintains an active, aggressive, and libidinal relation to the other on whom it depends. (Grosz, *Jacques Lacan* 47)

Through a spatialization characterized as subjective distanciation, the ego "comes to distinguish itself as subject from its own body, over which it establishes a hierarchical distance and control" (47). According to Grosz, the mirror stage allows the child to identify with its own specular image via imaginary positioning:

> a totalized, complete, external image – a *gestalt* – of the subject, the subject as seen from outside; ... the visual *gestalt* is in conflict with the child's fragmentary, disorganized felt reality; ... the specular image positions the child within a

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[32] See Andrew Cutrofello's "The Ontological Status of Lacan's Mathematical Paradigms" (in *Reading Seminar XX*) for discussion of whether Lacan's topological interests are faithful to mathematics, a concern my spatial approach does not share.

[33] In the mirror stage "The point is not that it is *in* a mirror that the child finds the contours of its self, but rather that the process of subject-formation is a *mirroring* one. This is for Lacan the founding model for an illusory totality of a 'self'; the mirror-image is the *ideal* or totalized ego whom the infant longs to *become*" (*Thinking Space* 187).

(perspectively organized) spatial field, and, more particularly, within the body, which is located as a central point within this field. (48)[34]

This imaginary space[35] established by the mirror stage is the background of Lacan's intersubjectivity, an arrangement of the phenomenological field in which the subject encounters its own subjectivity as the other reflects his desire back at him in inverted form.[36] Lacan emphasizes the spatiality of the intersubjective autre, this third term (since the subject is always-already split into two terms) for whom the subject is an object in space: "The human being only sees his form materialized, whole, the mirage of himself, outside of himself" (140). The logic of the mirror stage activates a spatially distorted *other scene* in which the other acts as a spatial coordinate that engages transferential reflection (*Seminar* Book I). Thereafter the other becomes a correlative of the scopic

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[34] Notice the concentricity of the "central point within this field" is descriptive of the visual phenomenological experience, not to be confused with the decentered and eccentric form of Lacanian subjectivity.

[35] As described by Blum and Nast, Lacan's mirror stage engenders a robust spatial subtext:
> What is noted but nonetheless left underdeveloped by Lacan is the degree to which mirroring entails a number of spatial disjunctions: First, I (here) am there (in the mirror-image); there (the mirror-image) is here (ego). Second, the image itself is two-dimensional and accordingly founds a two-dimensional subject. Third, the image is a symmetrical inversion of the spectating body. That the mirror allows the spectating child to occupy both positions at once means that the distance, differences in dimensionality, and asymmetry between subject and image are fantasmatically collapsed. Connected to the mirror-stage spatial disruptions is the distinction Lacan makes between the eye and the gaze, which importantly structures gender identity as yet another spatial break. ("Jacques Lacan's Two-Dimensional Subjectivity," in *Thinking Space* 188)

This indeterminacy or disorientation is a product of endless signifying chains. In the reflexive dynamic of the mirror stage, "the image 'out there' produces a Gestalt of wholeness (the image is a coherent unity) that exceeds the infant's feelings of bodily awkwardness and fragmentation." (188).

[36] As I argue further in Chapter Four, this intersubjectivity can itself be read as a relative of field poetics at the point where it shades into interobjectivity: that is, the subject sees the *autre* as an external object, and through this relationship infers her own objectivity. Avant garde poetics that emphasize the materiality of language, and of the (typo)graphic itself, generate a similar effect. In a related triangulation, the analysand, or patient in analysis, by demanding che vuoi? is asking not just "what do you want from me?" but "how do I appear to the other?"

mirror: a partial reflection[37] which bombards the subject with the enigmatic desire of the other.[38]

While the Imaginary is the system of self-image produced by the literal reflection of the mirror of others, Lacan's Symbolic is the register of the signifier, a fabric that is defined against the Real, the unmediated pure experience of life that resists symbolization. As Bruce Fink articulates,

> Canceling out the real, the symbolic creates 'reality,' reality as that which is named by language and can thus be thought and talked about. [...] What cannot be said in [a social group's] language is not part of its reality; it does not *exist*, strictly speaking." (Fink, *Lacanian Subject* 25)

In this way the symbolic "bars" the real, overwriting and erasing it (*Lacanian Subject* 26). The relationships among the terms of Lacan's triad begin to assert spatial characteristics, as Steve Pile argues: "The Real, like Freud's 'ein anderer Schauplatz' (another scene), is an unreachable place where what is missing from the Symbolic, or for Freud what is unacceptable or traumatic, is deposited" (*The Body and the City* 138). "The real, therefore," adds Fink, "does not *exist*, since it precedes language; Lacan

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[37] There is also a sense in which Lacan's Imaginary introduces a problem with spatialization, making the Lefebvrean spatial body always already subject to a fantasy. In connection with the mirror stage, Lacan explores a situation of mimetic over-identification with space known as "legendary psychasthenia," a form of spatial overwhelming and disorientation of the subject. At odds with his rejection of psychoanalytic interpretations, Lefebvre's own description of mirror reflections is quasi-Lacanian as he interposes the subject and imaginary space.

> If my body may be said to enshrine a generative principle, at once abstract and concrete, the mirror's surface makes this principle invisible, deciphers it. The mirror discloses the relationship between me and myself, my body and the consciousness of my body - not because the reflection constitutes my unity qua subject, as many psychoanalysts and psychologists apparently believe, but because it transforms what I am into the sign of what I am. (*Production* 185)

Strikingly, Lefebvre independently discovers the subjective disorientation in this mirror condition: "In order to know myself, I 'separate myself out from myself'. *The effect is dizzying*" (*Production* 185; emphasis mine). This is just one way Lacan's analysis troubles Lefebvre's and vice versa: the encounter of the two thinkers complicates and extends the propositions of each.

[38] In Lacan's declaration "the unconscious is the discourse of the Other" (*Écrits* 30), this Other is conceived as a place. "The other scene," is the obscene side of conscious experience, and here "obscene" retains the sense of its folk etymology, by association with the Greek *ob skene* or off-stage. At the "constitution of the subject in the field of the Other," "the characteristic of the subject of the unconscious is that of being, beneath the signifier that develops its networks, its chains and its history, at an indeterminate place" (*Four Fundamental Concepts*, 208). The indeterminacy of this place reinforces the constitutive nature of disorientation for the subject.

reserves a separate term for it, borrowed from Heidegger: it 'ex-sists.' It exists outside of or apart from our reality"[39] (Fink, *Lacanian Subject* 25). *Ex-sistence* derives from a French translation of Heidegger's German *Ekstase*: "standing outside of" or "apart from" something. "Lacan uses it to talk about an existence that stands apart, which insists as it were from the outside, something not included on the inside. Rather than being intimate, it is 'extimate'" (Fink in Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality,* 22n24).

Lacan's revelation of the "other scene" corresponds with his inversion of the usual paradigm of *intimacy* with his invention of *extimacy*. As Žižek formulates it:

> The symbolic order is striving for a homeostatic balance, but there is in its kernel, at its very centre, some strange, traumatic element which cannot be symbolized, integrated into the symbolic order—the Thing. Lacan coined a neologism for it: *L'extimite*—external intimacy. (*Sublime Object* 132)

This extimate Thing is a non-object which is never fully symbolized, which resists the symbolic order even while hosting the circulation of signifiers and signifieds, egos and others. The intimate/extimate paradigm reinscribes the bounding logic of inside/outside, and Lacanian psychoanalysis applies this logic to the signifier in a form of spatial poetics: the symbolic fabric is the chain of signifiers, the external medium of registration for the unconscious. In the context of the avant-garde poetry I explicate in the following chapters, I argue that inasmuch as it can be represented, space, as the medium of presence, absence, and proximity, is linked with *das Ding*, the Thing, a traumatic register

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[39] This negative model defines the Real against what it precedes, what it underlies, as Fink explains: "The real is, for example, an infant's body 'before' it comes under the sway of the symbolic order, before it is subjected to toilet training and instructed in the ways of the world. In the course of socialization, the body is progressively written or overwritten with signifiers..." (*The Lacanian Subject*, 24). Žižek's model goes beyond the negation of the symbolic, describing an excessive positive condition: for him the Real "undermines symbolization, since it functions as the Otherness which resists it; in itself, however, this Real is a positivity of the exuberant wealth of experience" (*Lost Causes* 319). "...there is no Real without the Symbolic, it is the emergence of the Symbolic which introduces into reality the gap of the Real" (*Lost Causes* 319).

that resists all symbolization, persisting as Real.[40] The psychoanalytic subject responds to this situation with a reactive process of what Fredric Jameson calls cognitive mapping.

Jameson: Globalization and Cognitive Mapping

While late capitalism has been understood in the temporal terms of Marx's cause-effect dialectic, in which each mode of production gives rise to the next, the era of globalization has produced an irruption in that temporal pattern. As it accelerates uneven development across spatial scales, neoliberalism practically generates the spatial analysis and critique required for an understanding of its operations. Given its own scalar quality, its characteristic functioning at multiple simultaneous levels, globalization requires dialectical thinking through scales.[41] Fredric Jameson, arguing Lefebvre's theories produce a nascent "spatial dialectic" posited "in opposition to the Hegelian temporal one," (*Ideologies* 238) extends a theoretical model of subjective orientation in the form of cognitive mapping, a theory which bears problematically on both the production of scale and that of the subject.

If Lefebvre had brought to awareness the previously invisible neutrality of Cartesian space, and had, with Certeau, established the integral relationship of space with the practice of everyday life, neither had extended their study to the full ramifications of space for subjectivity. Each focused on the revolutionary potential of political space to the exclusion of the subject's *interior* experience, while Gaston Bachelard and Yi-Fu Tuan, for example, dwelled on the subjective while all but excluding the political.

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[40] Žižek explains "The Real is not the transcendent substantial reality which from outside disturbs the Symbolic balance, but the immanent obstacle, stumbling block, of the Symbolic order itself" (*Lost Causes* 319). The symbolic order is always (conceived as being) inscribed on something -- a medium that is Real, a Thing that refuses the impress of signifiers, and will never be isolated or represented. In Chapter 4, in discussion of McCaffery's statement that "form is the only possible thing," I discuss poetic spatial form as an example of *das Ding*.

[41] The old hippy bumpersticker, "Think globally, act locally" indicates, in the implied connection between the scales, the kind of spatial dialectic that arises with the overwhelming appearance of a global totality: one in which the approach to the globe is uncertain, while at least local acts are possible. Jameson's speculative aesthetic of cognitive mapping relies heavily on this connection.

Fredric Jameson argues the spatial turn is "one of the more productive ways of distinguishing postmodernism from modernism proper" (*Postmodernism* 154), articulating a special character of postmodern space:[42]

> ...space is for us an existential and cultural dominant, a thematized and foregrounded feature or structural principle standing in striking contrast to its relatively subordinate and secondary (though no doubt no less symptomatic) role in earlier modes of production. So, even if everything is spatial, this postmodern reality here is somehow *more* spatial than everything else. (*Postmodernism* 365)

While spatiality is not a new phenomenon arising with postmodernism, Jameson establishes a break with the earlier narrative space and distinguishes the space of modernism from that of postmodernism. Harvey would read "postmodern sensibility" as an effect of a "transition from Fordism to flexible accumulation" which caused

> an intense phase of time-space compression that has had a disorienting and disruptive impact upon political-economic practices, the balance of class power, as well as upon cultural and social life. (284)

Harvey's view aligns this compression and disorientation with the specific economic phenomena of the quick transition from Fordism-Keynesianism to a sped-up system of vertically disintegrated, just-in-time delivery.[43]

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[42] While spatiality is not a new phenomenon arising with postmodernism, Jameson establishes a break with the earlier narrative space that presaged the spatial turn and distinguishes the space of modernism from that of postmodernism:

> In hindsight, the 'spatial form' of the great modernisms (a description we owe to Joseph Frank) proves to have more in common with the mnemonic unifying emblems of Frances Yates's memory palaces than with the discontinuous spatial experience and confusions of the postmodern [...]. (*Postmodernism* 154)

The spatial turn associated with postmodernism represents not just theory's closer engagement with space; Jameson also illuminates the heightened spatiality of theory itself:

> ...contemporary theory has certainly taken a spatial turn, and not only in the ideological battles waged over the Saussurian distinction between synchrony and diachrony. Graphs are everywhere in contemporary theory, from Levi-Strauss's various models all the way to Lacanian mathemes and their representations, Foucault's more outrageous maps in *Les mots et les choses*, and even Deleuze's notion of diagrammicity. (*Valences of the Dialectic* 493)

While Lefebvre established the idea that space is produced, Jameson's concept of cognitive mapping closes the circuit of the socio-spatial dialectic by representing how produced space in turn affects ideas about the subject and its orientation to the larger unrepresentable totality, what for Lefebvre is production (of space). But some features of this dialectical circuit are left untheorized, and display an unconscious ideological investment. Here I will briefly survey and amplify the productive contradictions in Jameson's account, and offer speculative models based on the spatiality of Lacanian analysis described above that could supplement this form of conceptualization while distinguishing it from literal disorientation in material space. By way of introduction to the analysis of avant-garde poetry in the following chapters, through Jameson's theory I explore how disorientation can function as a generative poetics.

The Subject of Totality

Jameson's cognitive mapping aims "to enable a situational representation on the part of the individual subject to that vaster and properly unrepresentable totality which is the ensemble of society's structures as a whole" (*Postmodernism* 51). It addresses the disorientation and the sense of "antigravity" Jameson imputes to the experience of postmodernity by positing an orientation of the subject to its place in the larger system of totality (101). But Harvey productively disputes Jameson's distinction between modernism and postmodernism, arguing that modernism pursued an overarching project of totalization securely grounded in "materiality and technical-scientific rationality," while flexible postmodernism "is dominated by fiction, fantasy, the immaterial ... ephemerality, chance," and a project of deconstruction rather than totalization (*Condition*, 339). Dissolving the delineation between modernism and postmodernism, Harvey instead

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[43] In a manner more true to Lefebvre's example than Jameson is, Harvey's analysis moves from specific changes in mode of production to cultural effects of these transformations: "The relatively stable aesthetic of Fordist modernism has given way to all the ferment, instability, and fleeting qualities of a postmodernist aesthetic that celebrates difference, ephemerality, spectacle, fashion, and the commodifications of cultural forms" (*Condition* 156). This of course ignores the possibility that this putatively stable modernism might function as a straw man to artificially configure postmodernism as unstable.

posits a flux among these characteristics as the result of the fact that "[c]apital is a process and not a thing" (342, 343). Cognitive mapping similarly refers to a process which traces an absent total field of socio-spatial relations. Jameson clarifies that

> cognitive mapping was in reality nothing but a code word for developing a class-consciousness—only it proposed the need for class consciousness of a new and hitherto undreamed of kind [. . .] in the direction of that new spatiality implicit in the postmodern. (*Postmodernism* 418)

Christian Norberg-Schulz's *Existence, Space & Architecture* (1971) had earlier posited a relationship between architecture and the spatial subject, developing the modernist view that architecture and larger arrangements of urban space concretize *existential space*: when a child builds a fort as a zone of exclusion, she is mapping her existential mode onto the world around her (*Existence* 22). This same mechanism also obtains at larger scales, in his view: Norberg-Schulz demonstrates that Heidegger's philosophical schema of embodied being moves outward in scale, the determinant character of human action expanding from the shelter of dwelling to the mobility of roads. The Roman "founds his city by tracing on the land two crossing roads which divide the world as a compass in four, and he then surrounds this central juncture with walls" (*Existence* 22). But Norberg-Schulz stops short of spatially dialectizing this mechanism: if the subject produces a space Lacan might call *extimate*, materializing outside what is most intimate, we should investigate not only how space forges or constitutes the subject, but also how models of space inform the conceptualization of the subject so constituted.

While the analysis of space describes a new awareness of capital's spatial patterns, these physical emanations also transform mental space via metaphor and extended metonymic model. Most influential of these theories is Jameson's cognitive mapping, which formalizes this transition of physical spaces of disorientation, including the city of Los Angeles and more specifically its Bonaventure Hotel, into a conceptual model then used to describe a cognitive disorientation of the subjective relation to the global totality. Jameson argues not that space has changed the subject exactly, but rather that postmodern subjectivity has failed to evolve with the changes in its spatial

environment, causing a fundamental disorientation.[44] Jameson's cognitive mapping model is partially derived from aspects of Kevin Lynch's *Image of the City*, a classic urban-planning study of how to construct an "imageable city." For Lynch, as Jameson writes, "the alienated city is above all a space in which people are unable to map (in their minds) either their own positions or the urban totality in which they find themselves" (*Postmodernism* 51). The imageable city, by contrast, is one in which orientation to ambient space is best facilitated by a system of carefully arranged, unique landmarks. By interviewing subjects on the ground in major cities including Boston and Los Angeles, and asking them to describe their process of orientation in their surroundings, Lynch analyzed the features that were perceived as highly "imageable," such as Beacon Hill in Boston, and those which were consistently confusing or difficult to mentally trace, such as nearby Scollay Square which presents "spatial chaos at a multiple intersection of paths"[45] (*Image* 176). Here we must note the confluence of Lynch's "image" with Lacan's "imaginary": both refer to a dimensional self-locus within a necessarily distorted, abstract and incomplete image of space.[46]

Jameson claims postmodern architecture represents "a mutation in built space itself" (38), while humans "have not kept pace with that evolution," have not experienced any equivalent mutation: "We do not yet possess the perceptual equipment to match this new hyperspace, as I will call it, in part because our perceptual habits were formed in

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[44] Harvey provides a useful distinction between Marxist alienation and postmodern fragmentation of the subject: "We can no longer conceive of the individual as alienated in the classical Marxist sense, because to be alienated presupposes a coherent rather than a fragmented sense of self from which to be alienated" (*Condition*, 53). I posit further that each of these metaphors presume a coherent state-space which a condition of the subject (alienating displacement; schizoid fragmentation) alters.

[45] This (frustrated) self-orientation is a mental/spatial process familiar to anyone who has resided in or visited large urban centres. In response to this form of large-scale vertigo (a failure of the proprioception Olson will study; see Chapter Two), the implication of Lynch's urban planning project extends the concept of Hausmann's Parisian grid, as well as that imposed on Manhattan: producing a machinic, modernist space that privileges a specific ocular logic (See Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*).

[46] While Lacan's Imaginary bears a closer relation to the *image* than the *imagination*, I argue cognitive mapping discloses a scene in which both categories are activated. The imagination of space is one sense of the *cognitive* in cognitive mapping. And the imaginary disposition of space is what Lynch is collecting as he interviews subjects in his study, even collecting drawings from them in an attempt to gather a representation of the imaginary map that helps them navigate their urban surroundings.

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that older kind of space I have called the space of high modernism" (38-39). For Jameson, the subject, incompatible with its surrounding space, is incapable of orientation within this new postmodern welter:

> ...this latest mutation in space —postmodern hyperspace— has finally succeeded in transcending the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself, to organize its immediate surroundings perceptually, and cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world. (*Postmodernism* 44)

Jameson obliquely describes the scaling nature of disorientation, asserting a homological relationship between the experience of a body in postmodern architectural space and the experience of a subject attempting "to map the great global" network.

> It may now be suggested that this alarming disjunction point between the body and its built environment—which is to the initial bewilderment of the older modernism as the velocities of spacecraft to those of the automobile—can itself stand as the symbol and analogon of that even sharper dilemma which is the incapacity of our minds, at least at present, to map the great global multinational and decentered communicational network in which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects. (*Postmodernism* 44)

Jameson's conception of cognitive mapping "involves an extrapolation of Lynch's spatial analysis to the realm of social structure, that is to say, in our historical moment, to the totality of class relations on a global (or should I say multinational) scale" ("Cognitive Mapping," *Jameson Reader* 283). This "spatial analogue" is an assertion of the scalability of the subject to the level of its literal "local positioning" and beyond to the level of totality. What begins in Lynch as a mental-cartographic orientation to city space is translated by Jameson toward the scale of the total world, but it is also transmuted toward a conceptual mapping of ideology rather than literal cartography:

> I have always been struck by the way in which Lynch's conception of city experience—the dialectic between the here and now of immediate perception and the imaginative or imaginary sense of the city as an absent totality—presents something like a spatial analogue of Althusser's great formulation of ideology itself, as "the Imaginary representation of the subject's relationship to his or her Real conditions of existence." Whatever its defects and problems, this positive conception of ideology as a necessary function in any form of social life has the great merit of stressing the gap between the local positioning of the individual subject and the totality of class structures in which he or she is situated, a gap between phenomenological perception and a reality that transcends all individual thinking or experience; but this ideology, as such, attempts to span or coordinate, to map, by means of conscious and unconscious representations. (*Reader*, 283)

Against a generalized disorientation, the cognitive map aims in part to determine the locus of the subject (attempting to answer the question, "where am I in the broader system I can't fully comprehend?") as well as its orientation ("which way am I facing relative to that system?"). This orientation is impelled by the subject's condition of being overwhelmed by the scale and information density of its surroundings, now imagined as a global totality. Jameson claims that cognitive mapping is crucial to socialist politics, since

> the incapacity to map socially is as crippling to political experience as the analogous incapacity to map spatially is for urban experience. It follows that an aesthetic of cognitive mapping in this sense is an integral part of any socialist political project. (*Reader* 283)

Orientation requires *comprehension* in both major senses of the word: the attempt to *understand* the system one inhabits is accompanied by the attempt to visualize an embracing representation, or a frame of the totality. In order to know what surrounds the subject, she must know where she is; in order to know her location, she must consult her surroundings.

Jameson's deployment of a "spatial analogy" raises productive problems: while Haussmann's boulevards in Paris may have modelled the "phantasmagorias of space" (in Benjamin's phrase) that inspired and to an extent generated the *flaneur*, by the sixties

these open, "imageable" spaces connote a coherency that supports rampant commerce and further development rather than vanguard praxis (*Arcades* 12).[47]

For Lynch "urban alienation is directly proportional to the mental unmapability of local cityscapes" (*Reader* 283). While Lynch is not writing in the context of postmodernism, this spatial alienation accords with what Harvey, via Charles Jencks, calls the "produced fragmentation" of postmodern transport and communications technology, a situation that led to "[d]ispersed, decentralized, and deconcentrated urban forms" (*Condition*, 75-76).

Lynch's form of mental orientation against the backdrop of urban-planned space is not actually identical with map-making, but is closer to the ancient *portulans*, a "subject-centered" discursive diagram of space "where coastal features are noted for the use of Mediterranean navigators who rarely venture out into the open sea"

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[47]Is the global totality comparable to either of these? While totality is representationally subsumed by space in the metaphor of mapping, it is also an economic/social welter of relationships, only partially constituted in space. The abstract communication network, for instance, distinct from its material infrastructure, is not ideally represented by space, and yet "maps" of the internet abound (see Alexander Galloway, "Are some things unrepresentable?").

Jameson's theoretical position is problematized by his inclusion of the spatial contradictions that always-already inhere in capitalist space in a model that purports to represent an abstract "social imaginary" or economic/cultural totality. Jameson draws on a metaphor of urban space that is already a product of the relations of production: it is already ideological in the pejorative sense, smuggling an "unknown known," in Žižek's phrase (*Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle*), into the material used to conceptualize the unrepresentable totality. What space does a cognitive map imply? Does it escape or extend the genetic basis of the city form? Jameson's deployment of Lynch's concrete space as analogue appears to assume the totality is an already existing, coherent space that simply lacks a map, rather than a reproductive process engendered by capital and social practice.

Jameson appears to ignore the Lefebvrean dictum that space is ideological, and is produced by concrete activity of capital. As a result, the framework of cognitive mapping that leads Jameson to embrace the spatial dialectic would itself benefit from a spatial dialectizing. This "genetic" critique of the foundation of cognitive mapping certainly does not discount or devalue the theory; after all Jameson's project often depends on his unique ability to construct theories from tropes outside of Marxism/socialism which are retreaded for political purposes. But in recent talks, Jameson has admitted the metaphorical basis of cognitive mapping has been obsolesced, even while the need for this type of orienting theory has not dissipated [Vancouver, June 2010]. The next model of cognitive mapping casually suggested by Jameson will still be a fantasy cognitive space, but one with more dimensions: he gives a speculative multi-level chess board as an example, an image that could further the pursuit of a spatial dialectic (see *Valences of the Dialectic*; *Ideologies of Theory*).

(*Postmodernism*, 52).[48] Although cognitive mapping bears on a conceptual, social space beyond literal geographic terrain, the acts of orientation and navigation remain dominant.[49] With the advent of new instruments including the compass, sextant, and theodolite, navigation begins to traverse the "relationship to the totality, particularly as it is mediated by the stars and by new operations like that of triangulation" (52). Jameson's scale-up of Lynch's model is achieved with reference to the wider ("outer") space of stars[50] in allegorical comparison with literal navigation. With this extension of its basic analogy, cognitive mapping is expanded to "the coordination of existential data (the empirical position of the subject) with unlived, abstract conceptions of the geographic totality" (52). This totality is a distinctly spatial figure, apparently concept, abstraction, and structure at once, which Jameson proceeds to "transcode" into a revision of Louis Althusser's Lacanian definition of ideology.

Althusser argued science investigates the material Real while philosophy best communicates the import of science's discoveries, simultaneously illuminating its capture by ideology ("Ideological State Apparatuses," *Lenin and Philosophy*). Re-theorizing the metaphorical valences of cartography, Jameson configures the Althusserian distinction between existential experience (ideology) and scientific knowledge (controversially excepted from ideology)[51] as analogous to that between

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[48] Jameson admits the weakness of cognitive mapping inheres in its association with cartography, since "the transfer of the visual map from city to globe is so compelling that it ends up re-spatializing an operation we were supposed to think of in a different manner altogether"; cognitive mapping was supposed to "transcend the limits of mapping altogether," but is "drawn back by the force of gravity of the black hole of the map itself (one of the most powerful of all human conceptual instruments) and therein cancels out its own impossible originality" (*Postmodernism*, 416).

[49] Indeed, Certeau establishes the map as "a plane projection totalizing observations," but the description of space also makes recourse to the form of the "tour," in which "a discursive series of operations" orients the subject via narrative (119). Lynch's cognitive mapping produces a "*tableau*" in Certeau's terms, but Jameson's "socialist political project" would seem to call also for Certeau's "tour," which could inform "acting" versus "seeing," "movements" versus the static *tableau* (119).

[50] This perspective maintains the limit category of "outer" space as a conceptual category which bears on even the smallest scale of subjective mapping; a sense that is also present in the paradigm shift of the Earthrise photograph.

[51] See Teresa de Lauretis's argument against the exception of science from ideology in *Technologies of Gender* (1987).

Lacan's Imaginary and Real. Jameson adds that his "digression on cartography" corresponds with "the dimension of the Lacanian Symbolic itself" (*Postmodernism*, 54).

Jameson's analogy of the Real with science is limiting, and at odds with the above models of the Real as the negation of the Symbolic; as the overflowing plenitude of presymbolic signification. I wish to suggest an alteration to this model of the correspondence of the triad with Althusser's ideology, an adjustment which also accounts for many theoretical products of the reemphasis of space in postmodernity. While I agree with the correspondence of the Symbolic with cartography, I posit the Imaginary is represented by the subject's locus in the map, the position or site of self-orientation. In Lacanian terms, disorientation is Imaginary:[52] it involves the (lacking) spatial registration of a self-image analogous to that generated in the mirror stage. Most importantly, rather than taking scientific knowledge as Real, the properly Lacanian position reads science as part of the symbolization of the Real: scientific consensus is the razor's edge of the symbolic digestion of the material Real, of everything existential that currently mystifies human understanding and escapes symbolization.

Jameson perhaps unconsciously rehearses evidence that supports this configuration, noting that given the multiple modes of distortion that prevent the representation of a globe in two dimensions, "there are no true maps" of terrain, and yet still we represent space in a way that influences how we map our "individual social relationship to local, national, and international class realities" (52). Every attempted representation of an object and its spatial location in a geographical area will fall asymptotically short, creating instead a distorted map,[53] and eventually, a map of

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[52] From a Žižekian perspective, disorientation is akin to the stain of the Real, a perceptual form of the visual blot, of anamorphosis (I am grateful to Clint Burnham for this point). This is a perspective I pursue further in connection with the poetics of Steve McCaffery in Chapter 4. But spatial disorientation is not limited to an anamorphic image on a two-dimensional surface (as in the distorted skull in The Ambassadors painting by Hans Holbein), or even the disorienting relative motion of a second body, like the illusion (known as vection) that one is moving when a neighbouring train moves in one's visual field. The full extent of spatial disorientation would be something like the train illusion transposed to a higher dimensional level, where space itself is experienced as askew.

[53] Every map, every type of "projection," contains the telltale distortion of its transfer from a globe to a flat representation, a negative image of what cannot be (accurately) represented.

distortion.[54] This distortion determines the "global world system" as unrepresentable, while not unknowable (53).

Thus the repressed returns in spatial form itself: a dimension which is both a medium of the signifier and an absolute void immune to signification, indicates the persistence of a space that resists all imprint. The name for that which resists all symbolization is Real.[55]

Space as Real: The Return of the Planet

Within the Real of space, today the big Other returns to persist as an orbital presence surveilling Earth's surface, able to read all planetary objects as a giant text not unlike a scaled extension of de Certeau's view of the city from a skyscraper. The big Other has been reincarnated as the gaze of space itself (Morton) a spatial perspective which determines cosmos from a distant point.[56] And yet, Žižek argues the earth is "that which resists, remains forever obscure and unfathomable": "So, on the one hand, the earth designates what resists the meaningful totality of a historical world," while "on the other hand, however, what is most impenetrable is *the basic structure of the world itself*"

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[54] I should note that "a map of distortion," serves as an alternative shorthand for Althusserian ideology, which he described as "the imaginary transposition and distortion of men's real conditions of existence," or "the alienation in the imaginary of the representation of men's conditions of existence" (163).

[55] There appears a spatial symbolic register, and a symbolic space which are distinct from the Real of terrain. In Baudrillard's allegory, the map precedes the terrain.

[56] This interpretation of the fundamental spatiality of the big Other is supported by Žižek's reading of anxiety at the loss of the big Other, which is described as a form of claustrophobia:

> Lacan's standard notion of anxiety is that, as the only affect that does not lie, it bears witness to the proximity of the Real, to the inexistence of the big Other.... There is, however, another mode of anxiety which predominates today: the anxiety caused by the claustrophobia of the atonal world which lacks any structuring "point," the anxiety of the "pathological Narcissus" frustrated by the fact that he is caught in the endless competitive mirroring of his fellow men (a-a'-a''-a''' ...), of the series of "small others" none of which functions as the stand-in for the "big Other." The root of this claustrophobia is that the lack of embodied stand-ins for the big Other, instead of opening up the social space, depriving it of any Master-figures, renders the invisible "big Other," the mechanism that regulates the interaction of "small others," all the more all-pervasive. (*Lost Causes*, 36)

(*Lost Causes* 125; emphasis in original). The Žižekian parallactic Real[57] offers a spatial elaboration of the "Lacanian Real which, at its most radical level, is the disavowed X on account of which our vision of reality is anamorphically distorted:"

> it is simultaneously the Thing to which direct access is not possible *and* the obstacle which prevents this direct access, the Thing which eludes our grasp *and* the distorting screen which makes us miss the Thing. More precisely, the Real is ultimately the very shift of perspective from the first to the second standpoint (*Lost Causes* 127).

Žižek specifies "the Lacanian Real is not only distorted, but *the very principle of the distortion* of reality" (*Lost Causes* 288). Art work such as Clement Valla's "Postcards from Google Earth," which captures the spatial absurdities resulting from the failure of software to render satellite imagery in coherent topographic form, serves to materialize not just the scopic drive, symptomized in an unblinking gaze from orbital space, but also the distortions that constitute the displaced subject, refracted through the parallactic alternation between the space of the other's desire and space-as-big-Other.

The interrelated dichotomies of space/place, map/tour, periplum/birdseye view represent the form of comparison between space *in situ* and broader spatial context, part of the subject's attempt to grasp "the totality of capitalism from actually existing locations within it" (Goonewardena, "Urban Space and Political Consciousness," 174). The poetics of disorientation is generative, provided disorientation in space does not dictate a

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[57] By way of illustration, Žižek deploys this parallactic Real as an instrument for furthering the Adornian analysis of the antagonistic character of the notion of society:

> in a first approach, the split between the two notions of society (the Anglo-Saxon individualistic-nominalistic version and the Durkheimian organicist notion of society as a totality which preexists individuals) seems irreducible; we seem to be dealing with a true Kantian antinomy which cannot be resolved via a higher 'dialectical synthesis,' and which elevates society into an inaccessible Thing-in itself. However, in a second approach, one should merely take note of how this radical antinomy which seems to preclude our access to the Thing *already is the thing itself*—the fundamental feature of today's society *is* the irreconcilable antagonism between Totality and the individual. What this means is that, ultimately, the status of the Real is purely parallactic and, as such, non-substantial: it has no substantial density in itself, it is just a gap between two points of perspective, perceptible only in the shift from the one to the other (*Lost Causes,* 127).

In the work of experimental poets including Olson and Howe, his same parallactic shift inheres between the subject's periplum perspective and her imagination of the big Other's view of that perspective from above.

disorientation of thinking.[58] While the Real is what escapes all symbolization, it uncannily refers repeatedly to (non-metaphorical) space as a traumatic problem, as itself an absent cause of desire. The Real of space performs the "god-trick," the impossible totality of both views, periplum and bird's-eye, summed. From this perspective the spatial turn is the symbolic fabric that "introduces into reality the gap of the Real," a gap constituted in literal space.

Poetics of (Estranged) Space

Jameson's timely call for new forms of art to do justice to the "enormously complex representational dialectic" of spatial form in global totality is one that receives an answer in the avant-garde poetry I study in the following chapters (*Postmodernism* 54). This work, often labeled 'difficult' or experimental, responds to the exigencies of the risk society, of globalization and the disorientation of postmodernity by producing spatial estrangement through dialectical oscillation, exploring disorientation as a generative poetics.

Paralleling the technological gratification of the scopic drive, avant garde experimental poems materialize the gaze, to see across scales. By visualizing the formerly unrepresentable totality, turning it back into a literal picture, the scopic drive is reassigned to the big Other. Spatial poesis in literary/textual and visual art is in a process of giving the big Other a new definition: a new level of resolution. My readings of the poetry in the following chapters are in part analyses of the poems and poetics themselves, but they are also in part referential tools, deploying creative and challenging

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[58] The ambiguous effect of spatial thinking is demonstrated even by the comparatively unsophisticated theories of Joseph Frank, whose "Spatial Form in Literature" nevertheless points out the deep spatiality of language, especially metaphor. Evidence that this mode of consciousness critique has further to go is apparent in "Grounding Metaphor: Towards a Spatialized Politics," by Neil Smith and Cindi Katz, who unconsciously demonstrate the disavowed inherence of space even within a conceptual essay arguing for more consistency in spatial terminology. Deploying the spatial metaphor of a "ground" within an essay critical of the overuse of spatial metaphor goes some way toward establishing the basic unconscious character of space *itself*, to say nothing of spatial metaphor. "The critique is coming from inside the house...".

poetry as a form of knowledge in doing the work of theory. The poetry conducive to this work resists clear *meaning*, escaping the paradigms of paraphrasable sense and hermeneutic interpretation.

Due to the decline of symbolic efficiency[59]—the withering away of discursive language as an integral, self-present system of signification, the postmodern subject is now not only socially alienated, but also spatially disoriented, seeking registration in space rather than in the chain of signifiers. It is precisely the fact that space resists the closed hermeneutic paradigm of meaning that makes it an ideal symbolic fabric. As I show in the next chapter, Charles Olson's *The Maximus Poems* enacts an intensified proprioception of the subject, an attempt at orientation to the totality in response to this disorienting new cosmos of postmodernism.[60] Spatial poetics estranges space: rather than the banal background, space in postmodern art is a crucial dimension fundamental to socio-cultural and economic forms. Just as Viktor Shklovsky argued for the debanalization of everyday life, claiming that "Literature should make the stone stony" (*Theory of Prose* 20), at its most creative and rigourous, spatial poetics is capable of making space vertiginous.

The post-WWII period has witnessed a spatial shift in experimental poetics that corresponds with the spatial turn of theory. While Soja shows that the historical-temporal had been dominant in theory, I argue this had also been the case in poetry. A reemphasis of the spatial took hold organically through the intervention of French poets in a similar way that French philosophers and theorists had reemphasised space in theory. What I want to call a *visionary disorientation* is predicted in Rimbaud's early "Letter of the Seer": "I say that one must be a seer, make oneself a seer. The poet makes himself a seer by a long, prodigious, and rational disordering of all the senses." This *seeing*, made possible by perceptual disordering, is instructive: Kristin Ross's *The Emergence of Social Space* relates Rimbaud's poetics to the dynamic of industrializing metropolitan space coupled with the production of the everyday. This "rational

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[59] See Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject*, 322ff.

[60] In still attempting cosmos, Olson is closer to Pound than Howe or McCaffery are to Olson. Howe and McCaffery move to the production of disorientation in the poetry, where Olson attempts to make things cohere in an effort of Poundian nostalgia.

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disordering" is a trait that, over a trajectory of North American poetics, becomes fully spatialized in response to postmodernity, eventually producing the *poetics of spatial disorientation* I discuss in readings of three poets central to the trajectory I trace in the following chapters.

The spatial turn manifests in North American poetics through a gradual transition from historical to spatial emphasis that is bound symptomatically to changes in subjectivity. While Ezra Pound conceives of the epic poem as a "poem containing history," the phrase only partly describes his own *The Cantos*, which he called "the tale of the tribe." By contrast, *The Cantos* extend the Homeric spatial paradigm[61] by surveying systems of values and orienting nodes of attention amidst a subjective "vortex." Although freighted with (often oblique) historical reference, Pound marks the initiation of the American turn to spatial poesis. As Richard Cavell notes in his authoritative study, *McLuhan in Space*, Pound ushered in a resurgence of spatial thinking at the beginning of the twentieth century. A "new spatial sensibility" was expressed by Imagism and Vorticism, two ephemeral movements that had Pound at their core:

> This spatial sensibility was crucial to Imagism, which sought to present 'an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time,' an achievement most often ascribed to Pound's own poem 'In a Station of the Metro', where the effect is achieved through juxtaposition (or what Pound called 'super-position') on the space of the page, and where the medium of the poem itself—the typography—is hypertrophied into ideograms of faces and petals. (*McLuhan in Space*, 106)

The ideogram is a paradigm of a generative spatial symbolic register: not a grammar, exactly, as Fenollosa described in the essay Pound rescued,[62] but a constellation that

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[61] The *nostos* was recovered in some geographic detail by Victor Berard, whom Pound admired, in *Did Homer Live?* (1931).

[62] See Ernest Fenollosa, The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry.

eschews three-point perspective, the vanishing point, and the hypotaxis of declarative speech.[63]

Pound's burgeoning spatiality drew on perhaps the earliest recorded spatial poetics in Homer's *The Odyssey*. With the words "And then went down to the ship, / Set keel to breakers, forth on the godly sea", (3)*The Cantos* begin a poetic journey that retreads some of the recognizable spatial situations Odysseus encountered. Victor Berard theorizes that the *The* Odyssey's function is to pass on navigational information and instill the heroism of adventure in its readers (*Did Homer Live?*; see also Michael Seidel, *Epic Geography*). In *The Pound Era*, the authoritative study of this mode of *The Cantos*' poetics, Hugh Kenner uses the concept of homeomorphism[64] to designate the "subject-rhyme" that appears in comparison of the two epics. Kenner argues the later epic is homeomorphic with *The Odyssey*, since rather than merely "contain history," *The Cantos* survey and traverse a system of values in space-time, orienting a series of subject positions that are constituted by their relationship to these ambient details. *The Cantos* develop *epic space* in a progression from purely narrative patterns of content, including the Homeric *nostos*, or return journey, through the ideogrammatic and constellated juxtapositions of the later *Pisan Cantos*, a palimpsestic condition that prefigures the formally experimental deployment of page space and postmodern disorientation in later avant-garde poetry associated with the Black Mountain school.

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[63] Pound's ideogram resides somewhere between the visual space of Guy Davenport's collage (see *Geography of Imagination*) and the auditory space McLuhan would theorize. As Michael Davidson explains, "The 'ideogrammic method' advocated by Pound implied a way of moving from one element to another without providing the usual rhetorical connectives. Applied to the *The Cantos*, this method permitted Pound to create a visual field out of disparate discursive elements [...]" (*Ghostlier Demarcations*, 11).

[64] Similarly, "Joyce saw that the plot of *The Odyssey* and that of *Hamlet* were homeomorphs, one concentrating on the father, one on the son, but comparable in their structure of incidents. All ways of telling the same story are homeomorphic, even the way that ingeniously lets us suppose that the teller has been removed" (*The Pound Era* 33).

Crucial to the spatiality[65] of *The Cantos* is the concept of *periplum*, an area surveyed, 'not as land looks on a map / but as sea bord seen by man sailing' (LIX.28) This pre-cartographic aesthetic is interrelated with Pound's poetics of horizontal dislocation and juxtaposition, a first-person perspective on poetic terrain.[66] "Canto I" immediately introduces a state of disorientation:

> Sun to his slumber, shadows o'er all the ocean,
> Came we then to the bounds of deepest water,
> To the Kimmerian lands, and peopled cities
> Covered with close-webbed mist, unpierced ever
> With glitter of sun-rays (1)

The "Kimmerian lands" covered with "close-webbed mist" are impossible to navigate based on periplum, posing a negation that anticipates Jameson's postmodern condition of the disrupted cognitive map. Pound's register of space is not just representational, but also deployed typographically on the page: "Pound usually put two spaces between typewritten words, duplicating with technology a tendency already present in his handwriting. He knew that words physically separated from each other are perceived differently" (Kostelanetz, qtd in Cavell, *McLuhan in Space* 156-57). Pound's typescripts

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[65] Much as Berard had done with *The Odyssey,* Hugh Kenner deploys *The Cantos* as a map to the "sacred places" Pound explored, researched, and represented. Pound's, says Kenner, is a "Michelin map [that] will guide you, perhaps two hours by car from Montségur. A system of words denotes that verifiable landscape.... The words point, and the arranger of the words works in trust that we shall find their connections validated outside the poem" (qtd. in Perloff, *Differentials* 42). As Guy Davenport summarized the spatiality of Kenner's idiosyncratic readings, "Pound had tied identifiable fragments of interesting cultures into self-interfering knots that float in a magnetic field. You read them by looking at them. The meaning is in the geometry" ("Notebook" *The New Criterion*, Jan 2004, 78).

[66] Research by Kenner, Pound, Berard and Schlieman revealed that Homer's *The Odyssey* functions as actual periplum, as abstract precartographical objects that one could follow to find Troy. A sense of orientation is at the core of the Greek oral tradition (*Epic Geography*), and of course for seafarers of limited means with no safety equipment, orientation is a life/death understanding of position in surroundings. The very form of *The Odyssey*'s *nostos*, or difficult return journey, is a cautionary tale. Davenport would argue further that *periplum* was descriptive of the larger poem's structure:

> The Subject— *The Cantos* do not coincide point for point with their subject, for their subject was not created or imagined, but found. The subject therefore appears 'not as land looks on a map / but as sea bord seen by man (men?) sailing' (LIX.28). In these terms, the 'sailing around a subject,' the only subject would be such a map as the reader might make for himself, *The Cantos* being the logged voyage from which he works. This is why different readers report different subjects. (*Cities on Hills,* 7)

evince an early use of the repeatable spatialization a machine is capable of, a direct antecedent of later typographic experimentation including Charles Olson's Projective Verse and Robert Duncan's punctuating slash.

This latent spatiality in Pound, especially evident in the ideogrammic later *The Cantos*, erupts into full (self-)consciousness in Olson's work. The first American poet of the space age, Olson is a pivot-point of the spatial turn of North American avant-garde poetics. Clearly influenced by the older poet, Olson would adopt Pound's epic scale and the spatial model of periplum while disavowing his overt racism and fascist politics. Just as the theoretical spatial turn had transformed space from an unconscious realm of disavowal to an acknowledged social product, Olson's poetic space would move from the unconscious to the consciously deployed medium of typographic and phenomenological signification, as well as the outcome of historical processes within capitalism. With his pronouncement, "I take SPACE to be the central fact to man born in America," in *Call Me Ishmael* he not only expounded a critical intervention in (then-nascent) Melville studies that would identify the significance of space in the novelist's work; he also established the foundation for a praxis of poetic space to which he would contribute in years to follow, and which I expand on in the following chapter.

Experiments in spatial poesis are themselves geographically distributed across North America. While Olson's poetic locus never strayed far from the Eastern seaboard and Gloucester, Massachusetts, he was never identified with the New York school which evinced more emphasis on the radiant phrase, the expressive tenor of a personal voice and was decidely urban. His centrality to Black Mountain College would influence Denise Levertov, Larry Eigner, John Weiners and Jonathan Williams among others.

The conscious spatial turn evident in Olson's poetics is followed by poets who extended a spatial practice revealing his direct influence, in both the concentration on geographical thematic content, and experimental typographic form. Among these, Edward Dorn shows Olson's influence most directly in content and form, especially in *North Atlantic Turbine* and *Geography*, the latter of which is dedicated to Olson. Dorn and Olson share influences, including the geographer Carl Sauer; Dorn pursued an

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extension of Sauer's urging that "the thing to be known is the natural landscape. It becomes known through the totality of its forms" (*Land*, 337).[67] C. S. Giscombe's *Here* and *Giscome Road* are perhaps the closest in affinity with the spatial aspects of Olson's project, mapping a subjective spatial experience with comparable attention to geographic-historical detail, while adding a sensitive consideration of race.[68]

Inspired in part by Olson's example, Susan Howe has further opened the paradigm of open field poetics while also experimenting in typographical space. Howe's recent poetics extend Lyn Hejinian's rejection of closure even to the level of the grapheme, while still perpetuating Olson's focus on quasi-anarchic and idiosyncratic archival research. With reference to the Lacanian assertion that the unconscious is outside, I will explore the way Susan Howe's work, more than jettisoning the personal voice, also emphasizes the spatiality of the page and the materiality of the marks on that page.

