The Poetics of the Archive:
Twentieth and Twenty-First Century American Poems Containing History

by
Sara Elizabeth Phillips

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The dissertation is approved by the following members of the Final Oral Committee
- Lynn Keller, Professor, English
- Cyrena Pondrom, Professor, English
- Timothy Yu, Associate Professor, English
- Vinay Dharwadker, Professor, Literatures and Cultures of Asia
- Susan Friedman, Professor, English

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for my parents, who always believed in me,
and for Jeremiah

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Introduction

Poetics in the Archive

In a recent issue of *PMLA*, Deborah Nelson explores commonalities among several pieces plucked from the journal's archives and "clustered" under the rubric "twentieth century American poetry," noting that each "attempt[s] something other than or in addition to the study of twentieth-century poetry, deriving their motivations from outside the genre" and "mak[ing] the case for poetry's value to other areas of inquiry" (212–213). The essays, whose "outside" areas range from disability studies to performance studies to intimacy studies, have in common a "strong relation between poetic experimentation and the forms of intellectual inquiry that evolved in the . . . twentieth century" (213). In a similar gesture, this dissertation marries together two subjects of literary and intellectual inquiry that have grown up, as it were, side by side over the course of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first: the "poem containing history," after Ezra Pound's definition of verse epic, and the historical archive.[1] This study maps a dual trajectory across what may at first appear to be quite different landscapes—but like a binoculars' double lens the two fields merge as the picture comes into focus. On one hand, the study explores the development of the "poem containing history" from Ezra Pound to the present, paying close attention to each poet's approach to history, methods of research, and incorporation of source material into the poems; on the other, it marks changes in our conception of the historical archive from a physical repository for objective historical records to a locus of power that, in its selective and ordering capacities, reveals itself as an agent in shaping human memory.

What comes into focus when the two lenses are brought together is the subject position of the inheritor of the "poem containing history"—not simply the poets writing after Pound but those for whom the history is written, for after all, whether well-intentioned or misguided, hit or disastrous miss, it is our own histories that are conveyed to us through their work. As I survey a century of "poems containing history" I find that in each poet's negotiation of written history, a different possibility emerges for the subject of history. As the poets writing after Pound move away from his totalizing view of history which, in the early Cantos, tends to eclipse the everyday subject in favor of exemplars like Malatesta and Kung, they move toward poetries that, over time, acknowledge the material complexity of the subject's interactions and transactions with history: Charles Olson in his recognition of the subject's making of history; Susan Howe, problematizing this, in her portrayal of subjects who have been marginalized by the writing of history; Jena Osman, in her celebration of the subject's potential to gain agency within networks of power, including history; and Robert Fitterman, in his exploration of the dispersal of the subject and loss of individual agency in the digitized history of the present. Each of these renegotiations happens within and through the historical archive, whose definition expands over time from a physical repository housing documents of a shared past available to a privileged few to an "archive of everything" that is not limited by physical location or restricted access and whose contents are not determined solely by their relationship to the past but also their emergence in the present.

Although a handful of studies have considered theories of the archive in relation to literary narrative, in particular to trauma and testimony[2], serious consideration of conceptual changes in our understanding of the archive as a mechanism for shaping history—and the place

of the human within history—has not yet been applied to poetry, much less to the type of long poem referred to, in Ezra Pound's phrasing, as the "poem containing history."[3] In this dissertation, I explore changing conceptions of the historical archive as they emerge in exemplary "poems containing history" from Ezra Pound to Susan Howe, particularly around issues of access, power, and preservation. I also explore the poems themselves as archives of re-collected material, chosen from the historical archive (often physically by the poet) and arranged in a new order by the poet, who takes the role of "poet-archivist." Archive studies theorist Terry Cook writes that "archivists . . . co-create the archive . . . by defining, identifying, then selecting which documents and which media become archives in the first place . . . And that same initial archival appraisal decides, with finality, which records are to be destroyed, excluded from the archives" ("The Archive(s) is a Foreign Country" 504). Indeed, as Joan Schwartz and Cook explain in a co-written article, the role of the archivist is one of great power, particularly in choosing which narratives will become part of our common history:

> Through archives, the past is controlled. Certain stories are privileged and others marginalized. And archivists are an integral part of this story-telling. In the design of record-keeping systems, in the appraisal and selection of a tiny fragment of all possible records to enter the archive, in approaches to subsequent and ever-changing description and preservation of the archive, and in its patterns of communication and use, archivists continually reshape, reinterpret, and reinvent the archive. This represents enormous power over memory and identity, over the fundamental ways in which society seeks evidence of what its core values are and have been, where it has come from, and where it is going. Archives, then, are not passive storehouses of old stuff, but active sites where social power is negotiated, contested, confirmed.
>
> (1)

The link between the archive and power lies in the selecting and ordering capacities of the archivist, but further than this, in the archivist's role in shaping the archive itself—a "reinterpretation" or "reinvention" that shifts with our shifting notions of the archive. Yet as

Schwartz and Cook remind us, what is really at stake in the archive is the power to shape *stories*, particularly the stories we tell ourselves about our origins and our future, which act as "evidence of [society's] core values."[4] Applied to the literary tradition, we might in fact see this description as having much in common with the epic, the genre from which the poem containing history derives. If the archive serves as a storehouse for human history, the epic is one genre that shapes it into a vehicle for literary consumption. In fact, epic and archive share key features: the impetus to choose the best or most exemplary out of the mass of available materials, the purpose of preserving human history and solidifying "core values" for ourselves and our progeny, and the necessity to make that material available to future generations. All of these are evident in Ezra Pound's *Cantos*.

In *The Tale of the Tribe*, Michael Bernstein argues that the *Cantos* opened a new path for the verse epic in the twentieth century. Pound's conception of epic (and Bernstein's title) relies on Rudyard Kipling's notion of epic as a "tale of the tribe," or, to quote Kipling more fully, "a Record of the tribe set down in its enduring literature" (*GK* 194, Kipling qtd. in Bernstein 7). As Bernstein explains, using terms that further evoke connections between archive and epic, "It was through the teller of this 'record' that deeds of warriors, priests, and men of action were set down, providing a storehouse of heroic examples and precepts by which later generations would measure their own conduct and order the social fabric of their lives" (8). Several terms are important here: the written "record" as a physical object that holds the history of human action; the "storehouse" that houses such records; the notion that the poem-as-storehouse "provides" such "records" to the reader; and finally the "future generations" who will be able to access its contents. Further, Bernstein reminds us, the contents of the epic poem are "communal property . .

. and the situations represented therein . . . the accumulated labor of successive generations" (9)—again linking the "communal" ownership of the archive of human history to epic poetry, as well as to notions of progress. Thus, Pound's definition for epic in the twentieth century as "a poem containing history" or "including history"—as he begins to call it in the 1930s—is directly linked to the archive (*LE* 86). So too are questions about power, access, and preservation, for as Schwartz and Cook remind us, "The power of archives, records, and archivists should no longer remain naturalized or denied, but opened to vital debate and transparent accountability" (1).

For those poets that come after Pound, writing "verse epic" in new formulations and reinterpreting the shape of his poem-archive for new audiences and new situations of history, such accountability and transparency have become, by the time of this writing, not at all uncommon. Indeed, as the work of Olson at mid-century and Howe, Osman, and Fitterman in the early 2010s demonstrates, each poet takes deliberate steps away from Pound's conception of the poet as a central figure who shapes the poem externally with all of history to hand, even as they continue to apply some of Pound's techniques. But before we return to the poem containing history and the ways it has reconceived the writing of history and the shape of the poem-archive, let us take a closer look at the slippery history of the concept of the "archive."

The Archival Turn: History and Definitions

Over the last two decades the archive has become a central concern to the humanities, yet as far back as 1995, with the English publication of *Archive Fever*, Jacques Derrida commented that "nothing is less reliable, nothing is less clear today than the word 'archive'" (*Archive Fever* 90). Derrida's own understanding of the term is multivalent, reaching back to the word's origins

in an attempt to understand its currencies of meaning, particularly in relation to power and privilege. As Derrida explains, the word "archive" is derived from the "Greek *arkheion*," both the "address" where "official documents are filed" and the "domicile" for the guardian of those documents. The guardian or "archon . . . not only ensure[s] the physical security of what is deposited" but "has the power to interpret the archives"—thus linking archontic privilege to a site of power and to a person whose "publically recognized authority" gives him "hermeneutic right and competence" (2). The structures of power that result from this sanctioning of centralized power still persist in the public understanding. Even the most pedestrian definition of the archive casts it in terms of privilege and access—despite the fact that the contents, like those of epic, are communal property.