The Language poets continued the attenuation of the historical while pursuing formal experimentation that involved page-space and conceptual space. As Perelman argues, Robert Grenier's phrase "'I HATE SPEECH' and Grenier's criticism in general were important in its positing of literary space," establishing "a way of connecting private reading and writing desires with some sense of public consequence and thus with a

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[67] See Patrick Barron, "Dorn's Heretical Spatial Knowledge in 'Turbine' and *Gunslinger"* *Midwest Quarterly* 49 (4) (2008) 401-415.

[68] Daphne Marlatt's *Steveston* chronicles this small BC fishing village, "hometown still for some, a story: of belonging (or is it continuing? lost, over & over ..." (56), home to many Japanese Canadians who were subsequently interned by the Canadian government during World War II. Marlatt's epic Olsonian scope of the interrelated geography and history spans, as Frank Davey notes,

> the exploitation of natural resources, the exploitation of early Japanese-Canadian fishermen who were eventually rescued from economic servitude to the fish packers by their internment at the start of World War II, the exploitation of all weaker groups (the Indian, the Chinese, the Nisei, the poor, the female) by wealthy and legally-sophisticated corporations, the heroic tenacity of the exploited in living their very real, sexual, and substantive lives in the mud and storm to which the abstract powers of corporate finance have confined them. (Davey, *From There to Here* 195)

Also attentive to racial relations, Roy Kiyooka, in *Transcanada Letters* and *Pear Tree Pomes*, explores a sense of the nation as network, representing Canada as a geographic expanse.

future" (Perelman, *Marginalization*, 41). Geographically positioned on the West coast,[69] Lyn Hejinian in San Francisco would formalize a "rejection of closure" through an open text which "invites participation, rejects the authority of the writer over the reader and thus, by analogy, the authority implicit in other (social, economic, cultural) hierarchies. It speaks for writing that is generative rather than directive" (*Language of Inquiry*, 43).

Complicating the parataxis of open form by retying it to the sentence, Ron Silliman's prose poetics often engages with spatial ideology while developing "the new sentence" as a unit of poesis which preserves discursive meaning between full stops: "The new sentence is a decidedly contextual object. Its effects occur as much between, as within, sentences" (*Sentence* 92). The new sentence is contrasted with Surrealist prose poems, "which manipulate meaning only at the 'higher' or 'outer' layers, well beyond the horizon of the sentence" (*Sentence* 87). Silliman often cultivates complex spatial metaphors, such as this visualization of a spatial phenomenon to ultimately stand in for the representation of the writing act:

> 19. Because I print this, I go slower. Imagine layers of air over the planet. One closer to the center of gravity moves faster, which the one above it tends to drag. The lower one is thought, the planet itself the object of the thought. But from space what is seen is what filters through the slower outer air of representation. ("The Chinese Notebook," in *The Age of Huts (Compleat)*, 151)

This is itself a form of cognitively mapping the writing process onto a spherical geometry, which also recalls the scale-fluidity of the Eames' *Powers of 10* as it imagines nested "layers."

Ron Silliman's path-breaking anthology *In the American Tree* contributed to a mapping of the overall field of these experimenters, breaking them into geographic sections labeled "WEST" (including Barrett Watten, Lyn Hejinian and Silliman) and

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[69] Allen Ginsberg, spiritually tied to William Carlos Williams, who became his mentor in Paterson, New Jersey, would also go on to impress the gravitational field in California. Where Williams established a spatio-historical form in his *Paterson*, Ginsberg's ideology of "first thought, best thought" would record a luminous and leering present in the semiotics of road systems and the depressive transience of a Greyhound bus station. The anthropomorphization of city architecture in "Howl" is just one example of the interrelationship of subject and space in Ginsberg and bears an uncanny but distant relation to Williams's analogy of human and geographical form in *Paterson*.

"EAST" (which included Bruce Andrews, P. Inman, and Susan Howe). The eternal present of Larry Eigner's parataxis creates a spatial register in *Air the Trees*, and in a related way Robert Grenier's *Sentences* becomes a spatial object.[70]

Using both formally and discursively spatial means, Steve McCaffery challenges the model of a "neutral ground of language" as "uninterrupting sediment of support and an un-differentiated surface upon which events are ordered" (qtd in Perloff, "Sentence Not Sentence," Sulfur #39).[71] As I explore in Chapter 4, this "defenestration" imperative, crucial to his early *Carnival*, is amplified throughout his early works to generate a dialectic between *seeing* and *reading*.

At the spatial register of the typographical page, the work under discussion evinces an "ongoing dialogue in between surfaces and fields,"[72] including in this dialogue for instance the very concepts of poetic *field* and strong metaphors of textual *surface*, but also figures of depth versus the one-dimensional moebius strip. The lineage of developing spatiality in post war american poetry offers the potential to more fully explore the political volatility of an aesthetic of cognitive mapping, through the representation of material, non-metaphorical spaces. The major works of Olson, Howe

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[70] Ron Silliman's reading of Eigner in "The Chinese Notebook" immediately describes the spatiality generated by his poetics:

> 134. Terms, out of context, inevitably expand and develop enlarged inner conditions, the large field of the miniaturists.
> 135. Eigner's work, for example. The early writings resemble a late Williams/early Olson mode, discursive syntax, which becomes in later works increasingly a cryptic notation until now often words in a work will float in an intuitive vocabulary-space, their inner complexities expanded so that words are used like the formal elements in abstract art. (*The Age of Huts* 165)

Silliman describes a visually experimental poetics shared to some extent by Language-associated poets, including Susan Howe who I discuss in Chapter Three.

Grenier's poetic object, made of index cards to be shuffled and read in perpetually new sequences, incorporates spatial self-awareness when for instance two words are centered on a white card: "transference isolates". Not only the typographic object, but also the card itself is isolated; the poem is transferential not only in bearing the ink of signifiers, but also transferring its own signification onto the random antecedent and subsequent cards.

[71] Published in *Sulfur* #39 (Fall 1996): 139-51.

[72] Quoting here from Wah's *Music at the Heart of Thinking* (11), a text that broaches Olsonian mapping (21) while positing bodily phenomenology as a radical poetics and politics: "but the body as a place that is as a container has suddenness so the politics of dancing is a dead giveaway to the poet's 'nothing will have taken place but the place'" (22).

and McCaffery I study here are at variance with each other, and yet each engages in the *mise en abyme* of representing the representation of space, testing and challenging the way space not only contains signification, but is both implicated in it and resistant to it. The spatially disjunctive poetics explored here present an ideal medium for the rendering of the dislocations and disorientation that characterize postmodern space.

Chapter 2.

Charles Olson's *Maximus* in Space:
Subject to the Mappemunde

"Since Sputnik and the satellites, the planet is enclosed in a manmade environment that ends 'Nature' and turns the globe into a repertory theater to be programmed."

(Marshall McLuhan, *From Cliché to Archetype* 9)

The political and ideological Space Race, initiated with the launch of Sputnik in 1957 and culminating in the moon landings of 1969, chronologically bookends the production and publication of the three volumes of Charles Olson's epic, *The Maximus Poems.*[73] The spatiality of Olson's work, a conscious deployment of both typographic spatial form and an emphasis on social space as a dimension of politics, is reinforced by

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[73] *The Maximus Poems* were begun in 1950 and left incomplete by Olson's death in 1970; volume I was published in 1960, volumes II and III in 1968 and 1975, respectively.

this historical milieu[74] as well as his reading of the geographer Carl Sauer, the prose of Herman Melville, and Olson's own interest in cartography, which he traced back to the ancient Mayans. Specifically, Olson's writing life coincides with the technological advances of the Apollo program, and with the cultural paradigm shifts that accompanied these changes, including the capture of the "Earthrise" photograph in 1968, and the related emergence of an ecological consciousness that exceeded the dominant, Western, Romantic view of nature as a sublime force and an alien realm beyond humanity. This paradigm shift, which staged ecology as a dimension of the world in which humans were implicated, and in which they could intervene, also posited ecology as a universal, and influenced the founding of Earthday.[75] Figuring Charles Olson as the preeminent North American poet of the space age not only productively reevaluates his work within a dynamic scale continuum, but also locates his project within the advent

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[74] While the milieu in question is not a product of the technological determinism which Jameson argues "functions as a substitute for Marxist historiography" in the writings of Benjamin and McLuhan (*Marxism and Form* 74), it seems clear that the technological breakthroughs of the space race, especially in the way these revealed images of Earth as a globe (including the Earthrise image discussed in Chapter 1), enable and reinforce globalization in the popular imagination, but also no doubt in a philosophical register. Peter Sloterdijk meditates in his massive *Spheres* trilogy on Heidegger's pronouncement that the "fundamental event of modernity is the conquest of the world as picture," declaring that this picture began to take form long before the space race:

> The affair of Western reason with the totality of the world is created and unfolds in the symbol of the geometrically perfected round form, which we still signify with the Greek 'sphere,' or more frequently with the Latin 'globe.' It was the early European metaphysicians, mathematicians, and cosmologists who forced their new, fatalistic definition on the mortals: they would be creatures who inhabited and administered a sphere. Globalization begins as a geometricization of the immeasurable. ("Geometry in the colossal: the project of metaphysical globalization" in *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 2009, volume 27, p 29)

[75] Explaining that "[t]he Romantic term *culture*, hovering somewhere between nature and nurture, evokes a surrounding world,"(82) Timothy Morton argues that a sense of the world has inflected historical as well as spatial thought since the Romantic period.

> Just as history (as a sequence of events) has been becoming more global since the early modern period and the rise of capitalism, so history (as writing) has tuned in to the idea of *world:* of a surrounding environment or culture; what German thinking calls *Lebenswelt* or *Umwelt*. (*The Ecological Thought* 83)

See also Ursula Heise, *Sense of Place, Sense of Planet*, Chapter 1.

and recognition of postmodernism.[76] *The Maximus Poems* uniquely takes space as both its medium and material, form and content, as the poems trace a continuum from the human body to the outer regions of scale. Within the context of the spatial turn I laid out in Chapter 1, Olson's work both reflects and contributes to radical shifts in humanity's perspective on its own spatial situation at a moment when postmodern space begins to overlap with the spaces of modernity, and a planetary spatial imagination emerges.

By reemphasizing space in a radical poetic geography, Olson reexamines neglected local temporal narratives at the crux of roiling changes that accompany accelerated globalization. In what follows I analyze aspects of Olson's *The Maximus Poems* from two spatial theoretical perspectives which re-situate his work within the spatial turn of a nascent postmodernism: the Lefebvrean production of space, which reveals social space as a social product; and a speculative poetics of cognitive mapping— the attempted representation, in the face of postmodern disorientation, not just of the totality of world systems but of the subject's imagined relationship to this contingent totality. In the aggregate movement of The Maximus Poems, which is not to say its own totality, Olson's spatial poetics produce the vertiginous transition from the modernist citizen of the nation to the postmodern subject in globalized space.[77] If globalization's expansions and contractions of space produce the postmodern subject in a wave of disorientation which representations of space attempt to both counteract and represent, the subject's attempt to reorient through the cognitive mapping of imaginary articulations becomes the imperative of a new spatial (self-)consciousness (Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic*).

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[76] "The postmodern in American literature originated as a spatial fantasy," writes Barrett Watten in connection with Olson, and "every spatial fantasy correlates with an object" (*The Constructivist Moment* 323-324). If "the organization of space is the primary fantasy of the modern," "Postmodernity is the border between the modern and aesthetic negativity" (326; 336). Watten configures an investigation of "negativity as the privileged locus of any totality" as crucial to the discourse of the postmodern, in which he includes "the gaudy speculations of Robert Venturi or Jean Baudrillard, who may be read as inverting the discourse of progressive modernity and substituting examples of negativity, dissociation, and nonnarration for moments of domination and control" (336).

[77] I indicate with this phrase the emerging planetarity of global space that becomes explicit in later *Maximus* poems and which I discuss below. In one sense (contra Jameson,) it isn't a differential concrete space that distinguishes postmodernity, but a differential subjective relationship to space. The compressions of space, on the other hand, are directly constitutive of specifically globalized space.

Reading Olson's practice as spatial *poesis* takes advantage of the broad significance of the term: Greek for *making*,[78] poesis refers to Olson's production at multiple scales, from the typographic to the topographic, from local ecology to continental geology. Crucially, Olson's poetics remakes space in relation to the disorientation and displacements at the cusp of postmodernity. "Given Olson's 'methodology,'" Robert Creeley notes, "a favorite term, poetry had no longer a simply literary or cultural practice. It became, rather, a primary activity and resource for what can be called 'historical geography'" (preface to ...*Allegory of a Poet's Life*). Olson's poetic practice transcends the historical freight of *place*[79] by pursuing an aesthetic of radical geography as an avant-garde, materialist response to the intensified spatial character of postmodernity. This geographical aesthetic foregrounds spatial changes over time in all their disruptive and disorienting potential. In turn, this radical revision of geography's field and mode of investigation, inspired in part by the work of geographer

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[78] I am influenced by the Language poetics that, subsequent (and in various reaction) to Olson, formalized the non-confessional and disjunctive, if not the spatial, experiments of the sixties. As Perloff writes, "language theory reminded us that poetry is a making [*poien*], construction using language, rhythm, sound and visual image, that the subject, far from being the poet speaking in his or her natural 'voice,' was itself a complex construction, and that – most important – there was actually something at stake in producing a body of poems, and that poetic discourse belonged to the same universe as philosophical and political discourse" (*Differentials* 155).

[79] The concept "place" has experienced a career of many alternative definitions, until ultimately it was void of meaning. As Timothy Morton paraphrases Casey's *The Fate of Place*, "place went from being a fully fledged philosophical concept, wholly different from space, to a non-thing, an empty or arbitrary demarcation" (*Ecology* 169). "The evacuation of place reached its apex in the idea of space as a system of mathematical points," as Timothy Morton has it, and thereafter, "the concept of space colonized the idea of place" (170). But of course, the melancholy nostalgia over a lost sense of place is inappropriate from the postmodern perspective we now inhabit:

> what if globalization, via an ironic negative path, revealed that place was never very coherent *in the first place*? [...] Globalization compels us to rethink the idea of place, not in order to discard it, but to strengthen it, and to use it in a more thorough critique of the world that brought about mass hunger, monocultures, nuclear radiation, global warming, mass extinction, pollution, and other harmful ecological phenomena. (170)

Carl Sauer,[80] responds to a tension in Olson between subjective disorientation and a poetic reestablishment of ideological waypoints that charts a materialist universe represented as much *in* as *by* space.

Beginning with *Call Me Ishmael*, his study of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick,* Olson saw the history of America as distinctly spatial: "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"[81] (*Collected Prose* 17). The American geographic expanse and its exploration are two sides of one condition for Olson,[82] whose own direct poetic engagement with space begins with "Projective Verse," a manifesto which posits a robust field poetics where energy is instantly exchanged and actions provoke immediate reactions. A spatial approach to *The Maximus Poems* elucidates the confounding

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[80] Olson subscribed to the innovative views of Sauer, who transcended the standard vocation of geography as the 'scientific' description of topography. Sauer is comfortable admitting that the science of geography is part of what can't ultimately be consolidated by it. Sauer's work represents a revision of geography itself that would later be taken up by contemporary radical geographers including David Harvey and Edward Soja. Rather than comprehensively describe an area, Sauer described how the area and the people influence each other, an idea similar to Lefebvre's socio-spatial dialectic (discussed in chapter 1) in alternate terms. Sauer's work presages geography's transition toward ecology and conservation in the face of the exploitation of the expanding Western frontier:

> The natural landscape is being subject to transformation at the hands of man, the ... most important morphological factor. By his culture he makes use of natural forms, in many cases alters them, in some destroys them. (*Land and Life* 341)
> The natural landscape is of course of fundamental importance .... The shaping force, however, lies in the culture itself (343)

In Sauer's view the forms of the cultural landscape "are derived from the mind of man, not imposed by nature, and hence are cultural expressions" (343). Sauer's new emphasis represented a change in geography, shifting its baseline goal from the description of landscape to "a methodology for understanding the processes through which landscapes developed" (Mitchell 28). The complex interrelationship of people to space would become one of Olson's "new sciences of man": his "science of place" was specifically anchored by Sauer's then-radical concepts.

[81] Olson's use of capitalization in this famous line indicates a conceptual tie between his concept of a massive space and his typography: "I spell it large because it comes large here. Large, and without mercy" (*CP* 17). While his depiction of aboriginals is somewhat fraught, as I'll explore below, with generalizations, in this quotation he is including aboriginal inhabitants of "America," since the time of "Folsom cave" refers to a sweep of 10,000 years of human inhabitation of the continent (see the editors' notes in *Collected Prose*, 381).

[82] "Parkman" above refers to Francis Parkman, the historian and author of *The Oregon Trail, Sketches of Prairie and Rocky Mountain Life.*

features of Olson's practice and also extends the critical paradigms of the spatial turn with a new form of spatial poesis in which an epic poem is generated in the interface of page and world.[83] Via the mechanical constraints of his typewriter, Olson generates what he calls a "stave and bar" for recording rhythmic performance information, including patterns of enunciation (*CP* 245). Poetic parataxis takes on a new dimension as patterns in page space are deployed to signify not only the poet's particular breath patterns at the time of composition, but also the deep imbrication of the body in language, and the generative conflation of the subject (the poet's gestural emanation in the poem), and object (the constitutive signifiers and their referents in the world).

The breadth of Olson's critical prose presents a series of investigations of space at ascending scales, informed by theorizations spanning mythic geography, phenomenology, proprioception, the production of space, the spatio-historical nation, patterns of human migration, and ultimately theorizations of cartography and cognitive mapping. The development of spatial scale in Olson's poetics begins with the body-centrality[84] of spatial practice, as a textual forerunner of cognitive mapping. This is conceived by Olson as proprioception, or "proprious-ception / 'one's own'-ception" through which the body establishes its orientation "by the movement of its own tissues,

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[83] Ezra Pound's *The Cantos* similarly referred directly to culture via its material emanations in space. In Hugh Kenner's reading of Pound he follows *The Cantos* like a guidebook into France and Italy, finding the poem's specific referents, photographing them as evidence of the poem's evidence (*The Pound Era*).

[84] Olson's *centric* focus on the body is closely related to Heidegger's nascent phenomenology, within which "the 'subject' (Dasein), if well understood ontologically, is spatial" (*Being and Time* 111). See also Judith Halden-Sullivan in *The Topology of Being: The Poetics of Charles Olson* for further Heideggerian readings of Olson.

Additionally, Lefebvre's contextualization of space via the body's spatiality and that of its other is a model that will uncannily recur in *Maximus*, visible for instance in the configuration of Gloucester as an island, as an entity with a coastal "skin," that establishes relations inside its bounds: "Space—my space— is not the content of which I constitute the textuality: instead it is first of all my body, and then it is my body's counterpart or other, its mirror image or shadow: it is the shifting intersection between that which touches, threatens or benefits my body on the one hand, and all other bodies on the other. Thus we are concerned, once again, with gaps and tensions, contacts and separations" (*Production* 184).

giving the data of, depth" (*CP* 182).[85] This concerted study of space and subjective orientation is realized in Olson's life-long work in *The Maximus Poems*, which begins at the scale of a small city on Cape Ann, Massachusetts.

Polis Is This: The Production of Space in *Maximus*

Despite their eventual break over profound political differences,[86] the open field of Olson's projective verse could not exist without Ezra Pound as precursor. In early poems such as "The Kingfishers," Olson deploys the differentials of page space that his controversial mentor had expanded with the Imagistic development of ideograms. The legacy of Pound's Vorticism/Imagism leads directly to the later *Maximus*'s "pictoral and gestural" works; poems which, in order to quote, require "a photocopier not a word processor," as Bob Perelman writes, due to their integral spatiality (*Marginalization* 6-7). While Ezra Pound's *The Cantos* covers a historical sweep of places, times and cultures, ranging immediately over both eras and continents, *The Maximus Poems* begins with a romantic idealization of place with a close focus on a deeply spatial history. This practice bears a relationship to William Carlos Williams' *Paterson*, but where that work of place focuses on the mediation of the local by forms of colloquial speech and populist newsprint, Olson's geographic-historical research of Gloucester illuminates and reconstitutes dominant, residual and emergent forms of social space, past and present (Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*).[87]

Gloucester, Massachusetts is an early European colonial outpost about an hour from Boston which was established in 1623 as a fishing colony. Gloucester represents a

[85] Proprioception provided the "place" of the "unconscious" for Olson: "The advantage is to 'place' the thing, instead of it wallowing around sort of outside, in the universe, like, when the experience of it is interoceptive: it is inside us / & at the same time does not feel literally identical with our own physical or mortal self (the part that can die)" (*CP* 181). This suggests a productive alignment with Lacan's claim that the unconscious is outside, in an external chain of signifiers.

[86] See *An Encounter at St Elizabeth's* for Olson's rejection of Pound's anti-semitism and fascism.

[87] See also Olson's nascent ecological views collected in *Maximus to Gloucester: the letters and poems of Charles Olson to the editor of the Gloucester Daily Times, 1962-1969* (1992), which illustrates Olson's direct use of public discourse to intervene in the tension among residual, dominant and emergent modes of production and forms of social space.

contact zone characterized by violent appropriation. Gloucester Harbor, originally named "Beauport" by French explorers who recognized the natural protection offered by its sheltered position on the Cape, is now a permanent site of fishing and whaling. Olson's *Maximus* is in a way a product of this particular intersection of history and space: a confluence of colonial expansion and an accidental discovery of a continent, which results in a settlement that is a force of commerce and culture.

Addressed to the *polis* of Gloucester, Olson's early *Maximus* poems are letters to exhort the citizens to see the particularity of their place and politics,[88] and the value of their community:

> Root person in root place, hear one tansy-covered boy tell you
> what any knowing man of your city might, a letter carrier, say,
> or that doctor–if they dared afford to take the risk, if they reminded themselves
> that you should not be played with, that you deserve ... ("Letter 3," *Maximus* 16)

For Olson, Gloucester's community is the product of the historical independence of its citizens, an authentic character in spite, or as a result of, the isolation of the city from the wider nation:

> Isolated person in Gloucester, Massachusetts, I, Maximus, address you
> you islands
> of men and girls (16)

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[88] See Dale Smith, *Poets Beyond the Barricade: Rhetoric, Citizenship, and Dissent after 1960*, on Olson's intervention in public discourse, and thereby public space. Smith claims "A poem is meaningful to public knowledge insofar as it is capable of preparing an audience for the possibilities that are latent in how circulations of discourse and other symbolic forms are valued" (14). In an interview with Jules Boykoff and Kaia Sand, Smith expands on this statement through the example of Olson's publications in the local newspaper:

> What stands out about these poems as significant public discourse is the communal relationship that emerges through the publication efforts. The paper's editor and publisher worked to make Olson legible for a small New England daily. There are letters from town citizens who responded to Olson, challenging him or, conversely, thanking him for helping them see their city with a new perspective. While he wanted to preserve several historic buildings in Gloucester, he was also concerned with the shape or dimension of public feeling that accompanied the changes his city faced. And even though many of his preservation efforts failed, he increased civic awareness of the postwar urban transformations Gloucester experienced. His poetic voice(s) entered public record, thereby giving shape and gesturing to social possibilities that otherwise would not have emerged in the circulation of civic discourse that literally changed the face of the city. ("Poetry and 'enactments of public space'")

Olson understands a city as constituted by both its physical (infra)structure, its roads, buildings, and landmarks, as well as the enduring social patterns of its *polis*, and the self-reflection of that group as they develop through space and time. Olson's most engaged civic moments come in his anger as space is (re)produced by commerce, as American society shifts from an economy of production to one of consumption, and as American mass culture, in the form of "dirty / postcards / And words, words, words / all over everything" that have "invaded, appropriated, outraged, all senses / including the mind" (17). In this imagistic and affective manner, *The Maximus Poems* shows how a sharpened consciousness and imagination of place is shaped not only by history, but also by the forces and flows of capital, and thus exhorts the multitude to actively defend their community against such a "cheap" politics:

> Let those who use words cheap, who use us cheap
> take themselves out of the way
> Let them not talk of what is good for the city ("Letter 3," 13)

Rather the polis is encouraged,

> In the land of plenty, have
> nothing to do with it
>   take the way of
> the lowest,
> including
> your legs, go
> contrary, go
>
> sing   ("The Songs of Maximus" 19)

As Olson recognizes Gloucester as necessarily multiscalar, and his address to the city hails global capital and its reifying effects. This complex spatiality characterizes the city through multiple forms of symbolic space as Olson continually draws attention to geographic forms which carry a valence of signification. For instance, as Olson describes the Lady of Good Voyage, a statue of a woman holding a boat atop the Catholic Church, gazing from "on the hill, over the water," (6) Gloucester's special status is figured as a manifestation of the mythical American "city on a hill." Spoken by John Winthrop in his 1630 sermon from the deck of the Arbella, the ship on board which he explored and mapped the East coast including Cape Ann, the phrase, referring to

Jesus's sermon on the mount, influenced the view of the nascent colonies and the eventual United States as exceptional. Olson maintains this view of his adopted home's exceptionalism—at least in his early poems—and sees this status in Gloucester's citizens. Though Olson is defending the spatial and historical specificity of Gloucester, it is always within a dialectic of the particular and the universal, rescaling this spatial-political exceptionalism of America in a more positive manner than that used to justify adventurism and war:

> 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.... (qtd in *Guide* 9)

"All my life I've heard / one makes many" runs the epigram of *The Maximus Poems*, Volume I. The epic's recurring tension between the "one" and "many" is fundamental to the space of Gloucester, which is both radically differentiated and held as an archetype of a recurring universal form; it is also part of the dialectical antagonism between the community of polis and the individualism of the people who make up that polis.

Given its thematic focus on a single city and its emphasis on geography, *The Maximus Poems* can be located within the history of epic poems of place: the work's specificity to this coastal city and its engagement with the history of its founding and development speak to the deep engagement with this particular location. But Lytle Shaw crucially redefines this place by elaborating a broader anthropological *site,* developed in the sixties and seventies by American poets, Olson primary among them: "Olson's 'fieldwork' was central to the later explosion of poetry bound up with ethnography and archaeology in the period of New American Poetry..." ("Olson's Archives: Fieldwork in New American Poetry" 3). While Shaw perspicuously examines "the status of fieldwork in Olson's practice—its relation to ethnography, historiography and the archive" (10), my own focus in this section is the way Olson intensifies the spatiality of fieldwork. Through Henri Lefebvre's redefinition of space as socially produced, I will explore how Olson's poetic spatial form engenders a model of spatial thinking which is extensible beyond the anthropological or ethnographic *site* to a broad form of socially produced *space* across capitalist development.

Lefebvre's triadic theory of space is particularly useful in elucidating the way Olson's interaction with Gloucester creates a spatial complex that intensifies and ultimately rescales place. *Representational space* for Lefebvre includes space as directly lived through its associated images and complex symbolism while *representations of space* describe spaces tied to the relations of production and to the 'order' which those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs and to codes. *Spatial practice* embraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation; it is an opportunity for the masses to interfere in the capitalist organization and (therefore) the conceptualization of space (*Production* 33). Even though he was apparently unaware of Lefebvre's specific terms, Olson's *Maximus* isolates and explicates precisely these features of Gloucester.[89] In so far as it is a symbol of early European settlement and the colonial idealism of those who live there, Gloucester is a *representational space*: Olson calls New England a "newing land," a new start for the Europeans settling there (*Guide*, xxxii); yet, these settlements also represent a violent irruption and colonial displacement from the indigenous perspective, a representation which is foundational to *Maximus*. Gloucester is also revealed as a *representation of space*, a planned (and contingent) result of human activities, of the relations of production. Finally, Lefebvre's *spatial practice* designates both the activity of Olson as poet, whose walking and mapping describes and inscribes particular space from an embodied viewpoint, and the spatial practices of all those who built Gloucester, from the indigenous people, the British colonists and Portuguese fishermen, and later, the corporate practices of global capital.

Olson not only describes contemporary human geographical patterns of Gloucester, but also explores why this particular *there* is there. Just as Lefebvre penetrated to the production of space hidden behind its apparently given neutrality, the spatial emphasis of Olson's research uncovers what is elided in space by the temporal

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[89] I am unaware of any evidence that Olson was familiar with Henri Lefebvre's work. In discussing Olson's *Proprioception* in conjunction with Henri Lefebvre's *Dialectical Materialism*, Ron Silliman notes that Lefebvre book appeared "in the same Nathaniel Tarn-edited Cape Grossman series that first published Zukofsky's *"A" 22 & 23*. The Lefebvre was not translated into English until 1968, Olson composed his series of notes in 1961 & '62. Olson may have read or heard of Lefebvre, possibly through Tarn, but it's certainly not a given." (Silliman's Blog, Sept 1 2003; http://ronsilliman.blogspot.ca/2003/09/ive-been-mulling-idea-for-past-several.html)

emphases of history and of the epic.[90] As the visceral experience of space dominates the cognitive apprehension of a historical place, The *Maximus Poems* resists narrative cohesion. As opposed to the ephemerality and immateriality of place, Olson's ambient space is made *matter* by a Herodotean embodied measurement. This measurement is proprioception writ large, supplying a paradoxically universal and subjective standard by which to map the land: "History is the practice of space in time" (*The Special View of History* 27). Each universal is a product of particular, individual spatial itineraries and experiences. In 1948, some two years prior to the first *Maximus* poem, Olson wrote the following notes for a lecture 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 of a humanitas eased out of contemporary narrows. ("Man is Prospective" 2)

Olson's emphasis of the deep perception of space, of a space which "informs objects and ... contains ... secrets," clarifies a previously unremarked link with Lefebvre's project: Olson's poetics also confront the ideology that has secreted spatial knowledge from general awareness, and explicates the ways in which "(social) space is a (social) product" (*Production* 30).

The Lefebvrean socio-spatial dialectic, the dynamic interrelationship in which spatial relations are concretized in urban (infra-)structures which in turn affect society, often subtends the poetic signification of land forms in *Maximus* as Olson discovers instances in which specific geography impels or impedes exploration, and opens opportunities for exploitation. The initial settlers choose their locations based on a strategic exploitation of land forms, such as Fisherman's Field, sheltered by Tablet Rock, and the harbour itself, strategically exploited for its natural protection from rough seas. *Maximus* is replete with deeply researched and interrelated examples of how the early settlers are influenced by topography to become "root person in root place" (16), and in

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[90] While the epic poem is predominantly, up to "the Pound era," a "poem containing history," after *Maximus* the mode of the long (or life-long) poem reflects an emphasized spatiality, as in Ed Dorn's *Gunslinger*, Ronald Johnson's *Radi Os*, and even Silliman's *Ketjak*. Roy Kiyooka's *Transcanada Letters*, Christian Bök's *Crystallography*, and Stephen Collis's *The Barricades Project* are recent examples of spatial epics that invert a traditional historical/temporal emphasis.

turn how that settlement changes the topography, as in the building of roads, bridges, dams and reservoirs.

It is significant for Olson that Gloucester, geographically situated on Cape Ann but separated from mainland Massachusetts by the Annisquam River to the West, is an island. This spatial discreteness of Gloucester is an aspect of its representational space, giving the city relative independence from the development of the nation even as it is shaped by the history and present of that nation as an imagined community.[91] This leads in turn to a fascinating extrapolation of symbolic space as Olson creates a geographic homeomorph for Gloucester in ancient Tyre (present-day Lebanon). Olson thought of "Tyre as (with Gaza) the only city which resisted Alexander's universalization" (qtd in *Guide* 9), and thereafter became interested in Maximus of Tyre, a minor Greek philosopher who lived in the second century AD. Reading Tyre as a kind of mirror image of Gloucester across the Atlantic, the comparison is entirely spatial; when Olson opens *Maximus* "Offshore, by islands hidden in the blood," he imagines a removed point somehow associated with ancient Tyre:

> ...in the very first letter addressed to Gloucester, the position off-shore of
> Maximus is indeed an enormous expropriation of the other side of the Atlantic,
> the other side all the way back to man's first leaving the massive land continent
> of "Asia" for Cyprus, the 1st "island" in that aspect of Westward movement.
> (*Guide* 10)

This "expropriation" exemplifies the generative spatial associations that suffuse *Maximus*. Barrett Watten proposes that "Olson's solution to the problem of transcendental position, the dilemma of 'where to stand' in his epic, was to see himself, as any poet, in two places at once—for example, both in his body and outside it ('Offshore / by islands in the blood')—even if this solution led to a gradual devolution of narrative as it comes undone in the argument of his poem" (*The Constructivist Moment* 215). While this connection between Tyre and Gloucester is notable for its absolute

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[91] See Benedict Anderson for the relationship of the commodification of print with the origins of national consciousness (*Imagined Communities*; principally chapter three). This fact is consonant with Olson's concern with public discourse, in the Gloucester Times, but also at the relatively obscure scale of a small circulation poetics journal launched by Vincent Ferrini, much to the chagrin of Olson/Maximus.

independence of any historical link, its poetic effect is generated by the very disjuncture of the two elements, which counters this lack by a posited similarity in terms of representational space and the resistance of conquest.

For Olson, the island as form is a spatial metaphor that generates a psychological tone, but he is also referencing the particular characteristics Melville ascribes to his "Isolatoes" in *Moby Dick*.[92] Off-shore and independent of a larger land mass, even while proximate to it, the inhabitants themselves are constructed as insular: "so few / have the polis / in their eye" (32). Evincing a recursive pattern of the (re)production of space, attended by the destruction of the agora or commons in favour of private and commercial space,[93] the inhabitants of the island are themselves islands, carrying islands hidden in their blood. Establishing the authenticity (is the "blood" a certain history? a genetic birthright?) and independence of the island dwellers, Olson is also dialectically arguing the island is a partially anthropomorphized construct, a similarly unique individual, produced by a geographical determinism.

With the emphasis of insularity in the opening of *Maximus*, "Offshore, by islands hidden in the blood," Olson gives a subjective viewpoint on an objective location outside the purview of a mainland. But the symbolism of this locus is not an accident of "nature" or providence, any more than was the colonial conquest of the Massachuset Indians. Technically, the insular nature of Gloucester is itself *produced* space in the Lefebvrean sense: an engineering project known locally as "the Cut" made Gloucester an island in terms of contiguous land forms, minimally discrete from the mainland Olson sees as a nefarious influence.

The Cut was engineered by the Reverend Richard Blynman, the first minister of Gloucester, who was authorized by vote in May 1643 to cut a canal through the beach

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[92] "Islanders seem to make the best whalemen. They were nearly all Islanders in the Pequod, *Isolatoes* too, I call such, not acknowledging the common continent of men, but each *Isolato* living on a separate continent of his own" (*Moby Dick* 140). Melville's "separate continents" are a fantasy of exceptionalism that directly contradicts the humanist solidarity in John Donne's sentiment "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main."

[93] This invasive affront to public space is represented in the "mu-sick" pumped into street-cars (7), and also in the production of "the Cut" for the benefit of commerce (on which, more below).

and marsh to connect the Annisquam River with Gloucester Harbour (*Guide* 131). Olson researches the original historical moment the canal was pondered, both as engineering undertaking and as profitable tolled passage, by quoting letters and records from 1638-39:

> to view, whether it may not be / cut through [...]
> that they that cut the beach between
> Cape Ann & Annisquam
> shall have the liberty to take sufficient
> toll, for 21 years. (II.67)
>
> a certain previledged [sic] place
> call the Cutt [sic] where
> vessels pass through for money. (II.69)

This moment of the conception of a project moves Olson's attention from the product in space, the canal and bridge which are now hundreds of years old, to the otherwise obscured Lefebvrean production of that space. This motivated space of representation that alters geography for the benefit of capital is an early example of Marx's "annihilation of space by time" (*Grundrisse* 523). Ships were the dominant transportation technology, and the canal enabled passage from the Annisquam River to the open water via Gloucester harbour; meanwhile an elite group profited from the radical re-engineering of local geography. The Cut is evidence, still extant to this day (though spanned with a modern drawbridge), of the past mode of production and its impact on geography and spatial practice.[94]

In Olson's spatial practice, the Cut is a space of representation — a vision of how space could be transformed for the benefit of transportation, which is to say for profit— but it is also a representational space. The Cut is the site of Gloucester's isolation, the

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[94] This fragmentation of the environment itself for the sake of capital's efficiency is mirror-reflected by the fragmentation of Olson's form, which functions to the very different end of *resisting* "efficiency" of reductive hermeneutic interpretation. As I develop later in this chapter, this formal fragmentation is also implicated in the tension that prevents cosmos from appearing (or being perceived).

locus[95] of minimal discreteness that makes its space insular and its inhabitants unique, and Olson's obsessive returns to this locus show methodical research, both archival and spatial, as multiple times are conflated in a single space of the stratified present. The canal and the drawbridge over it figure prominently as a symbolically rich interface of river, ocean and land, and the site of an annual memorial ritual for sailors lost at sea:

> (4,670 fishermen's lives are noticed. In an outgoing tide
> of the Annisquam River, each summer, at the August full,
> they throw flowers, which, from the current there, at the Cut,
> reach the harbor channel, and go
>
> these bouquets (there are few, Gloucester, who can afford florists' prices)
> float out
> you can watch them go out into,
> the Atlantic (I.80)

At the Cut bridge, place becomes symbolic space: the locus of intensified differentiation is invested with the structure of feeling that makes Gloucester unique in its inhabitants' eyes. Formally, the indentation of the line "you can watch them go out..." visualizes the drifting of the memorial flowers that reach the ocean, the cemetery of so many members of Gloucester's working class.

The geographic discreteness of the sea city is also a representational space, a spatial symbol which grants Gloucester substantial but temporary independence from the developing nation, and is later extrapolated into the symbolic space of the city's citizens.

> I speak to any of you, not to you all, to no group, not to you as citizens
> as my Tyrian might have. Polis now
> is a few, is a coherence not even yet new (the island of this city
> is a mainland now of who? who can say who are
> citizens? (*Maximus* I.11)

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[95] In Lacanian terms, the Cut is also the mark of the divided subject. Gloucester is differentiated from the nation, initially posited as corrupt. The Cut is minimal to begin with, but makes a difference to both the land and water traffic. it is sutured by the bridge, a site of spatial production, but also of capitalist profit. Just as in the Lacanian phallus, the cut is imaginary, in that it is something 'put-on,' like the officer's badge or the judge's robes.

But Gloucester's spatial insularity is short-lived, as Massachusetts state highway 128, constructed through the city in 1950 as the post-war US reinvested in infrastructure, cuts a thoroughfare through the city's isolation and bridges it materially and conceptually to the nation, ushering capital flows from the mainland:

> as the mainland hinge
> of the 128 bridge
> now brings in
> what,
> to Main Street? (I.160)

Olson feared the development of this "mainland hinge" would be deleterious to the small city.[96] The lacuna intrinsic to the observation, the "what" in the phrase "the 128 bridge / now brings in / what," indicates the threat of that which would replace the eroding local specificity: the commodification of everything in an influx of corporate investment. The larger pattern of *Maximus* associates this reconnection of Gloucester to the geographic nation with invasive global capital in a form of early gentrification. In the face of this onslaught of the markets of the mainland, Olson makes the associative spatial connection between Gloucester and Tyre explicit, configuring the connection of Gloucester to the mainland by a bridge as a mirror of the assault on Tyre by Alexander: "128 a mole / to get at Tyre" (250).

However, this representational space of the posited symbolic insularity of Gloucester, is in fact a melancholy wish for something[97] that was never there. This insularity is a fetish, the investment of which elides the fact that it is itself a result of the production of space. When Olson begins Volume II of *Maximus*, the city has, in his view, not fared well against the capitalist production and commodification of space. While he

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[96] It must be said that this fear illuminates Olson's blindness to the original/originary invasion of Europeans: what did they bring in? Small pox, exploitation, greed, and the model of social organization represented by Main street itself.

[97] This "something" is another emanation of the Lacanian *das Ding*, configuring Gloucester's insularity *qua* fetish, which leads to a disavowal of the connection to the continent, to the nation which is both an object of desire and a source of corruption. Noting via Freud that the object of the subject's desire "is always maintained at a certain distance," Lacan clarifies that "this distance is not complete; it is a distance that is called proximity, which is not identical to the subject, which is literally close to it, in the way that one can say that the *Nebenmensch* that Freud speaks of as the foundation of [*das Ding*] is his neighbor" (*The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* 76).

supported the Portuguese fishermen (the "Portygees") who "pour the money back / into engines, into their ships, / whole families do, put it back / in" (32), keeping profits local, Olson saw the absentee ownership of fishing operations, and ultimately their corporatization and mechanization, begin to change the character of Gloucester. In "History is the Memory of Time,"[98] Olson recounts the "STAGE FIGHT," a conflict *circa* 1625 over the rights to use a fishing stage set up on Cape Ann:

> Which fight tells
> what heat there was
> in sd Harbour when
> was site of
> commerce (117)

Olson saw this era as one in which "real bucks" were earned in a material economy, but as capital infiltrated the settlement, people began "living off / things paid on / 33 year schedule," relying on credit rather than exchange value. Gloucester is ultimately susceptible to the same capitalist exploitation of people and resources that is rampant on the mainland, and with the commodification of credit begins to resemble "a nation fizzing itself / on city managers, / mutual losing banks..."(118). As the commercialization of Gloucester begins to physically change the city, as its historical spaces are bulldozed, Olson pleads with the contemporary residents to oppose the "pejoracracy," or gradual worsening of local conditions, caused by an influx of credit-based commerce and absentee-ownership.[99]

But Olson's poetics also demonstrates scale-fluidity as he posits the transference of local conditions to the nation and the world, making material the symbolic resonance between scales of built space, and projecting idiosyncratic particulars (the city) toward the universal (the world):

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[98] Later, detourning the quotation from John Smith that provided this title, Olson asserts "my memory is / the history of time" (256), acting as a big Other to the city's contemporary appearance, a subject aware of past social formations now ephemeralized in the present. See Sasha Colby's *Stratified Modernism: The Poetics of Excavation from Gautier to Olson* for a reading of Olson's archaeological interest in relation to Pierre Nora's claim that modern memory is as reliant as ever on "the materiality of the vestige, the concreteness of the recording" (189).

[99] In the later "Letter, May 2, 1959," Olson further specifies the connection of fishing with a more authentic industry and economy: "Commerce / was changed the fathometer / was invented here the present / is worse give nothing now your credence" (155).

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– the World tomorrow unless... (179)

Volume one of *Maximus* brings the liminal coastal space of Gloucester into the pantheon of poetic places including Thoreau's Walden, Emerson's Concord and Williams's Paterson. But the obscene underside of Gloucester persists at the centre of its social space: Dogtown, a time-capsule of an area that was colonized and settled before relapsing into *terra incognita*.

The Production of Dogtown

In Dogtown, Olson researches the oldest traces of white settlement, land uses, ownership, and the steady transformation of the "natural" landscape into a cultural landscape. In poems such as "Maximus, from Dogtown -I," (172) he documents the early production of this settlement, a representational space of a failed agricultural means of production. Olson carefully investigates the positions of the settlers here, creatively exploiting the disjuncture between the traces of the cultural landscape of Dogtown and the contemporary space of Gloucester. This now-deserted space[100] represented a configuration totally differential to the capitalist, private property of Gloucester: in 1650, Dogtown featured a 1000 acre Commons shared by all residents for cow pastures and

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[100] Continued contemporary engagements with this particular area are evidence of the compelling space of Dogtown. It has been deemed protected land by the state, terminating the transformations of the socio-spatial dialectic after one iteration of settlement and abandonment, and thus making it an open air museum of the time when people lived there. The logic of Olson's careful research and poetic mapping has been brought to its extreme conclusion with Irving Sucholeiki's archaeological digs (see *A Return to Dogtown*) and Mark J. Carlotto's GPS mapping of the geologic and social features (see *The Dogtown Guide*). The compulsion associated with Dogtown derives from nothing less than the extreme isolation and disorientation which many feel there, walking among the giant boulders of the moraine, an apparent freak of geologic time left over from the movement of glaciers.

wood gathering, a meeting house, and a "poor farm" halfway up Meeting House Hill. Individual farms were small and walled-in, but the social product was shared to some extent.

The production of the specific space of Dogtown narrativizes a volatile socio-spatial dialectic. The area was central to the first settlement of Europeans and British, whose attempt to farm it failed when the rocky soil wouldn't yield food enough to sustain them. As the settlers' mode of production shifted and fishing stages and residences were set up at the shore, Dogtown eventually received the abject,[101] the widows of fishermen lost at sea and their dogs, who lived there in penury and gave the place its current name. The socio-spatial dialectic again characterizes this earliest spatial practice: the geography of the place influenced the activity, which reshaped the place. The merest traces of this other-worldly, anachronistic utopia are still there; now looking quite dystopic as Olson registers depressions in the ground where cellars of houses once were.[102]

Configuring the wasteland as a prophetic image, Olson would call "Dogtown—the / rune of the / Nation" (508). This abandoned space is treated as a mystical signifier, a "rune" of ill portent for the Nation, as also for Gloucester. Dogtown today is an abandoned space of ruin, showing only bare traces of its inhabitation in an era that is

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[101] Joshua Nichols explains that the abject is a fundamental, and even constitutive aspect of the nominally utopian city, in a description that fits Dogtown and its relationship to Gloucester precisely:

Through the process of abjection, the utopian model grants the irrational a spatial form within the city. Thus, utopia localizes irrationality; it concentrates it in both the sites that it does not include and those that it disciplines. These absent or abject sites become all the more interesting when they are sites that the current city is unimaginable without. (J. Nichols 460)

[102] The contemporary American poet Kaia Sand's *Remember to Wave*, which exhibits Olsonian inspiration as it maps the political history embedded in the space of Portland, Oregon, makes concrete one of the implicit questions *Maximus* dwells on: "Do we need our ruins visible?" The answer Sand's "ode of accretion" proffers is yes; it posits a complex value and significance in the material traces of social production.

This same value is notable in Olson's conservationist and ecological stances, chronicled in *Maximus to Gloucester: the letters and poems of Charles Olson to the editor of the Gloucester Daily Times, 1962-1969* (1992), and more recently this value is driving an effort to save Gloucester's Fort Point, including Olson's former house, from destruction in service of the gentrifying development of a major luxury hotel (Peter Anastas, "Assault on Fort Immoral, Unethical" [http://peteranastas.blogspot.ca/2012/05/assault-on-fort-immoral-unethical.html].

now irrevocably past. This ruin is consonant with the sources that inspired Olson's program of "finding out for oneself": Pausanias and Herodotus' histories of Greek social formations that were ancient even to them.[103] In Lefebvrean terms, the area can be described as an ephemeral *mise en scene*, a "non-verbal signifying set" marked with lingering traces of human inhabitation, but now empty (*Production* 62).

Olson's embodied investigations of the production of space are undertaken by subjectively moving through and thus *practicing*, measuring the spaces in question. But in using elements of mapping at a second-order remove, deploying the mapping of mapping, the representation of representation, *Maximus* also illustrates how the imagination and exploration of space affects the production of the postmodern subject. In the following section I approach this spatial link to the subject through Olson's prolific deployment of the symbolic register of maps and mapmakers.

Cartographic *Maximus*:
The Representation of Representation

Mapping is the metaphor of metaphor itself. By symbolizing the raw, three-dimensional topology of terrain, mapping epitomizes the idea of analogy, of imaginative substitution. Olson's poetic investigation of the production of space experiments in many types of spatial representation, including thematic description, comparative archival research, and paratactic tours; but cartography is crucial to his poetics. Exploring the relationship of history and space, *The Maximus Poems* draws some of the very earliest historical maps and navigations of the world into its associative vortex: Eratosthanes's estimation of the size of the Earth, the Vinland map produced by Norse exploration, John Winthrop's early map of the local coastline; each of these and other maps represent space as it was imagined at a discrete point in history. *Imagined* is the key word, since the aerial perspective itself was physically impossible to achieve at the time. These

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[103] See especially the poem "Bk ii chapter 37," (*Maximus* 254) in which Olson inflects a descriptive tour of the recognizable space of Gloucester in the form of ancient Pausanias's topographical narrations of Greek geographic history, organized within the relative space that intervenes between landmarks.

maps grappled with the intractable problem of how to represent geographic details that were not fully understood or observed. The result is a materialization of imaginary phenomena; in a psychoanalytical framework, this is to say a visualization of desire. In Lacanian terms, maps are an orientation of the subject to its desire, the *objet a* made manifest as a cartographic chart which structures desire. But more broadly, these early maps inscribe a particular political imaginary onto the *tabula rasa* of an idealized, uninhabited vacuum, a fantasy space that Susan Howe explores with critical acuity, as I note in the following chapter. By representing the mythic experiences of early explorers in the space of *Maximus*, Olson traces the history of the expanding spatial awareness of the European colonial imagination, ocean by ocean, while extending his experimental form of symbolic registration of space.[104]

Maximus is suffused with oblique references to early cartographers, navigators and colonizers: Ptolemy, Eratosthenes, Pytheas, Odysseus, and Behaim appear from ancient history and myth; Juan de la Cosa, Columbus, Giovanni da Verrazano, Samuel de Champlain and John Winthrop contribute discoveries of the Americas; and modern-day navigators are plucked by Olson from Gloucester's roll of heroic sailors and fishermen. The aggregation of these figures in *Maximus* repeatedly returns the epic to what Olson, with reference to the Vinland Map, called the "discovery of discovering," (*CP* 327) the ephemeral knife-edge where spatial exploration translates the Real of terrain into the Symbolic of the cartographic representation.

Olson's explorations of his local space are carried out while consulting these historical maps, recovering the early perspectives of newcomers to the area and comparing the space of this distant past with what he sees now. In order to spatialize history, Olson also *quotes* these maps in the poems, bringing representations of representations to the page which illuminate the socio-geographic processes at work within specific terrain and show how space has been produced at multiple scales by

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[104] Olson offers a useful capsule of the spatial history he charts, the aggregate of which could be conceived as the initiation of globalization: "Columbus operated on the theory: sail to the West and the East will be found. He made the Atlantic the central sea. The mercantilism of 1500-1800 followed. It was the substitution of the Atlantic for the Mediterranean which worked a revolution for England. She was at the center, midway between the Baltic and the Mediterranean and thrust out toward the New World" (*CP* 104).

specific historical relations of production. This representation of representation is a distinctly postmodern aspect of Olson's work, positing a critical view of formerly privileged frames of reference by including a portion of the representational frame within the content. These maps, like all others, ultimately chart the subjective limitations of the mapper, concretizing particular, historically bound, ideological spatial imagination into an apparently objective index.

Shifting to a much earlier instance of the attempted symbolization of the Real of terrain, I turn to a crucial poem in *Maximus* that depicts at a global scale how the personal, subjective vision of individuals contributes to a world view that attains objecthood, in this case in the form of a literal world map. "On First Looking out through Juan de la Cosa's Eyes," (81) establishes a series of fluid and social maps which are subsequently negated through the *aufhebung*, the combined cancellation and preservation, of the totalizing imagination and exploration of Earth. It begins:

> Behaim—and nothing
> insula Azores to
> Cipangu (Candyn
> somewhere also there [...] (81)

Behaim's globe contained blank space beyond the Atlantic, where later North America and the Pacific would be discovered and represented. The chart produces a Cartesian logic of presence/absence: the void of featureless ocean either discloses land, the ultimate *objet a*, or it negates land (see reproduction below).

Figure 1.   Behaim's 1492 "Erdapfel" globe (literally "earth apple"), showing the distortions and fanciful islands between Europe and the Pacific Rim.

In the place of the land masses yet to be discovered, Behaim inserted mythical islands related to Christian traditions. *Something* had to be there—the binary logic of the map discloses how desire produces a feverish *objet a*:

and yes, in the Atlantic,
one floating island: de
Sant
     brand
          an   (81)

St. Brendan's Island is totally spurious, a phantom land mass supposedly discovered by the Irish Saint Brendan, that nonetheless appeared on many maps at the time. Here the name is broken across lines in an echo of the fantasy archipelagoes that populate Behaim's globe.

Juan de La Cosa, Christopher Columbus' "chief chart maker," was captain of the Niña in 1493. In "looking out through" his "eyes," *Maximus* recapitulates the production of social space through the discursive mapping of sailors at both ancient Tyre and the Gloucester of the recent past:

76

(As men, my town, my two towns
talk, talked of Gades, talk
of Cash's

drew, on a table, in spelt,
with a finger, in beer, a
portulans (81)

Gades is the Latin name for the Spanish city Cadiz, founded as a Tyrian trading colony, while Cash's is a fishing shoal east of Gloucester (*Guide* 117). These "two towns" extend the spatial homeomorph of Tyre and Gloucester, a comparison once again based on the practices of fishing and navigation that span the thousands of years that separate them historically. For these sailors, the comparison and iteration of their experience at sea invokes social space through the description of coastal details. The "portulans," shared via improvised map or spoken anecdote, is an ancient means of propagating crucial geographic information to those who have yet to confirm it with their own eyes. *Portolano* is Italian for "relating to harbours and ports"; the portulans relied on the description of landmarks visible on the nearby coast. While Behaim's map perpetuates distortions and spurious land forms, it did improve on these discursive forms by inscribing meridian lines on the void ocean, establishing a model of symbolic space that could support the crossing of the Atlantic, as opposed to the limited navigation within view of the coastline. And yet, even with these enhancements, Behaim's map was incomplete:

But before La Cosa, nobody
could have
a mappemunde (81)

Olson's "La Cosa" compares the discursive maps, casually drawn on a table-top, with the wished-for totalization of the mappemunde that would finally annihilate the "nothing"

that persisted in the blank spaces.[105] Before la Cosa there was no full representation of world space; after la Cosa's first map of the New World in 1500, vague continental shapes are filled in, and yet the Lacanian Real of geographic terrain still escapes symbolization. By subsuming early discoveries of terrain, Olson paradoxically gestures toward the totality of totalities: the overarching perspective that embraces blinkered world views in their temporary relevance before going obsolete. Considered dialectically, this view includes the notion that even Olson's own totality will be similarly subsumed. La Cosa's map is minimally "true" in that it finally registers the continental landforms of the "new world." But what la Cosa made was another document of the desire to explore for eventual migration and colonial expansion: a cartographic warping attends this desire like heat-distortion accompanies a fire.

The subjective perspective cannot be elided from the apparently objective product of mapping exploration: la Cosa's map includes a view of the cartographer

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[105] It is significant that Olson titled his poem after Keats' "On First Looking in to Chapman's Homer," since that work has special relevance for the poetic evocation of spatial discovery.

> On First Looking in to Chapman's Homer
>
> Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold,
>> And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
>> Round many western islands have I been
> Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
> Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
>> That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demense;
>> Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
> Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
> Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
>> When a new planet swims into his ken;
> Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
>> He star'd at the Pacific—and all his men
> Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
>> Silent, upon a peak in Darien. (1013)

Keats' reaction to reading Chapman's translation of Homer is to represent moments of spatial discovery, conflated and unmoored from time: the "new planet" refers to F.W. Herschel's discovery of Uranus in 1781, while Keats merges an account of Balboa seeing the Pacific from the isthmus of Darien with Cortez's first sight of Mexico City. Keats is "first looking *in*" versus Olson's "looking *out*," but nevertheless he finds a world. "Till I heard..." discloses auditory space, while "...upon a peak in Darien" elicits the situation of Balboa, the first European to see the Pacific, looking down from an elevation and realizing Panama is a relatively thin band of earth dividing the Atlantic from the Pacific.

himself in the act of making the map, reconnecting the embodied, subjective engagement with space to the production of the ascendent perspective.

Figure 2.   Detail of reproduction map showing Juan de la Cosa in upper left.

La Cosa's map thus captures both the *imagined perspective* of overhead legibility and the ecomimetic representation of the situation of the mapper, portrayed in a recursive *mise en abyme*. Olson would later manifest the recursive nature of cartographic fantasy when he writes "I am making a mappemunde / it is to contain my being" (257). The paratextual maps of *Maximus* record a desire not only to represent what surrounds the

subject, but to depict the inextricable involvement of the subject within the ambient space being mapped.[106]

In *Maximus* the impulse to map is given negative substance in the form of a threatening disorienting mist or sludge, described by the ancient explorer Pytheas of Massalia as an indistinguishable mix of air, water, and land. This blending of elements in a mystical obstruction is disorientation allegorized: a lack of distinction extends even into the basic components of space, producing an imagined obstacle posited at the edge of mapped space. Thus when what Olson called "Columbus' future," "The new land," appears to the navigator Juan de La Cosa "out of the mists / out of Pytheas's sludge // out of Mermaids & monsters // (out of Judas-land..." (82), the effect is not just the revelation of a putative new world, but also the reinstatement of orientation and an escape from indistinct, chaotic space.

Put another way, the edge of mapped space *is* the obstacle: beyond this edge, the confusion of elements makes orientation impossible. At the extreme of disorientation is *terra incognita*, unknown, unexplored territory, an obscene (in the sense of *off-stage*) outer limit which both compels and frames cartography.[107] At the edge of early maps of the Earth, this limit is known as *ultima Thule*, a concept Olson chased through ancient cultures in his research around *The Mayan Letters*, following it back past the Greeks "to the Phenicians, *(sic)* Cretans, Sumerians" (46). Derived from Pytheas description of "an island called Thule, which he described as northernmost of the British Isles, six days

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[106] This desire, called the "god-trick" by Donna Haraway (see *Simians, Cyborgs and Women*, Chapter 9), is a product of the fact that self-consciousness is a spatial paradigm. See also Christopher Dewdney's definition of self-consciousness: "The sense of self, human consciousness, is like a virtual image: it exists solely by relation to an observer. Its singular disposition is determined by the observer hypothetically observing himself or herself in the act of self-observation. This is the double enclosure of self-consciousness. [...] Consciousness is a set of footprints in the snow which stop and then retrace themselves" (*Children* 17).

[107] Dogtown is by extension the obscene underside of Gloucester, given its character as a failed inscription of *polis*, a space left in ruins which barely hint at a community built there upon the dispossession of aboriginals. Žižek's logic of the obscene underside is developed in response to "unwritten rules" that actually characterize the symbolic law, of the Catholic Church, for example (*Desert of the Real* 29; see also *The Parallax View* 370).

north of Britain," *ultima Thule*, or the "outermost reach of the world," is that which is necessarily absent from a cartographic representation of space (*Guide* 94-95).[108]

In the itineraries and cartographic representations that diagram the "subject-centered or existential journey of the traveler," in Fredric Jameson's words, a *terra incognita* always persists as the terrifying, disorienting background of subjectivity (*Postmodernism* 51-52). Maps posit a limit case for the representation of our position in the totality: there is always a beyond, persisting as data unthought, cognitively unmapped, awaiting its registration in space by forces of capital. Literal mapping and cognitive mapping intersect here: *terra incognita* needn't exist in order to occupy an effective locus in what we might call the *spatial imaginary,* an organization made legible by the overarching view which takes everything in, even that farthest point, even the subject *in situ*.

> on the puzzle
> of the nature of desire / the consequences
> in the known world beyond
> the terra incognita / on how men do use
> their lives (63)

The "nature of desire" and the spatial unknown each dialectically generate the other. Olson's spatial poetics represents a means of conceptualizing an epic quantity of spatial and historical data, eventually approaching a subjective totality of economic, spatial and historical relations, and simultaneously revealing the production of a mapping subject in their interface.

> 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 (64)

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[108] See Don Byrd for an expanded reading of Thule: "As Olson understands it, Thule was for Pytheas, who was still of the old dispensation and so a man who came from and returned to a Center, the *unknown* which modern men, in their expansive egotism, call 'the unconscious,' and locate at their own lost cores rather than at the limit of the world" (*Charles Olson's Maximus* 91).

As *Maximus* explores geography, and intervenes in space, it represents and acknowledges the always lacking total knowledge of the world. While Jameson argues that the totality is "properly unrepresentable" (*Postmodernism* 51), *Maximus*'s subject position constitutes the center of a "circle," perhaps more properly a phenomenological *sphere*, of spatial practice.

Olson's mapping attempts to fully saturate and conceptually occupy space by determining and registering his position among historical maps. But conversely, the poet's body also corresponds via a scaled relation to the imagination of a broader space. As Andrew Ross configures this aspect, "the orthopedic totality of the bodily image is writ large across *The Maximus Poems*, its fullest projection being that of the world's body itself, a conflation of Earth and Ocean" (*Failure of Modernism* 142). For Ross, "la Cosa's Eyes" records "the true 'mirror stage' of human history" by completing the world map (142). Building from this configuration of the map in a psychoanalytic context, in the final section of this chapter I examine how the reflexivity of this global image functions as a cognitive map crucial to the redefinition of the postmodern subject.

As he maps the findings of his archival research onto the spatial Real of territory, Olson also explores ways space is decodable as a signifying register, reading what is recorded by representational space. By cartographically and discursively symbolizing the Real of territory, Olson produces a symbolic fabric in which spatial particulars are obsessively registered. But more radically, as each of his investigations move from spatial products to the production of space, Olson develops a poetic slippage in the problematic comparison of map and terrain that attends any attempt at self-orientation.[109]

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[109] This forms an alternation between two Lacanian points: while the map materializes the perspective of the big Other, gazing from the heavens like a god, Lacan also argues there is no big Other, a claim that accounts for the actual impossibility of a complete and precise representation of geographical territory on a sphere. That *terra incognita* exists, and is a required part of the drive to explore, is further proof there is no big Other: there is no point that takes in, and cognitively maps, the Real totality of space.

In "Letter, May 2, 1959," (150) Olson chronicles the historical significance of a particular space[110] by walking, translating the land, registering obliquely its inhabitation by Aboriginals, and charting the contours of Europeans' early settling by pacing out a pattern of exploration and claimed ownership. Given Olson's emphasis on the body in space, in this poem he does not precisely map, but rather charts his movements through the landscape, using his body as the measure, his stride as the unit, in the acknowledged tradition of Wordsworth.[111] In Olson's topological practice, the physical pacing out of the area also functions similarly to Michel de Certeau's recognition of the effects of ambulation in space, where "[w]alking, which alternately follows a path and has followers, creates a mobile organicity in the environment, a sequence of phatic topoi" (99).[112] This practice extends beyond the subjective and illustrates past settlement and ownership patterns of the land, detailing the production of space in these earliest colonial commodifications of terrain as the land is territorialized in Western terms for the first time. In "Letter, May 2, 1959," (150) Olson composes past formations of local space by compositing his steps in a quasi-cartographic image, which opens, "125 paces Grove Street...," and retraces a performative inscription on geographic space for the big Other: "c 300 paces / Whittemore to the marsh / Kent's property / Pearce..." (150).

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[110] Butterick explains the area is a part of Gloucester "formerly called Meeting House Plain, near the early settlers' first meetinghouse, just east of the Annisquam River and about a mile North, via Washington Street, of the harbor" (*Guide* 204).

[111] Late in *The Maximus Poems* (and, as it would turn out, toward the end of his life,) Olson writes: "I come from the last walking period of man" (622).

[112] Given that Olson is instrumentally pacing out a distance, and inscribing rather than following a path, his act is perhaps closer to the Lacanian Symbolic than Certeau's Imaginary "sequence."

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

                          w to marsh
                        (hill falls off

   70
  paces
 hill falls   o
 S to   o
                  o
 marsh   o   140
                  o

did Eveleth go to present Marsh St?

old stonewall
—between Bruen & Eveleth?

            Meeting House   (Perkins)
 Babson   Green
 house
                                Millet
   Ellery   fence marking
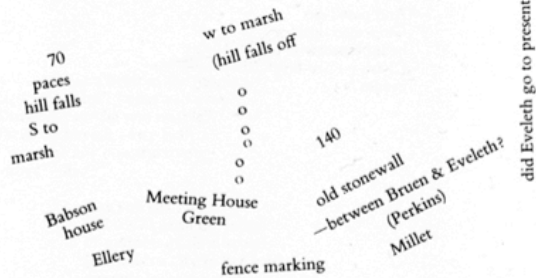
What did Bruen want? He had already shifted from Piscataqua
to Plymouth, then to Gloucester and now to New London and
would go from New London to found Newark, N.J.

Figure 3. "Letter, May 2, 1959" (*Maximus* 150)

A residual pattern of the production of space in Gloucester, which is also a production of the concept of property, is mapped onto the page: the poem graphically reveals the translation of space into property, an originary symbolization of the Real by the colonizers. A rock wall demarcating property distinctions is represented typographically by the "o o o o o o"[113] leading to Meeting House Green, the centre of a prior social space. Olson's retreading of these minimal demarcations recovers a failed start to the nation as they focus on the investment in the concept of property amidst a massive and violent displacement of Native Americans.[114] As Nicholas Blomley affirms, the

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[113] Here the exigencies of representation of representation are demonstrated on my own page as well: as I quote, I translate the "o o o o o" from Olson's vertical, poetic spatial form to the horizontal of my instrumental, critical page.

[114] This same investment in the concept of property is intensified in Susan Howe's poetry dealing with the early establishment of the U.S. not as an agora, but as a grid of real estate, advertised in Europe as a hot commodity for literal, capital investments. See my Chapter two.

"ownership model" of property, utterly alien to Aboriginals in North America, "concerns itself only with initial acquisition and subsequent transfers. Contemporary entitlements are grounded on some originary act," and this "initial acquisition is decidedly 'unsettled' in settler societies such as Canada, Australasia, and the United States" (*Unsettling the City* 25). Blomley continues,

> In cities like New York, Sydney, Honolulu, or Toronto, where do we locate that first link, given the prior presence of indigenous peoples? How settled are the links in the chain? Settler cities reassure themselves by supposing either that a legitimate transfer of title from native to nonnatives occurred (through treaty, deed, conquest, and so on) or, more bluntly, that the land was simply unowned and empty. (25)

Maximus registers the residual Aboriginal presence in Gloucester, but it also relegates the originary "first people" to a marginal position. As Blomley notes, "the city itself becomes imagined as a settled site, conceptually uncoupled from a native world," (*Unsettling the City* 27) and Gloucester frequently seems insulated from its fundamental historical violence in this way.[115]

Looking closer at "Letter, May 2, 1959," reveals something more complex: Olson finds the area he maps "enclosed both the local and the past," but states "I am not here to / have to do with Englishmen" (151). In fact what he traces is a large scale pattern that envelopes the local area: the change to the "commerce of NW shifting / man," the theory of Vilhjalmur Stefansson that centers of "civilization" moved in a generally North-West direction (*Guide* 210). In this context the representation of a map that the poem ends with, a typographic sketch of Samuel de Champlain's chart of *le Beau Port* or Gloucester harbour, denotes the violent contact of migrating Europeans with Aboriginals in the "New World," again more by negated appearances: "the river and marshes show clearly and no Indians along the Beach   forest on Fort Point   wigwams again at Harbor Cove..." (156). The field of numbers the poem concludes with stands in for Champlain's notations of the depths of the harbor, measured for the subsequent navigation of larger boats; but not before Aboriginals "ambush at the head of Rocky Neck," near the spot "[their ship]" is

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[115] Blomley expands on the conceptual link of thriving Aboriginal land with an empty paradise: "Native lands were the empty Eden from which private property was wrought: 'in the beginning,' argued Locke, 'all the World was America.' Thus, the chain [of ownership] begins with European settlement" (*Unsettling the City* 27).

indicated at anchor on the chart. This is a *sounding* of depths that corresponds to no sound of conventional poetic line or voice, and which interlaces both a will to spatial order in the careful measurement and mapping, and a chaotic, territorial violence of colonial intervention.

In "Of the Parsonses," (233) Olson uses the historical measure of rods and poles he found in his historical research to survey the land anew, in both senses: pacing the area bodily, but also observing from a remove:

> ...19 rods of land called the
> Garden
>
> 1732
>
> SWly to
> a Plumb-Tree. The well
>
> exactly opposite the Morse
> house, on the westerly side across
> from the middle of it, 1 acre of
> rocky ground...
>
> [...]
>
> Spring lane leads from the S end
> of the Morse house (across the street)
> in, 8 rods W'ly it says from
> the house there a line to begin
> fr the rock to a great rock by
> the Spring which is abt 10 poles,
> leaving the Spring common, thence
> NWly etc   (233-234)

These obsessively precise surveys of a past, yet still residual social space, register the geographic history of Gloucester in a spatial fabric which is the product of the conjuration of property that began with settlement, a production of territory that relies on the very residual maps and spatial descriptions Olson re-spatializes here. This re-spatializing "unsettles" this ideological space that effaces its own production as property so that "when we look more closely at this colonial chain, settlement becomes less certain" (Blomley, *Unsettling the City* 27).

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While deploying maps made by others, Olson also produced and consulted a heavily notated survey map of the area as he composed, indicating the idiosyncratic and careful nature of his work. Asked about entries on this map, he answers:

> Well, each one of them 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.) [...] I just found that I could be extremely precise about something....(*Muthologos* Vol. 1, 188)

Exercising this spatio-historical precision, in "Thurs Sept 14 1961" (229) Olson determines the early residency of one "Elicksander / Baker," and develops this data as a spatio-temporal waypoint: "One has then / a placement: a man, & family, / was on the River, / just above the Cut, / by 1635. And for / 10 years..." (229). These "placements" function as de Certeau's "sequence of phatic topoi" marking the production of Gloucester, situating the historical personages who shaped the space into what it is now, or what it had been. This comprehensive spatial survey is anchored in the poem's space-time using language from the deeds that produced the space as territory (*Guide* 342). *Maximus* inscribes the changing character of the space over time in the very description, which functions as the performative claim of ownership: these particular representations of space crucially transformed space/place into territory.

Olson extends his registrations of ownership (and his angry critique of the transformation of the city) in "Further completion of Plat (before they drown Dogtown with a reservoir, and beautify it)" (322). Detailing an area that the Goose Cove reservoir will flood, this "plat," or map, which Olson fashions out of some of the earliest records relating to the land, also locates land ownership as the zero-level of the production of space, privileging the owners of the fenced parcels of land as authentically self-present. Olson's poem spatially archives the fact that the establishment of property and homesteads was already a (failed) symbolization of the Real of Dogtown's resistant terrain, an inscription of legible order which would be all but obliterated after the area's inhabitants are dispossessed. This second-order symbolic registration of the area is Olson's melancholy attempt to fight back against what does not change: not just the

inevitability of change itself, but also the spatial, lived consequences of capitalism's creative destruction.[116]

Maximus and Cognitive Mapping

"can you tell the down from the up?" —Pound, *The Cantos* (132)

In *Maximus*'s paratextual and interlineal maps, spatial relations are defined by an egocentric perspective that is mediated by the body as a human measure. Olson describes the land in relation to a bodily locus and orientation, so that the object-array surrounding the poet also denotes his position: "To the left the land fell to the city, / to the right, it fell to the sea" (184). The poems' non-narrative representations of space, their investigation of the past activity of the socio-spatial dialectic, present a prototype of Fredric Jameson's influential concept of cognitive mapping. Olson's investigation of the production of Gloucester fixes historical data in space, generating a system of orientation that maps both the general spatial practices of the area and his own locus. This innovation in formal poesis depends on the palimpsestic combination of historical maps, Olson's in situ locomotion, and a dual description of the past social formation and the present state of the topography.

Just as Fredric Jameson's theory of cognitive mapping builds allusively[117] from the intense spatiality of transnational capital, Olson's geographic practice in *Maximus* spatially orients the subject's crisis in the postmodern moment: the subjective relation to a totality, and the subject's imagined relation to real spatial conditions as they develop and are perceived over time. Conceived in this way, it is clear that Olson has already

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[116] Dogtown was a sort of ghetto, a space of exclusion for the dispossessed residents: widows of lost fishermen and their wild dogs. Given that the land was not cultivatable, and had been originally abandoned as a settlement site for that reason, it is possible this particular land was allotted to these *homo sacer* because it had limited productivity and thus limited value.

[117] The allusion in Jameson's model is sourced to Althusser's distortion, discussed below, through which the "world outlooks" of ideology "constitute an illusion" even while "they do make allusion to reality," requiring interpretation "to discover the reality of the world behind their imaginary representation of that world" (*On Ideology* 36).

answered Jameson's call for art that performs cognitive mapping at a number of scales –
from the body in Dogtown to the body in the map, to the subject in the gathering totality
of globalization. The epic poetics of *Maximus* conceptualizes the world totality of
economic, spatial and historical relations, and, crucially, simultaneously reveals the
production of a disoriented subject in their interface. The imaginary register of this
process is encapsulated in the appearance of la Cosa in his own mappemunde, of
Champlain's ship in the map of Gloucester harbour (156), and most centrally in Olson's
reflexive claim that he is making a mappemunde, as I explain below.

Paradoxically, however, according to Jameson, "cognitive mapping cannot (at
least in our time) involve anything so easy as a map; indeed, once you knew what
'cognitive mapping' was driving at, you were to dismiss all figures of maps and mapping
from your mind and try to imagine something else," since "mapping has ceased to be
achievable by means of maps themselves" (409). This is consonant with the fact that
disorientation is a social and spatial process which cannot be mapped. For all its
cartographic paratexts, *Maximus* necessarily works as a hybrid between a map, a
proprioceptive tour, and a spatial historiography. Olson's oeuvre, however, shows that
the generative open form of certain avant-garde poetry can animate the conditions of
disorientation which precisely elude cartography and historiography. In this poetic
context disorientation is less of a condition to overcome than one to work from and with;
certainly the disorientation produced in the postmodern rejection of master narratives is
productive, while frustrating an earlier modernist emphasis on spatial order (Watten,
Constructivist Moment). Recognizing that in Lefebvrean terms space is a process,
Olson's spatial representations do what other forms cannot: by foregrounding
experimentation in spatial form, they respond to the world before there is any standard
for seeing it, or language for describing it. In this, Olson's representations are
homologous with the early maps which, translated into second-order representations,
suffuse his poems. Olson's incorporation of the overall arc of the historical development
of a spatial imagination, and a spatial imaginary in the sense of a dynamic world picture,
is to recognize that space is a process rather than a static object.

The star-nosed mole that Olson rescues, confused and spinning in the middle of
the road, is an emblem of disorientation in response to the spatial Real in *Maximus*.

Olson sends it "all into the grass / all away from the dizzying / highway if that was what was wrong" (396); the social production of space seems to scramble the senses of an authentic nature in a rare counter-example to the threat of disorientation of Gloucester's ship captains against the shifting shoals and hidden rocks of Atlantic shipping channels. Later, Olson himself loses his bearings, reminding himself of the dizzy animal he rescued:

> Advanced out toward the external from
> the time I did actually lose space control,
> here on the Fort and kept turning left
> like my star-nosed mole batted
> on the head, not being able to
> get home 50 yards as I was
> from it. (573)

Maximus illustrates not that space disorients the subject, but that disorientation forces it out into space, reaching for the map, the compass, and ultimately to the stars for astral navigation. Disorientation is not resolved in *Maximus*; rather, its constitutive and productive qualities are intensified. Disorientation is constitutive of the subject, which constantly seeks the desired *objet a*, a definitive self-locus against an incomprehensible spatial background which is historically produced; which is to say time and space intersect in this disorientation. Disorientation is productive inasmuch as it necessitates, through spatial estrangement, new perspectives implied in the space between the parallactic alternatives of the embodied horizontal view and the ascendent verticality implied by the perspective of a map. This is a poetics of space that works to both counter and gauge the space-time compressions of capital; the distortions of the concept and materiality of the totality; and the subject's relationship to the totality.

As I have argued above, the progression of Olson's mapping begins with his uncovering the abstracted social production of his contemporary space, reaching back to the discovery of "Europe's / first West" (128). Olson demonstrates how navigation and orientation define both "the limits of the land," and a conceptual image, a cognitive map which is simultaneously a representation of subjective, bodily space at one scale, and a postmodern cosmos at another. As the social production of this space is clarified through research and first-person spatial exploration, however, Olson's surroundings begin to reflect the globalization and uneven development driven by late capitalism in a distinctly spatial logic. Shifting his attention to the spatial registration of Dogtown, it is clear that

Olson sees the ruins of a quasi-utopian commons there as premonitory of the negative effects of this uneven development.

The reader is invited to look out through Charles Olson's eyes at moments which attempt to integrate the scene of writing into the writing itself. These scenes are often topographical descriptions, placing the writer in a specific locus: one example, which Olson called "one of the carefullest 'graphics' in the book—like a Webern score—" (viii, *Editing the Maximus*) reads in part:

> out over the land skope view as ...
>   Dogtown to the right the ocean
> to the left
> opens out the light   the river flowing
> at my feet
>   Gloucester to my back
>   ... the air is as wide as the light ... (296)

Olson constantly pursues orientation to his specific spatial surroundings in what Timothy Morton has termed an ecomimetic form, a looping of the immediate writing context into the poem's content.[118] "You say 'orientate me.' Yessir. Place it! / again / I drag it back: Place (topos, plus one's own bent plus what one *can* know, makes it possible to name" ("Letter to Elaine Feinstein," *Collected Prose* 252). "Place is the aperture of being," claimed Heidegger (*Poetry, Language, Thought* 172); but Olson's subjective interaction with Gloucester transcends Heideggerian place (discussed in Chapter One), instead engaging a spatial turn in an attempted subjective reorientation against the vertiginous background of globalization. As Olson claims "I am making a mappemunde. It is to include my being," (II.87) it is clear the cognitive map functions not only to chart the historical geography of his surroundings, but also to situate his own subjectivity in the expanded spatial (and political[119]) context of globalization.

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[118] "Ecomimesis aims to rupture the aesthetic distance, to break down the subject-object dualism, to convince us that we belong to this world. But the end result is to reinforce the aesthetic distance, the very dimension in which the subject-object dualism persists" (*Ecology Without Nature* 109).

[119] While he uses the Greek term *polis*, which denotes both *city* and *the concept of a city,* to describe an idealized symbolic community, Olson also interrogates the possibility of political commonalities in the face of the burgeoning diversity of contemporaneity:

Conclusion: Cosmos as Spatial Dialectic

Why does *Maximus* pursue an obsessive registration of particulars in a spatial symbolic fabric? This practice serves to counterbalance the subject's disorientation while continuously referring to the earliest representations of his local space:

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

Olson's phrase, "orient / show me (exhibit / myself)" is very significant given *Maximus*'s constant dynamic of the representation of representation.[120] The duality of this representation, its second-order character, is encapsulated in the double inscription, "show me (exhibit / myself)": *show me* refers to a representation the subject receives, while "(exhibit / myself)" captures the reflexive encounter: "myself" exhibited to "me." This perfectly delineates the properly Lacanian aspect of the Imaginary: it is always a reflexive and spatialized encounter with the other, a recognition that the gaze is outside. The imaginary emphasizes the efficacy of the image, as the mirror (stage) supplies/contains the primordial image of an ordered subject (albeit in objective form, out there).

Further, *orientation* is derived from *orient*, itself derived from the Latin *oriri*, to rise: the self-location integral to navigation and cartography is based on a conceptual ascending above a space that can't be comprehended from the ground. This ascendent

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> The question, now, is: what is our polis (even allowing that no such thing can be considered as possible to exist when such homogeneity as any Greek city was has been displaced by such heterogeneity as modern cities and nations are)? (*Guide* 25).

In something of a folk-vernacular version of the Jamesonian totality, Butterick notes "His answer is, 'the very whole world,' not 'a bit smaller than the whole damn thing'; it is 'the State,' 'The System,' the 'totality,' adding, that it is necessary 'to invert totality—to oppose it—by discovering the totality of any—every—single one of us'" (*Guide*, 25). The articulation of the particular ("every—single one") and the universal ("totality") is once again foregrounded, granted without much theoretical nuance.

[120] This second-order representation is also the form of Althusser's imaginary orientation to real material conditions, in which to orient is to see oneself in the thick of the world, or more specifically, in class struggle (*On Ideology* 59).

view reflects the dominating perspective that cosmology borrows from cartography: as de Certeau shows, to float above an area is to see it transformed into an orderly text, to see the chaos of real topography collapsed into the simplicity of a map (*Practice*). The shapes on la Cosa's or Winthrop's maps are representations of an imagined perspective: in the parallax gap between the marks on the page and the actual terrain, between the ascendent and the horizontal perspectives, lies *periplum*, the representation of subjective experience distinct from the fantasy image of order seen from above. "Periplum," Pound distinguished, "not as land looks on a map / But as sea bord seen by men sailing" (*The Cantos* LII-LXXI, 83). The maps that *Maximus* generates by exploration are primordial responses to a deep subjective disorientation, which they cannot help but preserve. As Lefebvre relativizes the paired concepts of alienation and disalienation, he conceives of them in dialectical movement he graphs as "alienation—disalienation—new alienation"[121] (*Everyday Life* Vol. II, 207). Disalienation in space is a matter not of mapping disorientation, (an impossible task,) but of isolating the inevitable distortion of every map, which serves to illuminate another form of alienation: the maps themselves are perforce disoriented. Orientation via mapping is an allegorical displacement for the subject minimally distanced from his own disorientation, as the dynamic between two views of space, "map" versus "sea bord" characterizes the imaginary process of determining self-locus.

The mode of cognitive mapping is, according to Jameson's morphing of Althusser's definition of ideology,[122] an *imaginary* orientation to *real* material conditions. These terms should be understood to carry their full Lacanian connotation: such that *imaginary*, beyond simply *not real*, connotes the dynamic of the imaginary misrecognition and identification with the other as it plays out in the mirror stage. *Real*,

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[121] Lefebvre continues: "For example, to become part of a collectivity can 'disalienate' one from solitude, but this does not preclude new alienations which may come from the collectivity itself. Leisure activities 'disalienate' from the effects of fragmented labour; however, when they are entertainments and distractions, they contain their own alienations. One particular technique may 'disalienate' human activity from nature or from another, less effective technique, but it may bring a technological alienation which can be much deeper (such as fragmented labour, or the social imperatives of technology, etc.)" (*Everyday Life* Vol. II, 208).

[122] Althusser claimed ideology "represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence," a distorted representation of the world which nonetheless refers to reality in an equation he condensed as "ideology = *illusion/allusion*" (*On Ideology* 36).

accordingly, suggests that the conditions of the totality cannot be symbolized; overdetermined and overwhelming, they escape the effort to fully map them in any coherent or accurate manner. In this imaginary dynamic, cognitive mapping posits an emergent meta-position beyond and above the terrain mapped.[123] Engaging a program of cosmography from this metaposition, *Maximus* charts material space as an attenuated order,[124] represented both *in* and *by* space. Olson's spatial poesis develops a scalar representation not just of the totality of world systems, but of the subject's imagined relationship to this system of material systems; the historical development by capital of particular communication, transportation, and political networks that in turn support the capitalist production of space.

Olson's complication of the subject position of the citizen, as he productively situates it in the simultaneous scales of both the city and the nation, parallels the deterritorialization and reterritorialization of capital and production that ultimately produce a global totality. Implicit in Olson's cognitive mapping is the inevitable shortcoming of the map. The Real won't materialize, and so can't be symbolized, and thus its threatening, disorienting overpresence is never eradicated; it is something like a fissure in the map, a tear in its fabric of representation. Instead, it propels both

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[123] This is a cosmic perspective established by Dante and Pound, and further exploited by McCaffery's *Carnival*, as I discuss in Chapter Four. As *Maximus* delves further into Greek mythology, it also borrows the cosmic perspectives on the world which the primeval gods often functioned to supply. Below, "Tartaros" (usually spelled Tartarus) refers to a realm of the underworld where those who outraged the gods were punished.

> the statistical
> (stands)
> outside
> the Stream, Tartaros
> is beyond
> the gods beyond hunger outside
> the ends and sources of Earth (335)

[124] Although the subject of the following complete poem is only negatively present as a lacuna, the sense of an extensive "form" that supports a subjective order is clearaz:

> I looked up and saw
> its form
> through everything
> –it is sewn
> in all parts, under
> and over (343)

continuous exploration and mapping, and the concomitant attempt to find or impose an order on the overwhelming spatial particularity.

With the apparition of a global space of relations subsuming the small island fishing city of the early *Maximus*, Olson begins to produce a scalar imaginary model of totality which relates the present local with the historical global, and which also serves, given its relativity, as a distanciation on this looming totality. As Don Byrd intuits, Olson's "*Imago Mundi* is dynamic. The *Maximus* does not exhibit an image of the world, rather it shows a succession of images..." (*In Relation*: Acts 10, 141-42). The meta-level of *Maximus* bounds across and effectively maps successive world images onto a larger moving picture of human striving after knowledge, grasping toward *scientia*. By abutting these different pictures, Olson's totality of totalities traces diachronic changes in the world picture[125] due to exploration and mapping, as well as a sharing of the social map.

In Dante Olson recognizes the prototype of the ascendent, cartographic view of the world, the perspective of space itself, which globalization both necessitates and frustrates:

> At the end of the Paradiso, when from the seventh sphere the earth is so small
> its features are obscured as the moon's to us, Dante recognizes one spot on all
> its surface—that entrance to the West, the Pillars. Dante's last glance is on the
> threshold to that future Columbus made possible. ("Call Me Ishmael," *CP* 105)

From this ascendent point of view,[126] Dante specifies "one spot" that is invested with symbolic resonance: the Strait of Gibraltar, the gate through which the Greeks

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[125] Inasmuch as it is increasingly spatialized in postmodernity, the totality bears a critical relation to Heidegger's "world picture": not a picture of the world but the world conceived as a picture (see *Off the Beaten Track*).

[126] It is actually from the Eighth Sphere (Canto XXII) that Dante looks back at Earth:

My eyes returned through all the seven spheres and saw this globe in such a way that I smiled at its scrawny image: I approve that judgment as the best, which holds this earth to be the least; and he whose thoughts are set elsewhere, can truly be called virtuous. (ll.133-138, Mandelbaum trans.)

This is an ascendent point of view that precisely prefigures Earthrise: a view of Earth from the distance of the moon; an inversion of the usual perspective *vis a vis* the two planetary bodies.

proceeded to explore the wider world beyond the Mediterranean—in a sense, the opening onto the globalism of a distant future.[127]

Olson's desire to "take the Earth in under a single review / as Eratosthenes as / Ptolemy" (586) did, is inspired by these ancient geophysicists who theorized the size and shape of the earth, of the totality, when these were not only imperceptible, but nearly inconceivable. Like Balboa's view of the Pacific from an elevation, or like the imaginary aerial view of a legendary island, the perspective that comprehends the totality is *ultima thule* for Olson, the false-objective far point that discloses the subject's locus.

The effects of spatial limits are transformed through the eras of the enlightenment, the modern and postmodern. Barrett Watten illuminates the gendering of the notion of *ultima Thule*: "In the modern, the ego's era, the subject is identical to a hallucination at its own spatial limits, which are the site of a compelling negativity that must be dominated and denied. This moment of limit, or denial, has everything to do with a demand for the feminine" (*Moment* 328). Further,

> the spatial boundary is precisely where the self is stabilized in its objectification of the other; because this is an imaginary identification, it must be policed by a regime of mastery that exceeds it. In default to the imagination of some greater order of knowledge and control, subjects attempt to reproduce themselves as a form of spatial mapping onto the world they think they know, as imaginary, but therefore cannot control. (328)

"Such a projection is aggressive," Watten continues, in producing the colonial encounter, a projection of the European man onto subordinated peoples (328). Watten's detangling of subject and space, drawing from Teresa Brennan's psychoanalytic history of modernity, points out that Olson's apparently projective spatial explorations, tracing and tending geographic boundaries that represent the subject, are also internalized, delimiting the dimensions and possibilities of the ego.

Building from Watten's contention that "[s]patial fantasies create boundaries by means of a negative object," (330) I argue that the attenuated presence of "Indians" in *Maximus* is readable as one of these boundary-creating negative objects. Olson's epic

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[127] This minimal "gate," a discrete interval or gap, is also a model of Lacan's *objet petit a*.

does include Indians, their material traces, in the arrowheads still found in the region, the near-indestructible bits that outlast everything else, often tied to space just as the later european descendants, the first land-holders by the Western principle of ownership are tied to their specific properties. But Indians appear in the twice removed imaginary context of Olson's memories of playing a game as a child when "Historie / come bang into the midst of / our game! Actors, / where I have learned another sort of / play" (53).[128]

In Lacanian terms, *ultima Thule* is the farthest reach of an absent big Other. It is from this perspective that the planetary begins to appear in the space that formerly constituted the world; "...over the city   over the earth—the earth / is the mundus" (406). Olson establishes an alienating alternation between the planet earth as it arises in postmodern, globalizing consciousness, and the *Mundus,* or world, the formerly disavowed theatre of embodied activity.

> The World
> has become divided
> from the Universe (III.73)

As the world is divided from symbolic efficiency, this displacement of the *world* by the *earth* transmutes something as quotidian as nightfall into a schematic of planetary rotation: "Each Night is No Loss, It is a daily eclipse, / by the Earth, of the Sun" (448). Planet and world never lose their attachment to the originary city, instead expanding the civic model of cosmos: "...but the city / is only the beginning of the earth   the earth / is the world   brown-red is the color of mud, // the earth / shines ..." (406). The embodied scale of the poet in his immediate, ambient space[129] is never foreclosed: each of the

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[128] The space is resonant both because Olson has learned later of the reality of their historical persistence in the place he performed the child's game, and also because this event transpired at an apparent make-out spot in "the bush."

[129] Timothy Morton's reading of "The Star," the poem by Jane Taylor better known as the nursery lullaby "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star," offers a model of "ambient poetry" strikingly applicable to *Maximus*:

wider perspectives on the world is related to that basic proprioception that measures space, the body, "the unit   the smallest   there is" (623). This geometric proportion describes a relationship of the nested scales of space *Maximus* cognitively maps, depicting the subject ("man") and its disorienting relationship to the totality.

> [B]ut beyond the earth
> far off Stage Fort Park
> far away from the rules of sea-faring   far far from Gloucester [...] far
> by the rule of its parts by the law of the proportion
> of its parts
> over the World   over the City   over man (407).

If to map anything is to impart some sense of order to its form, *Maximus*'s cartography attempts the transition from history to space, and thus from disorientation to order, making a subjective bridge from overwhelming global totality to imagistic cosmos.[130] But as this order fails to materialize, or materializes in unexpected ways, *Maximus*

> As is common in ambient poetry, the poem deconstructs the metaphysical opposition between writing and nature commonly found in Romantic-ecological discourse. It negotiates between the global and the local, terms often placed in too rigid an opposition to one another in Romanticist discourse. By offering a form of "portable localism," a strategic essentialism, the poem traverses the general and the particular. Moreover, its matter is not the physical conquest of an objectified earth, but the sonic and graphic location of the subject in a world. It is about as unmilitaristic as one could imagine, short of evaporating the subject in a haze of nihilism. ("'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star' as an Ambient Poem" n.p.)

Although the egocentric *Maximus* cannot be accused of "evaporating the subject," "the sonic and graphic location of the subject" rings true, even while the cognitive map produced here is a chart of global space, rather than "a world."

[130] This recalls Louis Zukofsky's paradigm of poetic context; a frame that posits an interior and exterior, "[t]he context necessarily dealing with a world outside of [the poem]" (*Prepositions* 15). For Zukofsky the quasi-objectivist poem responds to the "desire for inclusiveness—The desire for an inclusive object," and this is one that includes itself as an object. A form of unspoken cosmos animates these ambitions:

> The desire for what is objectively perfect, inextricably the direction of historic and contemporary particulars – A desire to place everything – everything aptly, perfectly, belonging within, one with, a context. –A poem. The context based on a world [...] (*Prepositions* 15)

This "desire to place ... everything aptly, ... one with, a context", which is to say to obliterate division of content and form, is a conceptual model of cognitive mapping, and by extension, of cosmos.

recapitulates Pound's experience in the late *The Cantos*, in which the whole refused to cohere.[131]

What is the nature of the order attempted? This attempted cosmos is a close relative of Heidegger's "fourfold," the fundamental human milieu in which we dwell between earth and sky, among divinities and mortals (*Ethical Architecture*, 158). As Lefebvre explains in terms of a structural topology, prior to the capitalistic production of space proper, surroundings were rendered intelligible by a differently perceived spatial order:

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[131] The model of Pound's metaview of his own *The Cantos* as it appears in Canto CXVI clearly motivates the form of Olson's ascending view of the Earth and world. This canto is also referenced by Steve McCaffery in connection with reading as a form of seeing, as I examine in Chapter four. Pound's distanciation on his own work, a point of view included reflexively in that work's conclusion, is a moment in which the egocentrism of his production slips only enough for his neurotic anxiety to come to the surface (which only deepens the work's imbrication with Pound's ego-position).
        Came Neptunus
                his mind leaping
                        like dolphins,
These concepts the human mind has attuned
        To make Cosmos—
        to achieve the possible—
        Muss, wrecked for an error,
        But the record
                the palimpsest—
        a little light
                in great darkness— [...] (795)
        [...]
        But about that terzo
                        third heaven,
                            that Venere,
        again is all "paradise"
                    a nice quiet paradise
                            over the shambles,
        and some climbing
                        before the take-off,
        to "see again,"
        the verb is "see" not "walk on"
        i.e. it coheres all right
                        even if my notes do not cohere. (796-797)

Order is itself an elusive Real for Pound (albeit one that Dante had apparently captured in his ascent of the heavens); it is the attempt to symbolize cosmos itself that annihilates it. Thus the fact that Pound's "notes do not cohere" does not negate the possibility that "a nice quiet paradise" exists, somewhere in realms that resist the symbolic registers of discourse and of cartography.