In common parlance, then, the archive is understood today as a repository for public records and historical documents, often housed institutionally in state libraries, historical societies, and governmental buildings with oversight by those bodies. Merriam-Webster extends this to any "repository or collection especially of information," indicating that in the current digital age, the material underpinnings of physical records, and our understanding of what makes a collection "official," have shifted. Indeed, two major fronts have challenged the modern conception of archives: most recently, the digital turn which is slowly making it possible for scholars and laypeople alike to access the vast historical archives once available only in the dusty margins of state libraries, bringing questions of access, evidence, and storage to the fore; and, as this introduction explores in further detail, the "archival turn" of the last decade which has exploded the meaning of the archive across disciplines.

Cultural historian Ann Stoler, who coined the phrase "archival turn" in her 2010 book on Dutch colonial archives, *Along the Archival Grain*, explains that over the course of the last decade there has been a shift "from archive-as-source to archive as subject," helped in part by the work of Derrida but with "a wider arc and a longer durée" (44). No longer do historians see the "archive" as a mere repository of records for an institution or nation; the archive is itself shaped by the practices and structures that created it, including the archive professionals who select and catalog its contents and the historians who use its records as evidence. For Stoler, the disciplines most affected by the "turn" are those most closely connected to the making of history: "What marks the past decade are the new conversations between archivists and historians about documentary evidence, record keeping, what features of archival form and content can be retrieved, and how decisions should be made about historical significance and preservation" (46). Indeed, much of the conversation around the archival turn has taken place among and even between historians and archivists, as recent work by Francis Blouin and William Rosenberg attests.[5] Yet historians, who tend to be less interested in the actual, material workings of the archive than in the political dynamics that determine records' inclusion and exclusion, may in the end have less to offer in terms of understanding the archive from the inside, as I hope this study does through the lens of poets practicing *within* and *out of* actual archives.[6]

Because I am interested in archival work as it is conducted by practicing archivists, my study pays close attention to currents in archival theory from within the archival discipline, where archive theorists like Terry Cook, Heather MacNeil, and Terry Eastwood continue to encourage interdisciplinary conversation. Indeed, as MacNeil's introduction to *Currents of Archival Thinking*, co-edited with Eastwood in 2010, elucidates, concerns within the archival

field are directly applicable to historians and to any discipline that would agree we should "question the impartiality of archives and neutrality of archivists, assert the historically-situated and determined nature of archival theory, [and] advocate[e] greater diversity and inclusivity in archival practices" (xviii–ix). Such "currents" of archival thinking and practice include paying greater attention to the meaning of the archive, now more interdisciplinary, with more accountability to the public and emphasis on social justice, inclusivity, and access; learning how records are preserved and managed in the digital age; seeing archives as socially and ideologically shaped versus organic and impartial; and understanding archivists as "active in shaping memory" in their appraisal and descriptive practices (xi).

Yet interest in the archive is not limited to the disciplines of history or archive studies. In the past fifteen years, it has also expanded in new directions as subdisciplines have claimed theoretical space for the term—each with differing aims and approaches. Beyond Stoler's research into Dutch colonial archives, the archive has emerged in postcolonial studies as a shaper of national history with deep ties to imperial power in works by Thomas Richards (*The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire*, 1996) and Kathryn Burns (*Into the Archive: Writing and Power in Colonial Peru*, 2010). For gender studies it is both a site of repression and a physical site of sensual, forbidden touch, as shown in work by Ann Cvetkovich (*An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*, 2003), Margot Canaday (*The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America*, 2011), and K.J. Rawson (*Archival Rhetorics: The Logics and Affects of Transgender Archives*, forthcoming). In trauma studies, theory on the archive by Georgio Agamben (*Remnants of Auschwitz*, 2002) can be paired with monographs on subjects ranging from archival photography (James E. Young, *At Memory's*

Edge: After Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture, 2011) to Holocaust oral history (*Approaching an Auschwitz Survivor: Holocaust Testimony and its Transformations*, edited by Jürgen Matthäus, 2010), documentary history (*Collect and Record! Jewish Holocaust Documentation in Early Postwar Europe*, Laura Jockusch, 2012) and cultural memory (*An Ethics of Remembering: History, Heterology, and the Nameless Others*, Edith Wyschogrod, 1998). In the digital humanities, by far the most developed subdiscipline with ties to literary studies, the digital archive has functioned as a practical means to give scholars and students access to the contents of multiple authors' archives, broadening the subfields of manuscript study and genetic criticism (*The American Literature Scholar in the Digital Age*, edited by Amy E. Earhart and Andrew Jewell, 2010).

As new disciplines have incorporated the archive into their repertoire of topics, the definition of the archive has also broadened and blurred. Indeed, the term "archive" evokes a surplus of meaning and applications depending on which theorist, historian, or critic is speaking. For cultural historian Carolyn Steedman, it is "simply a name for the many places in which the past (which does not now exist, but which once did actually happen; which cannot be retrieved, but which may be represented) has deposited some traces and fragments, usually in written form" (*Dust* 69). For cultural studies theorist Helen Freshwater, the archive is a "literal embodiment of the metaphors that surround memory, as memory is (in)formed by culturally distinct methods of storage, inscription, and access" (742). Bringing together several strands of meaning, literary critic Barbara Biesecker writes of the archive as "an historical space, a political space, or a sacred space; a site of preservation, interpretation, or commemoration" (124). Indeed, for literary scholars Michael O'Driscoll and Edward Bishop, the archive has taken on a "variety

of institutional forms, including record repositories, museums, and libraries, [but also] all manner of inscription: monographs, photographs, film and video, databases, blogs, email, websites, monuments, paintings, and architecture, just to offer a partial list." At the same time it carries an "ever more weighty metaphorical status [as] . . . a figural representation of history, memory, consciousness, households, and power" ("Archiving 'Archiving'" 4). Though these descriptions share family resemblances, they also speak to the blurring of lines between conceptual and physical descriptions—a divide that has not gone unnoticed in literary studies. Similar to O'Driscoll and Bishop, literary scholars Paul Voss and Marta Werner recognize the archive both as "a physical site—an institutional space enclosed by protective walls—and an imaginative site—a conceptual space whose boundaries are forever changing" (i).[7]

One aim of my dissertation is to bridge the gap between conceptual and practical orientations toward the archive, between a view of the archive as a "metaphoric invocation for any corpus of selective collections" closely tied to the human longings for "the primary, originary, and untouched" and a "body of documents and institutions that house them" (Stoler 45).[8] My treatment of the archive takes into account the theoretical discourse surrounding the archive, particularly as a repository for collective human memory, and, just as importantly, the *physical* repository of history and its *material* records. The poets in this study all use historical records, often accessing them by visiting archives, but always with attention to the material fact of their (coming into) existence, whether the record is taken as objective evidence as in Pound and Olson, or whether its origins are more suspect as in Howe, Osman, and Fitterman, the last of whom shifts "records" to a purely digital register. In part, this dissertation maps the trajectory from a physical to a theoretical orientation, from a tangible encounter in the archives to digital

encounters that put into question the value of records as material evidence for truth. Rather than offering a single definition for the archive, then, I provide an understanding of its use and meaning for each poet.

Archival Methods and the Poetic Medium

My methodology for each of the chapters follows a similar pattern: I am interested in how poets' use of documents from the historical archive informs our understanding of their historiography. Therefore I pay close attention to the ways in which source material finds its way into each poem, and to the ways in which the poets deviate from, recycle, or quote directly from it to render their histories. My readings of Pound, Howe, and Osman in particular hinge on their use of sources to create new orders of meaning by calling up the material history of the past through citation and quotation. Olson and Fitterman, in contrast, reveal their approach to history differently: Olson through the competing "repertoire" of cultural knowledge handed down through performance (following Diana Taylor) and Fitterman, also in a performative gesture, in the emerging history of human discourse as it plays across the screen of the internet. This divide might be characterized as one of "static" vs. "moving" history: Olson and Fitterman are interested in preserving the past *as it occurs*, while the other poets are hoping to render or revisit a past that has *already happened*. For each of these, a reliance on material history is a strong current whether through physical or digital means; to some degree I am attempting to measure these poets' belief in the past as inhering in the present through their work, despite the knowledge (at least for the more contemporary poets) that such an attempt is, as Dominic La Capra writes in *History and Criticism*, questionable: "When it is fetishized, the archive is more

than the repository of traces of the past which may be used in its inferential reconstruction. It is a stand-in for the past that brings the mystified experience of the thing itself—an experience that is always open to question when one deals with writing or other inscriptions" (*History and Criticism*, 92 n. 17).