Social space does incorporate one three-dimensional aspect, inherited from nature, namely the fact that between what is above (mountains, highlands, celestial beings) and what is below (in grottoes or caves) lie the surfaces of the sea and of the earth's flatlands, which thus constitute planes (or plains) that serve both to separate and to unite the heights and the depths. Here is the basis of representations of the Cosmos. (*Production*, 193-94)

Spanning these three dimensions with an alternately dis/embodied eye, *Maximus* tracks the representation of totality, and the subject's relation to that totality, while also interrelating global migration, spatial production, and the subject's imaginary locus within the mappemunde: "to perambulate the bounds" is to engage bodily with the limits of "a cosmos..." (516).

Olson's surfeit of material information about historical and contemporary Gloucester accrues, in what Shaw terms a "mystical positivism," to illuminate "how concrete literal spaces and wider geographic features condition human productions and relations" (18). What does the hyper-specificity of space *signify* in the poem? The fact that *cosmos* means both "order" and "world," betrays the social conflation of the concepts which *Maximus* disrupts. The city's function as an early model of cosmic order shows this referent is certainly a human, rather than a divine cosmos.[132] In his *Special View of History*, in which "the end sought of each subject is to be inclusive," Olson observes that "a cosmology [...] would seem to be the most obvious inclusiveness— in fact the classic example, I should suppose, of same: the attempt of man to see order throughout creation and to define it" (*SVH* 53). If Olson's poetic proprioception is a scalar forerunner of cognitive mapping, cosmography, in turn, appears as proprioception at the most macro scale imaginable. *Maximus* intensifies an intuition that grand cosmic order is

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[132] Given the level of idiosyncratic definition with which Olson renders his world at multiple scales, the ascription of order to this welter would be a logical leap. As John Scoggan writes, "Olson's world is conceived from the heights of Mount Dogtown. It overlooks the earth of Gloucester, Massachusetts. [...] A new world is achieved because the poet has refused to abstract his imagination away from the actual. [...] Olson is opening a space that doesn't refer to anything other than its own doings. Its own intelligibility" (333, 335). The question of this self-identical intelligibility recalls Olson's maxim, "That which exists through itself is what is called meaning" (*Muthologos* Vol. I, 64), a near-tautological assay of both ontology and epistemology which could fruitfully be applied to spaces of *Maximus*. The space Olson registers exists through itself, imposes itself, and its primary characteristic is the resistance to reductive interpretation of its order or meaning.

homeomorphic with the illusion of bodily unity,[133] and with the imagined coherence of the nations and continents on a map. This "inclusiveness" is concretized in the way the ancient maps include the mapper, a recursive condition that resounds as *Maximus*'s mappemunde includes Olson's "being."

But the strong sense of decentering I associate with Einsteinian relativity in Chapter one, the demolition of the concept of *centre* by the revelation that there is no privileged frame of reference, is also bourne out by Olson's revealing short treatise on "Kosmos," which focuses on the word's dual denotation of "order" and "world":

> If order is not the world—and the world hasn't been the most interesting image of order since 1904, when Einstein showed the beauty of the Kosmos and one then does pass on, looking for more—then order is man. (*SVH* 47)

In a hangover of the old cosmology, however, Olson discerns three vestiges of this pre-Einsteinian world view that persist: "[t]hey are Void, Chaos, and the trope Man":

> Kosmos infers Chaos as precedent to itself and Man as succeeding, and when it goes as a controlling factor, only Void becomes a premise of measure. Man is simply filling an empty space. Which turns quickly by collapse into man is skin and flesh surrounding a void as well. Void in, void out. (*SVH* 49)

Driven on by the *objet a* of spatial discovery, the void inside the subject corresponds to the void outside. "Man" as object fills empty space, but also, as subject, abhors the vacuum of *terra incognita*. Once all the world has been mapped, the terrain (always incompletely) symbolized, the fantasy of *terra incognita* returns with the force of something formerly repressed. At a micro scale *terra incognita* reappears in the

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[133] Describing a directional cosmos, Lefebvre intimates a sense in which orientation of the body is a recursive function of the body's essential act of imprinting its own spatial properties on its surroundings.

> A philosopher might speak eloquently in this connection of a coextensive presence of space and Ego thanks to the mediation of the body, but in fact a good deal more – and indeed something quite different – is involved here. For the spatial body, becoming social does not mean being inserted into some pre-existing 'world': this body produces and reproduces – and it perceives what it reproduces or produces. Its spatial properties and determinants are contained within it. In what sense, then, does it perceive them? In the practico-sensory realm, the perception of right and left must be projected and imprinted into or onto things. (*Production*, 199)

minimally discrete spaces that resist the commodification of everything; at a larger scale, it reappears as the unknown knowns of nations, trading blocs, entities made newly appreciable in the alienating production of global space by capital. As these spatial practices map the overdetermined complexity of space, they open a vertiginous perspective on the totality.

As Earth, the planet versus the world, refuses denotative meaning, it thereby becomes the perfect signifier. The planetary scale is adduced to the spatial field of *Maximus* as it reaches an inconclusive conclusion: the subject, reconfiguring itself in the measurement of wider space, encounters a field that resists delineation by the poem's earlier ambulatory method of cosmic divination, and thus recasts the disoriented subject in "outer space," the very field that has been disavowed and repressed by the local.

The Maximus Poems enacts an intensified proprioception of the subject, an attempt at orientation to the totality in response to the disorienting new cosmos of relativity in postmodernism. By uncovering the abstracted production of social space, Olson's spatial poetics defines "the limits of the land," producing a cognitive map which is simultaneously a representation of subjective, embodied space at one scale, and of an elusive postmodern cosmos at another. This scalar continuum, although imaginary in Lacan's sense of locating the ego, has concrete effects on social space. "The illusory / is real enough" (296).

Chapter 3.

"Set at Great Distance from this World": Susan Howe's Unsettling Spatial Poetics

> "...wandering through zones of tropes, World filtered through book"
> (*My Emily Dickinson* 18)

Situated in a lineage of North American poetics established by Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound and Charles Olson, Susan Howe's spatial poetics uniquely confronts received history with its own spatial contradictions. A visual art context is prominent among Howe's varied influences: she majored in painting at an art college in Boston, developing an art practice that centered on the representation of words, leading directly to her "visual poems"[134] which emphasize typographical experimentation. Discussing the creative context of the mid-sixties art scene in New York City, where she moved in 1964, Howe offers a roll-call of minimalist visual artists: "Richard Serra, Joan Jonas, Don Judd, Eva Hesse, Ellsworth Kelly, Robert Morris, Carl André, John Cage, Agnes Martin . . . the work of these artists influenced what I was doing" (Keller, "Interview" 4). In her poetics practice, Howe also extends an early American lineage shaped by Emily Dickinson and Herman Melville,[135] while reexamining Puritans including Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards. Drawing inspiration from Black Mountain poets including Robert Creeley, Robert Duncan, and Charles Olson, Howe is, like Olson as well as Steve McCaffery, a scholar-poet who remains mostly outside the traditional academic sphere, even as her work responds to Shakespeare (*The Liberties* (1983)), Milton (*A Bibliography of the*

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[134] Howe explains the continuity between her visual art and poetic practice: "I used quotation in my painting in the same way that I use quotation in my writing, in that I always seemed to use collage; sometimes I made a copy in the painting of some part of another painting, another form of quotation. Collage is also a way of mixing disciplines" ("Interview" 3-4).

[135] See Rachel Tzvia Back, *Led By Language: The Poetry and Poetics of Susan Howe*, 187 n25.

King's Book; or, Eikon Basilike (1989)), and the philosopher C. S. Peirce (*Pierce-Arrow* (1997). Howe's dynamic poetics consistently challenges disciplinary boundaries and merges poetic practice and knowledge production.

In this chapter I survey, sample and juxtapose a range of Howe's poetry in order to explicate the spatial poetics she develops throughout her challenging and resolutely non-narrative oeuvre. To do so, I divide this work into three roughly defined periods which, though not strictly chronological, describe varying modes of Howe's spatial poetics. In the early period (1974-1987) I trace an overarching spatial metaphor of the wilderness, which intervenes in canonical received history of the representation of nature in American poetics (*Hinge Picture* (1974); *Secret History of the Dividing Line* (1978); *Pythagorean Silence* (1982) *Articulation of Sound Forms in Time* (1987)). In the middle period (1989-2003), I focus on her representations of the exclusive space of the archive (*A Bibliography of the King's Book, or Eikon Basilike* (1989); *The Nonconformist's Memorial* (1993); *Pierce Arrow* (1999); *The Midnight* (2003)), an attention that intensifies a dynamic of inside versus outside. Finally, in the late period (2007-2010), I explore Howe's recent typographically experimental work including *Souls of the Labadie Tract* (2007) and *That This* (2010), each of which generates a disorienting over-proximity of the signifier, such that it overtakes the signified, extending Howe's semantic experimentation by rupturing the sign in a graphic collage which relates to her early work as a painter.

To maintain a spatial focus, I shift emphasis from these temporal categories, and instead argue that the modes of spatial practice which Howe develops over time each elaborate a differently inflected spatial symbolic fabric—spaces that function symbolically in Lacan's sense of supporting the associative and referential chains of the signifier. The first of these, corresponding to the early period of Howe's work, is a space determined by a frontier logic of the dominating boundary. The middle period constructs and problematizes an archontic symbolic interior, a zone of exclusion which confers value on archival material. In recent work of the late period, a moebius-like space of an *extimate* unconscious derived from the "palimtext" (Davidson) of partial signifiers and abrupted graphemes. These multivalent spaces share a poetics of "unsettling" disorientation which productively mirrors the fragmentation of postmodern space and the related dynamism of the postmodern subject.

"Archaeology and mapping. Space."

In an interview with Lynn Keller, Howe locates Olson's influence in connection with that of Robert Smithson, articulating the connection of space and history she gleaned from North American poetics and land art:

> Around that time (1968 or '69), through my sister Fanny, I became acquainted with Charles Olson's writing. What interested me in both Olson and Robert Smithson was their interest in archaeology and mapping. Space. North American space—how it's connected to memory, war, and history." ("An Interview with Susan Howe" 5)

Howe's work responds directly to Charles Olson's influence, even while transcending his methods and developing an expanded "composition by field" in which spatial and typographical elements disrupt normative reading practices: like Olson, Howe works within and against the page as a set space. Howe's intensified poetic space is in part a result of her frustration of interpretive closure: even when her work is compatible with conventional reading, it withholds sentential meaning and risks an environmental syntax instead built on an accretion of juxtaposed historical and personal signifiers. While exploring the spatial practices that affect the course of history, both typographically and thematically, Howe intervenes obliquely into the constitutive materials that ultimately revise and re-situate that history. In contrast to Olson's mythic or epic space, which significantly re-opens the spatial dimension of an otherwise unchallenged colonial history, Howe's formal experiments create a poetic space-time through which she materializes historical and spatial contradictions. Primary among these is the paradoxical dual image of the "New World" as both empty Eden receptive to colonists, and as mysterious, savage wilderness—a problematic colonial spatiality that justifies the dispossession of aboriginal land.

My study builds on the previous interpretations of Bob Perelman, Peter Nicholls, and Marjorie Perloff,[136] who have all contextualized the content and form of Howe's work

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[136] Bob Perelman, *The Marginalization of Poetry*, Princeton University Press, 1996; Peter Nicholls, "Unsettling the Wilderness: Susan Howe and American History," Contemporary Literature 37, no. 4 (1996): 586–601; Marjorie Perloff, "'Collision or Collusion with History': The Narrative Lyric of Susan Howe," *Contemporary Literature* 30, no. 4 (1989): 518–33.

in relationship to the trajectory of the Language poets. In her essay "Whowe,"[137] Rachel Blau Duplessis theorizes Howe's work in relation to hegemony, reading her poems as "repositories of the language shards left in a battlefield over cultural power" (*Pink Guitar* 125). Duplessis examines the significance of space in a colonial, feminist context, claiming Howe's page space is "a space devoted, consecrated to marginality, a page space that is a canvas of margins" (*Pink Guitar* 136). Susan Vanderborg, Kaplan Harris and Craig Douglas Dworkin crucially read Howe's "visual page" as a function of feminist, and antinomian, historical revision, suggesting implicitly that space is the optimal metaphor to describe Howe's avant-garde forms.[138] Most recently, Elizabeth Joyce's comprehensive study of the prolific space of Howe's poetics traces the work's production of meaning in registers across social space, typographical experimentation, and psychological space.[139] Joyce engages Howe's production of space at the level of geometry and fractals in *Pythagorean Silence*, for instance, exploring "spaces between" (Joyce 73).[140]

Despite this range of engaged readings, and specifically their sensitivity to Howe's spatial form, no critics have fully deployed the interpretive lever represented by the topological tools of Lacanian psychoanalysis. I argue that Lacanian concepts, including the symbolic register and the *extimacy* of an unconscious which is structured like a language, produce perspectives crucial to the productive explication of the apparent chaos of Howe's most linguistically and spatially disjunctive work. The inherent spatiality of the psychoanalytic topology (discussed in Chapter One), as well as the fundamental linguistic structure of the unconscious, serve to untangle the complex relationship between the signifier and the subject evinced in Howe's poetry. Ultimately I propose that Howe's work—in which the denaturing of signifiers, both as semantic and

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[137] *Sulfur* (20) Dec, 1987. 157. Reprinted in *Pink Guitar: Writing as Feminist Practice*, 123-139.

[138] Vanderborg, *Paratextual communities : American avant-garde poetry since 1950*; Harris, "Susan Howe's Art and Poetry, 1968-1974," *Contemporary Literature* 47 no. 3, Fall 2006, pp. 440-471; Dworkin, *Reading the Illegible*.

[139] Elisabeth W. Joyce, *"The Small Space of a Pause": Susan Howe's Poetry and the Spaces Between*. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2010.

[140] In fact the model of the interstice structures Joyce's book, Howe's line "the small space of the pause" offering an archetypal interregnum; but this emphasizes a structural paradox that goes uncritiqued, in that the emphasis on a space "between" shores up the putative isolation of discursive elements.

as typographic units, participates in a decline of symbolic efficiency—approaches the condition of Lacan's Real as the annihilation of the symbolic register is paradoxically symbolized. The writing is an allusion to the breakdown of writing conceived as a communicative medium, thus opening generative alternatives to unambiguous signification. In this way Howe's experimentation tests the signifying potential and the limits of intelligibility of spatial arrangements, creatively exploiting disjunction while also determining the minimal proximity required for language to function. What is the relationship of space to meaning that Howe's poetry theorizes, demonstrates, and ultimately challenges?

Spatializing Disjunction

In *Disjunctive Poetics*, his creative and exacting study of avant-garde poetry from Gertrude Stein to Susan Howe, Peter Quartermain finds a common thread of syntactic and hierarchical disturbance in poetry that insists "on the autonomous nature of the poem as part of an indeterminate physical and socio-economic world" (11). This is a mode of criticism that produces a new way of looking at poems, one that William Carlos Williams alluded to when he described how Objectivist writing, perhaps closest to a viable category for this range of work, "recognises the poem, apart from its meaning, to be an object to be dealt with as such" (qtd in *Disjunctive* 1). Quartermain's approach eschews the teleology of hermeneutic interpretation, pursuing instead a "readerly" criticism that generates creative analysis while rejecting closure, in Lyn Hejinian's phrase: "The poem emerges in the act of composition, and reading is a compositional act" (*Disjunctive* 13). In objectivist and language poetry, Quartermain argues, "things stand in no clear relationship to one another save contiguity. Much of the syntax is paratactic, for parataxis forces the reader to build hierarchies on no authority other than her or his own..." (*Disjunctive* 12-13). The "beside-placement" of parataxis develops a space of contiguous signifiers, each of which influence the reader's response; this is opposed to the hypotaxis of linear description:

> Hence the only firm thing to hold on to in the poem, that holds the writing
> together, is not meaning in the sense of an encapsulation which can be
> separated out, cashed in at the end of the reading in exchange for the

knowledge-claim that "this is what the poem means," but *language*, the voices, the play in and of language, the dialogue with the poem taking place in the reader's consciousness, moving toward some sort of cognition and recognition of meaning and structure which cannot be separated from the decisions made within the writing/reading. In 1910 William James defined such consciousness as "a field composed at all times of a mass of present sensation, in a cloud of memories, emotions, concepts, etc.... Its form is that of a much-at-once." (*Disjunctive* 13)

I argue that Howe uniquely spatializes the disjunction Quartermain establishes as a basis of avant-garde poetics. Through this lens I investigate not only the metaphorical space that Howe produces, but also the actual spatial disjunction that supports this metaphor and its relationship to the subject in space.

Howe's poems often trouble the very definition of meaning, problematizing not any one interpretation, but the structure of hermeneutic interpretation itself. The basis of this ambiguity is spatial. Bob Perelman notes that Howe

explores space in a mode of extreme particularity: in some works this is thematized as a desperate wandering through a dangerous wilderness, with particular historical figures such as Mary Rowlandson and Hope Atherton offered as models for a writer and a reader who are only given the most contingent glimpse of where they are. (*The Marginalization of Poetry* 130)

As Perelman intuits here, Howe's spatial exploration of history generates an experience of disorientation: reader and writer are both unsure of their position, of their locus in a larger conceptual space of the text. But notice: the implied metaphor assumes one could be located in a space of comprehension[141]—in this fundamental orientation, one could self-locate *vis a vis* a coherent narrative. But Howe's practice seldom allows for the communication of a comprehensible narrative; in the context of her respatialization of history, in the sense that it challenges dominant historical readings, this disjunction

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[141] I intend "comprehension" in two major senses: a space that is both all-encompassing and intelligible.

deranges the existing reading of past events and make possible an *other* combinatory constellation.[142]

In this spatial practice Howe is more than a poet, conventionally defined: she also performs the role of analyst[143] of these paradoxical distinctions and margins, interrogating the implicit spatial analogies that establish central (canonical, coherent, narrative) versus marginal (disjunctive) texts. In what follows I examine the way Howe's spatial practice disrupts the ideological spatiality of archival materials and of the archive itself.

Revising History:
Unsettling the Frontier with the Archival Trace

Within her historical-archival interventions which I examine in this section, Howe produces three interrelated spaces, which I investigate before connecting them to her typographic experimentation in section II. The first of these spaces is thematic: the historical space of New England into which Howe delves. This is the space of violent first contact in a terrifying wilderness, organized by a complex logic of the frontier, seen in "Articulation of Sound Forms in Time" and "Thorow," for example. The second is the literal space of the archive itself, incorporated via a meta-view of the location of Howe's research, the locus of her materials, and appearing in the work in a way that preserves (and sublates) the site of her historico-poetic production: this space is developed in *The Midnight*, in which Howe attempts to gain access to the Houghton Library at Harvard.

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[142] Like Perelman, Quartermain situates Howe's work in an overarching spatiality, a sustained experimentation with the effects of lines and points:

> Howe's work, from the very title of her first book (*Hinge Picture*) on, treads borders, boundaries, dividing lines, edges, invisible meeting points. Her language returns to such cusps again and again, for they mark extremities, turning points, limits, shifts, the nameless edge of mystery where transformations occur and where edge becomes centre. (*Disjunctive Poetics* 396)

[143] I have benefitted from Clint Burnham's perspicacious reading of Howe's typographical experimentation in *The Nonconformist's Memorial* through the Lacanian Analyst's discourse (see *The Only Poetry That Matters*, 90).

The third is the textual space that Howe produces through a productive interference with the contents of the archive and a rich spatialization of discourse exemplified in *My Emily Dickinson* and "Melville's Marginalia." By treating archival documents as spaces, Howe engages an associative exploration that remaps a symbolic wilderness.

Howe builds a dense metaphorical complex around the wilderness and the act of wandering in the poems collected in *Singularities*. The work is concentrated on productively disorienting the coordinates of history by breaking and dissolving boundaries. The overarching spatial metaphor of *wilderness* encapsulates the view of New World terrain held by early European settlers, but also comes to represent a welter of confused signification more generally. Intervening in canonical, received history, Howe respatializes historical material traces through sampling and juxtaposition, an aesthetic wandering which intensifies the violent spatial contradictions that produced colonial New England.

My reading of Howe's spatial-historical interventions extends from Doreen Massey's argument that space offers "potentially disruptive characteristics," which include "its juxtaposition, its happenstance arrangement-in-relation-to-each-other, of previously unconnected narratives/temporalities; its openness and its condition of always being one of the vital moments in the production of those dislocations which are necessary to the existence of the political (and indeed the temporal)" (39). It is this critical potential in the theory of space that Howe deploys within a poetics that questions modes of spatial hegemony and hierarchy. Howe's spatial practice works at a distance from the ideology of colonial history to challenge its view of space as always-already "divided/regionalized" (65). By engaging the history of these divisions textually, Howe productively interferes in the expected spatial functioning of text and event. Crucially, this produces an alternative history in a form extrapolated from the content: a form that intensifies the discreteness of borders, the symbolic space of the frontier, and a logic of proxemics which I detail below.

Much of Howe's work is saturated with literal and metaphorical spatial content which reintegrates the socio-spatial dialectic, showing its centrality to history while also critically revising the hegemonic view of space as distinct from society. This distinction between space and society is an extension of the Cartesian dichotomy between subject

and object, human and environment, *res cogitans* and *res extensa*: and this dichotomy also produces a spatial politics closely related to Lefebvre's critical revelation of space's character as a social product. In her critical revision, Howe obtains an analytic remove from the complexity of embracing spatiality via archival text furnishes a productive distanciation from coherent narratives of history: "In my poetry, time and again, questions of assigning *the cause* of history dictate the sound of what is thought ..." ("Statement" 16). From a radical geographical perspective these dominant narratives, which seem to form coherent, stable places and spaces, are in fact the product of representations of space which "are remarkably dependent on images of break, rupture, and disjunction" (qtd. in Massey 65). The nominal self-identity and coherence of colonial space can be seen as a reactive fantasy when we realize "the premise of discontinuity forms the starting point from which to theorize contact, conflict, and contradiction" (65). Howe illuminates the contradiction that this presumed disjunction relies on imaginary boundaries imposed, and thus made concrete, by violence: "Maps give us some idea / Apprehension as representation" (*Singularities* 54). This "apprehension" maintains a subtle ambiguity between the noun forms that denote either anxiety or understanding, and the verb form denoting seizure, as of land or person.

Spaces in/of History

Howe's early poetry, from 1974-1984, including that collected in *Frame Structures*, *A Europe of Trusts*, *Singularities*, and *The Nonconformist's Memorial*, is most directly engaged in this spatio-historical revision. There is a Herodotean/Olsonian tone in this *finding out for herself,* discovering not just how location affected event, but also how event affected place: "Historicity of the scene / Confused narrative complex" (*NM* 15). Howe's "complex" is a manifold space generated by narrative confusion. Howe is not biased toward space, but establishes a dialectic between space and time, recovering and positing anew how history and geography each influenced the other in what Edward Soja called the "socio-spatial dialectic". But while she exploits space as a register of evocation of the sedimenting and "covery" (Perelman) of women in history, Howe also

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evokes a feminist revision of established history and settled space by recovering idiosyncratic details that trouble hegemonic formations[144]: "The origin of property / that leads here Depth / Indian names lead here," toward a recovery of a "psychology of the lost" (*Singularities* 52).

As Howe's poems interrogate the way received history elides its spatiality, they recapitulate Henri Lefebvre's argument that space erases its own historical production (*Production of Space*). Howe's spatial alternative to the linear-temporal model of history reconfigures past data as involved in a system of sedimentation and discovery, sublation and revelation, rather than a canon of institutional memory in which "Malice dominates the history of Power and Progress. History is the record of winners. Documents were written by the Masters" (*The Europe of Trusts* 11). For Howe the historical field presents a canonical surface which hides an obscene underside, in the literal sense of *off-stage*: a negated *other* space.

> I write to break out into perfect primeval Consent. I wish I could tenderly lift from
> the dark side of history, voices that are anonymous, slighted-inarticulate.
> (*The Europe of Trusts* 14)

This "dark side" conceals the spatiality of history for Howe: "Things overlap in space and are hidden" (12). In response, Howe lifts space and its Lefebvrean production out of its

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[144] As Rachel Tzvia Back notes, aspects of Howe's practice also run parallel with those of Walter Benjamin: both undertake a process-based approach to "historical consciousness" (*Europe of Trusts* 13; qtd. in Back, 60):

> ...the insistence that the past must be read and written differently [...] the understanding of one's world through its figurative and literal topography, and the refusal to conform to genre limits and genre norms are a few of the traits shared by Benjamin and Howe. (*Led By Language* 60)

This comparison offers even more context for understanding Howe than Back remarks on here: both writers also pursue "historical consciousness" in the terms of a topographical metaphor, intervening in what had been "carried along in procession," in Benjamin's words ("Theses on the Philosophy of History"; qtd in Back 59). Historical materialism for Benjamin and for Howe involves a spatialization of what had been dead time. They both pursue a close engagement with the spaces that carry evidence of the past to the present; "As if all history were a progress," as Howe writes (*NM* 7). The *material* emphasis of historical materialism sifts what persists, and where, to carry evidence of an attenuated past into the present. This model of time as a stream, a "procession," and the present and past as distinct spaces, is used advisedly.

subsumption in a canonical history which usually foregrounds only temporality. Henri

Lefebvre describes this situation as a topology of spatial disavowal, consisting of

> both a scene (where something takes place) and an obscene area to which
> everything that cannot or may not happen on the scene is relegated: whatever is
> inadmissible, be it malefic or forbidden, thus has its own hidden space on the
> near or far side of a frontier. (*Production* 36)

This "frontier" has special resonance in the particular spaces of early colonial history

Howe re-examines.[145] To extend Lefebvre's schema, in Lacanian analysis this obscene

underside is the "other side" of psychoanalysis, the space of the *objet a* which defines

the subject. Lacan's *objet a*, the cause of desire,[146] is a lack ceaselessly orbited in what

becomes the circuit of drive.[147] In Howe's later work, the library is constructed as a

topological expression of *objet a.*[148]

If the present appears as a space produced by an invisibly canonized and

institutionalized material history, Howe's *Frame Structures* and *Singularities* tear this

apparent order down to its basis in the violent conquering of land and people, a

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[145] If Lefebvre uses *frontier* in part metaphorically here, it is a reminder that the contemporary and concrete frontier appears in an urban context of revanchist gentrification, a process mapped by Neil Smith in *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City*. The appearance of "malefic or forbidden" elements is no less organized by this contemporary (re)organization of space, which often proceeds (in Vancouver, where I write this) under a banner of "urban renewal."

[146] As noted in Chapter one, Lacan specifies the texture of his topology when he describes the *objet a* as a "privileged object, [...] that object whose very reality is purely topological, [...] around which the drive moves, [...] that object that rises in a bump, like the wooden darning egg in the material which, in analysis, you are darning..." (*Four Fundamental Concepts*, 257). This also extends Žižek's development of the obscene underside discussed in Chapter Two.

[147] Lacan explains the "relation of the subject to the Other is entirely produced in a process of gap," establishing a spatial interval or lack that inheres between these terms (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 206). Žižek elaborates how this gap or lack is constitutive of the Lacanian "subject of the signifier":

> The subject of the signifier is precisely this lack, this impossibility of finding a signifier
> which would be 'its own': *the failure of its representation is its positive condition.* The
> subject tries to articulate itself in a signifying representation; the representation fails;
> instead of a richness we have a lack, and this void opened by the failure *is* the subject of
> the signifier. To put it paradoxically: the subject of the signifier is a retroactive effect of the
> failure of its own representation; that is why the failure of representation is the only way to
> represent it adequately. (*Sublime Object* 175).

[148] I owe this formulation to Joshua Nichols' "Lacan, the City, and the Utopian Symptom : An Analysis of Abject Urban Spaces," *Space and Culture* 2008 11: 459.

conglomerate bearing the ambiguous name "wilderness." "Historical imagination gathers in the missing" (*FS* 3); by applying a spatial critique to the normative spaces that elide history, *Frame Structures* and *Singularities* gather in the otherwise elided production of the primary site of early American history.

Beginning with her own historical site, the title piece "Frame Structures" maps Howe's family history and the production of the particular spaces of Buffalo, New York and Cambridge, Massachusetts among others. Through her total family history, Howe charts "a flow of capital from the Netherlands across the Atlantic Ocean" in the wake of the Dutch treaty in 1782 (4). What follows is a brief historical narrative of wealthy Dutch bankers pooling their resources to buy "huge undeveloped tracts, then referred to as 'wild lands,' in the central and western parts of New York and Pennsylvania as a business speculation" (4). This originary dispossession, a land grab before the land had ever been considered "real estate," was part of a plan to profit by selling the wild lands to poor and desperate settlers, "crossing from one field of force to another field of force" (4). This establishment of the geographical space of America as a commodity form is one definition of "Frame Structure," setting a basic paradigm of units of property, of tracts established with definitive exchange value.[149]

Howe traces an originary instance of Lefebvre's capitalist "production of space" *par excellence*, one that depends on the work of surveyors to impose a Cartesian grid of rational abstract space. This "structure" also frames Howe's family history and its spatial entwining with violent first contact between aboriginal inhabitants and European settlers. Situating her family in the geographical region, Howe's survey of space over time produces a simultaneity, or synchrony. Her research uncovers a Pocasset Indian Queen or Sachem named Weetamoo, the daughter of Corbitant, who repeatedly escapes "murderous Christian soldiers again and again" in the conflict of King Philip's War, only to drown during a flight to her kingdom; Howe notes "[t]he tide washed her body up *on land that eventually became the Howe farm*" (*FS* 22; emphasis mine). The range of juxtaposed events appears idiosyncratic only until recognition of the pattern that

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[149] A strong resonance exists here with Olson's spatial registrations of property in Dogtown, mapping the transmutation of terrain into territory, as I discussed in Chapter Two.

establishes Howe's ancestors in the particular places of New York and Massachusetts. This is a self-situating with respect to history and geography.

America's history of colonial contact and domination of territory is fundamental in these poems. The conflict through time is perpetually a conflict over space; space that from the beginning of European incursion was gridded, mapped, bought and sold as a virgin commodity. "Frame Structures" establishes the historicity of this foundational mapping:

> The art of surveying has no definite historical beginning though the Chinese knew the value of the loadstone and in Egypt the tomb of Manna at Thebes has a representation of two men in chains measuring a field of corn. Narrative voices of landowners map a past which is established (*FS* 22).

This surveying represents an early production of symbolic space; an investment of significance in a connection of space and time, pinpointed where a narrative of property ownership constitutes history: "voices of landowners... map a past."

If history and space each produce the other in a dialectic, Howe's practice shows that as this history is reopened to examination, it produces a very different (image of) space. By looking awry at what is taken for granted in history, Howe deranges the map of the past, and disorients the subject by cutting up these "voices," re-sequencing and thus repurposing them to create interference patterns in the canonical narrative.

This same strategy is extended to the later productions of space: Howe writes that in the 1850s, "Buffalo was a rail center and highway crossroads for hauling tonnages of grain, limestone, coal, iron, ore, lumber, petroleum, and railroad cars all over the place" (13). Buffalo's specific geographical features, including the water power of the Niagara River and natural inland port, contribute to the production of this particular space, which in turn attracted continual development and investment. As Howe traces the historical decisions that led Dutch investors to risk capital in Massachusetts, and reviews their memorialization in the names of roads near her childhood home, she illustrates the historical production of the present space. The originary Cartesian

mapping of American space by Europeans is integral with the claims and names that transform spaces into property and property into places:[150]

> This place is called by the natives Teuh-sce-whe-aok. These lines I transmit to you from the point of impact throughout every snowing difficulty are certified by surveyors chain-bearers artists and authors walking the world keeping Field Notes. A representation of all the hills and valleys they pass, all rivers creeks and runs. This goes on forever as far as precapitalist Utopia because the Niagara River constitutes part of the boundary between the United States and Canada. (*FS* 28)

Howe's production of symbolic space, in which places function as vectors of motion within a larger process of capital's expansion and compression of space, directly recalls the research and exploration that Olson undertook in Gloucester (see Chapter One): "The brute force is Buffalo because of its position as a way station whose primary function is the movement of goods from east to west and vice versa in dark reaches before soldiers come foraging" (*FS* 29). Force agglomerates into the city of Buffalo "because of its position," because of its centrality as a transportation hub— which is to say because of the centrality of transportation itself to the burgeoning market.[151] This readily compares to the ideal shelter of what became Gloucester Harbour, and its proximity to rich fishing shoals.

> In 1808, realizing the importance of the location of this struggling frontier settlement at the far northwestern corner of New York State, the managing agent and surveyor for the Holland Land Company in Genesse County drafted plans for an elaborately baroque city [...]." (*FS* 28)

In addition to the historical production of space, as Howe reviews the spatial and economic rationale for the conscious and unconscious definition of places, she is

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[150] In the brief poetic essay "Place; & Names," Olson tries to go back to the originary meanings of place, discussing the "nominative power" of "factors of naming," and a "landschaft / experience (geography)" which is "truer / to space-time than personalities / or biographies...," suggesting a poet can jump back to an essential meaning (*CP* 200). This relates directly to what Howe explores with the quotation of Henry David Thoreau's letter to Daniel Ricketson: "—am glad to see that you have studied out the history of the ponds, got the Indian names straightened—which means made more crooked—&c., &c." (*Singularities* 42).

[151] This spatially aware materialism is not unlike Carl Sauer's early precursor to the socio-spatial dialectic: the geographical study, influential on Charles Olson, of how society and landscape each affect the other (See Sauer, *Land and Life*).

establishing a spatial symbolic fabric: a space produced by the relational distribution of places in a constellation that indexes social activity.

Howe's poetics presents a direct challenge to the patriarchy and masculinity of capitalist / colonialist productions of space, the hegemony responsible for the naming and claiming of specific territory. This is accomplished by suspending the form of unitary hyper-rational narrative that managed to both romanticize and annihilate aboriginals, who were somehow simultaneously associated with the wilderness and excluded from *terra nulles* (See Rachel Tzvia Back, *Led By Language*). The patriarchal territory marked out by violent colonization becomes a *ground* of history that is established and maintained spatially through both cartographic surveys and descriptive discursive surveys of the territory as *landscape*. In response, Howe effaces the arbitrary boundaries[152] that produce an ideological space: "...looking for what is looking, I went down to unknown regions of indifferentiation. The Adirondacks *occupied* me" (*Singularities* 40). *Terra nulles,* an imaginary "region of indifferentiation," is an *unknown known* which serves the colonial goal by conceiving the New World as empty. This crucially establishes a spatial symbolic fabric whereby land is mentally cleared in the interest of its function as a medium for new colonial registrations of culture and inscriptions of power.

"Articulation of Sound Forms in Time" materially echoes the disorientation of "Hope Atherton's Wandering" by presenting a destabilizing accretion of historical signifiers:

> Untraceable wandering
> the meaning of knowing
> Poetical sea site state
> abstract alien point
> [...]
> Left home to seek Lost
> Pitchfork origin
> tribunal of eternal revolution
> tribunal of rigorous revaluation (*Singularities* 25)

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[152] Doreen Massey has productively explored the argument "that the need for the security of boundaries, the requirement for such a defensive and counterpositional definition of identity, is culturally masculine" (qtd in Joyce, 235n10).

Howe's redefinition of history is a poetic derangement of the fetishistic disavowal that cleanses New England of the problematic Indians that persisted there. When history records a schematic version of "The Falls Fight," Howe adds, "What the historian doesn't say is that most of the dead were women and children" (3). Howe's lines are multivalent: given its enjambment, "Lost" could be the grammatical object of "seek," implying a desired state of dislocation, while it could also modify "origin," indicating the historical object of desire. Oscillating between a material level in which it refers to its own signifiers, and a meta-level in which the poem charts the destabilization of knowledge where "Untraceable wandering" is "the meaning of knowing," each certainty is undercut and subject to "rigorous revaluation." This transformation is reflected in the "Visible surface of Discourse" which resembles "Runes or allusion to runes" (36). As though the poem gains fleeting awareness of its own "Untraceable wandering," it reflexively addresses its "Dear Unconscious scatter syntax / Scythe mower surrender hereafter" (36).

The production of another idiosyncratic space is retraced from an ambivalent chronological position in "Thorow," in which Lake George is conceived as a historical centre of gravity which is simultaneously represented as it appears in the poet's present:

> In the seventeenth century European adventurer-traders burst through the forest
> to discover this particular long clear body of fresh water. They brought our story
> to it. Pathfinding believers in God and grammar spelled the lake into *place*.
> (*Singularities* 40; italics in original)

The career of "our story" across frontier space is deflected by the presence of "fresh water," which becomes *place* only by virtue of its naming by Europeans, and their venerated big Others: "God and grammar."

Against this historical perspective, Howe's attention to the contemporary moment initiates a poetics of contradictory space:

> ...a Dairy-Mart, a Donut-land, and a four-star Ramada Inn built over an ancient
> Indian burial ground. Everything graft, everything grafted. And what is left when
> spirits have fled from holy places? In winter the Simulacrum is closed for the
> season. (*Singularities* 40)

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Sensate to the contradictions that appear in holding a transparency of contemporary space over its previous conditions,[153] Howe generates a concatenated space in which spatial linkages form semantically associative or dissociative chains; what she calls a "narrative in non-narrative" that will recur as a potent contradiction (*Singularities* 40). Occupying this same idiosyncratic space, Howe acknowledges the "panic of dislocation" she felt until she "moved into the weather's fluctuation. Let myself drift in the rise and fall of light and snow..." (*Singularities* 40). This panic prefigures the forms of disorientation which Howe explores in later texts, including *The Midnight* and *That This*, and which represent extreme *dislocation* through graphical displacements of text from the expected lineal register.

"Thorow" is organized around the possibility of a mythical "thorow passage" (42) connecting the North East with its wider wilderness surroundings. This "passage" carries the connotation of *text*, especially in the homonymous connection with Henry David Thoreau, but also a *way*, a *via rupta* like that Levi-Strauss follows among the Nambikwara in "A Writing Lesson."[154] The poem responds to Gilbert's *A New Passage to Cataia*, which posited an obstruction of movement in space that would allow "no navigable passage" to the northeast (42). As the puritan minister Increase Mather exclaims in the epigraph: "Land! Land! Hath been the idol of many in New England!", Howe's text focuses on the way this idol permits or frustrates passage,[155] and for whom. As the poem traces "[t]he expanse of unconcealment / so different from all maps" (*FS* 55), an explorer's logic of the discovery divides space into a series of discrete areas which are connected by portals of access.[156]

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[153] In this way, the present "Simulacrum" of the past recalls Olson's fondness the "tansy buttons" of Gloucester's idealized past in *The Maximus Poems*, mentioned in Chapter 2.

[154] Levi-Strauss, *Tristes tropiques* pp. 290-93.

[155] This frustrated/frustrating "passage" is an ambiguous precursor to both the controlled, guarded space of archives, and the spatially disoriented text of Howe's later, typographically experimental textual *passages*.

[156] Howe's archival research functions to explore and reinstate not just the spatiality of history, but also the "Historicity of the scene," unpacking the sedimentation of event that characterizes New England. Howe associates her ancestral roots with the bare geographical qualities of the area:

Detourning this explorer's logic, the figure of the frontier is crucial to the spatial analysis of Howe's poetics as she is drawn repeatedly to "The brink or brim of anything from telepathy to poetry" (*NM* 92). Certeau's theorization of the frontier reinforces its universality as a structural feature:

> From the distinction that separates a subject from its exteriority to the distinctions that localize objects, from the home (constituted on the basis of the wall) to the journey (constituted on the basis of a geographical 'elsewhere' or a cosmological 'beyond'), from the functioning of the urban network to that of the rural landscape, there is no spatiality that is not organized by the determination of frontiers. (123)

The spaces of "Thorow," like those of "Articulation of Sound Forms in Time," are generated by an intensification of the frontier as a boundary that is both imaginary, in that it projects the egoistic fears of the colonizers "slipping from known to utmost bound" (19), and real, in terms of the chaotic violence at the contact point of a "geographical assertion" (20). Ultimately the symbolic boundary is inscribed as the outcome of social relations. For de Certeau the very logic of narrative is generated by a spatial contradiction: "Stories are actuated by a contradiction that is represented in them by the relationship between the frontier and the bridge, that is, between a (legitimate) space and its (alien) exteriority" (de Certeau 126). While frequently referencing both "a (legitimate) space and its (alien) exteriority," Howe refuses the production of unambiguous narrative, creating instead a postmodern space in which the distinction of inside/outside is both spurious and integral. In this space of contradiction (as opposed to a contradiction of relational space), what was thought to be excluded is always already included:[157] "Within frontiers, the alien is already there, an exoticism or sabbath of the memory, a disquieting familiarity. It is as though delimitation itself were the bridge that opens the inside to its other." (de Certeau 129). This paradoxical link of boundary and

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> This particular Connecticut landscape, with its granite outcroppings, abandoned quarries, marshes, salt hay meadows, and paths through woods to the center of town put me in touch with my agrarian ancestors. ("Writing *Articulation of Sound Forms in Time*," in *Sound of Poetry*, 200).

This connection of disparate times in space configures geography itself as archival, the host of a material embedding of history in space similar to what Bakhtin calls the "chronotope."

[157] This *already-included* structure is one I explore in the psychoanalytic terms of *extimacy* and *introjection* below.

bridge is one Howe explores in another spatial register as she attempts to access archontic space.

Spaces of Archive

Even while Howe spatializes the *contents* of the archive by accentuating the spatiality of history, her work also recursively includes in its production her interventions in the *literal space* of the archive.[158] The collections Howe explores, and sometimes struggles to gain access to,[159] include Temple University Library, where she finds *Melville's Marginalia* (*The Nonconformist's Memorial* 89); The Houghton Library at Harvard, where she experiences the exclusionary affect of academic scholarship (*The Midnight*); and the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale, where she studies Jonathan Edwards's archive (*That This*). Howe's historical method resembles Charles Olson's in its Herodotean resonance; but while Olson's *finding out for oneself*

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[158] Howe often regards the archive as a general form that is exclusionary based on gender: "If you are a woman, archives hold perpetual ironies. Because the gaps and silences are where you find yourself" (*The Birth-Mark* 158). Howe has presented a paper she called "a collaged swan song to the old ways" of doing archival research in the face of the changes wrought by digitization.

> Things-in-themselves and things-as-they-are for us. Often by chance, via out-of-the-way card catalogues, or through previous web surfing, a particular "deep" text, or a simple object (a bobbin, a sampler, a scrap of lace) reveals itself here at the surface of the visible, by mystic documentary telepathy. Quickly. Precariously. Coming as it does from an opposite direction. If you are lucky, you may experience a moment before. [...] In research libraries and collections, we may capture the portrait of history in so-called insignificant visual and verbal textualities and textiles. In material details. In twill fabrics, bead-work pieces, pricked patterns, tiny spangles, sharp toothed stencil-wheels; in quotations, thought-fragments, inscriptions, endangered phonemes, even soils and stains. [http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/23028]

In the talk, entitled "The Whispered Rush, Telepathy of Archives," Howe explains that she draws on "Some Emily Dickinson fragments from the Amherst College Library, some from William Carlos Williams manuscripts for *Paterson III* in the Poetry Collection at SUNY Buffalo's Poetry Collection, some from the Jonathan Edwards' manuscript collection at Yale's Beinecke Library, and others from visits I made with Jen Bervin last winter to the Antonio Ratti Textile Center at the Metropolitan Museum" (n.p.).

[159] If in Lacanian terms, Howe exhibits a fantasy of exclusion from archival spaces (which would remain a fantasy even if objectively true), a related problem associated with digital archives is that they exclude exclusion – if it is too easy to gain access, a subject can't enjoy the symptom of exclusion, in the sense of the intermingled pleasure/pain of *jouissance*.

often meant going to the locus of historical event in addition to scholarship, Howe's primary space of discovery is that of the archive, the internal spaces of which she charts at several scales. Howe responds to space along a scale continuum that embraces continental landforms, particular landscapes, the cramped spaces of the archive and the idiosyncrasies of the page. She explores the way architecture and bureaucracy affect access, brings into the poem the loci of books according to the Dewey Decimal system and the effect of this spatial intermingling, and connects these with the spaces of her visual page and her graphemic symbols as typographic objects. These distinct spaces are often the sites of paradox through which Howe explores freedom in spatial constraint, for example, or agoraphobia in the open space of frontier. Throughout this practice Howe crafts a coherent series of spatial metaphors that re-contextualize historical figures and events.

What gets taken for "history" is always already subject to the spatial arrangement of the archive. History itself is a spatial result of temporal accumulations, including texts localized within the semi-sacred space of the archive and catalogued via the Dewey decimal system. Historically, archives are always-already spatial: in his influential *Archive Fever*, Derrida clarifies that archival documents were fundamentally associated with a spatial location; indeed the Greek *arkheion* was "initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the *archons*, those who commanded" (2).

> On account of the publicly recognized authority, it is at their home, in that *place* which is their house ... that official documents are filed. The archons are first of all the documents' guardians. They do not only ensure the physical security of what is deposited and of the substrate. They are also accorded the hermeneutic right and competence. They have the power to interpret the archives. Entrusted to such archons, these documents in effect speak the law: they recall the law and call on or impose the law. (2)

The archive would have no power "without substrate nor without residence"; documents require "at once a guardian and a localization" (2). This fundamental link between archival documents and their spatial locus is one Howe formulates as she includes the archival process of her production in her resultant poetry. In *Singularities* and *The Midnight*, Howe explores libraries and archival spaces as a spatial symbolic fabric: a

realm in which specific locus and the logic of access and denial are integral with the significance (or signification) of texts that support a canonical history.

The symbolic space of the archive is organized around the spurious but symbolically efficient division of inside / outside I outlined above. This space also exhibits the paradoxical logic Lacan uses to argue that the unconscious is something that "closes" upon the approach of an other (especially the analyst), while also claiming the "impropriety of trying to turn it into an inside" (*Écrits* 711). To define symbolic space, Howe exploits *heterotopia* (in Foucault's terminology), models of spatial otherness: one of these heterotopia is the archive itself. An area which is enticingly off limits, and thereby limits the information it holds, the archive controls access to its contents and curtails its potential use in new formations. Connected with the "sort of border life" of "Thorow," a scouting amidst "Unappropriated land," Howe

> Expectation of Epiphany
>
> Not to look off from it
> but to look at it
>
> Original of the Otherside
> understory of anotherword (*Singularities* 50)

Howe doesn't "look off from" history, but by looking directly "at it" achieves an epiphanic "understory." We might read the archive as the "Otherside," containing traces of "understory" that have been repressed both discursively/institutionally and spatially. Given that "understory" names the layer of vegetation beneath the main canopy of a forest, it is clear that wilderness has not been left behind, but is metaphorically interconnected with the space of the archive.

Howe proliferates metaphorical inflections on the archive and library spaces which are foundational to her poetic interventions in history. Her poems and prose often imagine the archive as a form of nature, an ideal abstract space. In conscious echo of Thoreau's "Walking," which begins "I wish to speak a word for Nature, for absolute freedom and wildness," Howe asserts "I wished to speak a word for libraries as places of freedom and wildness" (*Souls of the Labadie Tract* 16). "The stacks of Widener Library and of all great libraries in the world are still the wild to me [...] I go to libraries because

they are the ocean," she writes (*TBM* 18). And yet this oceanic metaphor, implying the plenitude and freedom of open water above and below the surface, is often contradicted by the difficulty Howe experiences in accessing these archontic spaces. In *The birth-mark: Unsettling the Wilderness in American Literary History,* Harvard Library is figured as rarefied territory: as her father, a law Professor, "entered the guarded territory to hunt for books," Howe waits outside the entrance, observing her father's admonition that to proceed would be to "trespass" (18).[160]

In "Writing *Articulation of Sound Forms in Time*," Howe reflects on the process of her poetic research by flashing back and forth between the material she reconfigures and the activity of its discovery. She illustrates how "such oblique and marginalized materials as folk tales and early American autobiography" are literally spatially marginalized in the archive (Duplessis, *The Pink Guitar* 123), often secreted twice over, given the archive's restriction and the quasi-random hiddenness and discovery of materials in the physical distribution of the collection.[161] When Howe finally gets access to Yale's Sterling Library, the narrow spaces paradoxically provide a feeling of freedom:

> It was the first time I experienced the joy of possessing a green card that allowed me to enter the stacks of a major collection of books. In the dim light of narrowly spaced overshadowing shelves I felt the spiritual and solitary freedom of an inexorable order only chance creates. Quiet articulates poetry. ("Writing *Articulation of Sound Forms in Time*," in Perloff, *Sound of Poetry*, 200)

This "inexorable order" derived from things in contingent relationships, an apparent cosmos derived from its opposite, contingency, begins a transformation of the valence of *wilderness* for Howe. She calls Sterling Library a "sleeping wilderness" in which she felt "the telepathic solicitation of innumerable phantoms" (200). A product of its component parts, the sum of both its textual inside and architectural outside, the archive is figured as a sanctum, a symbolic space *par excellence*:

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[160] See Susan M. Schultz, "The Stutter in the Text: Editing and Historical Authority in the Work of Susan Howe." *A Poetics of Impasse in Modern and Contemporary American Poetry*. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 2005. 141-158.

[161] The contingent spatial organization of books is fundamental to *Melville's Marginalia*, for instance: "One day while searching through Melville criticism at the Temple University Library I noticed two maroon dictionary-size volumes, lying haphazardly, out of reach, almost out of sight on the topmost shelf. That's how I found *Melville's Marginalia* or *Melville's Marginalia* found me" (*NM* 89).

> I felt a harmony beyond the confinement of our being merely dross or tin;
> something chemical, almost mystical, that, thanks to architectural artifice, these
> gray and tan steel shelves in their neo-Gothic tower commemorate in
> semidarkness, according to Library of Congress classification. (200)

In addition to a multiplicity of temporalities converging in the research collection, Howe's spatial organization of the archive's description highlights the simultaneity of scales in which multiple focal lengths are seen simultaneously: the nation, the architectural enclosure, the narrow space of shelves. But concentration on the inside/outside distinction here reveals it as a fiction; a fantasy established by fetishistic behaviour that produces the spatiality of power.

Here archival space is imaginatively configured both as interior space and as the imaginary space of the nation: the "green card" is an allegorical green-card, a document allowing access to the resources of a guarded state. A variation on Derridean archive fever is operant here: the crucial question concerns not what is inside or outside the archive, but who has access to a symbolic space, the archontic interior that confers fetishistic value.

In a section entitled "SCARE QUOTES II", Howe's more recent *The Midnight* exemplifies the way points of association eventually imply a systematic total space in the aggregate of spatial descriptions. This total space exhibits minimal discreteness, a condition I posit in which the intensification of borders is followed at once by their ephemeralization or canceling out, modeled in the present case by the difficulty of Howe's access of the Houghton Library at Harvard. The spatial setting-apart of the library illustrates the dependence of archontic authority on the localization Derrida describes.

> Entering Houghton Library: Harvard Yard, 9:00 a.m., a fine June summer
> morning. At the entrance to the red-brick building designed by Robert C. Dean of
> Perry, Shaw and Hepburn in 1940, two single wooden doors with hinges,
> concealing two modernist plate glass doors without frames, have been swung
> into recesses to the left and right so as to be barely visible during open hours.
> The only metal fitting in each glass consists of a polished horizontal bar at waist
> height a visitor must pull to open. I enter an oval vestibule, about 10 feet wide
> and 5–6 feet deep, before me double doors again; again plate glass. (*Midnight*
> 120)

While she provides an abundance of background information on the architecture itself, Howe's concentration on thresholds works to emphasize the spatial differentiation of the archive from everyday space. The spatial distinction implied by the glass doors is contradictory: as the description continues, this space is revealed to be as distinct from its exterior as possible, given "its state of the art technology for air filtration, security and controlled temperature and humidity," and yet the doors of its outer perimeter are made inconspicuous, "barely visible during open hours."[162]

With Howe's minute description of the physical structure she attempts to penetrate in order to access Emily Dickinson's manuscripts, the space of the archive is integrated into the work: "Environment itself is its own vast force" (*Midnight* 141). Contradictory space is evident in this environment as Howe reaches an anteroom:

> Standing at the center of this reservoir set apart for public traffic but empty as a church, I feel myself the parasite object of the Institutional Gaze. What is being evaluated? I have come here to examine Emily Dickinson manuscripts. Already, just across the threshold, my orientation has changed, viewer and viewed are reversed. (122)

As her orientation changes, Howe is stripped of "extraneous possessions" (125) and finally allowed to enter the reading room, only to come up against another barricade to access: an electronically controlled door, opened from inside at the signal of a button. A communication breakdown causes Howe to be denied access temporarily, drawing attention to herself as she attempts to wrench open a locked door. The door's visual discontinuity prevented Howe's access, and reinforced the segregation of the space.[163]

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[162] The detail of Howe's description of the space is itself conspicuous, and illustrates the model of Certeau's spatial *tour* discussed in Chapter One:

> Immediately to the right of the door to the staircase stands a small desk where a guard intercepts all visitors. At the left end of the antechamber are two doors. The left one leads into small coatroom, the right into a smaller space[...]. Beyond these two service rooms is the entrance to the Edison and Newman Rom, a large rectangular chamber about 60 feet wide with a high ceiling, two ponderous glass chandeliers, and two fireplaces on the wall opposite the entrance. (*Midnight* 121)

[163] "The door to the reading room at Harvard University's Houghton Library has been changed since 1991," reads the *Author's Note* in frontispiece of *The Midnight*: "it now has glass panes and in that regard is more user-friendly." The change in the door associates it with other instances of Howe's minimal discreteness: although now transparent, and more user-friendly, the door remains an effective barrier, keeping the collection secure inside.

Despite the obsessive spatial detail in her descriptions of the library, it is never clear if Howe gets access to the Dickinson manuscripts; thus the resulting poem serves to represent what Lefebvre called a *counter-space*, "designed to thwart strategies, plans and programs from above" (*Production* 383).

These metaphorical spatializations of library and archive trouble a paradigm of discrete spaces in a way that echoes Lefebvre's thinking:

> Visible boundaries, such as walls or enclosures in general, give rise for their part to an appearance of separation between spaces where in fact what exists is an ambiguous continuity. The space of a room [...] may be cut off in a sense from social space by barriers and walls, by all the signs of private property, yet still remain fundamentally part of that space. (*Production* 87)

Howe's trespassing only reinforces the connection of text to literal space, and this analogy gradually leads to a confluence of the two, such that writing is figured as a space for Howe. Her production of minimal discreteness, in which things are separated by the thinnest possible margin, accomplishes the *aufhebung* or sublation of borders: both intensifying and cancelling them at a stroke. The archival domicile which is set apart, or the frontier as an infinitely thin demarcation which articulates both the civilization and the wilderness on either side of it, and the difference I explore below between seeing and writing in Howe's graphical texts; each of these is analogized in *The Midnight* by the figure of the interleaf.

The Midnight posits the tissue interleaf as a perfect figure of minimal discreteness[164] in the context of the physical book. Following Howe's contents page is a representation of the title page of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Master of Ballantrae* as seen under an interleaf. The effect softens the focus, obscuring some of the information; the next page is a representation of the verso of that page. This simulacral reproduction of a book's spatial material is followed by text which specifies the quarantined elements:

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[164] Illustrating a dialectical spatial logic in which both border and absence of border are emphasized, minimal discreteness is a concept Duchamp explored with the term "infra-thin." In her *Differentials*, Marjorie Perloff writes about appearances of the infra-thin in *The Midnight*, but oddly ignores the best example, the tissue interleaf.

> There was a time when bookbinders placed a tissue interleaf between frontispiece and title page in order to prevent illustration and text from rubbing together. Although a sign is understood to be consubstantial with the thing or being it represents, word and picture are essentially rivals. The transitional space between image and scripture is often a zone of contention. Here we must separate. [...] (np)

With these "rivals," a dichotomy is inferred between reading words and seeing pictures. The interleaf is a barrier that separates and communicates, conjoining these formally disjunct entities:

> Tissue paper for wrapping or folding can also be used for tracing. Mist-like transience. Listen, quick rustling. (np)

Symbolic space is produced by the attachment of signification to spaces that are discrete only in terms of fantasy. The logic of bordering established by the frontier, the sacred space of archive, and the tissue-thin insulation of the interleaf are evidence that "superstition remains—as spiritual hyphen" (*Midnight* np). In the next section of this study, turning to typography, I will argue that when minimal discreteness is transposed to the page-field, objects do not remain discrete in disjunction, but are conjoined by perception. Prior to this exploration of literal, typographical space, however, I want to chart Howe's treatment of citation as a metaphorically spatial operation.

Intermezzo:
"To follow what trails he follows"—
Words of Others as Textual Space

I have thus far explored two forms of Howe's historical space: her research of the space of history, and the inclusion of the space of archives in which she pursues this research. In a third spatial representation, Howe treats words themselves as a space, a terrain, even, that must be traversed.

> Names who are strangers out of bounds of the bound margin: I thought one way to write about a loved author would be to follow what trails he follows through words of others [...] (*NM* 92)

This reveals the paradigm Howe is herself using: in her research, Howe treats words as a space through which trails are made—texts for her are a medium, a terrain which accepts the index of footprints. "Through words of others" is not just an expression *via* (quotation of) the words of others, but following a path through those words as though through a space. But note also the recursion involved: this textual space is at a second-order remove, as Howe describes following the following another author has done.

The spatial dimension of Howe's poetics is extended through her poetic scholarship in *My Emily Dickinson*, which opens with a literary and spatial situating of Dickinson at geographical scale, in a paradigm of isolation:

> Emily Dickinson across the ocean from George Eliot and Elizabeth Barrett Browning was isolated, inventing, SHE, and American. Isolation in nineteenth century England and America was spelled the same way, but there the resemblance stopped. Poe, Melville, and Dickinson all knew the falseness of comparing. Stevens and Olson later—the boundless westwardness of everything. Ancestral theme of children flung out into memory unknown." (*MED* 20)

Tellingly, this situating in space is simultaneously a contextualization of other writers; influence is figured as a relational space. Howe's reading of Dickinson's "My Life had Stood" forms a meditation on the frontier and its integral binding with women writing.

> The American continent and its westward moving frontier. Two centuries of pioneer literature and myth had insistently compared the land to a virgin woman (bride and queen). Exploration and settlement were pictured in terms of masculine erotic discovery and domination of alluring/threatening feminine territory. (*MED* 76)

Howe refuses this *virgin land = virgin woman* analogy, springing women from this misogynist trap while also challenging the naive view that the land was untouched and empty by replacing the Indians in their rightful territory. As Howe continues her analysis of "My Life had stood," she connects Dickinson's "idea of herself" as the product of spatial alienation at a "frontier":

> My and me. In this unsettling New England lexical landscape nothing is sure. In a shorter space (woman's quick voice) Dickinson went further than Browning, coding and erasing–deciphering the idea of herself, dissimulation in revelation. Really alone at a real frontier, dwelling in Possibility was what she had brilliantly learned to do. (*MED* 76)

Reflecting on the integral nature of Dickinson's line breaks, which were tampered with and effaced by well meaning editors, Howe writes in *The Birth-Mark*:

> This space is the poem's space. Letters are sounds we see. Sounds leap to the eye. Word lists, crosses, blanks, and ruptured stanzas are points of contact and displacement. Line breaks and visual contrapuntal stresses represent an athematic compositional intention.
>
> This space is the poet's space. Its demand is her method. (*TBM* 139)

Through her close attention[165] to the spatiality of archival material, of the "words of others," text is transposed into something like a landscape. Howe's configuration of text as a space is not a weak metaphor or simple trope: it emphasizes the literal spatiality of text through a form of poetic analysis. Howe often "dissolves the distinctions between a world inside the poem and a world outside the poem" (*Disjunctive* 398). The world inside the poem challenges attempts to grasp it as a coherent whole, while the world outside the poem is more difficult to discern the more we regard the object-hood (as opposed to the *objectivity*) of the poem.

In Howe's distillation of Dickinson's innovative form she implicitly reveals an instructive parallel between herself and her object of study:

> She [Dickinson] built a new poetic form from her fractured sense of being eternally on intellectual borders, where confident masculine voices buzzed an alluring and inaccessible discourse. . . . Pulling pieces of geometry, geology, alchemy, philosophy, politics, biography, biology mythology, and philology from alien territory, a 'sheltered' woman audaciously invented a new grammar grounded in humility and hesitation. (*MED* 21)

Fractured, on borders, amidst alien territory: space furnishes the optimal metaphors of the sustained non-narrative difference that Howe, like Dickinson, explored. Subjective

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[165] Duplessis's interpretations of Howe's page-space as a site of struggle draw in turn on the way Howe reads Dickinson:

> The ground can never be cleared of the prior. It saturates us—political powers, social places, duties, infusions of norms, irruptions of protest. Thus the sign is never empty, it is never EMPTY; it is full, fused and jostling, an active "stage for struggle" (as Bakhtin says, somewhere). Howe's innovations on the page, her sculptural sketches of signs, make a poetics of her responsibility to and in this multiple struggle. (DuPlessis, "WHOWE" 127)

alienation, a spatial as well as conceptual condition, is foundational to the poetics of both writers.

Emily Dickinson's spatial practice at the scale of the page informs Howe's own spatial experiments in which her texts create heterotopias through transgressions of poetic expectations. In the next section I survey Howe's typographical experimentation, in which a relational page-scape of signifying objects further disorients the thematic spaces of history I detailed above.

Howe's Page Space as Terrain

My investigation so far has reviewed the extended thematic spatiality of Howe's poetic revisions of history, retracing her use of spatial metaphor in archival materials, and her thick description of and intervention in the idiosyncratic space of the archive itself. In this section I argue that the metaphorical space that Howe conceives and explores within the "words of others" generates a corollary in the literal production of her own spatial text. This experimental page space, which produces a generative disorientation that challenges sense and meaning, is a product of Howe's formal experimentation in palimpsest, typographical disjunction, and concatenation. This experimentation produces a poetics of disorienting symbolic space that confronts spatial ideology — illuminating the often invisible effects of space on signification.

In its perceived difficulty, its challenge to self-evident sense, Howe's work joins a lineage of radical North American poetics including Dickinson, Stein, Olson, McCaffery, and Hejinian, all of which frustrate the teleological model of hermeneutic interpretation. Reflecting on the poetry of Gertrude Stein, Quartermain observes: "[t]hat it is impossible to decode suggests that decoding is inappropriate" (65). This decoding model of interpretation, which assumes an enciphered paraphrasable content that can be deciphered, is completely at odds with the functioning of Howe's work. She directly challenges this model through her spatial practice: an idiosyncratic composition by field, which depends not on sequence, but simultaneity for its effects.

While Howe's earlier thematic treatments of historical space are readily quotable, appearing amidst long discursive descriptions which are narratively lucid, and which interrupt or introduce her lineated "poetry," to quote Howe's later poetic collages "you need / a photocopier not a word processor," as Bob Perelman commented on the poetry of Charles Olson (*Marginalization*, 7). In Howe's spatialized page, plural meanings are generated "before" the surface, in the reader's mind, in response to the spatial eccentricity of the page. This work is anathema to the sense of "meaning" sought by hermeneutic interpretation: a rational, unitary and paraphrasable meaning secreted *behind* the frustrating, scattered surface. For Howe, meaning is a process versus a teleological end point; meaning is a kind of knot through which signifiers are drawn, an aesthetic impasse which invites further thought.[166] Howe's practice generates a pattern of spatial disjunction and conjunction, a mode of spatial composition that causes fragments of signification, often historical documents and other appropriated text, to produce new meaning effects in combination. Its challenges to normative syntax and sentential communication abound, but the graphical experimentation of Howe's work develops a form that completely subverts syntax by displacing graphic forms across the page field. Even the conventions of an avant-garde lineation are cast aside, replaced by a field-poetics that requires new forms of analysis.

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[166] This image of a knot through which material is drawn I draw in turn from Hugh Kenner's *The Pound Era.* Howe raises general questions about meaning, including whether it matters, or is matter, if we agree that decoding is impossible or inappropriate, as Quartermain holds. This also raises questions as to how meaning is *something that readers do*, rather than a substance instantiated by writers; a line of questioning Chapter Four pursues more directly in connection with Steve McCaffery and Language poetics.

"Now draw a trajectory in imagination":
Howe's Typographical Disjunction as Spatial Signification

As Howe's work pursues an intensification of the spatial logic of line breaks in avant garde poetry,[167] she joins an American stream of typographically experimental poets that includes Pound, Williams, Olson, and Ginsberg. But perhaps none of these presents the radical dislocation of signifiers that Howe effects as she explodes simple linearity and exploits page-layout as a register of signification.

Explaining the challenge to *sense* of avant-garde poetics in general, Michael Davidson argues that "[b]y foregrounding the material qualities of language, the artist removes words from their conventional syntactic and semantic positions, making strange that which ordinary communication makes instrumental" (*Ghostlier* 38). Howe accomplishes this foregrounding of materiality through experimental typographical page layout which has two productive effects: a physical challenge to legibility; and a form of relational proxemics.[168]

Howe's typographically experimental forms often present a visual ambiguity that evaporates any sense of ego in the author function: only the merest trace of a coherent

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[167] Howe's strain of typographically experimental works present what could be mistaken as cartographic forms; when recognizable words or phonemes appear, they are arranged in such a way that they embody the apparent randomness of geographic forms reflected in maps. But I argue Howe's forms index spatial thinking rather than a relationship between map and territory. They are reminiscent of the way Olson arrays words and symbols in mapping arrangements, but beyond this superficial similarity Howe's signifiers are original productions of space, not emulations as seen in Olson's "On First Looking Out Through Juan de la Cosa's Eyes," for instance.

[168] Certeau explores the scaling nature of proxemics in an evocative coda to his discussion of the relationship between story or narrative and space:

> E.T. Hall defined proxemics 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." (222)

Howe recognizes that the spatiality of early settlement and statecraft were not always unconscious:

> When Theophile Cazenove reached America in 1789, he realized that Philadelphia was the best scene for his operations because the future of American funds, federal and state, depended on the actions of the federal government. Pavements were in wider space and getting social satisfaction he carried along a letter of introduction from his backers in Amsterdam to Andrew Craigie in New York. (*FS* 6)

"I" is intimated. But further, Howe's lines are often overprinted, forming a "palimtext" in Michael Davidson's phrase, obliterating the smooth functioning of text as a medium of communicative thought. The concept of *palimtext* retains "poststructuralism's emphasis on writing as trace, as inscription of an absence," but also emphasises "the material fact of that trace, an inscribing and reinscribing" (*Ghostlier* 67). Extending this focus on the materiality of writing, Howe deploys a simultaneous hybrid of two meanings of "composition": she not only composes, but also composites, in the sense of designing and setting typography. The reader of Howe encounters not a coherent *place*, but a bewildering *space of relations*, of palimpsest, inversion and rotation.

Inversely connected with the decline in its physical legibility, the materiality of Howe's typography is highlighted as the text becomes an inscrutable object of desire similar to Lacan's discourse of the analyst.[169] Just as the analyst functions as a profound enigma of whom the analysand or patient asks "Ché vuoi?" or "What do you want?", what should I be doing in my role to satisfy this transferential situation?[170]—so, by offering enigmatic partial signifiers, Howe's work often hystericizes the reader, just as analysis hystericizes the analysand (Burnham, 84; Fink, 136). In "Articulation of Sound Forms in Time," for example, the signifiers themselves are often denatured, misspelled, only faintly alluding to actual words:

> rest chondriacal lunacy
> velc cello viable toil
> quench conch uncannunc
> drumm amonoosuck ythian [...] (*Singularities* 10)

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[169] See Clint Burnham, *The Only Poetry That Matters*, 90.

[170] Here I draw on Burnham's relation of the four Lacanian discourses to what he terms "social collage"; see *The Only Poetry That Matters*, 80-85.

Commenting on this passage she calls a "vocalized wilderness" in the later *Souls of the Labadie Tract*, Howe writes "Here is print border warfare *in situ*" (17); the border now is not territorial, but that between legibility and illegibility.[171]

Howe describes Jonathan Edwards as a "paper saver" who destroyed manuscripts and notebooks to reuse the paper, thus generating quasi-random collages of recto surfaces coupled to a verso *elsewhere*: "The relational space is the thing that's alive with something from somewhere else" (*Midnight* 58). This "somewhere else" is the spatial relation itself, the signifying distance between object-signs on the page and from one page to another. As Perelman notes, Howe's page often "bears a resemblance to a chart of an archaeological dig" (Perelman, *The Marginalization of Poetry* 131). An archaeological dig is an intervention in the spatial stratification of history: objects are drawn out of their sedimented relation and put into new constellations on the surface of the eternal present experienced by a scholar, a panoptic viewer who guesses at relationships of the objects based on their new order. But as Perelman continues, in Howe's archaeological practice "there is no systematic apprehension; she is trying to place pieces of processes that have left only fragments" (*Marginalization* 131). Howe's distinct objects, once concatenated in the physical manifestation of a timeline, are de-sedimented and juxtaposed on the surface of the page as typographic forms.

Any disturbance of the settled past reconfigures it; nothing is ever disjoined without the formation of new conjunctions. In the spirit of wandering that troubles narrative temporality, I now double back over what I had configured as Howe's early

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[171] Quartermain calls Howe's enciphered spellings "*apo koinou*" at the level of the letter (*Disjunctive Poetics*). *Apo koinou*, Greek for "in common" is an articulation at the level of syntactic units which creates an ungrammatical but communicative construction. It functions in the way two clauses are hinged by the word "tennis" in the following example: "I like tennis is my favourite sport." This spatial conjunction with disjunctive semantic effect[27] is by Howe exploited in letter forms: "uncannunc / drumm amonoosuck ythian" (10). These combinations, shared to a limited extent by actual words, give an impression of language that foregrounds the tenuous border with chaos on which communication rests. The impressionistic simulacrum of language has its roots in dadaist Hugo Ball's "Karawane" (1917). See also Ian Davidson, *Ideas of Space in Contemporary Poetry*, 9-10.

    In further examples including "Eikon Basilike" and "Melville's Marginalia," Howe's typographical experimentation treats the page as a canvas in which semantically unconnected content is spatially juxtaposed as "VERBAL PHANTOMS," lines overprinted and running in every direction on the page (*NM* 100).

metaphorically spatial period, this time focusing on the typographical experimentation which already appeared in early works as an illustration of the productive spatiality of history; an experimentation which Howe has since elaborated. Her typographic dispersion interrogates the point at which signification accretes and breaks down: the space of comprehension in Howe's page is a dilating, self-undermining vortex of part-signifiers. Howe is graphically "unsettling" the "lexical landscape" she noted in *My Emily Dickinson,* "coding and erasing–deciphering the idea of herself," the idea of a subject in relation to signifiers (*MED* 76).

In *Secret History of the Dividing Line*,[172] Howe's content, being comprised of graphical marks, self-reflexively meditates on the mark as both object and concept. In the process of exploring the uses of marks and boundaries in dividing property and state lines, she also highlights the ambiguity and degeneration of marks and the related disorientation of marked space:

> mark   mar   ha   forest   1   a   boundary   manic   a   land   a
> tract   indicate   position   2   record   bunting   interval [...] (*FS* 89)

Even while marks support a "boundary model," establishing "land land land district boundary ..." (89), the marks here are incomplete and indistinct. Is a mark a thing seen ("mar   ha...") or a sign to be read ("excellent figure MARK")? At the instant marks are made to delineate space, disorientation enters the scene: mark is "symbol   sachem maimed..." (89). Is a *sachem*, or Indian chief, (merely) a symbol? Is it the chief who is literally or symbolically "maimed"? The ambiguities multiply given that each term stands as a possible modifier of the others: the syntax itself bears the effects of violence. The signs are cushioned with extra white space, offering the converse possibility that these marks are completely independent of each other: "an object set up to indicate a boundary or position" bears a certain self-identity (*FS* 90).

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[172] On line breaks as a spatial logic with strong effects, Hugh Kenner argues William Carlos Williams' famous red wheelbarrow doesn't work in unbroken prose, "But hammered on the typewriter into *a thing made*, and this without displacing a single word except typographically, the sixteen words exist in a different zone altogether, a zone remote from the world of sayers and sayings" (*Homemade World* 60; qtd in *Differentials* xxix).

"From one tremendous place to another / treading on the brink was safe" (FS 108). The linear experiments of Howe's "Dividing Line" are often conjunctive, re-linking concepts and images that stand in perplexing semantic relationships:

MORNING

_____

SHEET OF WATER AT THE EDGE OF WOODS

(*FS* 113)

These conjunctions belie the "dividing" function of the founding "line": an organizing intervention etched into the randomness of topography, a trace that makes territory into property. Surface against surface, Howe typographically infiltrates the fact that boundaries have histories; that they are the products of historical cruces, often not so much "secret" as disavowed by a present which takes them as given, or even natural.

In "Melville's Marginalia," the text visualizes the kind of tracking/tracing that describes the study of marginalia:

Melville's Marginalia
Secret footsteps cannot bring him   (*NM* 104)

A typographic intermingling of the two lines makes them indistinct, while the interference pattern of the graphemes creates the illusion of a third line that cannot be resolved. The material encounter with this palimtextual artifact which challenges legibility foregrounds the gaze as it dictates a shift in attention to *looking* as opposed to *reading*. In an index of the conditions of production, and the materiality of the objects of her research, Howe deploys text in a spatial register that disrupts itself. These "secret footsteps" simultaneously refer to both the source text and the movement through it.

In each of these examples, Howe pursues an experimentation with the space of the line (and the space the line produces) that extends Perelman's redefinition of "the marginalization of poetry" as a positive condition, a non-metaphorical spatialization accomplished by line-breaks, and also redefines marginalia by extension in relation to the "master page" implied by the metaphor (*Marginalization* 5). The paradox of lineation inheres in the way disjunctive line breaks create "a marginal / work in a quite literal sense" (*Marginalization* 4).

Howe rejects and escapes the "violent smoothness" Perelman sees in "smooth-edged rectangles" of prose forms, "the visible // sign of the writer's submission to / norms of technological reproduction" (*Marginalization*, 5). In place of a narrative plane geometry that guides conceptual movement on established thought-paths, Howe instantiates a bewildering wilderness of interrelation: "Poetry is thought transference. /Free association isn't free" (*NM* 105). Perturbations in the "movement" of free association are symptoms of unconscious effects. These lines follow directly on Howe's description of her composition of *Melville's Marginalia* "by pulling a phrase, sometimes just a word or a name, at random" from the scholarly work of the same title by Wilson Walker Cowen (*NM* 105). Howe's work is a form of psychoanalytic "transference," the "inter- and intra-subjective relation between analyst and analysand" (Grosz *Lacan* 18), to precisely the extent to which Howe acts as analyst of archival signifiers manifest in unsettled randomness. To Howe the analyst, the uncanny associations within this textual space, a kind of externalized unconscious, appear distinctly motivated: "Free association isn't free."

Howe's *Extimate* Textual Unconscious

If, as Barrett Watten argues, spatial order is the fantasy of modernism, (*Constructivist* 326) Howe's early interventions in ordered narrative-historical forms are the prelude to an explosion of order that is "immune to standardizing / media" in Perelman's phrase (*Marginalization* 7). Writing prior to the publication of Howe's most graphically nonstandard recent works, Perelman perspicaciously included Howe's writing, "which uses / the page like a canvas," in his extrapolation of a stream of (post-)language poetry "where publication would be a demonstration of singularity approximating a neo-Platonic vanishing // point" (*Marginalization* 7).[173] Howe's recent graphically experimental works contain free-floating elements that disrupt any logic of up/down or left/right. In this crucial way they differ from maps which establish a

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[173] Not to neglect Perelman's own formal innovation by writing an essay in the borrowed form of a poem; a relative of Howe's shifts into a prosaic, documentary register in *Singularities*, *The Midnight*, and elsewhere, as well as the poetic form of her scholarship in *My Emily Dickinson*.

reference "north," and rely on a strict orientation relative to that point: here no compass points provide baseline orientation. And yet, to invoke Lefebvre, a distinctive "spatial practice" emerges, one that extends her earlier reflections on poetic content as a comprehensive field in which nothing is not significant: "In the precinct of poetry, a word, the space around a word, each letter, every mark silence or sound, volatizes an inner law of form; moves on a rigorous line" ("Flames," qtd in Quartermain, *Disjunctive* 399). In these late poems the "rigorous line" is a continuous space established by the distance between the subject and the signifier which is constitutive of the subject.

This distance I characterize, via Lacanian theory, as *extimate.* As Paul Kingsbury helpfully summarizes,

> Jacques Lacan coined the neologism '*extimacy*' (*extimite´*) in order to theorize two interrelated modes of psychical apprehension: first, how our most intimate feelings can be extremely strange and Other to us. Second, how our feelings can be radically externalized on to objects without losing their sincerity and intensity. ("Extimacy" 235)

As Howe pursues a radical disconnection of her own voice from the signifiers she arrays in typographic space, by not only borrowing the words of others, but also deranging those material signifiers such that they become ambiguously legible, I argue she is activating a mode of extimate textuality that symbolizes the subject's relationship to its exterior unconscious.

This studied disconnection results from the material practice Howe innovates, beginning with her recent work, including *Souls of the Labadie Tract* and *That This,* in which she uses "multi-purpose copy paper, scissors, "invisible" scotch tape, and a Canon copier PC170" in order to generate new graphical collage forms of productive disjunction ("An Open Field," n.p.). With these tools, this late work extends Howe's earlier practice in which "each page is both picture and nonsense soliloquy" (in Perloff, 203). Howe's formal experimentation in her aesthetic visual page, a mode that is transgressive of sentential meaning and instrumental reason, seen principally in "Fragment of the Wedding Dress of Sarah Pierpont Edwards" in *Souls of the Labadie Tract* and in "Frolic Architecture," which appears in *That This*. By electronically sampling textual material, and by including the rough edges of partial selections, Howe further accentuates both the formal visio-spatiality of her poesis, and the materiality of the

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signifiers on which this work depends. The hybrid digital-analog medium she has innovated treats words and letters as *things*: objects scanned, printed and re-scanned, remapped in opposition to the spatial logic of sentential continuity. To the logic of partial selection considered above, Howe adds an aesthetic partiality derived from visual idiosyncrasies that result from electronic and analog manipulation and breakdown of the graphic text itself.

The poems collected as "Fragment of the Wedding Dress of Sarah Pierpont Edwards" are built of sampled transcriptions Howe made of Jonathan Edward's unusual archive of manuscripts written on scavenged paper and cloth ("An Open Field," n.p.).
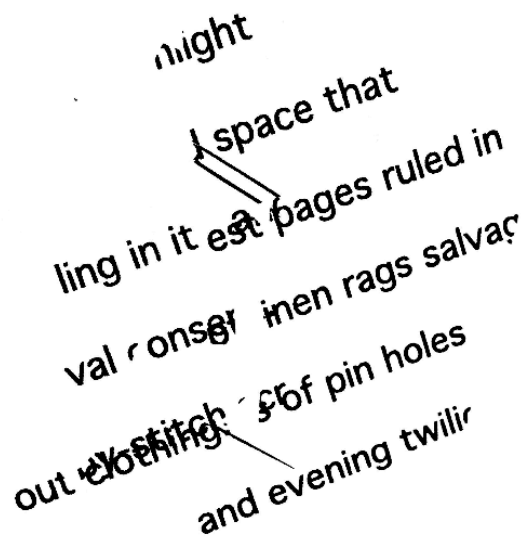
Figure 4.   From "Fragment of the Wedding Dress of Sarah Pierpont Edwards,"
Souls of the Labadie Tract 121

This material disintegration matches and extends the semantic breakdown, a signifying gap the reading mind is always attempting to fill.[174]

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[174] This graphically challenging work is closely described by Howe's reflection on her earlier "Eikon Basilike" which she identifies with "impossibility": "So I wanted to write something filled with gaps and words tossed, and words touching, words crowding each other, letters mixing and falling away from each other, commands and drams, verticals and circles. If it was impossible to print, that didn't matter. Because it's about impossibility anyway" (*TBM*, 175).

How does relative space signify?[175] In the conventional sense of a transparently linked sign and referent, surely it cannot. But Howe does inflect that link, which is normally invisible by altering the ratio of space to mark. Just as Einsteinian relativity revoked the possibility of a privileged frame of reference, Howe's typographical experimentation obliterates the sense of *up* or *down* on the page. Howe's proxemics extends and complicates the logic of parataxis such that locus constitutes part of the signification of signs. As Quartermain observes, "What is remarkable is not simply that the notation for the eye plays against and with that for the ear, but that moving toward fracture and fragment the syntax and the diction move also toward completion" (395). Howe's background in painting established a compositional aesthetic that never waned as she took to poetry: "Though my work has changed a lot, those books the poems begin to form in have not. I've never really lost the sense that words, even single letters, are images. The look of a word is part of its meaning..." ("An Interview with Susan Howe," 6). Peter Nicholls writes that Howe's mode of "visually conditioned" poetics produces "constellations of words which combine in a way that forces prosody against syntax" ("Unsettling the Wilderness" 596). This exploding of syntax generates a poetic model of proxemics: the unconscious orientation and proximity of objects in relation to each other, a relational space which does not signify, precisely, even while it is significant. "[R]ather like Jacques Lacan's concept of the unconscious," Nicholls asserts, "Howe's wilderness is a text composed of gaps and traces" (589); in these later works that wilderness is given graphical, as opposed to discursive form, and as a result the relationship to the unconscious and its materiality is strengthened.

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[175] Rachel Tzvia Back interprets Howe's typographical practice by studying the shape the eye traces on the page as it reads the poems, but this reduction to two-dimensional linearity limits her argument, while leaving untouched the question of how to read the relative space of the poems (*Led By Language*, 156-157). The radical opening of field poetics entails a differential, non-linear space: a field of perception in phenomenological terms, in which the wandering line of the eye is not necessarily the base standard of signification.
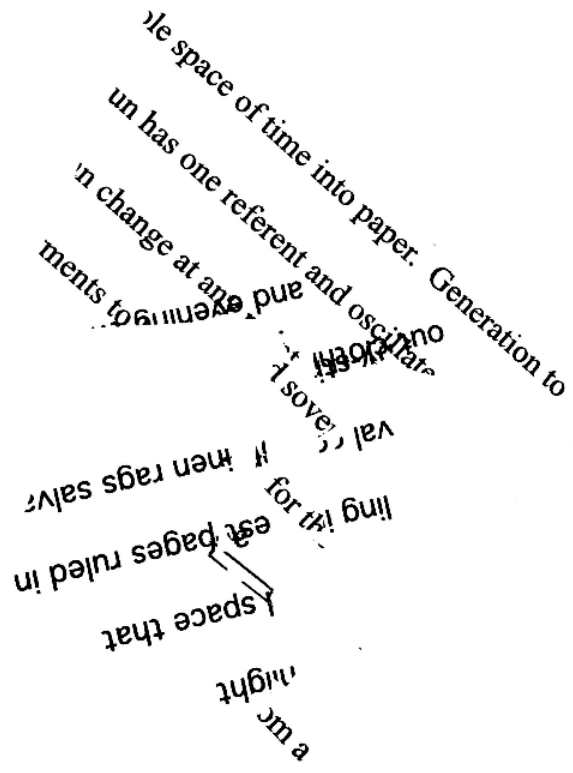
Figure 5.   From "Fragment of the Wedding Dress of Sarah Pierpont Edwards,"
Souls of the Labadie Tract 120

Linearity here is a smashed vestige of "pages ruled," illustrating the impossibility of translating a "space of time into paper" record. Overprintings cause inverted perspectives, perhaps inferring multiple subject positions, to intersect and clash, creating phantom signifiers where words interfere with each other or are abruptly cut off.

In *That This*, Howe rescans her raw material until graphemes take on an aesthetic of malfunction, of a reproduction process gone wrong. But this would only be "malfunction" in a context that ignores the latitude of a poetic signifier, its potential to highlight the constant backfiring of referential language. Translating between analog material and the ephemeral digital trace, Howe recycles manipulated text into a digital environment where it is manipulated further. A logical extension of her earlier paratextual

experiments, Howe's paratexts are now directly imported to the page, cut in ragged strips and made to collide with each other. This in itself seems an extension of Howe's early practice in "Hinge Picture," for instance:

> [...] minerals such as salt adama
> nt and magnet or with
> terrestrial and celestial
> phenomena such as earth
> wind cloud rainbow moon (*FS* 38)

The partial phrases and letterforms of "Frolic Architecture," appearing in various typefaces, present a logic of partial selection that points deictically though obliquely at an *other* textual spaces from which this excerpt, framed by white space, originates. Where "Hinge Picture" exploits patterned line breaks and composition on the page, its broken lines often forming sentential sense, "Frolic Architecture" foregrounds a radical palimpsest that negates the sources' linear continuity. On the model of Foucault's heterotopia, this juxtaposition of fragments generates a *heterotext* beyond the present poem, a differential text that appears only in its absence, in its negation of the logic of coherent quotation:

> e set at great distance from this world,
> t, it then appeared to me a vain, toilsom
> bitants were strangely wandered, lost,
>   comfort to me that I was so separate
> worldly affairs, by my present affliction&
> al tho melancholy was yet in a quiet frame
> ngers I was in, it was not without a deep
> prepared for Death. & I did set myself to [...] (*That This* 56)

Howe's assemblages often cunningly reveal that what hermeneutic interpretation would assume is an intention personal to the author is actually a vector from outside the author and text. "Collage is anti-hierarchical" writes Stephen Collis (*Through Words*, 17); Howe's authorial intention as a collagist works at a clear remove from the author's personal *interior* expression. The Lacanian unconscious is at work here in Howe's selection of the found text, but also in my reading of it.

```
had the wings of  a dove trig
, but whether could , I fly,Oh
· & abiding PORTION and no
ring, deceiving, enjoyment
s, where shall I find Real ⁊
I wander from mountain
ne---Oh that I could fin·
rest for the sole of m·
·  ·-·d weary myself t
```

Figure 6.   From "Frolic Architecture," *That This* 47

Howe's formation of the poem from appropriated text represents an *extimate introjection*.
In psychoanalysis, introjection usually refers to the unconscious adoption of the ideas or
attitudes of others (Kingsbury 251); here, the incorporation of text from *outside*, in the
sense that these words are not reducible to Howe's personal expression, even while
they are selected by her, is fully conscious, but it is the pool of *other* signifiers that
represents the unconscious. Paradoxically, the introjection is *extimate* in that what
comes from *outside* is no less personal than the ideal of a naked lyrical expression, thus
cancelling the initially apparent dichotomy of inside versus outside. The passage "where
shall I find Real / I wander from mountain ne---Oh that I could fin / rest for the sole of m /
weary myself" perpetuates Lacanian resonances, not only in the allusion to an illusive
Real, but also in the desire for "rest for the sole of ... myself," a desire stoked by the
over-proximity of the *other* who triangulates subjectivity. The radical materiality of
Howe's poetry is ultimately concentrated in the objecthood of signifiers, which stand in
for this *other*:

> More and more I have the sense of being present at a point of absence where
> crossing centuries may prove to be like crossing languages. [...] Even the
> "invisible" scotch tape I recently used when composing "Frolic Architecture"
> leaves traces on paper when I run each original sheet through the Canon copier.
> (*That This* 31)

Howe's cutting, pasting, and rescanning of text in "Frolic Architecture" is itself a material
introjection; the poems are never divorced from her process. Howe conjoins a technical

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wrinkle, the persistent trace of the transparent tape, to a historical context of centuries, and produces countervailing interference patterns in some barely perceivable ("invisible") medium: "present at a point of absence...". The "point of absence" appears as a lack which, like the all-too-visible "invisible" tape, is subsequently revealed as the lack of a lack.

Perhaps the ultimate exemplar of this present-absence is a sliver of text which appears illegible, until the eye extrapolates, supplying the lacking wholeness of the marks, and see a "trace of a stain" in the centre of the fragmentary vertical line:
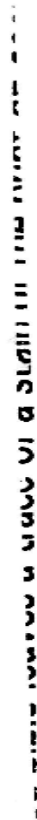

Figure 7.   From "Fragment of the Wedding Dress of Sarah Pierpont Edwards," *Souls of the Labadie Tract* 125

Howe's poetry, like eruptive visual and concrete poetry which it is partially related to,[176] is anathema to what Bernstein called "Official Verse Culture," with its emphasis on self-presence and direct personal communication (Perloff, *Differentials* 129-130). What I have read as Howe's poetics of distributed unconscious abjures linear sentential narrative, evoking instead phanopoeic and logopoeic space in chaotic diagrams of thinking that generate further thinking, as opposed to signification. Through radical disjunction, Howe challenges the conception of space as a guarantor of meaning, revoking the stable *ground* on which the edifice of communicative language is installed. Howe's every approach to space reveals a dimension that resists symbolization and can only be hinted at: "I have already shown that / space is God" (*Labadie* 124). The desired symbolization of the Real of space is, like a god, a vague fantasy that absconds at the approach of desire, fueling drive. Lacan's Real is the ultimate disjunction: it does not admit of reading, but is recognizable at the point reading is frustrated. Howe gets as close as possible to representing the Real's annihilation of the symbolic where she deploys denatured, partial symbols. "Lacan tells me ... reality appears to be marginal," Howe writes, pinpointing the margin or frontier where the raw territorial Real of wilderness is covered over by the symbolic fabric of reality (*TBM* 37). Approaching the annihilation of the symbolic, Howe develops a spatial register that locates through disjuncture where legibility drops off the map.

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[176] This relationship to Concrete work by Ian Hamilton Finlay or Emmett Williams or Bob Cobbing, work that "explores not only the iconic and spatial features of letters but also their capacity for semantic indeterminacy" (Davidson 15-16), certainly expands the context in which Howe's work is perceived. Further, the work of Georges Perec (*Species of Spaces*) and D. A. Levy (*The North American Book of the Dead*) realize alternate deployments of page-space as a screen that hosts the often hallucinogenic associations of meaning and relational typographic position. But Howe complicates the effect of what Johanna Drucker in another context calls "Conspicuously concrete poetry" as she combines experimental typography with what Drucker calls "apparently-neutral 'regular' presentation of texts," an "assumed transparency of habitual graphic composition" (119). By including and intermingling what is often set up as two opposed forms within unitary poems or sections, Howe challenges that opposition itself, amplifying, even more so than Emmett Williams, who Drucker refers to here, "the visual potential and condition of all and any work on the page— as Saussure's obsessive pursuit of anagrams reveals the texts within texts that haunt all language. All texts are graphically marked" (119-120). Howe's involution of *exterior* texts, her use of "habitual graphic composition" as an apparent comment on experimental typography, even when relationships among these approaches remain unclear, amounts to an expansion of the aspiration toward visual arts in Howe's forerunners in Concrete Poetry.

Normative writing entrains a politics of complacency (Perelman 97); the familiar reinforces the standard orientation to the signifying register of space: blindness, disavowal at best. If language lags behind experience, there may be as yet no words for the spatial disorientation of the globalizing present. Language which asymptotically approaches a representation of the present *should properly be disorienting* in relation to communicative transparency. As Peter Quartermain notes, avant-garde poetics (of which Howe is an innovative practitioner) departs from the most fundamental linguistic expectations:

> The imperative to capture polyvalent clusters of associations and perceptions, and to preserve the simultaneity of field, requires abandoning normative syntax, and even intelligibility. The task of the writing, indeed, is to undo them, for our experience of the world undoes the rule of hierarchy and authority as set patterns. (13)

This "simultaneity of field" is directly supported by the confounding, unsettling spatiality of Howe's work; a disjunctive space that radically departs from the economic closure of reference, and the temporal sequentiality of narrative. For Howe, patterns cross "history" in a spatialization of broad time: "Meditation of a world's vast Memory // Predominance pitched across history / Collision or collusion with history" (*Singularities* 33). Howe's work exemplifies traits that have become hallmarks of postmodernism: the dispersal of self-present meaning; the collapse of symbolic efficiency in language; and a practice that reinforces a decentered subjectivity born of an externalized unconscious. "Free from limitations of genre Language finds true knowledge estranged in it self" ("These flames..." 8). Against the nominalist violence of the colonial frontier which, through exploration and cartography, registers geographic space as a symbolic fabric, Howe's poetics of disorientation and "unsettling" is an ethical act: her intervention in the historical/archival canon interrupts the big Other, while her disruption of signification itself suspends the symbolic register, allowing access to a "true knowledge" normally obscured by history's narrative thrust.