In part, then, the dissertation also maps the effects of exposure to newer concepts of the archive and to the writing of history, especially in relation to access and power. Where Pound tended to see his historical project as excavating objective, even totalizing, truths of the past to apply to the present, each of the poets who follow after reconceptualizes his historical methods for new audiences, making the poem containing history an ideal lens through which to view changing attitudes toward history and to the use of historical documents as evidence for a shared past in the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. With its citational, documentary approach, the poem containing history is thus well-positioned to interrogate structures of meaning as presented through written history and, more specifically, through the lens of the archive as it conceived both practically and conceptually. Indeed, a century of "laying bare the device" has led to a re-appraisal of methods by both poets and historians, who are more critical and more aware of the assumptions surrounding the archive and evidence, both of which are understood today to be constructed through both social and subjective means.

Over the course of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, the poem containing history has undergone many transformations, and this dissertation explores many of these. Generically, it has shifted from Pound's and Olson's epic-length tomes to much shorter histories (usually 50 to 100 pages) that still employ some epic conventions. Howe, Osman, and Fitterman all use "small" histories to critique received historical narratives. Howe draws on individual

histories to address gaps in history, Fitterman affirms the collective human story through culling individual voices from the digital airwaves, and Osman, whose scope is epic if the length of her poem is not, draws connections between particular lines of history to encourage the reader's revaluation of written history.

The poem containing history has also transitioned from being creator-centered and shaped from the outside, as in the *Cantos*, to offering multiple interpretations of the poet's relationship to the material under hand. Pound's shaping genius is reinterpreted through Olson's self-insertion into the *Maximus Poems*; while Olson does not scrutinize the validity of the history he is telling, he does add himself to it, a strong step toward recognizing his influence *within* that history. Howe, deeply cognizant and critical of the power of the author over written history, takes this in another direction, intentionally distancing herself from the scene of writing to give individual voices housed in the archives a chance to speak. Osman, returning to a less self-critical gaze yet equally critical of the power dynamics inherent in the writing of history, tells history slant, inviting the reader to co-create meaning through a re-collected set of facts from America's vexed founding history. Fitterman, furthest from the Pound tradition, also performs a disappearing act, letting the material of internet searches determine the content of his work and displacing human choice for machine output, bringing up questions at the end of the dissertation about the value and even necessity of the human in shaping our shared history—a sea change from Pound whose aim was to highlight the best examples of civilization for humanity's betterment.

As the dissertation explores in depth, the poem containing history has also, like the archive, transitioned from a past to a future orientation, particularly in the work of Olson, which

at the end of the *Maximus Poems* opens out to the future as his poem-archive expands to encompass the globe, and in the work of Fitterman and Osman, which in different ways considers emerging human discourse as a production both of current human knowledge and of what is possible for the human in the future. Where Pound and Howe cull records from a past that is ever receding, Fitterman and Osman stand at the cusp of the present, looking forward into the enunciative possibilities of the human subject in the digital age.

In another reorientation that also takes into account the subjectivity of the human, the poem containing history has become deeply invested in the individual subject of history, particularly the voices that have been marginalized or overlooked in the historical record—including a deeper consideration for gender and racial inclusivity in Howe and Osman. Where Olson and Pound see in the poem-archive the possibility to preserve the past for safekeeping, Howe and Osman see in it the possibility for resurrection and reorientation. Howe, in particular, uses her work in the archives to "tenderly lift from the dark side of history, voices that are anonymous, slighted—inarticulate"—resurrecting them even after the point of final silence ("Statement" 15). It is no surprise that the main issues driving this study—access, preservation, and power—are intrinsically connected to changes in our conception of the archive that find correlation in the verse epic.

Importantly, then, the three poets at the end of the study reconceive the subject's capacity for agency within history quite differently, each offering a new perspective on what it means to be human—and to shape history as individuals—as we enter a new millennium. Before this a profound shift has already taken place: Pound's history from outside and above, with its emphasis in the early Cantos on established figures of the historical record, gives way to Olson

becoming himself the protagonist of his history, the poet-archivist both subject and shaper of a verse epic that acknowledges its own making. Such awareness, still problematic in its unquestioned assumptions of personal agency (Olson as Maximus is humanity, writ large, even if he announces a stance of humility), lays the groundwork for Howe's attempt to rescue marginalized figures thirty years later—a trend also evident in postcolonial theories of the subaltern and in trauma studies, giving agency and subjectivity to history's forgotten and to the subjects of human genocide. This is followed by Osman's hopeful foray into the possibility for real agency for the subject willing to reorient herself in relation to systems of language and history shaped by power, a move that is countered by Fitterman's exploration of the dispersal of the human subject in digital networks, co-opted by consumerism and unable to escape the mediation of his digital identity. Despite the possibility for the digital subject to participate in the systems of its making—one offered by Fitterman as a potential solution—this raises serious questions about the possibility for individual agency as the "archive of everything" takes over our present.

Archival Choices: Selection and Approach

As I considered which poets to include and which to leave out (an archival choice, no doubt), my main consideration was the degree to which the poets writing after Pound both relied on and modified their uses of the historical record in significant ways, including the shape and scope of their poetry and the position of the author to the source material and text. The poets I selected are also, to different degrees, part of the continuing avant-garde; each is innovative and experimental *in his or her time*. Thus, they not only inherit and reshape Pound's original

historical purpose, but also utilize his techniques, particularly in their use of collaged citation which puts history on the page in ways that challenge our expectations for cohesive, hypotactic narrative.[9] Simply put, such poets are already questioning the system; it follows that their interactions will have in common a deep commitment to questioning, investigating , and interrogating structures of meaning—or, to echo Olson's words in the *Maximus Poems*, "looking for oneself for the evidence of / what is said" (I.100–101).

In part, I chose Olson because he is indebted to William Carlos Williams; thus, I was able to touch upon the historiography of all three of the great practitioners of the poem containing history in the twentieth century. I was also interested in Olson for his shift in focus from local preservation to a much more sweeping, all-inclusive history by the end of the *Maximus Poems*; this shift finds resonance in my final chapter as Jena Osman and Robert Fitterman explore the "archive of everything" in the information age. The inclusion of Susan Howe was never a question; although I focus on her most recent poetry, her work has placed her from the late 1970s to the present directly in line as inheritor of the poem containing history through both Pound and Olson; her investment in the archive as a place of material silence and whispering ghosts is what brought me to the subject in the first place. Her regard for the lost subjects of history—and her decision to distance herself from their stories in order to give them more fully to the page—is one that pairs deep ethical commitment with innovative ways of telling history. Having traced a trajectory through Pound-Olson-Howe, the choice of who to write on in my final chapter was not a given. I might have written on a scholar poet like Cole Swensen or Rosmarie Waldrop, but while both draw on history, they do not, as a rule, do so through use of the archive; nor do they quote or cite to the same degree as other poets in the study. I might also have focused on a

documentary poet like Mark Nowak who cites from the culture at large to critique systems of labor and capital. Yet Nowak, despite his clear documentary impulse, is a much better fit for the trajectory my dissertation did *not* follow: Pound-Zukofsky-Ruykeyser-Reznikoff.

My choice to pair very recent work by Jena Osman and Robert Fitterman was motivated by their reconceptions, very different for each poet, of what citational poetry looks like in the current field of practice outside of the limitation of a physical archive. For Osman, who considers Howe a central influence, this played out in her use of an etymological dictionary (a kind of archive of language) to explore the history of New York's financial institutions; for Fitterman, a conceptual poet, I became fascinated with his use of the internet to cull individual voices from the emergent stream of human discourse—a highly preservationist practice that speaks to current questions of what it means to be a human subject, and to remember *humanly*, in our digital present. For indeed what ties my study together isn't only the poets' reimaginings of history as it was in the past; the orientation to the present returns us to epic concerns for the human story as it emerges from our current moment into the future, for as Derrida writes, "The question of the archive is not . . . a question of the past. . . . It is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow" (36). Like the epic whose stories of the communal past are necessary for the persistence of the human in the continuing present, the archive also has a responsibility to humanity's present and future—not only to preserve its contents for future generations (in whatever form this may take), but, as Fitterman suggests, to be open to receive the human story as it emerges in the now.

I have also been concerned, as this introduction makes clear, with understanding how our changing ideas of the archive correlate with each poet's interpretation of history. Thus, my chapters on Pound and Howe look at the practical work in archives actually done by the poets, while my chapters on Olson, Osman, and Fitterman focus their arguments around theoretical concerns: the Olson chapter on theories of the written and embodied archive from Jacques Derrida and Diana Taylor, and the Osman/Fitterman chapter on Foucault's conception of the archive as it relates to emerging human discourse. This ABAB structure is particularly helpful in moving the discussion of the archive from an emphasis on the physicality of archives, which is still, as the work of Susan Howe attests, very much in play in contemporary work, to a larger discussion of the theoretical implications of what the archive *means* as we look toward the future of the poem containing history without recourse to material "evidence" in physical archives.