Chapter 4.

"A Peak to Descend from into Language": Seeing and Reading Steve McCaffery's Spatial Poetics

> "simply the structure of space becoming no more than a structural accommodation of space"
>
> *Carnival: the Second Panel*

Darren Wershler commits no exaggeration when he claims that Steve McCaffery has produced "arguably the most heterogeneous body of work in Canadian letters"[177] (*Verse and Worse* ix). Spanning approximately 45 years, McCaffery's oeuvre ranges from "post-

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[177] As Wershler explains, McCaffery's breadth has extended to a bewildering range of forms, including "the haiku, the imagist poem, the Romantic lyric, the long poem, the detective novel, the portrait, the comic strip, the philosophical treatise, the aphorism, the ode, the *nouveau roman*, the map, the apology, the prose poem, the cut-up, the sonnet, composition by field, the log book, and the manifesto, to name only a few" (*Verse and Worse* x). It is worth noting that McCaffery's identification as Canadian is complicated by the fact that he was born in Sheffield, England and attended Hull University before moving to Canada in 1968 to pursue postgraduate studies at York University and work with bp Nichol. Despite the international reach of his work and associations, McCaffery found himself in a position between nodes of national identification at a moment when a tradition of Canadian letters was being defined. In an interview in 2000, McCaffery noted that his

> non-connection to Canadian poetry has continued through to the present. My work has never appeared in major anthologies of Canadian poetry (e.g. the Oxford Book of Canadian Verse) and my longer works have been ignored (by such writer-anthologists as George Bowering, Gary Geddes, Sharon Thesen and Michael Ondaatje) in the construction of the Canadian Long Poem canon. In addition I have never been invited to adjudicate on the Canada Council. ("An Interview with Karen Mac Cormack & Steve McCaffery" 30)

McCaffery also sees himself as ostracized from important U.S. anthologies that defined the Language movement there, referencing his exclusion from Silliman's *In the American Tree* and Paul Hoover's *Norton Anthology of Postmodern American Poetry* on the basis of his being "biologically non-American." (30)

semiotic" work including *Transitions to the Beast* and *Broken Mandala*, to the concrete "typestract" panels of *Carnival*, and traces a generic sweep from ephemeral sound performances with The Four Horsemen, to broadsides, on to highly theorized criticism informed by French poststructuralism (collected in *North of Intention* and *Prior to Meaning*,) and an anti-narrative novel, *Panopticon*. A survey of McCaffery's early work, produced over a period from 1967 to 1975, suggests a chronological progression that first negates the discursive, linguistic and semiotic aspects of language in favour of a purely visual post-semiotic form in *Transitions to the Beast* (1970), before reincorporating the signifier—albeit in a partial, repetitive and distorted form—within a visio-spatial composition in *Broken Mandala* (1974), with *CARNIVAL: the First Panel* (1967-70) and *Second Panel* (1970-75) bridging the post-semiosis of the visual poems with a loosely coherent, spatially distributed narrative which reestablishes threads of referential meaning, only to cross-cut these threads with a radically spatialized form. *Dr Sadhu's Muffins* and *'Ow's "Waif"* (both 1975) define a practice of quasi-random sampling from a fixed set of texts which, conceived as "a kind of seeing," bear a prototypical relationship to the homolinguistic translations of the later *Every Way Oakly* (1978). In this early period McCaffery also began a practice of collaboration which continues to this day, composing *Legend* (1980) with Ron Silliman, Bruce Andrews, Charles Bernstein, and Ray DiPalma; and producing in *Six Fillious* (1978) experimental translations of Robert Filliou's *14 Chansons et une Charade* with Dick Higgins, Dieter Rot, George Brecht, and bp Nichol.

McCaffery is considered one of the originary North American Language poets in its initial period between 1970 and 1980, along with Ron Silliman, Charles Bernstein, Barrett Watten, Robert Grenier, Bob Perelman, and Carla Harryman, among others. Language-centered poets in this period undertook a practice that examined a number of shared "issues," as Silliman enumerated them in his influential *In the American Tree*: "The nature of reality. The nature of the individual. The function of language in the constitution of either realm. The nature of meaning. The substantiality of language" (xix). This "substantiality," a focus on signifiers as material objects, and language as a system of phonic-graphemic phenomena, characterizes much of the practice and theorizing of the Language poets. The foregrounding of materiality appears in the close attention to and innovations in typographic form, the reemphasis of a sensitivity to language's

thingness that Jerome McGann would trace back to Yeats and Pound (*Black Riders* 76).[178]

Surprisingly, despite McCaffery's consistent formal experimentation in both semiotic and non-verbal space throughout his varied oeuvre, amidst the breadth of critical responses, a concentrated spatial reading of his work has been neglected. Surveying the range of radical alterity in McCaffery's work through a spatial lens reveals a practice as closely associated with architecture and painting as with the variant strands of avant-garde poetry. While it is certainly "impossible to select anything like 'representative' works out of such a diverse body of material," (*Verse* x) the current chapter focuses on aspects of McCaffery's early poetry that developed the arc of his singular experiments in spatial form.

Pursuing what Watten calls the "phenomenological basis for writing," (*American Tree* 485) Language Writing can be generalized only to the extent it shares certain formal traits. One of these is a constructivist aesthetic derived from the Russian Formalists which functions to intensify formal experimentation and to strain the referential and narrative functions of conventional language (*American Tree* 485). These functions are revealed in the theory and practice of many Language poets as ideological, smuggling a capitalist worldview into the fabric of thought by commodifying the materiality of everyday life. Another shared trait of much Language Writing is what Lyn Hejinian terms the "rejection of closure": the frustration of transparent meaning in the production of an open text which "is generative rather than directive," and which "invites participation, rejects the authority of the writer over the reader and thus, by analogy, the authority implicit in other (social, economic, cultural) hierarchies" (43). Another trait shared by Language poets is the "analysis of the capitalist social order as a whole and of the place that alternative forms of writing and reading might occupy in its transformation" (Andrews and Bernstein xi). In Silliman's precedent-setting essay "Disappearance of the Word / Appearance of the World," he argues that this capitalist order commodifies

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[178] McGann opens his Chapter two, "Composition as Explanation (of Modern and Postmodern Poetries)" with Yeats' premonitory assessment of textual materiality: "English literature, alone of great literatures because the newest of them all, has all but completely shaped itself in the printing press" (*Black Riders* 76).

language. Silliman holds that "the primary impact on language, and language arts, of the rise of capitalism has been in the area of reference and is directly related to the phenomena known as the commodity fetish" ("Disappearance," *Language Book* 122). As Linda Reinfeld expands,

> Silliman's concern is that if we permit the word to stand for something else, if we exchange the word for its meaning, we thereby initiate a process in which anything can stand for anything else and anything can be exchanged or replaced. Once the word can be exchanged, it can circulate (just as money circulates in a capitalist economy), and like money, the word as a medium of exchange cannot serve as a source of genuine human values. (*Rescue* 33)

Looking to the ultimate logical consequences of this model of "linguistic money," McCaffery saw that "linguistic production is instantly transformed into linguistic consumption" (*North* 14); and further, that "[p]roducing a sentence is actually re-producing the internalities of the system by a consumptive 'use' of its rules and forms" (14). For Silliman, the "function of the commoditized tongue of capitalism is the serialization," or alienation or atomization of the reader (127). In response to the particular "capitalist mode of reality passed through the language and imposed on its speakers," a mode which represses its own activity "through the serialization of the individual," (130) "the poem" is positioned "to carry the class struggle *for* consciousness to the level *of* consciousness" (131).

This coming to consciousness is often allied with a metaphorical distanciation of language as such: "distance," writes Barrett Watten, "rather than absorption, is the intended effect" (*American Tree* 612). Charles Bernstein produces a related form of distanciation in his "Artifice of Absorption," a model Jerome McGann sees as a "process for revealing the conventions, and the conventionalities, of our common discursive formations" (*Black Riders* 107).[179] While Language-centered work often displays experimental spatial form, it also infers a symbolic space in which language functions as a complex system. Thus Silliman's dialectic of the word and world produces consciousness not just of language's material dimension, but also of its spatial extent.

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[179] As I will show, this formal distanciation is structurally harmonic with McCaffery's *Carnival*, which he referred to as "A peak to descend from into language" (Introduction, *Carnival: The Second Panel*).

As she describes the "reach" of its "spatial properties," Lyn Hejinian explores this spatiality of referential language's total system:

> Language itself is never in a state of rest. Its syntax can be as complex as thought. [...] The progress of a line or sentence, or a series of lines or sentences, has spatial properties as well as temporal properties. The meaning of a word in its place derives both from the word's lateral reach, its contacts with its neighbors in a statement, and from its reach through and out of the text into the outer world, the matrix of its contemporary and historical reference. *The very idea of reference is spatial*: over here is word, over there is thing, at which the word is shooting amiable love-arrows. Getting from the beginning to the end of a statement is simple movement; following the connotative byways (on what Umberto Eco calls "inferential walks") is complex or compound movement. (*Language of Inquiry* 50; emphasis mine)

Hejinian distinguishes the space of the typographical, material line ("simple movement") from a conceptual space of complex, interrelated thoughts ("complex or compound movement"); from this perspective the spatiality of work that resists reference appears as a derangement of an imagined semantic space. McCaffery bridges this apparent dichotomy between line and thought as he observes that the "simple movement" of linearity also describes a form of thought: "Linear progression, we have come to understand not merely as a spatial arrangement but as a way of thinking" (qtd in Perloff, *Differentials* 178). McCaffery's early visual poems and experimental translations demonstrate a unique resistance to the linear spatial logic inherent to reading and, too often, thinking.[180]

To return to McCaffery's oeuvre specifically, its wide range of formal experimentation and generic transgression, in concert with McCaffery's influential incorporation of post-structuralist theory in North American poetics, has inspired a wealth of varied critical responses. These include a study of the affinity of McCaffery's work with

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[180] The interrelation of reading and thinking is reinforced by the relationship of language and subjectivity. "Seizing the structuralist homology of language and social order," as Jeff Derksen writes, "Language writing proposed to locate the subjective within the structural by refiguring the reader in a more equitable relation of (textual, and by extension, social) meaning production. The commodification of everything—including the process of reading—and the deepening alienation brought on by the globalization of capital leads the Language writers to target language and reading as the sites of engagement" for the revolution of social relations within globalization within a range characterized by "upper limit utopic transformation via a transformed productive reader or, lower limit, disgust, anger, humour" (*Annihilated Time* 125).

the phenomenological engagements of minimalist art in George Hartley's *Textual Politics and the Language Poets* (1989), Peter Jaeger's psychoanalytic readings of The Toronto Research Group in *ABC of Reading TRG* (1999), 'pataphysical speculations by Christian Bök in *'Pataphysics: The Poetics of an Imaginary Science* (2002), and Marxist economic analyses in Marjorie Perloff's *Differentials: Poetry, Poetics, Pedagogy* (2004). The journal *Open Letter* has published special issues dedicated to readings of McCaffery's work. The first, in 1987 (6.9), was edited by long-term collaborator bp Nichol, who had hoped to counteract what he saw as a dearth of critical engagement with McCaffery by bringing the responses of (mostly) his peers, including the three other Four Horsemen and Fred Wah, among others. In *Open Letter*'s more recent special issue (Fall 2011, 14.7), editor Stephen Cain observes that "[s]ince then, McCaffery's critical cachet has grown," owing partly to the work of well known American critics including Charles Bernstein, whose "The Artifice of Absorption" (1987) responds to *Panopticon*, and Marjorie Perloff, whose *Radical Artifice* (1994), *Poetry On and Off the Page* (1998), and *Differentials* (2004) each reflect on McCaffery's experimental breadth and influence on avant-garde poetics ("Introduction" *Open Letter* 14.7, 6).

Peripherally influenced by Jacques Lacan's analysis of the subject's relationship to language, McCaffery consistently pursues the creative fragmentation of the subject through an intensification of both the materiality and arbitrary relations of language. In a 1984 interview with Andrew Payne, McCaffery explains

> The deepest implication in Freud, and the one which Lacan has best elucidated, is the radically textual nature of the psyche. We both inhabit and inhibit an unconscious that is structured as a language. This projected emergence of a post-Freudian "textual" subject seems to be of critical importance. It puts the very notion of a 'subject' in doubt and, at best, poses that subject on the ruined concept of a Self. (*North* 129)

The coherent Self "being no longer tenable as a unitary whole," McCaffery turns to "Kristeva's notion of a subject-in-process within an instinctual and symbolic economy" as a viable substitute, a "subject as plurality" reminiscent of Fredric Jameson's and Deleuze and Guattari's evocations of a schizoid fragmentation (ibid). McCaffery disrupts the normative linguistic subject by interfering in the linguistic function of the pronoun (*Shifters*; *Evoba*); a practice that dissociates language's generative effects from coherent narrative (*Panopticon*; *The Black Debt*) and rends authorial intention from the process of

composition, instead treating source texts as a fund of unconscious latent material (*Ows 'Waif*; *Dr Sadhu's Muffins*). In concert with this linguistic disruption, however, the activation of the reader's productive engagement with the text foregrounds the subject as a social entity.[181]

As I argue in Chapter One, Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic topography is itself a spatial model that represents intersubjectivity as a set of spatial relationships within the symbolic order. Building from this argument, this chapter undertakes a speculative Lacanian analysis of the generative tension between seeing and reading in McCaffery, exploring how this tension highlights both the spatiality of the gaze and the spatial economy of the sign. Responding to the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, Lacan's gaze is crucially outside the subject: perception is *of* the object, not the subject. In this way the gaze is sensate to poetic spatial *form*; this form in turn supports a *content* which is available to reading only to the extent it is closed to the gaze. The gaze infers a general economy, while reading produces a restricted economy. If for Lacan the subject is a barred other ("The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious," *Écrits*) caught in a field of vision (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 93), McCaffery manipulates this field in the dynamism of seeing as it transitions into reading, and vice versa, bringing this disavowed space of circulation alternately to visibility/legibility. Via Lacanian theories of the signifier, the subject and the Real, I explore how McCaffery's work treats space as an experimental meta-register in which meaning materializes, circulates and dissipates as an *objet a* of poetics, and by extension, of politics.

While considering some of his voluminous critical and theoretical responses to the poetics of his contemporaries, I will examine the way McCaffery's own poetry, with special emphasis on concrete, non-linear and visual work, such as *Carnival*, and creative translations including *Every Way Oakly*, uses spatial representation to model a radical shift of perspective on both the subject and meaning itself. As McCaffery's poetics charts a marginal zone between *seeing* and *reading*, this shift reveals the subject

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[181] McCaffery's practice accords with Charles Bernstein's argument that the "social grounding of poetry cannot be evaded by recourse to a purely intellectual idea of the materiality of language since the materiality of language is in the first instance a social materiality and, at the same time, a materiality not of selves and identities but of bodies, including gendered bodies" (*My Way* 9).

as the dynamic product of a spatial economy of signification, while illuminating meaning as a fetish, a form of commodity in a network of consumption.[182]

Given that, as Peter Sloterdijk has it, "there is no intersubjectivity that could not equally well be interobjectivity,"[183] I explore the functions of the letter, the signifier and the gaze within a phenomenological frame informed by Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Lacan in order to explicate how McCaffery's spatial poetics produces consciousness of material interactions in (and also beyond) language. In explicating his work within a theoretical context, I take McCaffery's spatial visual poetry not as an object of theory "which pacifies the chosen object field and guarantees the impossibility of it modifying the theoretical domain," but as an obstacle to theory, a cipheral challenge which necessitates just such a modification or refinement of theory ("Parapoetics of the Architectural Leap," 91). The modification I propose is a perspectival shift on the subject and its gaze within a schema I configure, drawing on Lacan and Žižek, as interobjectivity, wherein the spatial interposition of a subject within a field of objects emphasizes the objecthood of the subject. This coordination of a spatial field illuminates language as the medium of the unconscious as it choreographs an over-proximity of the material signifier, producing a challenging system of signification marked by resistance to semiotic resolution.

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[182] In McCaffery's later critical frames (which fall outside the purview of the current chapter,) principally in the essays collected in *Prior to Meaning*, he incorporates a conceptual model of the clinamen, or "atomic swerve," which "derives from classical particle physics as outlined by Lucretius and earlier by Democritus and Epicurus" (*Prior* xvii). In the essay "Zarathustran Pataphysics," McCaffery deploys the clinamen as a strategy for its elucidation, further spatializing its action on the field of the page: "The right-hand, or 'correct,' column contains the normative version of the text; the left, or 'erroneous,' column performs the 'correct' column's content. Specifically, it enacts, as well as speaks about, the inclination of the clinamen when the latter manifests within writing as a typographic error" (*Prior* 15).

    The Lucretian swerve is a spatial model on the atomic or even quantum scale: a poetics that (provisionally) reaches Heisenbergian uncertainty in the quasi-scientific terms of Alfred Jarry's 'pataphysics, via the Einsteinian relativity manifest in the infinite regress of signification coupled with a radically decentered subject.

    Although technically not a form of agency, the swerve is related to the Olsonian/Poundian *periplum*, in that Marx saw it as a spatial emblem of free will (*Prior* xviii). The closer homology, though, is with the *dérive*. "Clinamen," descending from the Latin *clinare*, to bend or incline, forms the basic model of the attractions and repulsions of situationist psychogeography.

[183] (Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason*, D 15)

Diminished Reference:
Or, the Decline of Symbolic Efficiency

Perhaps most germane to the explication of his poetry is the wealth of McCaffery's own highly theorized criticism. Opening a related but alternative tack to Ron Silliman and Charles Bernstein's respective theorizations of the commodification and absorption of language, McCaffery configures Language poetry within a bifurcation of the productive utility of a restricted economy governing transparent communication, and the elusive sovereign object suspended in a general economy. McCaffery's economic modeling of referential and sovereign language would pursue a Bataillian model distinct from the formally Marxian approach of Silliman and Bernstein. He also differentiates his argument from the *productivity* of Hejinian's open text. As Romana Huk reflects, Hejinian's open text "is not the object of recovery or rescue. Rather the text is a *force* that initiates the process of the production of a *productive reader*," one "who is able to read ideology" (*Assembling Alternatives* 53). But this very emphasis on production is what McCaffery will push against in his iteration of the theoretical basis of Language-centered poetics. McCaffery critiques the facile "shift from sign consumption to sign production" (*North* 14) which maintains the model of a restrictive economy. In place of this constrained, productive paradigm, McCaffery proposes a general economy in which "the text returns a use-value by offering itself as unexchangable, outside the logic of the commodity, thereby opening ambivalently to both semantic loss and productional recovery" (*North* 20).

McCaffery's own formal experiments are based in a robust engagement with linguistic theory, a model he sees as characteristic of Language poetry more generally:

> In Language Writing it is the sign rather than the word that is the critical unit of inscription. This shift of writing *from a verbal to a semiological context* was certainly anticipated as early as the *Course* of Saussure where he describes the linguistic sign as a binary, oppositive relation that involves two functional elements: a discharging signifier and a discharged signified. ("Language Writing: From Productive to Libidinal Economy" *North* 145)

The shift "from a verbal to a semiological context" pinpoints the break with Charles Olson's breath-poetics, as the model of speech as expressive of a unique ego is obsolesced. In a similar way, McCaffery breaks with what Mark Wallace calls "the New

American poetry speech-based poetics, often associated with spoken-word, ethnopoetics or New York School Writing" (*Telling it Slant* 193). Language poetry experiments in forms of auto-referentiality that foreground the referential system's attempted elision of its function, breaking down with this move the system's conventionally seamless operation.[184] This breakdown of the *message* itself is an irruption through which Roman Jakobson's "metalinguistic" function appears,[185] a perspective which for many Language poets emphasizes the materiality of language.

The shift to a semiological context invites a spatial reading of McCaffery's work: crucially, for McCaffery conventional meaning is conceptualized as arrayed in a quasi-rational (but unexamined) space. In fact, he argues, meaning is derived from a movement in space. The primacy of space in McCaffery's own poetry and poetics is indicated by the spatial engagement of his critical responses to Language poetry, a movement within which he holds an influential position as poet-critic. McCaffery's influential essay, "Diminished Reference and the Model Reader," (*North* 13ff)[186] focuses on the way Language Writing activates "the morphological and sub-lexemic relations present and obtainable in language," (*North* 13) McCaffery cites Brian di Palma's "CODICIL" as an example of Language poetry's "diminished reference," arguing that "Language Writing resists the unity of the 'imaginable level' and refuses the transference of reading to some sort of simulated object" (*North* 16).

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[184] Through analysis of "the force of language in its passage" in Karen Mac Cormack's work, McCaffery develops a theory of "phrasal propulsion" (*Prior to Meaning* 152) in which "the words neither arrest attention nor inhabit time long enough to insist on comprehension, but rather fill out a space whose positionality or situation is measured as a temporal shift. Kineticized this way, meaning registers plurally as evaporative effects" (*Prior* 154). The way this "temporal shift" is derived from a space of asyndeton or syntactic uncertainty, is very evocative, but falls outside the limits of the current chapter.

[185] See Fredric Jameson, *Prison House of Language*, 159-60; 203*ff.*; and Linda Waugh, "The Poetic Function in the Theory of Roman Jakobson," 58.

[186] "Diminished Reference" evolved from its first appearance in the journal *Open Letter* (3.7, Summer, 1977), where the different emphasis of the essay's original title, "The Death of the Subject: The Implications of Counter-communication in Recent Language-Centered Writing," indicates the connection ultimately posited between the conditions of linguistic communication (or its failure) and the condition of the subject.

Noting that "Paul Ricoeur describes reference as 'the movement in which language transcends itself,'" (*North* 16)[187] McCaffery argues that di Palma's poem rejects the strictures of conventional reading which "would demand a referential *transit* in the poem ... to a point beyond the words themselves..." (16 emphasis added). This "point beyond" metaphorizes meaning as a state space within which lexemes can transcend themselves in "referential transit", pointing to meaning *over there*, at an illusory juncture where signs are exchanged for meaning. The spatiality of signification reaches its apotheosis as reference itself structures an interior/exterior dichotomy: "what emerges through reference is the fabrication of an exterior that structures material language as the relationship of an 'inside' to an 'outside'" (*North* 17). This deictic reference presumes an outside of any specific language object where exchange occurs, and in pointing to a larger chain from which it is sampled, also presumes an inside, a core valence the "words themselves" carry non-arbitrarily. Language poetry, with di Palma's work functioning as a representative example, transgresses this "logic of the referent" which McCaffery figures as explicitly spatial (17):

> As we read, see or scan the poem, we come to feel syntax as the movement of a textual surface without a pre-determined destination. Replacing referential development is a lateral complexity through which planes of relation and difference become moebius and profundity a surface fold. It is essentially the opaque condition of writing" (*North* 19).

With the replacement of "referential development," one symbolic space is negated by another: against the Cartesian rationality of a meaningful coordinate space, the moebius form instantiates continuity through infinite gradations. The surface of textual materiality becomes the locus of what Silliman calls the "philosophy of practice in language," (*Language Book* 131) disclosing fundamental contradictions and complexities in the system of language which also serves as the medium and model of the unconscious.

"Treated as a producible field the poem offers a polysemous itinerary," McCaffery explains, one that resists the "logic of transit" so that "the *event* of reading becomes a primary issue," focussing on "the incidentality of the signifier rather than the

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[187] This movement is further developed in the later essay "Temporality and the New Sentence: Phrase Propulsion in the Writing of Karen Mac Cormack" (*Prior to Meaning* 149-160).

transcendality of the referent" (19). This "superfluity of the signifier" is a quality McCaffery calls "cipher" in a generatively problematic metaphor[188] which nonetheless illuminates the readerly processual model generated in his own poetry (19).

> The cipheral text involves the replacement of a traditionally 'readerly' function (the pursuit of words along certain referential vectors to a corresponding world outside the text) by a first order experience of graphemes, their material tension and relationships and their *sign potentiality* as substance, hypo-verbal units simultaneously pushing towards, yet resisting, contextual significations. The cipher thus offers a strategic method for motivating non-commodital productivities that cast both writer and reader into an identical work process. The referent no longer looms as a promissary [*sic*] value and the text is proposed as the communal space of a human engagement (*North* 19-20).

This "communal space," produced as it were on the textual surface, in the "first order experience of graphemes" rather than in "referential vectors" that diverge toward a "world outside," breaks down the hermeneutic hierarchy of writer over reader, instead producing meaning in an asymptotic "material tension" that is unrecuperable by a system that commodifies meaning. In di Palma's poem, language "is *not* directed beyond itself," McCaffery writes. "Lacking an aggregative *destination* the words tend to free-float within an under-determined code" (*North* 18; emphasis added). This free-floating quality, a product of diminished reference derived from an emphasis on the semiotic qualities of language, parallels the anti-gravity of decentered subjectivity in postmodernism. As McCaffery argues, language writing decoupled "language from the historical purpose of summarizing global meaning replacing the goal of utility with the free polydynamic drive of parts" ("Language Writing," *North* 153). Language, once freed from a model of

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[188] "Cipher," a trope that logically requires deciphering, implies a substantive message that was intentionally encoded and can be decoded with fidelity to the original; ideas at direct odds with McCaffery's formalization of "diminished reference" as well as the lateral action of his homolinguistic translations. *Cipher* implies a hermeneutic economy of meaning in which a telocentric resolution is borrowed against a future metamorphosis in the total language environment. What is the cipher concealing?—the (activity of the) signifying chain. From whom is this activity concealed through encipherment?—The big Other. But since in properly Lacanian terms it is precisely the signifier that stands in for the big Other, such a concealment appears as a potential logical flaw. This could be one reason McCaffery would later explain "[t]he terms 'cipher' and 'ciphericity' were provisional terms I have subsequently discarded" ("Diminished Reference" 13). "Diminished reference" incidentally forms a premonition of what Žižek would later call the decline of "symbolic efficiency" (on which see his *The Ticklish Subject* 326ff.). See also Eric L. Santner's *My Own Private Germany: Daniel Paul Schreber's Secret History of Modernity*, and Jodi Dean's *Žižek's Politics*.

rational, self-present speech, is decentered with respect to transparently communicating subjects; but more profoundly, this non-utilitarian language also decenters subjectivity, forming a material unconscious, an Other (of the) text that traces Silliman's continuum of "world" to "word." As it denies the telocentrism of a hermeneutic "destination," this other text contributes to an energetically vertiginous poetics of disorientation.

General Economy as Meta-position: Seeing Reading

As he develops an innovative practice through and beyond post-structuralist theory,[189] McCaffery's poetics also responds to a Marxian engagement with issues of authority and economy which characterizes many examples of Language writing (Lazer 40). He explains that "Marx's notion of commodity fetishism, which is to say the occultation of the human relations embedded in the labour process, has been central to" his considerations of "a referentially based language, in general" ("Repossessing the Word," *American Tree* 604). But again, just as Marx's theory of value implies a transit of value from labour to commodity, this referential basis relies on a transcendental *beyond* of the language; a metaphorical ground which solidifies value. McCaffery's later configuration of "writing as a general economy," (*North* 201) based on Bataille's model of unrecuperable consumption, facilitates analysis of signification within the terms of circulation, transaction, and deficit, but does not constitute a system of productive (fetishistic) investment and exchange (*North* 156). This general economy, in Bataille's words, "makes apparent that excesses of energy are produced, and that by definition, these excesses cannot be utilized," and thus are "lost without the slightest aim, consequently without meaning" (qtd in *North* 156). Opposing a Marxian model of restricted economy which serves a coherent exchange value, the general economy

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[189] Perloff attests that "McCaffery himself points to the Russian Formalists, to Wittgenstein, Barthes, Lacan, and Derrida as the sources for his theory, and indeed Language poetics, in this first stage, owes its greatest debt to French post-structuralism, although Charles Bernstein, for one, was much closer to Wittgenstein, whose work he had studied with Stanley Cavell at Harvard, than to Derrida, whose analysis of signification he distrusted, even as Silliman and Andrews were drawn to a more politicized Frankfurt School poetics" (*Differentials* 158).

hosts a sovereign exception which disrupts the translation of meaning in space from one individual to another:

> Sovereign communication, like Language Writing, rejects the model of communication as a transmission-reception by two individual, reflective consciousnesses. ... Language Writing should be encountered at the bifurcation of these two orders of value: productive utility on the one hand, and sovereignty on the other. (*North* 156-157)

Bataille explains that sovereignty is this "object which eludes us all, which nobody has seized and which nobody can seize for this reason: we cannot possess it, like an object, but we are doomed to seek it. A certain utility always alienates the proposed sovereignty" (qtd in *North* 156).[190] McCaffery sees this as "a gesture beyond use value" as well as exchange value; like the *beyond* of meaning, this is an outside that demarcates the dimensions of the restricted economy.

> The importance of a language centered writing—all writing of diminished referentiality—is the writing and reading *per se*, as productional values (the writing as a production of production; the reading a production of the text). Both writing and reading of these texts are aspects of a language production. (*Language Book* 160)

In the fetishistic referential mechanism which produces meaning as a surplus value, the reading subject is not only constrained, but consumed: "The consumption of text occurs historically at that point where the reader herself is consumed and dehumanized by the text. ("From the Notebooks," *The Language Book* 162). The fetish of reference completely elides the reader's writerly or disalienated function, and instead "[s]igns are consumed when readers are alienated from signification" (162). In the sovereign breakdown of utilitarian sign exchanges, however, the sign itself (the unit of signifier/signified) is no longer elevated for consumption, giving way to the materiality of the signifier. In this way "language centered writing dispossesses us of language in order that we may repossess it again" (162).

By foregrounding the insistence of the signifier's materiality, Language poetry disrupts the semantic transcendence presumed in the act of conventional reading (a

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[190] It should be noted that this elusive sovereign object prefigures the Lacanian Real, to be discussed further below.

restricted economy serving the exchange of signs for meaning). McCaffery derives this materiality from a general economy that I argue is fundamentally spatial:

> As a macrosyntactic unit all literature is seen as one huge, spherical sentence, continuously expanding, whose grammar and arrangement is continuously permutated and modified. Literature forms, at the same time, an absolute, non-narrative environment within which both narrative readings and writings are possible. (*Rational Geomancy* 155)

McCaffery moves from "writing as meta-sign to writing as writing" (*North* 146) by adopting a distanciation from the "centripetal, self-annihilating push of language chained by reference to reality," a position which furnishes an overarching view of the restricted economy, including its putative outside. But language is that which we can't think outside of, and yet we freely think *of its outside*: a concept we require in order to delineate a complex, interrelated interior, which is also to say an economy. This interiorization and its relation to an economic model is a concept McCaffery makes recourse to frequently: "[t]he fight for language is also a fight inside language" (*Language Book* 159).

In the reader's productive engagement with the expanded space of the poem, it becomes clear that McCaffery's economic formulations crucially undergird and proceed from his earlier dialectic of seeing and reading:

> In contestation are both general and restricted economies: a regulating, conservational disposition that limits and organizes the independent letters, pushing them towards the word as a component in the articulated production and accumulation of meaning, and the other disposition which drives the letters into non-semantic material ensembles that yield no profit. (*North* 215)

In these opposed economic terms, the "word as a component in the articulated production and accumulation of meaning" is the currency of a restricted economy of reading, while the counterposed mode of *seeing* activates a general economy which "drives the letters into non-semantic material ensembles that yield no profit."

By exposing the fetishization of the sign through a Marxian restricted framework of exchange value, and then shifting to a general economy which preserves the materiality of textual immanence, McCaffery "detaches the reader from language as a communicative subject," thus freeing her to operate instead as "an agent of production" (*North* 152), even if, for McCaffery, that production is not the production of meaning

(which he criticizes the Language poets for relying upon), but the production of an unusable, unrecuperable language event.

Concrete: Reading Seeing

Some of McCaffery's earliest work explored a non-semantic practice that eschewed words entirely. *Transitions to the Beast* (composed 1969-70, published 1970) is a series of manual drawings that utterly resist the orbit of semiosis and force a reconsideration of how abstract shapes in space might signify. *Transitions* is a reaction to the "semiotic poem" developed by Brazilian concrete poet Decio Pigniatari, a form that assigned geometrical shapes a verbal signified of which they became the signifier. McCaffery recalls that "What excited me instantly about the semiotic poem was the potential for non-verbal progressions allowing a type of reading to develop that was much closer to the classic category of 'seeing'" rather than reading (*Open Letter* 6:9 (Fall) 1987; rpt in *Seven Pages* Vol. I 435). Through the troubling of the relationship of seeing and reading, which McCaffery pursues throughout his oeuvre, *Transitions* experiments with a perspectival syntax which generates an illusion of depth which also inverts and extrudes from the page,[191] thus escaping the bounds of conventional legibility. Structured on a "partial adoption of the sign," which is to say an abandonment of the signified, according to McCaffery, the work assaults categorical boundaries by positing an "intra-psychological placement between the two (separate) regions of seeing and reading (instigating such further questions as how does one see a reading and would that be any different from reading your seeing)" (*Seven Pages* Vol. I, 436).

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[191] The dynamic geometric objects, often iterating and mutating the component parts of the letter E and its graphical relationship to M and K, explore an originary set of forms arrayed in a spatial syntax. As McCaffery explains, the intended effect was revolutionary: "involved in the post-semiotic idea (and conscious to my mind at the time) was a contribution to the destruction of writing itself." (*Seven Pages* Vol. I, 436). In this way *Transitions* may appear distinct from later creative translations, but many connections, centered in experimental concepts about seeing, are evocative of a close relationship.
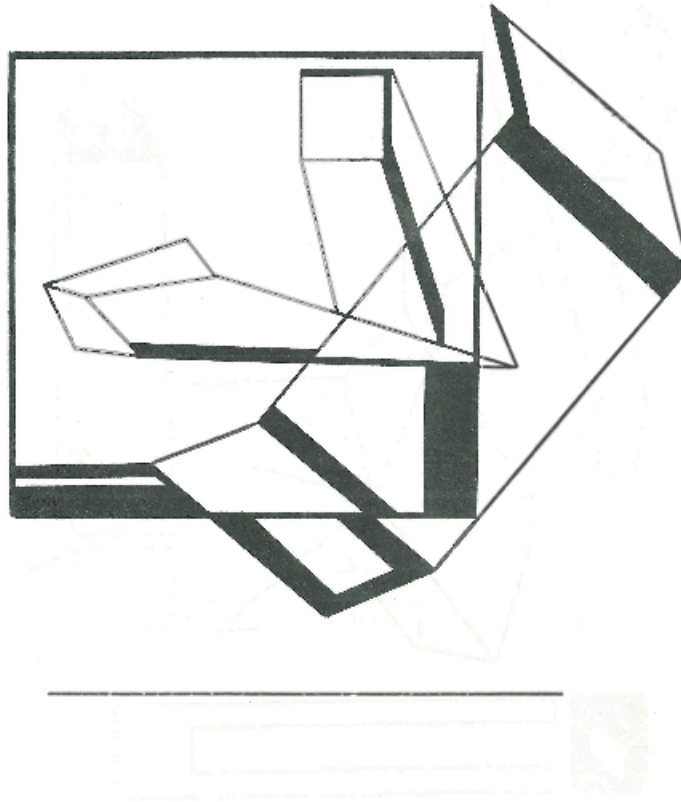
Figure 8.   *Transitions to the Beast* n.p.; *Gronk* series 6, no.s 2&3, August 1970

Clearly these "regions" imply signifying spaces, the putative separation of which is immediately challenged by the possibility of *seeing reading* and vice versa.[192]

McCaffery further explains the seeing/reading dynamic as a byproduct of his frequent interposition of two distinct systems, the pictorial and the syntactic:

[192] A recent exhibition co-curated by Scott Watson and Michael Turner at the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery in Vancouver, "LETTERS: MICHAEL MORRIS AND CONCRETE POETRY" (January 13 - April 8, 2012), displayed McCaffery's *Carnival* (discussed below) in conjunction with works of concrete poetry (by Henri Chopin, Gerhard Rühm) and visual art (Michael Morris's "Letter" paintings were the titular focus), a juxtaposition that is faithful to McCaffery's avowed influences from the period of this work's production. By contrast, however, McCaffery's recent performances of *Carnival: Panel Three* (which is a superimposition of *Panel*s *One* and *Two*) bring the work back to the context of sound-poetry, as he reads the work, page-by-page and replete with nonsense vocalizations, accompanied by a recording of his own voice also reading from the work (see recordings of his March 19, 2012 performance at MIT, for example).

The presence of two different, but not competing, writing systems inaugurate a dialogue that complicates the spatio-temporal dimension in reading. Visual elements demand a readerly complexity through the need to cross over from reading into 'seeing' and from integrative comprehension into meditation. These visual elements seem also to shatter the social neutrality of type" ("Performed Paragrammatism," *Seven Pages* Vol. II, 361).

The "need to cross over from reading into 'seeing'" implies these activities are figured as "non-overlapping magisteria," to repurpose Stephen Jay Gould's phrase about the relationship of science and religion. In a slight variation on the "intra-psychological placement" pursued by *Transitions*, McCaffery conceives a boundary-crossing here. The shattered "neutrality of type" is a function of the ideological transparency of language, conceived as a window onto coherent, objective content, an ideology McCaffery opposes with his radical emphasis on the opacity, which is also to say the materiality, of language.

In his *Broken Mandala* (1974) composed in the same period as *Transitions*, McCaffery similarly focuses on a visual crux, this time reincorporating partial verbal signifiers and further fragmenting the sign. Using office stamps as brushes in radial patterns interrupted by the same masking technique used in *Carnival*, *Mandala* foregrounds visual composition over legible semantic content, deploying language "almost as paint, as pure graphic substance" (*Open Letter* 6.9 Fall (1987); reprinted in *Seven Pages* Vol. I, 440). Once again McCaffery refers to "the desire to confound the psycho-social boundaries that would divide a 'reading' from a 'seeing,'" noting "[t]his marginality has been a constant concern in all my visual texts" (439). Commenting on *Mandala*, McCaffery notes, "The politics did not inhere in the content but in the disposition of the language as a pure, graphic materiality, which I saw as a defetishizing [strategy]" (440). But *Mandala* is representational rather than critical, McCaffery wrote in hindsight, observing that "the work still supports a fetishized perception and does not eliminate the 'gaze' as an optical transaction across a distance between an unproblematic text and an unproblematic self" (440).

But if a parallax gap inheres between seeing and reading, this gap is paradoxical: a reader *sees*, in a facile sense, the marks on the page, and may variously will her eye-track across the page, or among the pages of a book or the field of a panel, or this may be unconscious. The acts of reading and seeing might be willed and productive, or

unconscious and passive, or some combination of these. While to read conventionally is often to see something beyond the words, a *Vorstellung* (in Hegel's terminology) or representation derived from the closure of semiotic communication,[193] seeing and reading seem at first to produce two unsharable perspectives on the same object: be it a symbol or a signifier.[194] But I want to argue that McCaffery succeeds in both alternating between and conflating these perspectives, these modes of perception of the textual object. Charles Bernstein could be describing McCaffery's hybridizing of seeing and reading as he refers to poems in which

> the articulation of contemplation is an example of how (*a technique*) words can be brought into one's more total awareness in reading, where in reading you are brought up short to the point of the text becoming viscerally present to you, the 'content' and the 'experience of reading' are collapsed onto each other, the content being the experience of reading, the consciousness of the language and its movement and sound, the page. (*Content's Dream* 68-69)

The relationship between seeing and reading in McCaffery's poetry puts in tension the passive conventional reading presumed by Bernstein's "official verse culture" and the self-conscious grappling with unrecuperable material forms in challenging avant-garde spatial poetics.

Textual Fields, Dimensions Variable

In their experimental representations of historical spaces and their interventions in the spatial dimension of histories, both Charles Olson and Susan Howe develop and deploy a projective field, utilizing an expanded page space as the field of syntactic

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[193] For Jameson's distinction of "picture-thinking" (representation) versus *Verstand* (reason), see *The Hegel Variations* 124*ff*.

[194] Responding to Hannah Arendt's passage in *The Life of the Mind* entitled "Thinking" in which she argues that "the main characteristic of mental activities is their *invisibility*," Lisa Robertson agrees that "thinking's community is unquantifiable" (*Nilling* 23). Transitioning from thinking to reading with the assertion that "for me, the two activities are completely implicated, folded into one another," Robertson continues: "Also, reading's topos, its place of agency, is invisible, and necessarily so. *Reading resists being seen*. This is not to say that it has no effects on public life, but that those effects cannot be predetermined, cannot be conveniently mapped and often do not follow causal, or intentional, patterns" (*Nilling* 23; emphasis added).

arrays. Olson and Howe each also explore a referential space, in multiple senses. For Olson, the gap between historical cartography and the literal space of Gloucester's seaside city, ultimately discloses a spatial Real, a vertiginous space allegorized by Pytheus' sludge, and inferred through the representation of representation; a space that, while inspiring a poetic of cognitive mapping, refuses to be rendered in the symbolic. Howe's referential space includes a conceptual wilderness of violent first contact and colonization, and also an archival space of textual citation figured as wandering. In Olson's original projective stance, the typewriter provides a "stave and bar" for registering the respiration of the embodied poet, but in his later poetics of *Maximus* this space logic is extended to encompass and represent the physical spaces of Gloucester within the wider nation that forms the poet's immediate ambience, and further enlarged to infer the global space produced by capital. In extending but also departing from Olson's spatial model, Howe uses non-linear space and an alternating poetics of disjunction and conjunction to establish a palimtextual variation on the projective that engages the unconscious effects of spatialized signifiers. While often (but not always) functioning as symbols and signs, Howe's letters, graphemes, phonemes, and words also insist on their identity as objects in paratactic space.[195]

While Olson's maps are representations (of representations) of space, and in Howe zones of exclusion structure both the physical archive and canonical history, *Carnival: First Panel* (1967-70) is a spatial field that exploits machine-typed text in a very

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[195] The political tenor of Olson's poetics suggests a subject in post-national space, while Howe performs a challenge to settled history and archival exclusion. Although I configure Howe's "page space as terrain" in the previous chapter, McCaffery's practice in *Carnival* would seem the apogee of this concept, especially in its deployment of scale in both its large dimension and its great and small details of content.

different way from Olson, while nonetheless forming a challenging response[196] to the sonic-spatial energies of projective verse. McCaffery's *Carnival* produces the definitive Baudrillardian map which precedes the absent territory. As *Carnival* negates untroubled access to a referential space of meaning, a mass of (typo)graphical or graphemic space takes (its) place, immediately *there* on the page. This accomplishes a shift from the depth model of "fenestrational necessity, a mandate to linguistic transparency through which all beings and events [are] forced to pass," (*North* 39) to a reassertion of the productive surface, a meditation on the flaws in the glass of the putative semiotic window.

In relation to McCaffery's theorization and critique of reference, *Carnival* is a paragon of "textual space as a lettered surface resisting idealist transformation," (*North* 17). The arrays on the panel reveal both the immanent and transcendent character of McCaffery's language: the immanent mode presents language as *seen*, as visual form, while the transcendent function is activated in legible phrases where the text emphasizes content while simultaneously overshadowing form.

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[196] The graphical aspects of McCaffery's work are in productive tension with the hangover from Charles Olson's projective verse, the breath-poetics that McCaffery felt was only half-theorized since its "celebration of pneumatic plenitude" ignored "breath's *other* law," "a negative economy of waste and involuntary expenditure" (*Prior to Meaning* 49). This recto-verso form of the relationship of breath to un/controlled respiration (themselves analogous to in/exhalation) contextualizes McCaffery's theorizations of a textual struggle between formal "civilization" and "babble", and leads him to eventually associate Olson's breath-poetics with a specific space—that of the Mayan sites of the Yucatan (*Prior to Meaning* 49). More recently, McCaffery would reflect: "I've always retained from my reading of Charles Olson's "Projective Verse" one important precept: the structural importance of kinetics to the revelation and disappearance of meaning (his notions of "breath" and "energy" do not factor in my work but importance of kinetics does)" (*Verse and Worse* 68).

Figure 9.   From Carnival: The Second Panel

In this oscillation between and blending of seeing and reading, the materiality of the signifier, the thingness of text and language, translates the implicated subject of the reader toward her own objecthood. Rather than denigrate the subject, the putative hierarchy of text over reader is thus sublated and replaced with an environment of mutual production. This logically precedes McCaffery's crucial distinction that the pronoun "I" acts as "a geographical marker and not an identity; a 'here' rather than a

'self'" (*North*, 120). As I will later argue in connection with Lacanian analysis, the subject thus objectified eventually sees itself (seeing itself), as a thing in the field of the other; as a "here" relative to a "there".

Carnival As Spatial Epic

As Marjorie Perloff writes, "*Carnival* represents the first stage of McCafferian language experimentation, the stage when the 'death of the referent' as well as the fabled 'death of the subject' were taken to be de rigueur" (*Poetry On and Off the Page*, 269). *Carnival: The First Panel* and *The Second Panel* are scale-fluid, simultaneous total objects that resist perceptual totalization, or comprehension. Subtitled "Sixteen square feet of concrete," *Carnival: The First Panel* is a hybrid object that exploits field poetics as well as concrete typographical experimentation. Initiated one year prior to the publication of Mary Ellen Solt's anthology *Concrete Poetry: A World View* (1968), it is made with a typewriter, but as Joanna Drucker notes, "to call it a typewriter work would be to suggest that its identity should be constrained to its mode of production, which is far from true" (*The Century of Artists' Books* 239). *Carnival*'s roots, McCaffery claimed, "go beyond concretism ... to labyrinth and mandala," (Introduction). This evocative comparison to meditative structures designed to be walked in begins to indicate the intensive spatiality inherent to the work. The work announces itself as a transforming space as it opens with the following "INSTRUCTIONS":

> In order to destroy this book
> please tear each page carefully
> along the perforation.   (n.p.)

The careful destruction of what begins as a book creates a large spatial field which escapes easy categorization. What McCaffery terms the "panel" is initially secreted in book form, fragmented into pages. The overall work is made up of pages compatible with the mechanical constraints of the typewriter, while also overflowing these limitations

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in the panel assembled in an eight by eight grid.[197] Creatively destroyed, the components of the book object are disassembled and transformed into a single total surface. This initial transformation is itself a formal suggestion of a fractal and fragmentary relationship between the work's parts and the whole they assemble.[198]

Liberated from their portable commodity form, the pages become a space completely differential to the book: once constructed, *Carnival* resembles an abstracted cartographic canvas. This total effect involves an aesthetic scale fluidity in which distance from the piece reveals abstract forms which replace the recognizable semantic elements within the generalized typographic texture. The fully assembled panels are rarely displayed, meaning the direct experience of the material object is hardly accessible; but on the Coach House website, *Carnival* has reached its apotheosis in digital form: it appears as a scaled map, each page zone linked to the individual pieces. The resulting ability to zoom in or out allows one to see both the overall scale of the whole canvas and the details of each component panel; while distance engenders cosmos, proximity reveals contingency.

McCaffery explains that "*Carnival* was essentially a cartographic project; a repudiation of linearity in writing and the search for an alternative syntax in 'mapping'" (Nichol, "Annotated" 72). Christian Bök and Derren Wershler extend this cartographic reading as they find in *Carnival* "a map that refrains from mapping a terrain beyond the refrains of its map" ("Walls that are Cracked" 26). Typographical space and topographical[199] space often exchange their original positions: rather than terrain

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[197] Drucker explains that "McCaffery is attentive to the boundaries of the page, even as he overrides its limits in forging connections from panel to panel. But each individual sheet manages to hold its own as a visual work, each is remarkably different from the others, and each has a remarkable range of richness in its variation of visual, as well as poetic, tone" (*Century*, 240-241).

[198] I use *fractal* here not in a strict mathematical or geometrical sense, of course, but as a shorthand for the characteristics of self-similarity (in which effects of parts are related to the effects of the whole) and the transformational effect of changes in scale. While *Carnival* might be thought of as "formless," in the same way Euclid excluded clouds and other natural forms from geometrical representation, a fractal reading brings Benoit Mandelbrot's investigation of "the morphology of the 'amorphous'" to bear on McCaffery's complex form (qtd in Perloff, *Poetry On And Off the Page* 319).

[199] *Topography* refers to both the arrangement of the natural and artificial physical features of an area (*the topography of the island*), and, with emphasis on *-graphy*, a detailed description or representation on a map of such features.

informing the map, the symbolic simplification/distortion of the map has infected the terrain. Our aesthetic expectations become solidified as laws of space; but the left-to-right logic of sententious meaning is challenged by McCaffery's implicit position that a poem needn't have any more spatial logic than a painted canvas, although in its hybridizing of reading and seeing it might have more. Not only do the overdetermined textures give an impression of similarly overdetermined terrain, the product of geological forces over vast timescales, but textual details also present cartographic functions; for example, a semantic refuge is offered as the words "rest here" appear at the end of a series of dots.

Like the labyrinth and mandala in which it is rooted, *Carnival* is an object of spatial contemplation the materiality of which is near-obtrusive: a network of signs, certainly, but also a continuum of loci, fields and circuits at once. Also like the labyrinth and mandala, the panel is an object to be moved through, suggesting motion as a signifying process in a space of signs.

McCaffery refers to *Carnival* as a "language environment... designed ultimately to put the reader, as perceptual participant, within the center of his language" (Introduction, *Carnival, The Second Panel*, n.p.).[200] *Tours* of this spatial symbolic register have the effect of spatializing cognition as the eye traverses the panel.[201] If *Carnival* is, as McCaffery reflected, "closer to cartography, to a diagram or topological surface than a poem or 'text,'" what is the referent space of this map or diagram (*Seven Pages Missing*

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[200] McCaffery's terminology can be sufficiently technical as to raise dialectical contradictions; here, the phrase "language environment" begs the question whether there is any other kind of environment. All environments, inasmuch as they are perceived or described, are inside language.

[201] As in Rachel Tzvia Back's readings of Susan Howe, the eye tends to make linear itineraries/paths through the nonlinear canvas (*Led By Language*).

Vol. I, 446)? If *Carnival*'s map is a spatial epic, its implied terrain[202] mounts a challenge to the assumption that language is a system of recoverable, coherent meaning.

Having been "executed entirely on the typewriter," the first panel foregrounds its own materiality in the textural, two-colour textual fields which stretch the capabilities of the machine and transform its output from alphabetic-semantic to spatio-visual. Resembling the direct output of a teletype's id, *Carnival* uses the spatially precise grids of repeated letter forms in conjunction with masks to generate abstract typographic patterns at variant angles, often overprinted and interrupted to the point of illegibility.[203] Elaborating a literal and extreme form of *parataxis*, or *beside placement*, *Carnival* reinforces the word's etymological basis in the Greek *tassein*— "to arrange." The work's spatial logic eschews paragraphic or sententious structure, instead drawing on an associative proxemics[204] of graphemic objects which chart relative space, resulting in the interaction of *things* on the page with forms of semantic or conceptual ideation. Repeated keystrokes —"mmmmmmmmmmmmmm"— function like an auditory/graphical background hum; elsewhere on the panel the din is inverted—"wwwwwwwwwwwww"— to similar effect as McCaffery utilizes subtle distinctions of letter forms to generate uncertainty as to which way is up. In a phrase, *Carnival* is a *table of contexts*. This is not to say that it is without content, but that its mode of presentation functions by spatially interrelating accreting elements. Deploying the inevitable scale-shift as a viewer nears the panel to read or backs away to see, these graphemic forms, recognizable up close,

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[202] An apparent newspaper quotation similarly extends the poem into the materiality of terrain: "Edmonton: the wreckage of missing light plane reported men aboard was found yesterday in the northwest territories about 200 miles northeast of yellowknife. // here as in the garden I am careful to recreate the exact dimensions of the farmhouse. a land bridge the put in speech plus the pressure of such verticalities as tea..."(First Panel). This 'wreckage of (a) missing light plane' is both a putative object the reader/viewer might search for using the map-like assemblage before us, *and the assemblage itself*, the *light plane*, the reflective (or illuminative, now, in the case of a computer screen) panel confronting the eye, partially wrecked, partially missing, and found in a massive territory.

[203] McCaffery explains the dissociation from the authorial subject effected by his textual negations: "It's important to remember that the mask excludes and deletes much of the written text. What results are deliberately induced fragments, parts of inscription whose terminations and commencements are not determined by a writing subject or a logical intention but by a material, random intervention" (qtd in Perloff, *Poetry On and Off the Page* 268).

[204] This proxemics is a spatial-semantic version of the geomantic metaphor discussed below by which supernatural significance is ascribed to spatial interrelations. Here a non-metaphysical poetics of space draws linguistic and visual elements into productive formations.

become a textural territorialization, a grain, both detailed and abstract, elaborating the connection of typographic place and the subjective space anchored by the Other of the symbolic field.

As the conventional form of legibility is denatured, the failure of one code gives rise to the production of a new hybrid, challenging preconceptions as to how to read it. But then, the legible textual content itself does suggest rules, as the work self-relates by instructing the reader in how to process it: "don't cross the page don't cross the page," it suggests, "read down the page please across don't cross...." It is a paradoxical message, since in order to read this horizontal line, one is breaking the injunction to "read down the page." As attention is drawn alternately to the functions of seeing versus reading, content and context trade places. The wide field of signifiers repeatedly refers to its own centre, "the pulse of purity": "centres meet centres meet centres meet centres meet" / "ALL LINES LEAD TO THE CENTRE FOR EVERYTHING / INHABITS THE CENTRE". In phenomenological terms, everything perceived is registered at the central point of the embodied subject in space; here the centre of the panel is equally implied. From a Lacanian perspective, "centres meet" in the subject's encounter with the gaze of the other. When the viewer/reader's eye seeks the panel's centre it finds an acoustical "I":

HEAR
I AM
    HEAR

As each of these coherent messages highlight the formal context, reflexively referring to the centre of the work in which they are situated, they establish a distance from the first panel's edenic narrative. The semantic message, which must be *read* to be received, directs perception back to the formal shape, the spatial, cartographic context, which, thus *seen*, becomes content. Just as the semantic instructions come into focus, they are overwhelmed by the spatialized mass of ideogrammatic visual relationships. In this way, both Cartesian subjective, and Gutenbergian typographical spaces are disrupted in a disorientation of the relation between spatial context and semantic content.

While the reader's interface with *Carnival*'s formal network, like tracing or walking a pattern through topological terrain, does not produce any determined signified, the

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work does adduce aspects of an intelligible narrative as a fevered Edenic drama is threaded through the space of the panel. But this paradisal Ur text of *Carnival* is disrupted and subsumed by the work's overwhelming graphical surface and is thus transformed into more context than primary content. The narrative elements unexpectedly form a background for the graphical surface.

The tension of word against picture is extended in the ambiguous dichotomy opened between Adam and Eve: "ADAM'S WAY: THE RETURN OF THE WORD / AND THE SYLLABLE TO THE / PICTURE & THE RETURN OF THE / PICTURE TO THE BODY." What does it mean to return the word to the picture? "ADAM'S WAY" pursues a phenomenological series, reclaiming the word and syllable as a symbolic image, a "PICTURE," which in turn calls attention to sight, and to the body. In other words, sign recovers the symbol which re-engages sight. In contradistinction, "EVE'S WAY" involves CREATING THE FALSE WORLD FROM THE WORD"; a sense of the simulacral ("FALSE WORLD") overtakes the determinism of language, its power to create.

Although McCaffery has since repudiated[205] the biblical content that supplies the text's rare coherent phrases, *Carnival*'s ambiguous differentiation of Adam from Eve draws intriguing correlations with Lacan's thesis that in humans there is no sexual relationship, asserting a parallax gap in place of an expected formal symmetry between the sexes. As Slavoj Žižek notes, there is a "subtle passage in late Lacan from"

> "il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel" to "il y a du non-rapport (sexuel)," a shift which precisely fits Kant's distinction between negative judgment (the negation of a predicate) and infinite judgment (the affirmation of a non-predicate). (*Less Than Nothing* 648)

Just as the "reversal of 'there is no relationship' into 'there is a non-relationship,'" functions as "a paradoxical object in which negativity itself acquires positive existence" (Žižek 649), McCaffery's obstructing masks create negative space through their positive presence, embodying the formal figuration of this positivized negative.

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[205] McCaffery called this content "incredibly naive... I built the text around certain biblical allusions. Adam as the power of nomination; Babel as the source of polyglossia and so on. All of this I would now scrap" (Nichol, "Annotated" 72)

Lacan's "there is no sexual relationship," epitomizes the content of the narrative that attempts to distinguish Adam and Eve, an ambiguous pursuit spatialized throughout the canvas of the first panel. Žižek's description of Lacanian symbolic space accurately describes how desire and *objet a* are interrelated in *Carnival*:

> When Lacan is describing the loops and twists of the symbolic space on account of which its interiority overlaps with its exteriority ("ex-timacy"), he does not merely describe the structural place of the objet a (surplus-enjoyment): surplus-enjoyment is nothing but this structure itself, this "inward loop" of the symbolic space. This can be clarified in relation to the gap that separates drive from instinct: while drive and instinct have the same "object," the same goal, what differentiates them is that the drive finds satisfaction not in reaching its goal, but in circulating around it, repeating its failure to reach it. (*Less Than Nothing* 542)

Thus a first approach to *Carnival* may assume the goal is to interpret the embodied narrative that attempts to distinguish Adam and Eve (while in fact multiplying the ambiguities of language and failing to distinguish Adam from Eve or "world" from "word"), only to eventually reveal that the tracing of symbolic space itself produces surplus enjoyment. In Žižek's terms, *Carnival*'s movement is from immanence to transcendence: from an instinct to read and resolve the narrative imbricated throughout the semantic features of the work to a drive to circulate the space of the work, seeing it as a pattern of objects in which the putative goal of semantic mastery is never reached.

Where the first panel foregrounds its production through experimental use of the typewriter, the focus of the second panel extends from strictly mechanical typography toward a range of medial imprinting that amplifies the gestural dimension of the signifier. McCaffery explains that *Carnival: The Second Panel* "places the typed mode in agonistic relation with other forms of scription: xerography, xerography within xerography (i.e. metaxerography and disintegrative seriality), electrostasis, rubber-stamp, tissue texts, hand-lettering and stencil" ("Introduction"). Again, to quote the work is to hazard a simplification of its complexity, but it frequently appears self-conscious about its patterning of sense and sound:

> to fix
> the wouivre of
> speech in a
> specific
> centre
> entered

into
as into
a movement
frozen. (*Second Panel*, n.p.)

The "wouivre" above is a Gaulish word that referred to a telluric energy current believed to move under the earth in serpent-like rivers. In a preview of what McCaffery (writing with bp Nichol) would call geomantic form, *Carnival* posits a system of affective energies somehow allied with an imagined or real geography:

ill
temper
the poem
being
writ in a
place
close to a
sea
or
a
river (*Second Panel*)

And further, in lines arranged in wave-patterns:

coral reefs and later a land bridge
the hyphenated proximity to metaphor splitting through the sea (*Second Panel*)

While further experimenting with the limits of legibility by using textual forms as textural brushes drawn laterally or radially across the page, McCaffery also extends the tension between seeing and reading, both formally, with ink stains that interrupt reading, and in terms of direct, self-reflexive content: "withheld from […] / their […] / so that the reader adds / a seeing experience to his reading / e ee eeeeee" (*Second Panel*). The tension involves the very grammatical foundation of language, examining it until it devolves into noise:

from
grammar
comes
a violence
and a
mustering
of
noise as
oh ess is
a mustering of
spaces   (*Second Panel*)

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Sentences are reconfigured fractally as grammatical units, displaying self-similarity[206] as their fully spatialized paratactic relationships in turn comment on their own sound, the ghostly "mustering / of / noise as ... a mustering of / spaces":

> the bounded
> sound that is
> the word
> declared as
> a
> consonantal
> edge a discriminated entity with the poem a pattern of such demarcations
> (*Carnival: Second Panel*)

This final line is itself patterned around the gap of the radial burst of multiple "CHANGE OF ADDRESS" stamps as what might be called consciousness critique in other contexts is presented here as a re-thinking of the senses via extreme parataxis:

> syntax understood
> now as
> an intrasentential
> linkage
> a wave
> de-contextualized
> & placed (body)
> under observation
> as in
> the dream of that
> geometry the semantics
> the
> perception cognitized
> the hope
> the futility which
> clusters
> lacking (*Carnival: Second Panel*)

Nested structures appear, having remained invisible until they were named: "simply the structure of space becoming no more than a structural accommodation of space." Is the "structure of space" ephemeralized here in the proximity to the "alphabet city" created by spatialized signifiers and phonemes, within which subjects "exist as a part of it"? The subject is looped into a kind of knot (channeling Lacan's Borromean knot) as a product of the "clusters" of "lacking" sense:

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[206] The roughness of *Carnival's* textual shapes is also fractal, absolutely refusing the gridding mechanical constraints often associated with the typewriter.

across the patterns
        of self
        interference
        the macro-pattern
        of the
        subject
        rhymes (*Carnival: Second Panel*)

Ambiguously, McCaffery refers to both a "macro-pattern" of subject-rhymes, of homeomorphic repetitions with difference, and to a related pattern of "self / interference" that constitutes the subject as an iteration of this homology.

As a visual and crypto-semantic object, as a space-field, *Carnival* interrogates the very concept of boundary, examining whether context ends at the limit of the subject's perceptions. But the Real of total language, the fantasy of a fully comprehended semantic system that includes its physical manifestations, is imperceptible qua symbolic field. Since the Real by definition cannot be symbolized, it serves to denote the materiality versus the ideality of language. While the dialectic of seeing and reading implies putative boundaries, this character applies only in the Imaginary: in the Real of spatial terrain, and McCaffery's geomantic spatial form, the apparent binary is dissolved. In terms of terrain, one topographical formation blends and bleeds into the next; it is no different in the case of these typographical formations. In a near-Hegelian process, McCaffery sets up a binary only to move beyond and cancel it. *Carnival's* many topographical and geologic images are ambiguously self-referential: **"**for in ordovician / times the sea / had covered fully / half the present / continent reducing... / to a group of island fragments...". "Island fragments" of sense, of ideation in semantic coherence, are exactly what appear here, especially under the influence of that phrase, as the context decodes the content.

The first iteration of the discipline of geography was obsessively motivated by the imperative to describe landscape and inscribe boundaries: to represent and name the overwhelming environs, or context. *Carnival* represents linguistically and typographically that which exceeds the rectilinear ambient space of the laboratory and the Cartesian grid. Both its indeterminacy, which renders its referent ambiguous (no matter how specific they begin in the production of the panel), and its overdetermination, its surfeit of detailed semantic and visual texture, give it the air of a postmodern cognitive map, a

disorienting metalinguistic assay at charting both the materiality and semantic terrain of language itself.

It is widely agreed that the Hunt-Lenox Globe (ca. 1503-1507) bears the only confirmed example of the phrase "HIC SVNT DRACONES" (*here are dragons*). The myth of this phrase being widely applied to maps is thus itself an example of presumed knowledge in the face of a lack of evidence. Although apparently apocryphal, the cartographic meme persists: it describes the psychological valence of blank spaces on maps, standing in for the threatening nature of *terra incognita*, of that which is unmapped, which is also to say unthought. These voids are bits of Real that are not only unsymbolizable, but inconceivable. Taking a distance from *Carnival* highlights its insistent negative space, what the poem refers to as "the white experience between the words" (Second Panel). The product of shaped stencils or masks which block the application of type, *Carnival*'s voids appear as unmapped sectors of its terrain, imposing negative space on the composition, but can also figure as positive features, embodying a trace or an echo of the beyond of the signifier:

> It's important to remember that the mask excludes and deletes much of the written text. What results are deliberately induced fragments, parts of inscription whose terminations and commencements are not determined by a writing subject or a logical intention but by a material, random intervention. (qtd in Perloff, *Poetry On and Off the Page* 268)

The concept of the parallactic gap is crucial in negotiating both the "white experience between the words" (*Second Panel*) and the impossible dichotomies generated by McCaffery: imperceptible in itself, parallax is the absence of a void, the lack of a lack, which McCaffery later theorizes as unusable excess.

Experimental Translations: Seeing Reading

The radical translations that McCaffery first pursued with Nichol as the Toronto Research Group form an instructive semiotic context of McCaffery's dialectic of seeing/reading which is further developed in *Carnival*, the first panel of which was published the same year (1973) as TRG's report on translation. The TRG report, which

would inform the later *Every Way Oakly,* what McCaffery calls a homolinguistic translation of Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons*, was pursued in a vibrant context of experimental translation. This background included work in Canada by Gerry Gilbert, Fred Wah's *Pictographs From the Interior of BC*; bp Nichol's *Translating Translating Apollinaire* project and others, amidst inspiring examples elsewhere (including, in the U.S., Celia and Louis Zukofsky's *Catullus* (1969) and in Brazil, Pigniatari and Pinto's manifesto (1964). In a practice that McCaffery first developed in collaboration with bp Nichol, homolinguistic translation is figured as a geomantic form: "Geomancy and geomantic translation are both activities in which the central act is the realignment of space and of the balance between already existing phenomenon (*sic*)" (*Rational Geomancy* 33). The word *geomancy*, defined by the OED and included by the authors, signifies

> the art of divination by means of signs derived from the earth, as by the figure assumed by a handful of earth thrown down upon some surface. Hence, usually, divination by means of lines or figures formed by jotting down on paper a number of dots at random. (153)

Entailing a shift of "energies," geomantic translation implies a form of signifying space: "We mean by Rational Geomancy the acceptance of a multiplicity of means and ways to reorganize those energy patterns we perceive in literature" (*Rational Geomancy* 153). Based on a coordinate space presumed to carry a surplus of meaning, *Rational Geomancy* is doubly Cartesian, able to not only divine and signify knowledge of a supernatural origin, but also supply an arrangement of space that is auspicious or otherwise conducive to energy flow. Thus geomancy is established as both a scalar and spatial operation: it involves an interpretation of space, of earth scattered in a pattern, but also suggests the arrangement of space, *tassein*, a spatial syntax at the level of architecture as well as the typographical page. As Peter Jaeger argues, the TRG's configurations of geomancy "are consistent with their continual stress on the signifier's materiality. By constructing an analogy between on the one hand the magical art of geomancy [...], and on the other hand the graphic organization of marks on a page, their report supports a nostalgic desire for original presence" (*Reading TRG* 48), instituting "a direct connection between a non-semantic 'energy pattern' and a universally comprehensible sign-system" (50).

Rational geomancy also illuminates the spatiality of *translation*, the conceptual or literal movement involved in the transmutation of an object within a language system. This movement implies a meta-position, Pound/Dante's "synchronic vista" from which the translative reading is seen (*Seven Pages* Vol. I 445). The connection of seeing and translation inheres in the way post-semiosis "attempts to present the reading as a perceiving experience and vice-versa as Pound suggested. [...] [T]he viewer 'sees' the reading process itself; his/her reading is not simply 'a kind of seeing' but *the* seeing" (*Rational Geomancy* 36). In TRG's "Research Report 1: Translation," McCaffery and Nichol immediately give a sense of the spatiality crucial to their exploits: "Let us see what is to be gained from a break with the one-dimensional view of translation" (27). In fact, a sense of *seeing* and spatial dimension are precisely what is gained from this break. TRG foregrounds a mode of translation expressed by Hugh Kenner as he described the practice of Ezra Pound: "as the poet begins by seeing, so the translator by reading; but the reading must be a kind of seeing..." (quoted in *Rational Geomancy* 28). McCaffery and Nichol extrapolate that, "In treating the translator's reading of the original text as 'a kind of seeing' Pound implies that the text is understood as a real object in the actual world"; thus they shift registers from an isolated semantic word to be *read* to a fully *objectified* object, *seen* in the world (28).[207]

McCaffery's solo work *Ow's "Waif"* exhibits a translational strategy that would treat his *seeing* of source-texts as a produced reading. McCaffery explains his practice in which each poem "results from a calculated action *upon* a specific word-source or 'supply-text'. This text functions as the total available language system for the poem—a specific limitation of vocabulary" (*Ow's Waif*, n.p.). In this partly chance-driven process, "[t]he supply-texts were chosen at random from books, articles, magazines, newspapers,

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[207] Further, the TRG reports conceptualize the page as much more than the medium of typographic marks:

> Perceived optically as a complete unit the page is qualified to such an extent that it ceases to function as an arbitrary receptacle, or surface, for the maximum number of words it can contain (functioning thereby as a random-sized unit in a larger construct), becoming instead the frame, landscape, atmosphere within which the poem's own unity is enacted and reacted upon. Page and type function as the two ingredients in a verbal sculpture. (*Rational Geomancy* 61)

etc. that had happened to be close by me at the times I felt the urge to write"[208] (*Ow's Waif*, n.p.). By reading it awry, McCaffery treats *Newton's Optics* as itself an optical phenomenon: using "vertical and diagonal readings of the supply text," that is, readings that incorporate a spatial seeing, he randomly samples it to produce a textual refraction (*Ow's Waif*, n.p.). Stunningly, this productive distortion of an original signal which still secretes its trace is homologous with the very experiments in optical prismatic dispersion which Newton's 1704 text documented.

Dr Sadhu's Muffins exhibits a similar aesthetic transformation of a series of source texts. The supply-texts here include "whatever happened to be on my desk when I was working: a *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, the words of Shakespeare, the poems of John Donne, an *I-Ching*, newspapers, *Life* magazine, *Scientific American*, abandoned drafts of several of my own poems, etc." ("Note on the Method of Composition," rpt. in *Seven Pages Missing* Vol. I, 442). These works are, in a sense, translations not of the supply-texts, but of the event of McCaffery's particular reading of them:

> In choosing to write my own reading in this way the poems became transcriptions of the movement of the moment under actual observation. They graphed a treatment of my own reading experience as a kind of seeing (Pound's sense of translation) graphing a reflex activity of my own eyes from off an arbitrary verbal surface, freezing a random sequence of words into a meaningful form" (442).

Thus for McCaffery translations are "transcriptions of the movement of the moment of actual observation," a movement that attains a certain conceptual abstraction (442).[209] This shift of observational/linguistic perspective produces anamorphosis, which the OED defines as optical distortion, but also botanical degeneration: "1. A distorted projection or drawing of anything, so made that when viewed from a particular point, or by reflection

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[208] These included "Newton's *Optics* (1705 ed.), an Evelyn Waugh biography of Edmund Campion, Susanna Moodie's *Roughing it in the Bush,* a trigonometry textbook," among others (*Seven Pages* Vol. I, 441). This quasi-procedural poetics *translates*, moves, textual matter into the fold of the poetic text from elsewhere. This is effectively a spatial procedural constraint involving the practical sphere of the subject in its ambient space, the radius of the immediate, the ready-to-hand.

[209] The "movement of the moment" suggests a space-time connection closely related to the parallax distortion built-in to the observation of observation itself. Self-locus is posited in this second-order observation, in the gap between Real and Symbolic, tempered/translated by the Imaginary.

from a suitable mirror, it appears regular and properly proportioned; a deformation," and "2. Bot. Such a degeneration or change in the habit of a plant from different conditions of growth as gives it the appearance of a different species or genius; abnormal transformation" (qtd in Perloff, *Poetry On and Off* 265). Indeed, this distortion or degeneration (or both) furnished the title for a section of *Dr Sadhu's Muffins,* which McCaffery describes in terms of an even more profound *perceptual* transformation:

> The "Anamorphoses" were attempts to "describe out of definition," to transform a comprehension into a perception, the known thing into the thing seen, by having a text generate itself out of the dictionary definition of its title (*Seven Pages* Vol. I, 443).

Anamorphosis, a visual distortion that appears normal when viewed from a particular point in space, here is applied to simplistic nouns given as the poems' titles: "Fish," "fly," "dog," among others. The quasi-visual distortion of the nouns' dictionary definitions produces a trace of "the known thing," while the signifiers may remain the only "thing seen":

> fish
> cold out of life
> the fins drunk dull
> and angled
>
> he is specified
> in isinglass (rpt. in *Seven Pages* Vol. I, 70)

"Isinglass," a gelatin derived from fish used in making glue and other products, specifies the specimen "cold out of life," "angled" as in caught on a hook.

Turning to *Every Way Oakly* with this practice of dimensional translation in mind, the spatiality is clear when McCaffery refers to the work as "a *recontextualization* of Stein's perceptual methodology within the linguistic discipline of translation" (*Oakly* ix). Here "the source texts become textual still lifes placed under the rigor of *translational observation*..." (*Oakly* ix, emphasis added), revealing McCaffery's homolinguistic translation as a spatial operation, a shift in viewpoint on an object from the first to a second perspective which generates a cubist parallax view. This spatial translation produces a multiplication of viewpoints that contributes to an irresolvable crux at the interface of seeing and reading.

The spatiality of McCaffery's "translational observation" of Stein is best illustrated by comparing Stein's poem "A METHOD OF A CLOAK," with an excerpt of McCaffery's (expanded) homolinguistic translation:

A METHOD OF A CLOAK.

A single climb to a line, a straight exchange to a cane, a desperate adventure and courage and a clock, all this which is a system, which has feeling, which has resignation and success, all makes an attractive black silver. (*Tender Buttons* 24)

•••

a method of a cloak
perhaps you should read the
        poem backwards reverse
the descent to where the top
forms a beginning as
your end so that
you end as you start in
a swapped limp to the edge of
        margins.   [...]   (*Oakly* 36)

Perhaps influenced by Stein's "single climb to a line," McCaffery effects a spatial distanciation, treating the original as a spatial object, as a thing *seen*, over and above a text *read*:

perhaps you should read the
        poem backwards reverse
the descent to where the top
forms a beginning as
your end [...] (36)

And yet, in the reading, the work reflexively incorporates its own spatiality ("backwards reverse / the descent to where the top / forms a beginning..."), blurring and interrelating the initially opposed visio-spatial approaches. These transformations recall the formal meaning of "translation" from McCaffery and Nichol's geomantic exposition: the movement of an object from one place to another. In McCaffery's translations, however, it is observation which moves. In an inversion of the habitual spatial logic of reading, "the top / forms a beginning as / your end," describing the reverse "descent" Stein had called a "climb to a line," even while the eye must descend *this* poem in order to receive that message. But within the multiplicity of relationships generated here, we must also consider whether this inversion refers to Stein's poem, or to the current one being read:

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reading crossfades into a mode of seeing language spatially, while the relative positions of words and lines are looped into the semantic content. Reading and seeing, although they are often separated as processes in McCaffery's work, also slide through boundaries in the space rational geomancy infers as a "multiplicity of means and ways to reorganize those energy patterns [McCaffery and Nichol] perceive in literature" (*Rational Geomancy* 153).

As other commentators have done, McCaffery describes Stein's process as using "a cubist 'painterly' (i.e. non-phonetic) technique to force her writing into hitherto 'non-literary' areas" (*North* 34). One imperative of cubism is to bring to consciousness the previously disavowed collapse of three-dimensional space onto the two-dimensional picture plane of a representation. This distorted portrayal of three-dimensional objects shorn of any vanishing point, known technically as axonometric projection, is used by Picasso in paintings which combine both an oblique and a frontal view so that a face in profile still displays both eyes, as in the Portrait of Dora Maar Seated (1937), for example. The shift in Paul Cézanne's painting from an Impressionist style to a prototype of cubism was cited by Stein as a major influence in a 1946 interview:

> Everything I have done has been influenced by Flaubert and Cézanne, and this gave me a new feeling about composition. Up to that time composition had consisted of a central idea, to which everything else was an accompaniment and separate but which was not an end it itself, and Cézanne conceived the idea that in composition one thing was as important as another thing. (quoted in Perloff, *The Poetics of Indeterminacy* 91.)

Although, as Marianne DeKoven attests, "comparisons of Stein's work to modern painting can be helpful in adjusting our vision to writing which continues to appear strange," there is a danger that the association of cubism with seeing can foreclose the ways in which Stein translated its composition of equipoise into a structure of reading (DeKoven 81). Jamie Hilder makes the important point that "[i]n our modern lexicon 'cubism' is so linked to painting that many approaches to Stein's cubism are blind in their expectation of visual parallels" ("Gertrude Stein and Picasso and Cubism" 81). Claiming Stein "undercuts all logical continuity," Michael Davidson explains that in *Tender Buttons* "there are no longer any privileged semantic centers by which we can reach through the language to a self-sufficient, permanent world of objects, foodstuffs or rooms" ("On

Reading Stein," *Language Book* 198). This revocation of "semantic centers"[210] means a new form of reading must be learned:

> We must learn to read *writing*, not read *meanings:* we must learn to interrogate the spaces around words as much as the words themselves; we must discover language as an active "exchange" of meaning rather than a static paradigm of rules and features. ("On Reading Stein," *Language Book* 198)

As deployed by Stein, McCaffery claims the cubist mode includes the "peripheralities of [Stein]'s own viewpoint and a description of the subjective perceptual experience itself within, and as part of, the actual descriptions of the object" (*Oakly* ix). This describes a second-order cubism which transcends, while including, the overtly visual (as opposed to semantic) medium of cubist painting. In a mode of *aufhebung*, this view recursively includes the gaze which makes it possible; in seeing reading or reading seeing, each of these dynamics enhances the gaze, the physical fact of looking, which is usually elided, invisible to the subject and, in a way, to the text. Seeing reading forces a consciousness of the meta-situation of reading, the process of material interaction McCaffery and Nichol called the "event of reading." Borrowing Lacan's definition of consciousness as seeing myself seeing myself, seeing reading introduces a conceptual distanciation that spatializes the otherwise flattened scene of straight reference.[211]

Demonstrating only minor deviations from a linear standard, McCaffery's translation does not extensively formally respatialize these works, but rather spatializes the content, where the metaposition relative to the original poem inscribes itself.

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[210] "Act so that there is no use in a center," begins the section of Stein's *Tender Buttons* entitled "Rooms."

[211] Lacan argues "one of the essential correlates of consciousness in its relation to representation is designated as *I see myself seeing myself*. What evidence can we really attach to this formula? How is it that it remains, in fact, correlative with that fundamental mode to which we referred in the Cartesian *cogito*, by which the subject apprehends himself as thought?" (*Four Fundamental Concepts*, 80). As so often in Lacan, these questions are not necessarily answerable—or they are answered with more questions: How is it, then, that the *I see myself seeing myself* remains the envelope and base of consciousness, and perhaps more than one thinks, grounds its certainty?

On the model of Lacan's fundamentally spatial analytic topology, McCaffery's reincorporation of the visio-spatial relation to the text, to the page and book as objects, can be conceived as a form of psychoanalysis. The "geometral space of vision" is fully imaginable by a blind man, Lacan argues, since "[w]hat is at issue in geometral perspective is simply the mapping of space, not sight" (86).

McCaffery's poem stands as the description of that metaposition. For Stein, words, used to describe objects (or at least obliquely refer to them, in the case of *Tender Buttons*'s titles, which embody what McCaffery called the "peripheralities" of viewpoint), are themselves more objects, and in response a homologous ideogrammatic quality suffuses McCaffery's translations.

While *Oakly* frequently displays a perceptual shift around a spatial object, a cubist refraction in kind with Stein's original *seeing*, in the following example this shift is a semantic torquing inflected by a *reading* of her discursive "still-life":

> GLAZED GLITTER
> Nickel, what is nickel, it is originally rid of a cover.
> The change in that is that red weakens an hour. The change has come. [...]
> (*Tender Buttons* 19)

> GLAZED GLITTER
> that there is a metal questioned
> metal started opened up &
> entered by a switch [...] (*Oakly* 16)

Once again McCaffery's spatial translation effects a distanciation, a meta-view which inflects the original accretions of meaning, but here it also registers a shift in the point of semantic observation: from a kind of mid-point between reading and seeing, Stein's phrase "what is nickel" undergoes a semantic metamorphosis into McCaffery's "that there is a metal questioned," just as his "metal started opened up" re-states Stein's "originally rid of a cover" in a form that materializes Stein's "[t]he change has come".[212] As Stein's poem ends, "There is no gratitude in mercy and in medicine. There can be breakages in Japanese," it prompts McCaffery's: "She gave no thanks for saving it / was ill when the cracks / spelled out // Hiroshima." McCaffery is tracking the original, but less spatially as in my first example than via semantic association, word by word, sign to sign; and yet, again, the parallax shift obliterates any intermediate stage between the two poems. Where Stein was rendering a still life into a syntactic sculpture, McCaffery begins with and translates a linguistic object. So from Stein's, "It certainly showed no obligation and perhaps if borrowing is not natural there is some use in giving" (19) McCaffery derives "where she had a need / and loaned it strange gifts / from a function"

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[212] In a metaphorical space distinct from *Carnival's* literal space, this change is spatial inasmuch as it depends on a shift in perspective that causes it.

(17). McCaffery *moves* Stein's objects by translating them within one language: this delineates the language system more than it describes any discernible object. In a form of Jameson's cognitive mapping (discussed in Chapter One), these translations make the reader *see* the total language system, the alphabet as social fabric.[213]

By sampling and shifting a set of textual referents which in the case of *Every Way Oakly* begin as non-referential objects, and in the case of *Ow's Waif* and *Dr. Sadhu's Muffins* results from a chance-derived[214] sampling of texts ready-to-hand, McCaffery's homolinguistic translations refer to the total language system, but eschew any accretion into wholeness or totality; which is to say they are general economies. In the tempo of their dynamic swing between tempting and frustrating reference, these works distinguish themselves from other modes of Language poetics, including Ron Silliman's "new sentence."[215] Appearing as a concretion of discrete symbols, a visual manifestation of a non-phonemic, post-semiotic syntax, they form puzzles at the level of potential sententious signification, teasing the possibility of a coherent clause.

This alternative multiplies the polysemic continuum generated in the dialectical counterposition of *seeing* and *reading*, a crux that blurs the initially intuitive dichotomy between the terms. Is the cubist still-life composed of words *read*, linguistically constructing a picture for the mind's eye, or is it a shape, an object *seen*, a sculpture immediately there on the page, apprehended objectally in the mind? Is the text

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[213] With implied reference here to Silliman's *The Alphabet* and Jerome McGann's analysis that "*The Alphabet* is a symbol that stands for itself because it is, in the fullest sense, a social text. As an illustration of itself, it means to be a revelation of the entire human world, the 'total social process,' including the (human) 'thingness' and physique of that process" (*The Point is to Change It* 55).

[214] Certainly the sampling of texts on a desk cannot be considered literally "random" or an emanation of actual "chance" (especially given that, as computer science has discovered, true randomness is excruciatingly difficult to generate); and yet, this is an intuitive, vernacular sense of the phrase chance-derived. Hugh Kenner famously espoused the virtues, specifically the efficiency, of a messy desk.

[215] Silliman's *The New Sentence* elucidates a paradigm shift related to prose poetry: he describes the new sentence as a unit of poesis which preserves discursive meaning between full stops: "The new sentence is a decidedly contextual object. Its effects occur as much between, as within, sentences" (*Sentence* 92). The new sentence is contrasted with Surrealist prose poems, "which manipulate meaning only at the 'higher' or 'outer' layers, well beyond the horizon of the sentence" (*Sentence* 87). I read McCaffery's homolinguistic translations as producing a word-to-word torsion which utterly eschews sentential meaning.

principally a linguistic environment unto itself, or is it a component of the reader's environment? Instead of coming down on either side of this question, McCaffery's spatial work sets up a hybridizing oscillation to bring each side into dialectical contest and contrast. To parallactically shift perspectives in this way is to admit into the poem the effects of perspective on that poem: with recourse to Lacanian analysis, I argue this shift admits a consciousness of the gaze itself.[216]

Lacan: Gaze as Striation of Space

Carnival's field of signifiers engages the spatial dimension of seeing in tension with a restricted economy of reading that generates an unrecuperable excess. It represents a complex object ideally analyzed by Lacanian theory, but it is simultaneously a tool for extending a conceptualization of the subject in postmodern space.

For Lacan, the human's form is materialized outside itself, in the first glimpse of ego in the mirror stage, while always seen from within that form. The particular reciprocity of the gaze, the fact that we ascertain being seen in the act of our own seeing, is complicated by the subject's scopic desire to see herself seeing herself. "Subjectivity seems to teeter delicately across [a] bisection of visual reciprocity: I exist both because I see others and because they see me, literally or metaphorically" (Kirby, *Indifferent Boundaries* 125).[217] This outside is also reinforced discursively, as Lacan explains: "If I have said that the unconscious is the discourse of the Other (with a capital O), it is in order to indicate the beyond in which the recognition of desire is bound up with

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[216] This second order perspective relates directly to McCaffery's political reading of syntax: that standard grammar is hierarchizing, controlling.

[217] Still, this "visual reciprocity" is neither symmetrical nor coherent: "in the depths of my eye the picture is painted. The picture, certainly, is in my eye. But I am not in the picture. That which is light looks at me, and by means of that light in the depths of my eye, something is painted" (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 96).

the desire for recognition" (*Écrits: A Selection* 130). This "beyond"[218] is structured by the desire to be seen by others as an ordered whole that functions as a distant echo of the coherent, total specular I seen briefly in the mirror stage.[219] "For Lacan," as Elizabeth Grosz explains,

> the drive is located somewhere *between* the eye and the gaze. The scopic drive must be distinguished from vision. The gaze demonstrates the *excess* of the drive over geometrical or in Lacan's term, 'geometral' or flat optics, a perspectival optics. Perspective represents the reception of *light*, a light which conforms to the laws of physics and the rules governing projection and the point-for-point representation of space. This may explain why it is so difficult to map the gaze: at best, one can represent how seeing occurs. (*Jacques Lacan* 78)

This recursive seeing generates a particular alienation as the world seems to look back at the subject, occasionally beckoning the scopic drive: "The world is all-seeing, but it is not exhibitionistic—it does not provoke our gaze. When it begins to provoke it, the feeling

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[218] Although here Lacan configures the unconscious as a "beyond," McCaffery seems to respond with a perspective on lack that is even more Lacanian than Lacan:
> The unconscious is not "a world"
> which sound poetry describes.
> It is rather the absence
> of a reference that points to the
> unconscious as an
> *absent agent*, never to be described
> but gesturally felt in
>
> the sonorous intensities and
> rhythmic cuttings of the pieces. ("Lyric's Larynx*," North* 179)

Though spatialized via the exterior other, McCaffery posits an unconscious which lacks the coherence and totalization of "a world." The unconscious figured as "absent agent," a paradoxical negation that is indexed by reference, marks the fact that "Sound's inevitable movement / is from a biological to a social order" (*North* 180).

[219] Žižek clarifies how the scopic drive redounds on the seeing subject in a way that I'm arguing involves the viewer/reader of *Carnival* in an interobjective relation:
> The scopic drive always designates ... a closing of the loop whereby I get caught in the picture I'm looking at, lose distance toward it; as such, it is never a simple reversal of desire to see into a passive mode. 'Making oneself seen' is inherent to the very act of seeing: drive is the loop that connects them. The ultimate exemplifications of drive are therefore the visual and temporal paradoxes that materialize the nonsensical, 'impossible' vicious circle: Escher's two hands drawing each other, or the waterfall that runs in a closed perpetuum-mobile, or the time-travel loop whereby I visit the past in order to create myself (to couple my parents). (*Interrogating the Real* 165)

of strangeness begins too"[220] (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 75). Indeed, for Lacan, "consciousness, in its illusion of *seeing itself seeing itself*, finds its basis in the inside-out structure of the gaze" (82), a notion that resonates with Nichol and McCaffery's theory that a "[s]tress on 'reading reading' creates a self-consciousness in the reader"[221] (*Rational Geomancy* 73).

Describing the subject's self-awareness as a spatial externalization, Lacan explains "the other which we are, is there where we first saw our *ego* —outside us, in the human form. (...) The human being only sees his form materialized, whole, the mirage of himself, outside of himself" (*Freud's Papers on Technique*, 140). While here the other functions in a way similar to a mirror, in later Lacan there are obstacles even to reflection: the "synthome" becomes not a linguistic feature, but an unanalyzable product of *jouissance*.

In the context of Lacanian theories of the subject in space, *Carnival* confronts the subject with her own objecthood[222] by re-inscribing "the self's radical ex-centricity to

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[220] Howe's palimtexts, including the fragment "quench conch uncannunc" from "Articulation of Sound Forms in Time," generate this "feeling of strangeness" in their collision of recognizable graphemes (*Singularities* 10). As Perloff points out, "'uncannunc' contains both 'uncanny' and 'annunciation'" in a word that is unreadable without surrendering to its strangeness (*Poetic License* 304).

[221] Incidentally, Nichol and McCaffery figure this "self-consciousness" in spatial terms, both literal and psychological: "Where emphasis is placed on *reading process* (I am typing this now with Steve sitting near the window picking his fingernails) in fiction (you are reading this somewhere we know nothing about the rom your life what's happening to you are you really talking to those you love letting them know you how you feel or are you retreating into your head hiding in the worlds the intellect can create for you) the fiction becomes in a sense anti-fiction" (*Rational Geomancy* 73). While for Lacan the world is all-seeing, Nichol and McCaffery accord with the Language poetics view of reading as a practice in which the subject first sees itself in its production of meaning, and only subsequently sees itself in the world, once the subject has been syntactically decentred within language.

[222] Drawing on George Hartley's reading of McCaffery in relation to minimalist art, Jaeger notes a homology between the objectifying effect of art objects in gallery space and textual objects on the space of the page:

> The work of minimalist sculptors such as Donald Judd and Carl Andre stemmed from a phenomenological concern with subject and object; in order to emphasize the interaction of the object, gallery space, and viewer's perception, the typical minimalist sculpture was pared down to a bare minimum of surface detail. Minimalist objects were intended to force viewers into an awareness of their own bodies, as objects in space in relation to other bodies. (70)

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itself," and establishing the crucial *outside* which the signifier, like the unconscious formed in its image, constitutes as a *ground* of desire, and a locus of self-orientation (*Écrits: A Selection* 130). Specifically, as he draws on the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Lacan's establishment of the scopic drive provides a means of understanding what is at stake in the alternation and blurring between seeing and reading in McCaffery's poetry. Translating this contextual information—the situation of the reader/viewer in space—into its content, *Carnival* contains a startling auto-reference to this very situation: "gazed alone as one who was in & beyond there" (First Panel). The gaze originates from beyond even if the subject is alone; the ego-autre relation both intensifies and undercuts the proxemic boundaries one could be "in & beyond".

The ideological function of language, including the naturalized assumption that it directly corresponds to reality (related to the Whorf-Sapir hypothesis that language is determinant, that it engenders reality), is critiqued through the very spatialization that *Carnival* demonstrates. The unconscious associations in patterned accretions on the panel are evidence of the way language also speaks through us, rather than simply the inverse. The signifier is an exteriorized unconscious which illuminates a void where the subjective interior had been posited by the fetish that language has the potential to express an individual mind. Language, included as a component of reality even as it symbolizes and produces an understanding of that reality, cannot fully register or correspond to the full-spectrum impression of the Real on the subject.

In Chapters One and Two I posited space as a figure of the Lacanian Real: as that which resists symbolization even amidst the desire and the absolute drive to map it in the form of a *mappemunde*. But analysis of *Carnival*, in the context of McCaffery's radical reterritorialization of signification in which (the desire for) meaning is complicated by the added dimension of the signifier's spatial location suggests a more radical dialectic: space, in the sense of terrain, is the archetype of the Real. That is, space describes the Real rather than vice versa: space is the archetype of all that which is incompatible with symbolization.

The unanalyzable margin between seeing and reading identifies spatial form as just such an enduring synthome, and terrain as unsymbolizable Real. In McCaffery's

"form materialized" as *das Ding*, the thing in the Real, "the only possible thing," the fight for language is also a fight within (the form of) language.[223]

Rather than deploying poetry as a window on the object world of things, McCaffery's defenestrating poetics breaks through this artificial mediation by creating a second-order object in the form of an obstinate concretion: a spatial structure that functions as a field of the other. Exploring a spatial poetics of opacity, in which one both looks *at* language and reads *through* it, McCaffery's spatial poetics, like analysis, can provide exactly the breakthrough (or "traversal") described by Lacan in which the apparent transparency of the alienated subject's identification with the other is revealed to be a reflection of the subject's own object-status. That is, the putative *window* of immediate relation to the other (meaning) is shown to be a *mirror* that had formerly been disavowed.[224] Through this effect, language produces an enduring subjective self-alienation. By functioning as other to the subject, language materializes the unconscious.