The first chapter provides a reading of Ezra Pound's "privileged" archive of the *Cantos*, with particular attention to issues of access (the right to entry) and accessibility (the ease of entry) for the reader/patron of his poem-archive. In this chapter, I use correspondence and first-hand accounts to explore Pound's on-the ground interactions with the archival collections he consulted in Italy during his research into the Malatesta cantos, as well as the ways the *Cantos* themselves function as an archive of the best offerings of civilization, hand-picked by the poet. Although the *Cantos* appear to many critics to be accessible only to an elite coterie of scholars and critics, Pound's more populist purpose emerges through the example of his close friend, Italian archivist Torquato Manlio Dazzi, who exemplified to Pound the best practices for teaching and learning in the public sphere.

Comparing the work of this real-life archivist and librarian to Pound's ideals for "ideogrammic" reading and teaching, I find that Dazzi opens the doors to broader access by modeling to library patrons a comparative critical faculty that is necessary in learning "how to read"—a first step in negotiating fuller access to knowledge. In the same way, entrance into the *Cantos* is not gained only through the hard work of the student, but often through the intervention of a teacher or expert who can, through instruction and through modeling selection of the best material, guide students to a cogent understanding. That today's reader can, through persistence, gain entrance through self-teaching and research and is one of the goals Pound had in mind even in the early Cantos. Yet Pound's emphasis on the mediating role of experts and teachers also problematizes Pound's poem-archive, particularly if we consider the difficulty of the poem to novice readers who may not have access to halls of learning or to the collective wisdom of annotators with their multi-volume glosses.

In the second chapter I consider the first of several "inheritors" of the Pound tradition for the poem containing history, Charles Olson, arguing that the *Maximus Poems* are shaped by two competing systems for recording human memory: the archive of written history, following Jacques Derrida's definitions in *Mal d'Archive*, and the repertoire of skill and knowledge that is handed down generationally, following performance studies scholar Diana Taylor's work in *The Archive and the Repertoire*. In his drive to preserve the history of Gloucester through both written and embodied history, Olson limits his materials to those that are available "in his own backyard"—that is, local records and customs—a material limit that helps shape his poem-archive into a vehicle for preserving the history of Gloucester's skilled trades which are, in his estimation, passing away. The chapter also traces Olson' shift from this "limited archive" to a

wider, more inclusive history that has the ability to incorporate the mythical and ancient; at the same time, it maps the poet's orientation from past to future as he opens his poem-archive to encompass not just the life of Gloucester, but that of the wider world.

Although Olson incorporates himself into the poem, suggesting the possibility that the individual may also influence his or her own history, the poet's entrance is problematic in its assumptions of "humanity writ large" which are unlikely to correlate with the experience of the subject on the ground. The Maximus figure, who is in a (literally) large sense a version of the poet, is no quiet interloper in history but rather a shaper and mover whose ability to move within history, and even guide its interpretation, extends far beyond the scope of the average reader, thus pointing to the poet's archontic privilege. Still, Olson's version of the poem containing history provides an opening for the poets and readers who come after to consider the influence of the individual in shaping history, whether at the scale of the personal or at the scope of the communal or global.

Olson is a direct predecessor to Susan Howe, who, placing herself as an inheritor of his work uses composition by field, openness, and femininity as a model in her early work (even as she is critical of his patriarchal attitudes). Yet her approach to history is quite different from that evident in both his work and Pound's. In chapter three, I consider Howe's recent work, *That This* (2010), as an attempt to recover, through use of the historical archive, a particular voice that has fallen into the shadow side of history: that of Hannah Edwards Wetmore, sister to Jonathan Edwards, whose journals were accessed by Howe in the Edwards family papers at Yale's Beinecke Library. Resurrecting voices is not new to Howe; however, in *That This,* a close look at her sourcework reveals a new methodology that makes more direct treatment of source material

possible. Copying directly from archival materials through use of the techniques of manuscript study and with reference to a vetted transcription by trusted Jonathan Edwards scholar Kenneth Minkema, Howe brings up questions regarding the history of textual transmission and the possibility for the persistence of the individual after death. In her "persistent archive," voices such as Hannah's continue to exist despite all evidence to the contrary, raising questions pertinent in the archive of the value of the original versus a copy and the possibility for traces and fragments of historical documents to carry the aura of the human. Writing more than a half-century after Olson, Howe rewrites the possibilities for the subject in the poem containing history by insisting that even those who have fallen into history's deepest fissures—whether through textual or actual violence—have, through poetry, a means to re-enter human discourse in powerful, even physical ways.

In the final chapter, I explore the ways in which Jena Osman, a scholar poet, and Robert Fitterman, a conceptual poet, use appropriative techniques to reconsider the history of ownership and human agency in late capitalist culture. Writing in the information age, their view of the "physical" record in an actual archive as the only reliable means of historical evidence has undergone a fundamental shift; for these poets, material is available all around us, even down to the material of the present moment. Working in what I term an "archive of everything," both poets are deeply interested in the ways in which information (for Osman historical and for Fitterman digital) relays knowledge of what it means to be a human subject in the revolving present. In "The Financial District," Osman considers the place of the subject in relation to the "networks" of New York's early financial history, using appropriative techniques to historicize the use of archival records and put into question their function as evidence of received history. In

Rob the Plagiarist, Fitterman uses the technique of "google sculpting" to cull individual voices from the internet in a kind of post-9/11 time capsule of collective identity in the poem "This Window Makes Me Feel."

Foucault's definition for the archive in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* becomes a trope that follows through both poets' work: through different means, both explore the emerging discourse of human history and language as it relates to the archive as "the first law of what can be said" (127). How one may enter the conversation, what one may say, and what each can pull from the past and present become subjects for enquiry and critique. Both suggest that networks of human discourse can be seen differently through "noticing," a concept from Joan Retallack that indicates the reorientation possible through art, and through "reframing," an appropriative practice in Fitterman's work in which "plagiarized" or borrowed material is reused differently to enunciate the difference between its original frame of reference and its new context.[10] The poets introduce us to fresh ways of understanding emerging and older strands of human discourse and the possibilities and limits these offer to the current subjects of history—both readers of their work and citizens of American culture.

In a hopeful gesture, Osman reorients our understanding of America's past by creating an archive that makes the link between human slavery and the rise of financial institutions clearer, opening the possibility for the subject ultimately to escape narratives of dispossession and ownership. Less hopeful but perhaps more attuned to the material realities of our current digital state, Fitterman preserves a kind of everyhuman's subjectivity that speaks to individual experience even as it makes us question our own identities as manufactured by media and co-opted by consumer culture. His suggestion that we may be able to overcome co-optation by

participating in, rather than rejecting, the culture that forms us leaves the reader with only a partial solution to the problem of shrinking agency in our wired world. In the end, both poets find ways to respond to "networked" culture in the present, shifting the focus of the archive from past to present and the contents of the archive to the world and to the evolving present. That access to their archives remains open gestures toward one more possibility for the subject of history, who now has fuller entry to their contents. As Derrida writes, "Effective democratization can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation" (4 n. 5).

This final chapter, with its focus on new technologies and networks of information, is poised at the cusp of archive studies and the poem containing history in the twenty-first century. Indeed, as we shift from the paper-based economy of the written record to a more encompassing, pervasive archive of everything driven by digitized information that is constantly and relentlessly scrolling before our eyes, we are reminded of Ezra Pound's deep concern in *Guide to Kulchur* for what to do about "the heteroclite mass of undigested information hurled at [us] daily and monthly and set to entangle [our] feet in volumes of reference" (*GK* 23). If the archive of human history has, as Fitterman's poetry of the moment would have us believe, expanded its bounds from the past to the present, and moved away from given narratives such as nation and progress, then what possibilities exist for recognizing the individual stories and histories, or of even recognizing the human subject, in the present? Does the individual cope and thrive in the deluge? I would suggest that poetry—particularly poetry that tells the human story—is one vehicle that, as Pound suggested eighty years ago, can help us to recognize what is worth keeping as we search for lasting human meaning; it is one vehicle through which, as Joan Retallack advises, we

can begin to “notice” patterns and ways of thinking that tell us how we got here and where we are going and that even allow us to reorient ourselves when necessary, enlarging our capacity as individuals to understand our place(s) within larger history without disregarding the material grounding of our own (lack of) agency. “What is the work of human culture,” Retallack asks, “but to make fresh sense and meaning of the reconfiguring matter at the historical-contemporary intersection we call the present?” (10). The poets who engage in this telling, with eyes wide open to the risks and enchantments of telling history, who keep us grounded in the material truths of our origins through their keen attention to the evidence of our existence, make remembering—and retelling—both worthwhile and possible.

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[1] Pound used the terms “containing” and “including” interchangeably in his definitions of epic. In *ABC of Reading*, published in 1934, he states that “an epic is a poem containing history” (46); the year following he calls it “a poem including history” (*Impact* 142). I choose the term “containing” over “including” because it implies both the poet’s active shaping of the “container” of the poem—its shape and scope—and his selection of materials, which are “contained” by the limits set by the poet, marking boundaries of inclusion and exclusion.

[2] See especially Jonathan Boulter’s *Melancholy and the Archive*, which considers the twentieth century novel and the archive through the lens of trauma studies. Georgio Agamben’s *Remnants of Auschwitz* examines the philosophy of testimony and witness in the post-Holocaust novel. Both of these studies also have in common a non-American focus.

[3] One study of the practical implications of the archive for twentieth century poetry does exist in Thomas John Nelson’s dissertation on Louis Zukofksy’s *“A”* as a “case study” for archival work in the twentieth-century “long poem.” As he writes, “Long poems . . . collect and preserve cultural documents. [Each is] an arrangement of discrete passages, often [using] direct citations from sources such as letters, historical texts, and other ‘non-poetic’ documents” (13–14). Although I agree with Nelson that poets such as Pound “act[s] as archivist[s] [in] select[ing] material for preservation,” Nelson bases his discussion of the archive on mid-twentieth century definitions of archival terms that do not take into account the modern understanding that, in the words of Caroline Williams, “archivists are active shapers of documentary heritage, rather than passive, objective custodians” (135). My work moves beyond both Nelson’s timeframe, which ends with the publication of *“A,”* and the static notions of the archive as objective record and the archivist (or, poet-archivist) as a passive, objective collector of cultural knowledge (Nelson 21).

[4] As Paul Ricoeur writes, when we consider archival documents, the "accent is placed on the support, the warrant a document provides for a history, a narrative, or an argument. . . . If history is a true narrative, documents constitute its ultimate means of proof. They nourish its claim to be based on facts" (67).

[5] In *Processing the Past* (2011), Blouin, an archivist, and Rosenberg, a historian, take up the question of archival authority as it relates to the history of their disciplines. Focusing on the "institutional" archive as a physical or digital repository rather than a conceptual framework, they find that archivists and historians "no longer share common professional training or historical understanding" once rooted in "mutual appreciation of scientific rigor and a shared notion of how the past should be processed" (6). Instead, an "archival divide" has arisen between the disciplines whereby "historians have become increasingly uninformed about what archivists have done and now do" and archivists have missed "how new concepts like social memory have changed historians' understanding of how the past can be processed analytically" (6–7). Their study raises issues that are also related to mine, in particular the ways in which "new historical approaches, new technologies, and massive amounts of contemporary information may affect how societies in the future may process their pasts through historical archives… [and] how as a consequence historical knowledge has and will be shaped" (7).

[6] Antoinette Burton's edited volume, *Archive Stories*, is a welcome exception to this rule. In it, Burton gathers "narratives about how archives are created, drawn upon, and experienced by those who use them to write history" (6). The collection of ethnographies, written by historians working inside physical archives, together show "the effect that the researcher's gaze, gender, or class may have on her experiences within them or about the impact that archival surveillance, architecture, or bureaucracy might have on the histories that are ultimately written."

[7] For more on interdisciplinary definitions of the archive, see O'Driscoll and Bishop, as well as Manoff.

[8] Stoler sees the gap between the theoretical and practical archive as existing between historians and cultural theorists. Other scholars, notably archive theorist Terry Cook, have placed the divide between historians, who "focus on issues of power, memory, and identity centered upon the initial inscription of a document," and archivists, who concentrate on "the subsequent history of documents over time, including the many interventions by archivists" ("The Archive(s)" 497). For Blouin and Rosenberg, the "archival divide" between archivists and historians is figured in slightly different terms, based instead on a growing divergence in training and knowledge, particularly around notions of archival "authority" (See note 4).

[9] See Bernstein's Introduction for his assessment of Pound's retaking of the epic from a purely narrative genre into verse in the twentieth century.

[10] For more on Retallack's concept of "noticing," see her introduction to *The Poethical Wager*, esp. 9–11. As she writes, "Noticing becomes art when, as [a] contextualizing project, it reconfigures the geometry of attention, drawing one into conversation with what would otherwise remain silent in the figure-ground patterns of history" (10).

Chapter 1

Ezra Pound and the Privileged Archive

> People find ideas a bore because they do not distinguish between live ones and stuffed ones on a shelf.
>
> —Ezra Pound, *Guide to Kulchur*

> These fragments you have shelved (shored).
>
> —*Canto* VIII

March 12, 1923. It began with a knock at a door. Ezra Pound, standing outside the Biblioteca Civile Gambulunga in Rimini, Italy, heard nothing but silence in reply—a surprise as he had written ahead to the librarian.[1] The building was closed; its caretaker, he learned, was ill. He wrote to his wife, Dorothy, the next morning, from the Palace Hotel:

> Blood And Thunder.
>
> Library here closed *at least* until the 20th as the damn *custode* has flu, and the boss [librarian] is too lazy . . .
>
> Am going to San Marino by the *trenino* in a few minutes and shall try to fill in time in Pesaro, Fano, etc. till the bloody *custode* recovers. IF he recovers."
>
> (qtd. in Rainey, "From the Patron" 128)

A week later he returned: another knock, again met with silence. But the poet insisted on seeing what he had come for: the manuscripts of Gaspare Broglio which contained accounts of the life of Sigismondo Malatesta, the subject of his new cantos.[2] Nancy Cunard, who would eventually publish *XXX Cantos*, had laid the groundwork during her visit to the Italian countryside the previous fall.[3] Stopping at Venice, Rimini, and Bologna at Pound's behest, she "locat[ed] rare books and transcrib[ed] 'wish-lists' of materials she thought might be useful" to him—sources related not just to the Malatesta family but to the builder Leon Battiste Alberti, who designed the façades of Sigimondo's Tempio, and philosopher Gemistus Plethon, who was interred at the

Tempio by Sigismondo (Chapman 554). "Documents abound in Italy you know," Cunard wrote to Pound. "You can refresh (!) yourself among them" (qtd. in Chapman 555).

Yet Cunard's experience navigating the libraries and archives of Italy's Adriatic coast was not always easy. In a letter dated October 15, 1922, she gave Pound an idea of the climate he might encounter when he came to research:

> You now have an enemy in Venice! or rather I have one for you. Went to [Ongavia] at once, and stuffy they were indeed. That man who took your letter from me, I pointing out the names merely, . . . read a line or two previous before he could be stopped. . . "The bruites" says he, 'oo are the bruites, hein?" it was a good moment. And they had no historical catalogue, nor anything else (I will go elsewhere now) and all the information was that Alberti was an architect.
> (qtd. in Chapman 555)

If Pound's reaction to being denied access at Gambulunga is any indication, he shared Cunard's frustration with the lack of bureaucratic efficiency, professionalism, and organization that was then evident in the Archivi di Stato. As Catarina Ricciardi explains, Italy's state libraries, which housed among other things documents related to the history of the former city-states where condotieri like Sigismondo vied for power in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, were "rather unevenly organized" well into the 1930s (149). Although regulations introduced in 1907, a year before the publication of the *Dutch Manual* in Italy, sought to centralize and reorganize state collections and to put new cataloguing and subject classification into practice, changes were slow in coming and "thorough modernization was never really achieved" (150).[4]

To someone accustomed to the highly regulated workings of the Reading Room at London's British Museum, Pound's experience at Gambulunga would have come as a shock, perhaps even an affront. By the time Pound became a reader in 1908, the entire holdings of the British Museum (equivalent to America's Library of Congress) had been published in a General

Catalogue searchable by author, subject, and title. Any system without such a catalog was inferior in the poet's eyes; in 1913 Pound complained that in America, "There is no British Museum catalogue from which a man may start" (qtd. in Paul 73). Further, readership came with privileges. As the holder of a "Reader's Ticket" he had only to request what he wished to read and it would be retrieved for him (73). He was, as part of the select group of men (and occasionally women) who spent their days as readers, known by name to the staff. The coterie culture of the reading room afforded the young poet a built-in network of fellow men of letters; as Catherine Paul writes, it was the place where Pound "fashioned himself into a modernist" (69). It was also the site of his first encounter with archives. Around 1911 he began to deepen his reading of the troubadours, particularly Arnault Daniel, by shifting from secondary to primary documents, availing himself of the vast collection which was only as far away as a willing library runner (Ricciardi 148).