In *Carnival* the barred signifier, the impediment to full symbolic fidelity, is opened up as a gap inhering between (although not fully dividing) reading and seeing. The non-utilitarian or unproductive function of the textural typography produces not just a symbolic economy, but a spatial economy which subjects the reader to the mutual impenetrability of a sovereign communication (*North* 156). In a second approach,

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[223] In Lacan's "Instance of the Letter," "The Meaning of the Letter" is described as "the material support that concrete discourse borrows from language" (*Écrits: A Selection* 163). Bruce Fink argues the Lacanian "letter" is the differential element which separates two words, noting that:

> In a hundred years, 'drizzle' might be pronounced 'dritszel', but that will be of no importance as long as the place occupied by the consonant in the middle of the word is filled by something that allows us to continue to differentiate the word from other similar words in the English language, such as "dribble." (*Lacan to the Letter* 78).

Reflecting back on *Carnival*'s signifying field from the concept of this differentiation, we see this minimal difference (with maximal effect) present in the play between the "world" and "word" that distinguishes the signifying activity of Adam from that of Eve in *Carnival*.

[224] Roughly speaking, Freud's model of the unconscious is a camera, receiving and filtering stimuli, while Lacan's model is a projector, beaming an idealized conception onto a spatially distinct (yet highly visible) other. This is reflected in the Freudian motto, *Wo Es war, soll Ich werden:* where *it* or *id* was, shall the *ego* appear. So Lacan's model of self-consciousness is not just seeing, as in Freud's camera, but *seeing oneself seeing oneself*, a recursive projection the distanciation of which can lead to a traversal of the fantasy.

however, the space of *Carnival* itself appears as this bar, separating the signifier from the signified, and certainly sign from referent. Finally, this apparent bar can also be *read* as a collapsing of the signifier and signified: when the reader transitions from reading to seeing, what she sees is the abstract blot of signifiers appearing as a textural signified: a stain.[225]

Ultimately, *Carnival* devises a retroversion of Lacanian imaginary and symbolic orders. What Lacan depicts as a topological movement of the child from the register of the specular "I" conceived in the mirror stage to that of the sociolinguistic "I" with entry into the symbolic register is inverted by *Carnival*. The sociolinguistic "I," a kind of avatar interpellated not just by an ambiguous address, but by the grammatical strictures of language, is broken down by the refusal of neutral speech; in its place the specular "I" recurs in the interobjective situation which guarantees "The I is always in the field of the other" (*Écrits* 869).

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[225] In the perceptual experience of these stains, *Carnival* activates a supersession of visual immanence over semantic transcendence in a dynamic related to that described by Žižek: "like the 'stains' in the early modernist paintings of van Gogh or Munch, the overpresent blotches of heavy color (the yellow sky in van Gogh, blue-green water or grass in Munch) whose dense non-transparency draws attention to itself and this disrupts the smooth passage of the eye towards the represented content" (*Less Than Nothing* 694).

Conclusion:

"All Words Are Seen"

—Hannah Weiner, as quoted by Laura Elrick, *Skincerity*

In the phrase McCaffery claims guided the composition of *Carnival*, "form is the only possible thing," that final grammatical object, "thing," resonates as *das Ding*, the thing in the Real, what Lacan called "the beyond-of-the-signified" (*Seminar*, Book VII, 54).[226] McCaffery writes that *Carnival* is "constructed as a peak, at first to stand on and look down from the privilege of its distance onto language as something separate from you [...]. But *Carnival* is also a peak to descend from into language. The panel when '*seen*' is 'all language at a distance'; the panel when *read* is entered, and offers the reader the experience of non-narrative language" (Introduction, *Carnival: Second Panel*.

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[226] One evocative analog of the fixating intensity of form is Roland Barthes's reading of a moment in Balzac's *Sarrasine*, in which a castrato disguised as a prima donna defends "her" honor. "The Italian woman was armed with a dagger. 'If you come closer,' she said, 'I shall be forced to plunge this weapon into your heart'" (*The Rustle of Language* 93). "Is there, behind the statement, a signified?" Barthes asks. "Not at all": the layered, simulacral situation elicits a sentence which is "the 'braid' of several codes:" the linguistic, rhetorical, actional, hermeneutic and symbolic codes. This imbrication of codes means "we can no longer *see* the text as the binary structure of a content and a form; the text is not double, but multiple; in the text, there are only forms, or, more precisely, *the text in its totality is only a multiplicity of forms—without (a) content*" (emphasis added; 93). If there is no signified "behind the statement," as Barthes claims, we can see from another perspective the appearance of the beyond-of-the-signified; a multiplicity of forms signified by the signification of spectral content. Note how "behind" / "beyond" etcetera illuminate the conceptual space of signification. These apparently persist because we think of these interactions as happening in a space or medium. McCaffery is no exception as he describes "an acutely kinetic space":

> I am never sure of where to go, only of the vaguest pointers: somewhere else and that a New Wilderness should be willed and wild: an acutely kinetic space in which the singularities of concepts, the unicities of texts might manifest themselves in a complex genealogy of fissures, breaks, polydirectional circulations and knots without an operative destiny in category. ("A Note on Concept" in *Seven Pages* Vol. II, 358)

emphasis added). This panel that can be "entered" suggests an interior, but a non-narrative one that presents sufficient spherical coherence to form an interior. The metaphor of distanciation from language operant in this model of "a peak to descend from" constructs the totality of language as itself an object. As we use language to explore how we are in language, the apparently obsolescent Cartesian dichotomy of inside / outside is recycled: the subject is *in* language, and sees itself reading (itself), even while language is that other thing *outside* the subject which supplies a bewildering field of signifiers. Given that we are in language and it speaks through us, the radical implication of McCaffery's remove to a linguistic "peak" of material observation is that one could ascend to a perspective on the totality of language, a *thing* (a form?) over there: a concentration of castrated,[227] degenerating graphemes and phonemes not unlike those found on Susan Howe's typographically adventurous pages. But the paradox is that as the "moment of observation" ascends, its perspective emphasizes the typographic surface of signs: the visio-spatial aspect of *Carnival* which is much more (or less) than language—which is *other* to language (misrecognized) as a rational, transparent medium. The totality of language is depthless, and in positing a symbolic field which ultimately constitutes an externalized unconscious, *Carnival* denotes the shallow, fragmented subject of the signifier.[228]

As a parallactic iteration of *Tender Buttons*, *Every Way Oakly* functions as an object added to the object-world, a comment on the world to the identical extent that any iterative response to an artwork is. In addressing the primordial mistake of a mirror for a window, *Oakly* foregrounds reflection versus transparency— (re)presenting not a window on the world, but an object reflecting the viewer's alienation and refracting her

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[227] "Spacing here inaugurates a radical split in the phonic direction, introducing in the second line an investment in a different sound whose end profit is a different meaning that generates its own chain of playful implications. We might see spacing, in this case, through a Lacanian model as a *castration*: the separation and loss of the letter-thing whose phallic status institutes a convention of difference" (*North* 61). We could say a convention of othering, derived from the lack misrecognized in symbolic castration (thus putting the *symbol* back into symbolic castration).

[228] Lori Emerson argues that "the typewritten text, the stamps, the various traces of writerly labor and the physical world (in the form of smudges or the slight bleed of ink) turn [*Carnival*] into a work in which the surface *is* the depth and the making of the work *is* the meaning" ("A Brief History of Dirty Concrete," *Open Letter* 14:7). In this, Emerson acknowledges that she torques against McCaffery's own claim that "*Carnival* is product and machine, not process ... it must stand objective as a distancing and isolating of the language experience" (*Carnival* "Introduction").

defense formations at once. As a refraction machine that places the subject beside the objective interrelationship which structures her subjectivity, *Carnival* is, in these terms, a paratactic megastructure. In formal terms, *Carnival* presents a "call to language out of language," eliding the author and activating the viewer/reader as a part of a "macro-syntax" (Introduction, *Carnival*). Similarly, *Every Way Oakly* constructs a second-order reading of an object's objectification. Its reader is interpellated as a subject confronting an object; subsequently apprehending in its spatial challenge to referential meaning her own object-status, her own spatial form as *das Ding*. These are generative models not of intersubjectivity, a mind encountering a mind, but of inter-objectivity: the revelation generated by a work's formal idiosyncrasy that the viewer is an object among objects, that the illusory geometral point[229] indicates a profound parallax distortion built in to observation itself. In response to the Real of spatial form, a terrain that resists symbolization, the Symbolic, tempered and translated by the Imaginary, attempts an orienting self-locus that is at once consolation, reductive distortion, and the only possible representation of the subject in space.

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[229] The crucial nature of the geometral point for thinking the gaze is negatively apparent in Bruno Latour's use of the panorama as a metaphor. By analogy with the panoramic structure, a functional language environment implies the place that should be occupied by the subject for the illusory field/image to manifest. The panorama is a convincing figuration for society, but by ignoring the technical positioning required for the structure to produce an image of wholeness, the appearance of an unbroken milieu, Latour elides the problem of the subject position that is called into question by his own metaphor. See *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*.

"An Ending (Ascent)"[230]:
Spatial Poetics of Nested Spheres

> For proof look up,
> And read
> Where thou art (Ronald Johnson, *Radi Os* 91)

The vertigo of a poetics of disorientation results in part from a tension between the uses and the effects of space. Conceptually, space functions as a register of representation which has unconscious (ideological) effects. Avant-garde poetry's formal and semantic representation of space is a practice distinct from, though related to, space as an allegorical model of totality. As the linguistic, spatial, and cognitive mapping of totality requires the complex interaction of space and language this interaction has produced problematic spatial metaphors within the spatial turn. Neil Smith and Cindi Katz trouble these metaphors in their influential article "Grounding Metaphor: Towards a Spatialized Politics." Focusing on a transition that occurred within "mid-century American geography," Katz and Smith argue that

> despite the invention of new languages of space in mathematics, physics and art, the language of social space ossified. Precisely in their refusal to explore alternative conceptions of social and physical space, geographers contributed to the deadening of space that prepared the way for, or at least accentuated, the power of spatial metaphor. (74-75)

In this intriguing formulation, the deadening of space as a concept correlates to the increased "power of spatial metaphor." Smith and Katz claim that "spatial metaphors are problematic in so far as they presume that space is not" (75). More specifically, these metaphors problematically "depend on a very specific representation of space: absolute space" (75)— that sense of space, "broadly taken for granted in Western societies," as an empty container of objects and actions, "a co-ordinate system of discrete and mutually exclusive locations" (75). Cautioning against the uncritical deployment of spatial

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[230] Composer Brian Eno's song by this title, made with 1970s-era synthesizers, formed part of the meditative soundtrack commissioned by NASA for the Apollo documentary For All Mankind. The "Ascent" in question was from the lunar surface, ending the moon expedition and beginning the return to Earth.

metaphors rooted in such a Euclidean representation of absolute space, Smith and Katz argue that "this space is quite literally the space of capitalist patriarchy and racist imperialism" (79).

While I fully agree with Smith and Katz's caution against the (unconscious) deployment of absolute space as a realm of metaphorical evocation, their critique, despite being hyper-aware, lacks a certain critical self-awareness.[231] Their argument depends on an absolute space that posits a solid "ground" that metaphors are installed on, that linguistic reference could be brought back down to—a space in which a simplified picture of gravitation pulls concepts down to *settle* on a solid fundament. The idea of "grounding metaphor" therefore relies on precisely the mode of absolute space Smith and Katz problematize. That their critique ultimately traces a recursive pattern by returning to an absolute space of *grounding* is not necessarily a shortcoming of their work; rather, the essay intensifies the fact that the influence of space on language and thought is both manifold and unconscious.

My scrutiny of the problematic *ground* in "Grounding Metaphor" invites similar consideration of psychoanalysis and its dual foundation in therapy, and in an engagement with linguistics as a means of understanding the human subject. The critical tool of psychoanalysis does not provide a privileged frame or a definitive structure that fuels a strict interpretation. Rather, aspects of Lacanian psychoanalysis expand and explicate theories of space and experimental poetics. The spatiality of the mirror relation; *extimacy*; intersubjectivity and its close relationship with the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, which contributes a visio-spatial focus in the concept of the gaze; and

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[231] The pitfall of Smith and Katz's approach is reducible to the difference between consciousness of absolute space, which they admirably demonstrate by disassembling the spatial elements that produce a taken for granted "space itself," and a self-consciousness of their own deployment of spatial metaphor within the critique of the same. Failing to recognize that "grounding" is itself a (spatial) metaphor, Smith and Katz unconsciously demonstrate both the prevalence of spatial metaphor, and the fact that there is no Archimedean point outside from which to critique it. In Lacan's terms (discussed below), they see themselves, but do not see themselves seeing themselves. This misrecognition, resulting in the inclusion of the spatial metaphor intrinsic to their own critique of spatial metaphor is a case of consciousness without self-consciousness which illustrates the sense in which these metaphors are abstract: they are effaced from consciousness, even as that consciousness is figured as a spatial topology, and is even, in the case of cognitive mapping, spatially constituted.

Lacanian psychoanalysis's structural-linguistic engagement with the signifier, its reflexive acknowledgment of the absence of purely social or biological grounds for its theories—all are useful tools in this expansion. Although it is answerable to critiques of its own foundation in the Freudian "talking cure" and its rarefied context of Victorian Vienna, psychoanalysis does not claim to be grounded in any solid fundament other than a practice that arises from Freud: it incorporates a minimal awareness of this groundlessness, and itself often functions more like a poetics than a science.

Lacan himself does not presume a solid ground-truth for his theories; rather, his deployment of linguistics locates the regress of meaning as a core principle. Joan Copjec acknowledges that "a linguistically informed analysis is obliged to forego the possibility of a metalanguage": structuralism's linguistic basis means there cannot be a level of discourse or analysis that escapes the condition on which it comments (*Read My Desire* 8). As Elizabeth Grosz clarifies, "while capable of reflecting on language as object, metalanguage is not capable of self-reflection, it cannot observe itself, without creating a higher order meta-metalanguage" (*Jacques Lacan* 177). Lacan's TV broadcast featured his encapsulation of the productive way language is always-already held as suspect in psychoanalysis: "Saying the whole truth is materially impossible: words fail. Yet it's through this very impossibility that the truth holds onto the real" ("Television" 7). While Lacan's writing is both declarative and evocative, it is resolutely not demonstrative (Fink, *Lacan to the Letter* 130). Rather, Lacan's work is characterized by a polysemy linked to the challenging avant-garde poetry I have considered: both Lacan's work and the poetics of disorientation represent a structure of thinking to be engaged and grappled with by a reader, rather than a static object of transparent meaning.[232]

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[232] In the context of spatial theory, the impossibility of a metalanguage, related to Derrida's claim "there is no(thing) outside the text," tends to collapse/expand into a sense that all language is already metalanguage. Jerome McGann writes: "Thinking only gets carried out in language, in texts. We sometimes imagine that we can think outside of language—for instance, in our heads, where we don't exteriorize the language we're using in language's customary (oral or scripted) forms. But the truth is that all thought is linguistically formed. Even mathematicians think about their abstract worlds in material languages" (McGann, *Black Riders* 171). Although McGann is not referring to it, his argument abstractly rehearses and rejects Julia Kristeva's critique of Lacan,

As Paul Bové notes, "since critical language cannot rest solidly upon an unquestioned transcendent centre or ground, it becomes, as a sign system, subject to the play of endless substitutions and permutations" (*Destructive Poetics* 285 n12). But even this rejection of a grounding metaphor relies on the notion of an absent ground. Although Bové is referring to a Derridean context, these "substitutions and permutations" are relatives of the metaphor and metonymy which, via Roman Jakobson, are also foundational to Lacan's analytic thinking. Lacan borrows Jakobson's theory that metaphor and metonymy are the axes of all linguistic operations (*Fundamentals of Language*) to structure his Symbolic order.[233] In the words of D. S. Aoki, metaphor "engenders paradigmatic multiplicity" in Lacan, while "metonymy, as the chaining of one term to contiguous others, engenders syntagmatic indeterminacy" (48).

Despite Lacan's claim that "no metalanguage can be spoken," (*Écrits: A Selection* 311) a Lacanian-inflected analysis of space enables a meta-perspective crucial to a spatial inquiry, a near-paradox described as follows by Timothy Morton:

> Once we accept that there is an 'impossible point of view' of space itself, from which all other points of view are equally (in)significant, imagining that there are (however many) unique viewpoints from within a horizon which are unequal but significant, begins to become increasingly fraught with difficulty. The global starts to pervade the local, not just socially but also philosophically. [...] The very idea that 'there is no metalanguage' is posed from this 'point of view.' (*Ecology Without Nature* 80)

Paradoxically, the foreclosure on metalanguages is, of course, dictated from a superior meta-position—a position that, from an outside, scans this next dialectical level up where

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which often focuses on his linguistic interpretation, arguing that operations that are "pre-meaning and pre-sign" should be considered outside the alleged constraint of language ("Within the Microcosm of 'The Talking Cure,'" *Interpreting Lacan*). Kristeva proposes adding the "semiotic" to Lacanian psychoanalysis as a marker for these other elements: a detail that in future work I would like to relate to Steve McCaffery's early semiotic poems (see Shuli Barzilai, "Borders of Language: Kristeva's Critique of Lacan." *PMLA*, Vol. 106, No. 2 (March, 1991), pp. 294-305).
[233] Lacan's "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious" (*Écrits*) establishes the relationship between Freud's concepts of condensation and displacement in dream work and the linguistic notions of metonymy and metaphor (*Lacanian Subject* 4-5). Bruce Fink holds that metaphor, the spark between two signifiers, even creates the subject for Lacan (*Lacanian Subject* 69-70).

a putative metalanguage would be found, embracing the first-order language beneath it.[234]

The linguistic functions of psychoanalysis disclose a minimal inclusion of its own paradoxical foundation: at the core of psychoanalysis is the concept that language is constitutive of the subject, but with the understanding that this language is self-referential and always separate from any final truth or ultimate referent. Similarly, language is also always insulated from the biological self, instead residing in a gap between the self and the ego: the unconscious. Lacan's statement, "there is no big Other" (Žižek, "Real of Sexual Difference" 72) establishes the rejection of master narratives, especially registering the death of god. The later claim "There is no Other of the Other," (see Miller, "Extimity") is a capsule form of Lacan's rejection of an absolute grounding in an exterior, authoritative basis. There is no Archimedean point that observes the space in which the big Other observes the subject. As Jacques-Alain Miller notes, "'there is no Other of the Other' implies ... a problem in grounding the alterity of the Other. Indeed, what is it, this Other, if not a universal function, an abstraction?" (*Lacanian Theory* 75). Miller points out this "function" of the Other assumes the status of a universal in psychoanalysis; a certain logic of alterity is one of its given components, existing not as a thing, but as an abstract function.[235]

Paul Kingsbury amplifies an important claim that the spatiality of psychoanalysis is not a mere metaphor or allegory:

> For Lacan, 'topology is not simply a metaphorical way of expressing the concept of structure; it is structure itself' (Evans 1996: 208). Mindful that psychoanalysis is not a TOE (theory of everything) or a totalizing philosophical worldview that

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[234] Here I use the metaphors of a "spatial dialectic" advisedly, and in response to Fredric Jameson's *Marxism and Form*, in which the dialectical process is described as "an entire complex of thought" being "hoisted through a kind of inner leverage one floor higher, in which the mind, in a kind of shifting of gears, now finds itself willing to take what had been a question for an answer, standing outside its previous exertions ..." (307-308).

[235] This abstraction is no less effective for being imaginary: psychoanalysis may still be effective therapy for those with a (skeptical) awareness of its mechanisms. This is why analysts undergo therapeutic analysis while they practice: there is no master that can fully analyze herself. The Lacanian analyst occupies a structural position as the *sujet suppose ce soir,* the subject supposed to know; even if she does not know (and she cannot possibly know what is imputed to her by her patient), the subject-position itself may still function effectively. (See Bruce Fink, *Lacanian Subject*, 87-88)

claims to possess the key to unlock the Truth of the World and Word (see Kingsbury 2003: 360), Lacan nonetheless 'really does mean it' when he suggests that subjectivity takes place topologically. Lacanian psychoanalysis is not a metaphorical or allegorical experiment. ("Extimacy of Space" 252)

While the intersubjectivity, the mirror stage, and the phenomenological *extimacy* of psychoanalysis is spatial, metaphor is nonetheless deeply embedded in its structure. It is therefore necessary to consider that the claim that the Lacanian psychoanalytic topology is non-metaphorically spatial might function as yet another attempted grounding which seeks a material bedrock for what is otherwise a practice very difficult to render in a static description. Is this "structure itself" another kind of absolute? In the context of poetics, one need not account for the apparent unmooring of psychoanalysis from everything other than language practice; rather, this characteristic constitutes the advantage of a psychoanalytic frame, especially in the explication of a vertiginous poetics which maps the decentering and disorientation of the subject.

In deploying a psychoanalytic frame, I do not presume that space is somehow *exclusively* psychoanalytic, but I am exploring what makes psychoanalysis dynamic for reading cultural products of the spatial turn. This frame helps examine both the production of space and the subject's imbrication in that production. On the other hand, my readings in this dissertation do not treat experimental poetry as latent, unconscious material to be analyzed as in the therapeutic scene. Lacan's assessment that the subject is *subject to language* is a means of understanding language as the interface of subject and space. This understanding is homologous with the specific spatial poetics I have explored here.[236] Lacan's linguistic concepts correlate with Language and post-Language poetry, which also treat meaning as ulterior, this time the product of a reader's intervention in a text. This condition of meaning in experimental poetics is illuminated

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[236] What Barrett Watten calls "the phenomenological basis for writing" that evolved out of the Russian Formalists, connects American modernist masters of the 'word as such,' Williams, Zukofsky, and Stein, to the illusionist or constructivist values" found in Language poets (*American Tree* 485). That emblem of Language poetry, the "word as such," is similarly crucial within the context of psychoanalysis and its principle that the unconscious structured like a language.

through the Lacanian context as a condition of the "barred subject," unable to penetrate to any *ground* truth, or to the Real, via the symbolic register.[237]

The crucial nexus is that a psychoanalytic frame challenges the very function of language as a signifying system, which is, of course, a hallmark of avant-garde poetic practices. In both linguistic and spatial terms, this challenge springs from the vertiginous decentering of the subject, of signification, and of space. Lacan's constant interrogation of conventional semantics[238] is related to the similar challenges to conventional sense manifested by the poetry of Charles Olson, Susan Howe and Steve McCaffery. The poetics of disorientation spatializes language: Olson's Projective Verse, Howe's unsettling palimtexts, and McCaffery's "peak to descend from into language," each deploy spatial form and content to escape the gravity of the strictly semiotic.

The poetics elucidated here treat language as a "frame structure," in Howe's phrase, but one that confers disjuncture rather than stability. These poems take Paul de Man's argument that all readings are misreadings as fundamental to its mode of production, and includes this reality not just in its semantic uncertainty, but also in its grammatical and logical disruption, its vortical derangement and spatial disjunction (Bové *Destructive Poetics* 40-43).

The work I examine here also materializes the Lacanian abstraction of the big Other, positing it as a poetic spatial relation that looks down from an orbital remove. The "Earthrise" and "Pale Blue Dot" images are fantasy-extensions of the map perspective that indicates a historically insistent desire. Humanity has now encircled the world with imaging satellites to fully realize McLuhan's conjecture about what was initiated with Sputnik.[239]

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[237] Meaning is also an ulterior product with regard space: while space is significant, representational, and is bound up in the relationships of signifier to signified and sign to referent, every imputation of *meaning* to a space risks treating it as an absolute ("space-itself" as Lefebvre called it) and thereby negating its powerful exceptionalism. Discourse is inevitably spatial, but space is not a discourse; nor is it a logic.
[238] A phrase I borrow from Peter Jaeger's *ABC of Reading TRG*, 9.
[239] See the epigraph to Chapter Two, above.

By establishing a practice that both represents space *and its representations* as well as produces space, the particular poems I have analyzed here crucially rework space; these texts produce and represent new forms of space that have arisen since the concept of space-time revolutionized a previously stable dichotomy of *spatial* versus *temporal*. As I wrote in Chapter One, similar to the Russian Formalist desire to "make the stone stony" (Schklovsky xii-xiii), this work has the virtue of returning to space its fundamentally disorienting character[240] in a way that compels further mapping, what I term the "representation of representation" in Chapter Two. The general poetics of disorientation and the specific vertiginous poetry I have examined here produce a complex effect which can be categorized in three ways. The first category is disorientation in space, a "classical" condition of being lost, perhaps emblematized by Odysseus's *nostos*, in which space presents an obstacle to returning home (but *home* is still *there*, somewhere); the second category is not merely disorientation *in* a space that is uncritically imagined as a stable Euclidian grid, but rather a disorientation *of* that space. This disorientation of space is related to Einstein's breakthrough theories in physics, which inspired the *New York Times*'s 1919 announcement mentioned in Chapter One: "Stars Not Where They Seemed or Were Calculated to be, but Nobody Need Worry...". As Smith and Katz acknowledge,

> The power of Einstein's relativity theory, the power of cubism and surrealism was not simply that they overcame established scientific or artistic conceptions of space but that they fundamentally challenged the absolutist conception on which a wider web of social, economic, military and cultural relationships were modeled. (76)

I argue the derangement of spatial representation demonstrated by these particular works also challenges this "absolutist conception" of space as its basic paradigm. In the final category of disorientation, exemplified by the poetry analyzed here, representations

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[240] This dissertation posits disorientation as an essential quality of space on the basis of the sheer prevalence of a negative dialectic that attends the human occupation of and engagement with space. This dialectic is manifested in an oscillation between a state of disorientation, of being lost, and an (often futile) attempt at orientation via representational cartography which falls short of its goal while mapping instead the constitutive subjective lack of orientation. The radical nature of this negative dialectic of space tempts me to claim that, regardless of this condition being fundamental to my study, it would be untoward to think of it as a "grounding metaphor"; indeed, I would hold that this disorientation and its relationship to mapping is not metaphorical at all, but is rather an integral aspect of human spatiality.

of space are themselves rendered disjunct in order to signify, if not symbolize, this condition.

The interconnection of poetics with literal space, or with models which trace a hybrid of literal and figurative, concrete and metaphorical, space also forms a means of conceptualizing subjectivity in the aftermath of the spatial turn. Elizabeth Grosz correlates models of space with successive theorizations of the subject:

> The Kantian conception of subjectivity is a metaphysical correlate of Newtonian physics, and the decentered Freudian subject conforms to the relativity of an Einsteinian universe. Perhaps the postmodern subject finds its correlative in the virtuality of cyberspace and its attendant modes of respatialization. (Grosz, *Perversion* 100)

If Baudrillard's claim that "it is the map that engenders the territory" (*Simulacra and Simulation* 166) remains persuasive after the heady days of post-structuralism, it may no longer fully account for the transformations that globalization wreaks on the spatial relations that constitute that territory.[241] If there is a danger of spatial metaphors[242] "deadening" and simplifying space, the effect of spatial poetics is doubly powerful as it returns complexity to lived space while representing and deploying it conceptually. As I have suggested, the poetic works explicated here are important corollaries to theories of the spatial turn as they eschew "metaphors out of control" (Dick Hebdige, qtd. in Smith and Katz 80) for an engagement with concrete space that pursues an aesthetic of cognitive mapping, charting the subject as well as its surrounding space and its (indeterminate) position in the broader totality.

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[241] Not that mapping has failed to keep pace of these transformations. As Ursula Heise notes, Google Earth and other recent forms of satellite mapping and digital representation feed back into the representations of social space, including the process of cognitive mapping (see *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet*). The "ludic fallacy" in which the model or map is mistaken for reality or territory, exemplified in Jorge Luis Borges's "On Exactitude in Science," is also instructive.

[242] Is it possible that terrain has become a signifier without signification? Given that, as Certeau explains, metaphor is derived from the Greek *metapharein*, "to transfer," all metaphors are spatial, themselves implying a space, a terrain through which something is transferred by a poetic vehicle. While thought is often modeled as terrain,[6] experimental spatial form including that explored in McCaffery's *Carnival* suggests we should instead see terrain as a model of thought; a form that complements the Real of space.

Rather than borrow what Smith and Katz imply is a territorial mastery[243] secreted in the cartographic apparatus and its connotations, the poems of Charles Olson, Susan Howe and Steve McCaffery assert that spatial mastery is itself an illusion. Rather than appeal to space as a solid basis in which discourse or knowledge can be grounded, they make space material and vertiginous. Far from "deadening" space, the poetics I examine here keep the spatial referent "alive" in its messy, disorienting character in such a way that restructures spatial models and therefore avoid treating space as an absolute or as a metaphor.

Despite their vertiginous quality, the works of Olson, Howe and McCaffery each demonstrate a material engagement with literal and historical concrete space, as well as the materiality of their language. I have shown that Olson's poetic space is rarely used to stand in for something else. Howe's radical typography is not a meta-level of self-present meaning, but an engagement with the materiality of the page as homeomorphic with specific social spaces, among them exclusive institutions (the university archive in *The Midnight*), a tract of land on which a religious utopia is pursued (*Souls of the Labadie Tract*), or an unsettling wilderness, forming a negative background of the Western ontology. With *Carnival*, Steve McCaffery extends the concrete materiality of language in both visual terms, examining its smallest components—letters, lines and abstract shapes—and, in the context of experimental sound poetry, detourning phonemes and syncopes on the page and in his vocal performances.

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[243] From one perspective, what "Grounding Metaphor" responds to is the dialectical force of spatial thinking: once thought invented the labyrinth, humanity built labyrinths that affect our thinking, setting in train a socio-spatial dialectic which must be understood (if not transcended) before a new paradigm of spatial production can be imagined. Lefebvre's reading of abstract space (also referred to in Chapter One) importantly prefigures the concerns raised by Katz and Smith:

> This abstract space took over from historical space as 'substratum or underpinning of representational spaces. Abstract space functions 'objectally', as a set of things/signs and their formal relationships: glass and stone, concrete and steel, angles and curves, full and empty. Formal and quantitative, it erases distinctions, as much those which derive from nature and (historical) time as those which originate in the body (age, sex, ethnicity). The signification of this ensemble refers back to a sort of super-signification which escapes meaning's net: the functioning of capitalism, which contrives to be blatant and covert at one and the same time. The dominant form of space, that of centres of wealth and power, endeavours to mould the spaces it dominates (i.e. peripheral spaces), and it seeks, often by violent means, to reduce the obstacles and resistance it encounters there. Differences, for their part, are forced into the symbolic forms of an art that is itself abstract. (*Production of Space* 49)

What is the subject looking for in the symbolic mirror of a cartographic spatial representation? As an epigraph from Chapter One asserts, the very act of looking indicates a split that implies self-consciousness: "The reflection, the image, the double, splits what it doubles. The origin of speculation becomes a difference. What can look at itself is not one" (Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 36). This evocation of what Lacan would call the split subject configures consciousness as self-contemplation.[244] "One of the essential correlates of consciousness in its relation to representation," Lacan argues,

> is designated as *I see myself seeing myself*. What evidence can we really attach to this formula? How is it that it remains, in fact, correlative with that fundamental mode to which we referred in the Cartesian *cogito*, by which the subject apprehends himself as thought?" (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 80)

Looking back at Earth from the vicinity of the moon, as Apollo astronauts did, is a scaled version of seeing ourselves seeing ourselves.[245] And indeed, this image, and other representations of the "whole Earth," are objects of contemplation bound up with forms of ecological consciousness.[246]

But these idealized images are also a means of attempting to order an imagination and an experience of planetary totality. The identification of *cosmos* with *world* implies not only a fantasy of the world as well-ordered, but also the fantasy of the world as the very pattern and ground for the concept of overarching order; one that is idealistically applied to (plans of) urban space. The poetics of disorientation transforms this fundamental homology, asserting a world which is disordered and disorienting, and

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[244] While Foucault saw how the panopticon could change behaviour even if it wasn't occupied by an other who brought the gaze to bear on the prisoner (*Discipline and Punish*), Lacan's big Other shows that this panoptic dynamic is internalized, making the machine itself unnecessary, obsolete. But in a subsequent, contemporary paradigm, as Žižek paraphrases, "I exist only insofar as I am looked at all the time," as actual surveillance cameras replace the divine gaze. Anti-panopticon: "Today, anxiety arises from the prospect of not being exposed to the Other's gaze all the time, so that the subject needs the camera's gaze as a kind of ontological guarantee of his or her being" (*Neighbor* 180).

[245] In the phrase that appears as epigraph to Chapter Two, Marshall McLuhan claims that we became an audience to the theater of our planet with the advent of the first orbital machine: "Since Sputnik and the satellites, the planet is enclosed in a manmade environment that ends 'Nature' and turns the globe into a repertory theater to be programmed" (*From Cliché to Archetype* 9).

[246] See especially "Contested Global Visions: One-World, Whole-Earth, and the Apollo Space Photographs" by Denis Cosgrove in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 84, No. 2 (June 1994), pp. 270-294.

modelling the groundless, contingent Real of the universe. The disorientation that I have traced and mapped through postmodern spatial poetics is often seen as an aspect of the cultural change which developed alongside and through economic globalization. This vertigo precedes postmodernism, appearing in the crucible of world-changing discoveries of physics from the 1940s. While physicists have agreed that the universe is composed of space, the character of that space has been radically revised multiple times: from the abstract emptiness of Cartesian space, to Einsteinian space-time which itself flexes and warps to produce what we experience as gravity.[247]

As Olson takes up the perspective from Dante's "seventh sphere"; Howe moves from the obscuring wilderness to the violent inscription of "civilization"; and McCaffery's *Carnival* produces of "a peak to descend from into language," each "ascend scale," deploying an imaginary distanciation Georg Simmel figures as a longing, a "call for that distance which commands an overview of all concrete details, for a bird's-eye view in which all the restlessness of the present is transcended and where what was previously only tangible now also becomes intelligible" (*The Philosophy of Money* 475).

At the extreme of distanciation, the bewildering loss of relative stability which comes with trying to imagine we live on a *planet* rather than simply on the *ground* removes any illusion of discrete spaces. At a certain distance, self-reflection gives way to elision. Juliana Spahr revivifies the lyric in a spatial practice that could be mistaken for an allegorical system, but I argue *This Connection of Everyone with Lungs* explores a materiality of space in a way that includes it in the trajectory of spatial poetics established by Olson's Dantescan spheres and McCaffery's "peak to descend from into language."

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[247] Carl Sagan puts this in lay terms while acknowledging the disorientation inherent to the idea: "In general relativity, gravity is *due to* the dimensionality and curvature of space. When we talk about gravity we are talking about local dimples in space-time. This is by no means obvious and even affronts commonsense notions. But when examined deeply, the ideas of gravity and mass are not separate matters, but ramifications of the underlying geometry of space-time" (*Pale Blue Dot* 34).

Juxtaposing vertiginous perspectives, Spahr moves from cellular to galactic scales before formalizing what David Harvey calls a "continuity of spatial relations" (*Spaces of Hope* 14):

> There are these things:
> cells, the movement of cells and the division of cells
> and then the general beating of circulation
> and hands, and body, and feet
> and skin that surrounds hands, body, feet.
> [...]
> The entering in and out of the space of the mesosphere in the
> entering in and out of the space of the stratosphere in the entering
> in and out of the space of the troposphere in the entering in and
> out of the space of the oceans in the entering in and out of the
> space of the continents and islands in the entering in and out of
> the space of the nations in the entering in and out of the space of
> the regions in the entering in and out of the space of the cities in
> the entering in and out of the space of the neighborhoods nearby
> in the entering in and out of the space of the building in the
> entering in and out of the space of the room in the entering in
> and out of the space around the hands in the entering in and out
> of the space between the hands. (*This Connection* 3; 9)

This range of relative scale is technically unthinkable: spatial unboundedness is Real in this scalar tour of the "in and out."

> as everyone with lungs breathes the space between the hands and the space
> around the hands and the space of the room and the space of the building that
> surrounds the room and the space of the neighborhoods nearby and the space of
> the cities and the space of the regions and the space of the nations and the
> space of the continents and islands and the space of the oceans in and out (6-7)

Ascending a series of nested scales, this passage performs a zoom out from the interior to the wide exterior, before returning to the scale of intimate space with the "in and out" refrain of respiration, connecting the wide, communal expanse with the personal lungs. But this pastoral, lyrical image belies the deployment of non-metaphorical space: with no material boundary separating these concentric spaces, the atmosphere is indirectly shared by everyone with lungs. The dual character of this connection is revealed in the final line: "How lovely and how doomed this connection of everyone with lungs" (10).

But if scale can suggest the trauma of the Lacanian Real, distanciation also has its cosmic, symbolizing function, evincing a narrative reduction that elides the very particularities of space the orbital big Other's perspective seems to provide. This is

demonstrated in the way U.S. astronaut Frank Culbertson documented the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks as it appeared from his orbital perspective on the International Space Station. Spahr configures this viewpoint as an affective transcendence via an orbital gaze:

> Beloveds, those astronauts on the space station began their trip home a few days ago and sent ahead of them images of the earth from space.
>
> In space, the earth is a firm circle of atmosphere and the ocean and the land exist in equilibrium. The forces of nature are in the blue and the white and the green.
>
> All is quiet
>
> All the machinery, all the art is in the quiet.
>
> Something in me jumps when I see these images, jumps toward comfort and my mind settles.
>
> This, I think, is one of the most powerful images in our time of powers.
> (*This Connection* 34)

The ultimate extension of the cartographer's dominating view of space, the view from orbit, is a mapping perspective de Certeau notes has been in the human imagination long before it was within its technological grasp. Here the power of perspective lies in the juxtaposition of this sublime distance and grandeur with the everyday scale of domesticity or the microcosmos of cells. At every scale, Spahr's space is an apparition both "lovely" and "doomed."

With the dissolution of the unitary lyric expressive voice, some contemporary American poetry jettisons the oneness of subject. Lisa Robertson, in *The Weather*, examines a planetary, shared phenomenon, at once an effect of and effecting geography; a phenomenon that metaphorically subsumes the place of the unitary subject. In Robertson, ideology is illuminated in flows of contradiction; here, belief is associated with a planetary paradise:

> First all belief is paradise. So pliable a medium. [...] Scarce and scant. Quotidian and temperate. Begin afresh in the realms of the atmosphere, that encompasses the solid earth, the terraqueous globe that soars and sings, elevated and flimsy.
> (The Weather, 10)

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The denial of sentence-level coherence multiplies/fractures the "speaking" subject. The *idea*, for Robertson, is the self-perception of position.[248] The self, in turn, is a process of 2nd-order orientation:

> Consider that we need to drink deeply from convention under faithfully
> lighthearted circumstances in order to integrate the weather, boredom utopic,
> with waking life. By 'integrate' we mean: to arc into a space without surface as if
> it were an inhabitable, flickering event.   ("Introduction to *The Weather*")

Some of Robertson's most evocative spatial work is presented through her *Office for Soft Architecture*, a plural approach further eliding a single subjectivity and multiplying the idiosyncratic perceptions of spatial and architectural space. "A History of Scaffolding" treats a temporary structure, erected on the principle of tensile strength, as a model for an elliptical poetics related to what McCaffery called "phrasal propulsion":

> Scaffolding is analogy. It explains what a wall is without being a wall. Perhaps it
> describes by desiring the wall, which is the normal method of description. But
> also the scaffold wants to fall away from support. Its vertigo is so lively. The style
> of fidelity of scaffolding is what we enjoy. It finds its stabilities in the transitions
> between gestures. (*Soft Architecture* 163)

The analysis of radically spatial poetics inevitably leads to objects, structures, and viewpoints that are not immediately recognizable as poems. Robert Smithson's challenging interdisciplinary practice is a subtextual site of this transfer. Lytle Shaw notes that postmodernity has seen the rise of spatial art as it developed from a poetics of place that posited the identity of self and place to a new site-specificity delinked from place (Shaw, Docents of Discourse). Shaw's Poetics of Coterie is a model of critical inquiry into spatial poetics which performs an important re-reading of the effects of social space within and upon O'Hara's poetic practice. His *Cable Factory 20* is a scaling acrostic of Robert Smithson's survey of materials for his Spiral Jetty, a work which itself

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[248] The 2008 "Positions" Colloquium in Vancouver established position-taking and ideological mapping as a standard trope. Nearly every participating artist made recourse to metaphors of spatial orientation in discussing their work. Does the space of poetic representation need to be mapped in order for coordinates to be usefully marked on it? In other words, do we all see the same map? As Mark Wallace argued, "A roadmap has a poetics also, on some level a conscious one. But the degree to which the poetics of the roadmap seems a cultural given makes a self-consciously explored geographical poetics necessary, not so much as a response to prevailing hierarchies as a reshaping of them" ("from *The End of America*" 15).

produces a scalar disorientation. "For me scale operates by uncertainty," Smithson explained; "to be in the scale of the Spiral Jetty is to be out of it" (Smithson, *American Tree* 580). Smithson's hallucinogenic testimony of how the particular landscape inspired the universal form of Spiral Jetty is notable for the sense of disorientation in this almost catastrophic revelation:

> Under shallow pinkish water is a network of mud cracks supporting the jig-saw puzzle that composes the salt flats. As I looked at the site, it reverberated out to the horizons only to suggest an immobile cyclone while flickering light made the entire landscape appear to quake. A dormant earthquake spread into the fluttering stillness, in a spinning sensation without movement. This site was a rotary that enclosed itself in an immense roundness. From that gyrating space emerged the possibility of the Spiral Jetty. No ideas, no concepts, no systems, no structures, no abstractions could hold themselves together in the actuality of that evidence. ("The Spiral Jetty" 146)

No concepts survive the torsion of this "spinning sensation," and Shaw exploits the fundamental centrifugal force of this "gyrating space": "so as space widens, paths multiply," (21) as the textual forms are set against rephotographed images and magnified maps that complicate the path of any one reading: "'Through place, the infinite' / —A liar living close by" (75). Where sentential meaning threatens to coalesce, it is reabsorbed by the spiral: "down to / scale and ascent, where / a dislocation point // widens" (25).

> Mechanics drop tools to gaze at the nebula
> U-turning trucks pause in erosion beds.
> Dumping loads letters for microscopes.
> Sulfur-water, pumps, ledge deformation. (19)

The phrase "Mechanics drop tools to gaze at the nebula" spans an unrepresentable, unimaginable scale translation from the ground to which the instrumental objects fall to the distant galaxy where nebulous light is sent from a cloud of distant suns; light that meets the earthbound eye with its own gaze, objectifying the subject in a great

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demotion. "To be in the scale of the Spiral Jetty is to be out of it." The intelligible reverts to the tangible.[249]

Cosmos is a directional, as well as a spatial fantasy. Lefebvre distills the sense in which not just the locus, but also the orientation of the body is derived from that body's essential act of imprinting its own spatial properties on the outside surroundings.

> For the spatial body, becoming social does not mean being inserted into some pre-existing 'world': this body produces and reproduces – and it perceives what it reproduces or produces. Its spatial properties and determinants are contained within it. In what sense, then, does it perceive them? In the practico-sensory realm, the perception of right and left must be projected and imprinted into or onto things. Pairs of determinants – axes versus points of a compass, direction versus orientation, symmetry versus asymmetry – must be introduced into space, which is to say, produced in space. The preconditions and principles of the lateralization of space lie within the body, yet this must still be effected in such a way that right and left or up and down are indicated or marked – and choices thus offered to gesture and action. (*Production*, 199)

Rather than the body orienting itself via essential landmarks or transcendent directions, these are produced within the body and projected outward. The famous Earthrise photo is always printed with Earth "right side up," with the lunar horizon "horizontal," but it was in fact framed vertically as per the orientation of the astronauts' lunar orbit. This same sense of vertigo is experienced in the examples of reoriented maps (popular in Australia, for instance,) which put the Southern Hemisphere on the top half of a Mercator projection map. As Buckminster Fuller used to say, on a spherical Earth "up" and "down" are meaningless—we should think of planetary bodies as objects which can only orient us as to "in" and "out", toward and away from their surfaces.

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[249] NASA space missions produce a spatial poetics not by forcing aesthetic speculations, into a scientific paradigm, but by contributing aesthetic and philosophical constructs to the analysis of culture and knowledge. As I noted in Chapter One, the capture of the "Earthrise" photograph did not appear on the Apollo 8 mission plan, perhaps because of its limited value for science; in much the same way, when Carl Sagan petitioned NASA to turn the outward-bound Voyager robot and point it in the direction of its origin in order to take a photograph, he admitted the resulting image would have no scientific value. Instead, the image, known as the "Pale Blue Dot" because Earth appears as a solitary speck, has inspired philosophical reflections in a way similar to Earthrise.

> From Saturn, I knew, the Earth would appear too small for *Voyager* to make out any detail. Our planet would be just a point of light, a lonely pixel, hardly distinguishable from the many other points of light *Voyager* could see, nearby planets and far-off suns. But precisely because of the obscurity of our world thus revealed, such a picture might be worth having (*Pale Blue Dot* 2).

How does the innately privileged position of anthropocentrism survive the shocks of scientific discovery? This is an area of investigation my future studies will pursue. The answers surely involve a systematic disavowal of a deep fear: that our primordial condition is disorientation itself, and that our cosmos, like the arbitrary "up" and "down" on a world map, is projected from the bodily centre of deep desires. These desires and their distortion of space are persistent forms of literally spatial anthropocentrism.

The turn to cognitive mapping, to cosmos, and to theories of cosmopolitanism or planetarity is an effort to right the vertiginous vortex by attempting to symbolize what most resists the symbolic. The Real of unimaginable, unrepresentable scale gives rise to a fantasy of scale invariance, that something is constant even while the frame of reference shifts bewilderingly. This is hinted at in a kind of rhythm of appearance and disappearance, world versus void, in the massive zoom out, and then in, of the Eames's *Powers of 10*. To repurpose Harvey's term, particular poetic experiments in space attempt to supply a "spatial fix" for the vertiginous scale and complex overdetermination of the spatial turn, ultimately seeking refuge from disorientation in the production of a cognitive map.

To change life, we must first change space, Lefebvre claimed. At its most radical, this statement refers not to a particular configuration of space, but to a perspectival shift that re-frames planetary subjectivity,[250] that explodes absolute space through a dwelling in the disorientation of seeing ourselves seeing the cognitive map.

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[250] See Gayatri Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* 73.

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