This culture of privilege and order did not follow the poet to Italy, not least at Rimini's Gambulunga. But if Pound wasn't to be allowed access through the usual means, it wouldn't stop him from pursuing other avenues of entrance. He enlisted the help of hotel owner Averardo Marchetti, whose Palace Hotel he had patronized during his last unfruitful stay at Rimini. On the morning of the intended visit, Pound wrote to Dorothy: "Hotel-keeper ready to sack the place and have up the mayor if it isn't open; he is a noble fascist" (qtd. in Rainey, "From the Patron" 129). Marchetti, who would go on to form the Fascio Riminese and become, as several scholars have noted, Pound's first important fascist contact in Italy, did right by his word, complaining to the town doctor, who also happened to be the town's fascist boss, about the incident.[5] Later that day, the librarian, Aldo Francesco Massera, having been "shamed and intimidated . . . into

opening the library," Pound was able to start a week's worth of research into the Broglio manuscript (Chapman 546).[6]

It would seem from the above encounter that Pound was, for all of his strong-arming tactics, embarking on a research enterprise that would be pitted with frustration. Yet although his correspondence passes with little more to say about the particular archivisti he became acquainted with as he visited the collections surrounding Rimini, there is one who stands apart—not as a source of frustration but rather the opposite. The man was Manlio Torquato Dazzi, the librarian and archivist at the Biblioteca Malatestiana (Malatestine Library) in Cesena in the early 1920s.[7] They met for the first time just days before the Gambulunga incident. "An amiable librarian has showed me most of what he can get his hands on," Pound wrote to Dorothy in a postcard from Cesena dated March 10 (qtd. in O'Driscoll, "Ezra Pound's *Cantos*" 179). Apparently the library was worth a second visit; he returned the following week between trips to Rimini, and the two struck up a correspondence.[8] At first the relationship was strictly professional. Dazzi would find rare volumes for Pound's research; Pound, in turn, entrusted him with early copies of the *Cantos*, a privilege Dazzi looked forward to with anticipation: "I will be glad to welcome her [the Malatestiana's] songs into my library," he wrote in the spring of 1925 (my translation, Lucchi 242).[9] In August of that year, Pound presented *XVI Cantos* to Dazzi in person, reading him "the Sidg [Sigismondo], the Hell and the new typescript":

> The copy was placed in the Malatestiana at Cesena by my own honourable hands with fitting inscription . . . Dazzi very much surprised when I said Hell cantos wd. not travel thru American post. (That shows what a proper Dantescan education will do for a man. He said no modern Eyetalian wd. have the guts to do 'em. That they were of a vigore propriamente Americano.)
>
> (Letter to William Bird, *Letters* 273)

What had begun as an acquaintance grew into lasting bond. A regular fixture at the Pounds' villa in Rapallo (Mary de Rachevitz called Dazzi "dreamy" behind his librarian's gaze), Dazzi and Pound remained friends after the archivist left his post at the Malatestine Library to pursue a position at the Querini Library in Venice in 1927; their last correspondence is dated April 1967, nearly ten years after Pound's return to Italy and a year before Dazzi's death (qtd. in Barnes 23).[10]

Pound's research into Sigismondo Malatesta, and particularly into the Tempio Malatestiana, was aided by the collection over which Dazzi had charge: more than 300 codices in Greek and Latin in addition to state archives. The library was also notable for another reason: it is recognized as the first public institution of its kind; from the time of its construction its contents have been freely available to the "commune" or city-state of Cesena.[11] That Dazzi is connected to the first free-access library in Italy will have bearing on the argument to come. What's more—and what makes Pound's venture into the archives at Cesena all the more intriguing—is that the Biblioteca Malatestiana is closely connected to the history of the Tempio Malatestiana, Sigismondo Malatesta's church-turned-monument and the central subject of the Malatesta cantos. Named for Sigismondo's younger brother Domenico Novello Malatesta (or "Novvy" as Pound calls him in the *Cantos*), the Biblioteca was commissioned by Novello to be built in his seat of power, Cesena, in 1447, the same year reconstruction began on the Tempio in Sigismondo's smaller city-state of Rimini. The Tempio, which remained unfinished at Sigismondo's death in 1468, was redesigned by Leon Battista Alberti; the Library, laid out by his student Matteo Nuti, was completed in 1453. Both buildings are significant to the history of Renaissance architecture, a fact which did not go unnoticed by the poet. The library, whose 550-

year-old structure remains unchanged from the original, is today recognized for its "documentary heritage" by the UNESCO Memory of the World program.[12] In 1936 Pound called it "a unique monument to the culture of the best decades of the Renaissance" ("Possibilities" 79). The Tempio, celebrated for its competing styles by modernist architectural critic Adrian Stokes in *Stones of Rimini*, received even higher praise in *Guide to Kulchur*: "The Tempio Malatestiano . . . [is] perhaps the apex of what one man has embodied in the last 1000 years of the occident. A cultural 'high' is marked" (159).

Although this is not the place to discuss architectural similarities between the buildings, it is notable that both Malatestas—one who became central to Pound's project and another who was thrust aside—attempted such monumental projects in the same period, Novello's for the public and Sigismondo's as a monument to his dead lover, Isotta (at least in Pound's estimation, which has been shown by several critics to be based on a popular misinterpretation).[13] As Michael O'Driscoll writes, Novello was "the exemplary figure of a cultural caretaker, unlike his warrior/patron brother" ("Ezra Pound's *Cantos*" 174). Novello, whose work included enlarging and fortifying Cesena's walls and building up its bridges and roads, won the support of the people by putting down rebellions and maintaining peace. His voice was replaced in early drafts of the *Cantos* by documentary material on Sigismondo (D'Epiro 18–19). In sharp contrast to his brother, Sigismondo was a condotiero known for his leadership and cunning on the battlefield; he spent his life winning and losing contracts at the whim of small but powerful warring Italian states. Yet he was also a patron of the arts. Beyond hiring the best Renaissance artists to work on the Tempio (fresco painter Pier della Francesco and sculptor Agostino Duccio, among others), he offered them time and money to work at their own pace. As the second letter in Canto VIII

details, Sigismondo encourages the "*Maestro di pentore*" to "work as he likes, / Or waste his time as he likes . . . / never lacking provision" so that both he and the painter may "get as much enjoyment as possible from it" (VIII.28–29).[14] A man who "enjoy[ed]" the arts as well as a man of action, Sigismondo was a better candidate to center the Malatesta cantos than a mere keeper of culture like Novvy: to become the central figure of Pound's early *Cantos* he had to be an exemplum of civilization *and* a mover of history.

It may also explain why Pound, quick to praise Dazzi for his patronage of the arts and well-kept library, does not go beyond naming him as an example for "what the small town can do" in his larger criticism ("Possibilities" 75). In an essay on the "Possibilities of Civilization," he writes, "My research into the life of Sigismundo Malatesta took me to Cesena and from the library to a concert, managed by the librarian. The program was composed of music of the highest quality and a local lawyer was adding more interest to it (from the piano) than the professional musicians who had been imported for the occasion" (78). In another instance, he put together an exhibit of eighteenth-century paintings at the Querini: "Sattecento portraits that had been scattered and were without any interest as single paintings, have been assembled. The visitor is now aware of an 'existence'; of something quite definite having occurred in XVIIIth century Venice" (79). For Pound, Dazzi's work as an archivist and librarian was directly linked to his work as a promoter of culture—yet within a limited sphere. Although he found the exhibit excellent, Pound was quick to point out that "there has been no attempt to *rival* the matchless galleries of Milan and Pelugia" (80, his emphasis). Similar to Novello who did not battle to enlarge his lands but only sought to preserve them for the use of the *commune*, Dazzi's purview was only over his own locale. His contribution, like Novvy's, remained within limits: "Let me

take his record as showing what a man can do outside a big city and without any pretensions to upsetting the history either of his age or of letters" (79).

Like Novello, Dazzi worked to extend "civilization" to the public within his own sphere of influence and with what he had at his disposal. He was well-qualified for the task. Trained in the classics, he likely caught Pound's eye for his translation of the Italian troubadour Alberto Mussato's *Ecerinis*, published in 1914 (*Letters* 257).[15] (The protagonist of *Ecerinis*, real-life feudal lord Ezzelino III, is a tyrannical counterpoint to Pound's Sigismondo.) Dazzi would also be the one to translate Pound to the patrons of the Malatestiana after receiving *XVI Cantos*, as detailed in the poet's 1925 letter to William Bird: "Various of the studiosi were later assembled (in my absence) and those who cdn't stumble thru English 'ad it explained" (*Letters* 273). Yet for all of his ability to translate language and culture to interested patrons and students, Dazzi did not himself contribute to the fine arts or to history. His own creative work, which he discussed in his correspondence with Pound, was nothing Pound could "get up on [his] hind feet and shout to the world" about ("Possibilities" 81).[16] Although Pound "respect[ed] the language and technique of his poems," Dazzi's work on Mussato was far more important: he had not only "rectified learned opinion of Mussato" but made him "better known" ("Possibilities" 80, 79). Clearly, for Pound, the librarian-archivist's role was not to "upset" history or to create masterworks of art or literature but to make them more accessible to others. Like Novello, he was a "cultural caretaker" of the highest order—albeit one who operated behind the scenes.

Pound also held Dazzi's archival work in high esteem: he writes in 1936 that "the Malatestine Library in Cesena . . . is in better condition because Dazzi was once its librarian" ("Possibilities" 79). Later at the Querini in Venice, Dazzi helped keep the value of the collection

alive for the public. Pound describes the library as "a monument of taste and, what is rarer, a monument to great common sense and thoughtfulness for humanity"—in part for the Querini family who left the building and the family papers it housed to the public, and in part for Dazzi's continuing watch over the collections (79). The Querini benefitted from his oversight, even down to the way it treated its patrons. Pound informs us that "the library is open in the evening" and even "provide[s] for those who forget to bring paper and for whom even that expense might have caused trouble"—a small detail, perhaps, but one that speaks to the respect for visitors that was harder to find in other state libraries (79). It was with Dazzi's help that Pound would undertake some of his most valuable archival research into Florentine poet Guido Cavalcanti, comparing over 80 original manuscripts to print editions to produce what he considered an authoritative textual edition in 1932 (Ricciardi 151).[17] The Italian edition, prepared by Dazzi and published at Pound's expense by a publisher in Genoa, opens with a dedication to Dazzi in all capitals: "A / MANLIO DAZZI . . . / CON ME DIVISO LE FATICHE DI QUEST' EDIZIONE" [To Manlio Dazzi who with me divided the labors of this edition] (qtd. in Casella 72, my translation). Clearly, Pound's trust in Dazzi went far beyond his work as an archivist or librarian; yet it found its origins in his work as a preserver of Italy's cultural heritage.

For both Pound and Dazzi, the archive was marked not by the dead weight of history but by the living light of all that was best in civilization—a quality that could only be seen through the application of a finely critical eye. In using his selective capacity to promote his collections to the public, Dazzi defied the common notion of the archivist as an objective, hands-off gatekeeper that had persisted since before the adoption of the *Dutch Manual*. This stereotype was

still very much alive when British archivist Sir Hilary Jenkinson published his 1922 manual on archival administration:

> The Archivist's career is one of service. He exists in order to make other people's work possible. . . . His Creed, the Sanctity of Evidence; his Task, the Conservation of every scrap of Evidence attaching to the Documents committed to his charge; his aim to provide, without prejudice or afterthought, for all who wish to know the Means of Knowledge. . . . The good Archivist is perhaps the most selfless devotee of Truth the modern world produces.
> (Qtd. in Cook, "What is Past" 22)

Although Dazzi did, in keeping with this definition, "make other people's work possible" through his maintenance of the collections at the Querini and Malatestiana, his service in the public sphere shows that he also used his critical faculties to broaden his collections' reach in ways that extended accessibility to the common patron. In this he was far ahead of his time. As Terry Cook writes of this period in archival history, "Any appraisal by the archivist was utterly inappropriate. Such exercise of 'personal judgement' . . . would tarnish the impartiality of archives as evidence. . . . The archivist's role was to keep, not select archives" (23). Yet in both the sattecento exhibit and concert Dazzi applied selectivity, choosing the music and paintings that would be presented to concert goers and library patrons. In doing so, he not only took an active role in determining what the public should see, but promoted their own critical faculties: visitors to the exhibit would have to make connections between paintings if they were to discern "an 'existence' . . . of something quite definite having occurred in XVIIIth century Venice." Pound remarked in *Guide to Kulchur* that "people find ideas a bore because they do not distinguish between the live ones and the dead ones stuffed on a shelf" (51). Dazzi's work as an archivist and librarian not only sorted between the living and the dead in Italy's cultural memory, but, by offering a limited set of "live" ideas to the public, gave patrons the opportunity to

exercise the kind of comparison that would be useful in their own understanding of what exemplified "civilization."

In what follows, I explore the aspect of Dazzi's public character that Pound both commended and, at the same time, took as a matter of fact for an archivist-librarian in 1920s Italy without knowing just how forward-thinking it was for the archival sciences: the ability to discern the valuable from the unimportant mass of material, or as Pound called it in *Guide to Kulchur* in reference to the print materials of his day, "the heteroclite mass of undigested information hurled at [us] daily and monthly and set to entangle [our] feet in volumes of reference" (23). Both "cultural caretaker" and curator of the best his collections had to offer, Dazzi mediated Pound's entry into the often disorganized, disjointed Italian archives and at the same time made them accessible to the public, cultivating the ability to compare that is a key to entering Pound's own epic work, particularly through the Malatesta sequence. In this way, he exemplifies Pound's ideal reader, able to discriminate and judge what is best within a given set of materials and further, what the parts mean when placed together. Not a man of action but one working in a smaller sphere to preserve and promote Italy's documentary and cultural heritage, Dazzi stands as a real-life example for how we as readers might enter Pound's *Cantos*. He models to us a method of "ideogrammic reading" that is necessary to understand and navigate the early *Cantos*, making it possible to bypass the cult of scholarly privilege that bars the common reader accessibility to Pound's poem-archive.

To get to accessibility and back to Dazzi, we follow a circuitous route that compares Pound's methods in the *Cantos* with the work of the modern archivist, through Pound's understanding of the ideogrammic method as it relates to the composition of the early *Cantos*,

and through his critical writing on "the new learning" which emphasized "comparative reading" across disciplines.

The Ideogram and the Archive

In the *Cantos*, the ideogram is more than a poetic technique; it is also a spatial construct whose structure resembles, in miniature, structures of the archive and whose composition reflects practices of the archivist, particularly the appraisal and arrangement that is evident in Dazzi's early work with archival collections for the public view.[18] Pound's attitude toward research, his selective practices when working with archival collections, and his integration of the material aspects of research into the poem itself (for example, his insertion of bibliographic tags in the Malatesta cantos) can also be traced to the ideogrammic method. By considering Pound's methods for research and writing as models of ideogrammic inquiry, this chapter assesses Pound's interaction with the archive itself: his entry into real-life archives and libraries, and the ways in which the *Cantos* themselves become, as a result of Pound's documentary approach, an archive of historic-literary fragments.[19, 20]

Entrance into Pound's "archive" is mediated by the poet, but is also contingent on the reader's ability to read in the way Pound prescribes—a method of interpretation I call "ideogrammic reading." By exploring the limitations of this reading practice, which Pound models for us in his textbooks and in the real-life example of Manlio Torquato Dazzi, I also will address issues of access and accesibility in Pound's Malatesta cantos, which were based in part on his own access to Italy's state archives in the early 1920s. How far do ideogrammic reading practices prescribed in the early *Cantos* and in his criticism extend to the reader's ability to enter

and understand his poem-archive? What credentials must one have to become a full access user of his limited access archive? And how does a real-life archivist like Manlio Torquato Dazzi become a model for this type of reading and learning, both in and outside the *Cantos*?

In my assessment of Pound's archive I will not be using tools from the literary canon, now quite large, on theorists like Derrida and Foucault whose approach to the archive has had very little to do with actual archival practice or an understanding of shifts in archival theory over the past 100 years.[21] Instead, by using the practical and theoretical terminology of practicing archivists I hope to further the dialogue between literary scholars and practicing archivists, and to push for a more truly interdisciplinary approach to the reading of the archive in literature.[22] As I argue, aspects of Pound's ideogrammic method are analogous to contemporary professional archival practices of appraisal and arrangement, taking Pound's practice beyond what would have been current in the libraries and archives where he himself conducted research. While I do not assume Pound's actual knowledge of archival practices, this is in keeping with his understanding of M.T. Dazzi's role as an archivist who was not simply a gatekeeper for cultural knowledge but one who engaged with the public by selecting and presenting to them the best that the archives had to offer, similar to Pound's own purpose in the *Cantos*.

Current archival practice recognizes the contingency and materiality of history; by looking at Pound's actual practice as an archivist of the history he catalogs in the *Cantos*, I hope to engage in a more material survey of his archival movement on the ground.

Appraisal and Arrangement: Pound's Ideogrammic Method

Appraisal is the process by which the archivist decides which materials to include and

which to leave out—similar to Pound's process in the *Cantos* for deciding which historical particulars to include as he recreated the political and artistic climate of fifteenth-century Italy in the Malatesta cantos. According to James O'Toole and Richard Cox, appraisal "entails establishing procedures for analyzing records in order to make sound and consistent choices. . . . Archival theory proposes a set of criteria, analytic tools, and techniques for archivists to apply in a systematic way" (119). The ideogrammic method, though by no means orthodox in terms of archival science, was in fact such a system; its theory was connected directly to its application. It provided Pound with a standard for choosing which material to include (more of which later), and more importantly to his technique, how it should be arranged. In arrangement the archivist "discerns the proper *intellectual* arrangement of the records and then puts them *physically* in that order" (122, emphasis mine). The spatial quality of the ideogram—whose careful arrangement of historical detail is rooted in a long history of thought applied to process—epitomizes this "think first, then arrange" principle.

In Pound's ideogram, arrangement is intrinsically connected to appraisal: it is through the intersection of historical particulars, that is, the spatial arrangement of historical detail chosen out of the mass of available material, that his index to history is built, "grouping" records according to their intersection at key historical turns, and across history through similarities of action or person. Thus, the "fragments . . . shelved (shored)" in the Malatesta cantos become an index both of the period and of those who peopled it (VIII.28). Sigismondo, for instance, is marked in Canto VIII both by his "arrangements" for the Tempio artists "to . . . get the sum agreed on . . . never lacking provision" and for his "service" as condotiero to the "Florentines" which will include "50,000 florins, free of attainder, / For 1400 cavalry and four hundred foot"

(VIII.29–30). Both patron and patronized, he is presented from the first as a man of refined taste and a man of war, with the exchange of money and provisions the common denominator in these widely differing roles. Pound exercised creative latitude in both his selection and placement of these facts, which occur in the same Canto one letter apart. Rather than following the chronological record or the order in which these historical particulars were placed in the archives he consulted, he gave them a new order that would highlight their unlikely intersections. In this way, he created a new archive, writ small, of historical particulars whose arrangement would, he believed, pique the reader's comparative abilities in a way their original order did not. Once laid down, these minute structures of meaning would accrete into a larger image of civilization that would model to readers right action and right thinking.

In Pound's poem-archive, selection was always made with one eye toward spatial arrangement. The ideogram itself is a spatial concept, based on the visual arrangement of signs that made up the Chinese ideograph. Pound's concept for the ideogram came out of his interest in the Chinese system of writing as interpreted by Ernest Fenollosa, whose "Chinese notebooks" were translated by the poet for publication in 1915, a few years before he began work on the *Cantos*. In Pound's interpretation of the Chinese system of writing (quite different from a modern interpretation), the ideograph layered pictures of single words ("rose, cherry, iron rust, flamingo") one over the other to create a new word ("red"), which would then embody the total character of the images built into it (*ABC* 22).[23] Once drawn, the ideograph could not be divided into its constituent parts; it only signified "red" once all of the images had gone into it; no one word out of those that composed it could represent or replace it.[24] In its inability to be dislodged once knit together, and in the necessity of each piece to the whole, the arrangement of the

ideograph bears a striking resemblance to the idea of "original order" mentioned earlier—the principle in archival theory that records should remain in the order in which they were first arranged. As we see in the example above, Pound did not keep the "original order" of the archive; as a poet, his creative impulse shaped his historical purpose.

This leads to an important difference between Pound's poem and working archives. In a working archive, records are catalogued according to the order in which they were received and it is this order which is preserved; in the *Cantos*, the parts of the ideogram hang in equal balance, carefully selected and placed so that the reader may create from them a new, whole image that is different than the one created from a set with a given order. It is their grouping *together* which is key to their value, as in the example of Sigismondo whose warring and creating impulses together made up "the man of action." Following Hayden White's description of the "organicist" model of history, these disparate parts "aggregate into wholes that are greater than, or qualitatively different from, the sum of their parts" (15).[25] In other words, once assembled, the ideogram crystallizes into something different, and "greater," than it was before; an act of creation has occurred. This extends Pound's role beyond that of the modern archivist and indeed, far beyond what Dazzi was capable of as an archivist ahead of his time. Where Dazzi was able to convey "an existence . . . [of] something quite definite having occurred," Pound was, through historical particulars, able to delineate and name the sharp features of that existence. As he writes of the ideogrammic method in *Guide to Kulchur*, "The purpose of writing is to reveal the subject. The ideogrammic method consists of presenting one facet and then another until at some point one gets off the dead and desensitized surface of the reader's mind, onto a part that will register" (51). Pound believed he was making this process easier by collecting and presenting relevant

facts to the reader. In fact, he believed, even without the aid of the ideogram the reader ought to be able to "pick the live details from past chronicle" in order to "isolate the quality or the direction of a given time's sensibility" (*GK* 227).

To "translate" the spatialized image of the ideograph (in which signs could be layered directly onto the same page) to the linear method of the ideogram, Pound used the formal techniques of juxtaposition and parataxis. Juxtaposition is the laying side by side of elements for purposes of comparison and contrast; parataxis takes this a step further, placing elements side by side *sans* prepositions, conjunctions, or other connective material that might indicate a causal relationship between them or subordinate one piece to another, leading to a potentially false syllogistic reading.[26] In the *Cantos*, Pound often placed fragments of historical and literary material—quoted or original, or a hybrid—back to back, with nothing to connect them, forcing the reader to interpret through the act of comparison. Though we may be tempted to read this as an "objective" stepping back of the poet-archivist from the record, we should not forget that the creative act of arranging, an arguably intrusive act, has already taken place.[27] Still, the onus for interpretation falls on the reader, who must not only understand each particular, but how it fits with the rest to create a new image. Here's an example from the opening of Canto 4:

> Palace in smoky light,
> Troy but a heap of smouldering boundary stones,
> ANAXIFORMINGES! Aurunculeia!
> Hear me. Cadmus of Golden Prows!
>
> (IV.13)

In this stanza, the ideogram is made up of four parts which, at least for modern readers, require a gloss to get to interpretation. In the first two lines, the burning of Troy suggests lamentation for the death of a city; the opening words to a Pindaric hymn ("ANAXIFORMINGES!") indicate the

conjunction of poetry and music; the reference to a bride praised by Catullus (“Arunculeia!”) gestures toward fertility and love; and the homage to Cadmus, founder of Thebes, signals the rise of a new civilization.[28] Together these build up into a montage, painted in broad strokes, of the fall and rise of civilization, including death, art/culture, love, and rebirth, all necessary elements for the cycle of history to continue. We might call this the ideogram for cyclical history—a theme Pound treats extensively in the *Cantos*. In it, 200 years of history are compressed into four fragmentary lines of poetry in which the pieces are separated only by the space of the line break and the grammar of the comma and exclamation point. Absorption occurs only after we know the history of each particular, leading to an explosion of meaning over a very small, brief space, just as Fenollosa implies the ideograph is itself a thing of brevity, “the meeting point of actions, cross-sections cut through actions, snap shots” (14). It also links to themes which are carried across into other cantos. As George Kearns writes, “Pound implies in this opening ideogram, each element supporting the others, a refusal to accept a fragmented sensibility in which art, private emotions, and government are kept separate from each other”—a description that points us straight towards Sigismondo Malatesta (27). Sigismondo experienced multiple rises and falls as a condotiero; he was a man whose private interests (including erotic affairs, money laundering, and murder) ran counter to his civic interests (the collection of art, the building of the Tempio)[29], a man who, despite his “fragmented sensibility,” becomes the man of action around whom the best of his civilization coheres.

Once one has become fluent in the signs that make up the image, the meaning of the ideogram explodes, its movement embodied in the all-at-onceness by which it passes before our eyes (try again reading the above example and you’ll experience this). In fact, it is this idea of

"action," of the movement that gives force to the image, that helped Pound to determine which material would be intrinsically valuable to his index of history. This connects back once again to the ideogram, whose "radical" or "root"—the image over which all of the others are layered—is a word of action; movement underlies the image, bringing it to life, as in the ideograph for "to grow up with difficulty" which is made up of the signs for "grass" and "twisted root," or in the movement of the burning city contrasted with Cadmus' triumphant entry at Thebes in Canto 4 (Fenollosa 13).[30]

In several sequences of the early *Cantos*, the radical or root of action is embodied by a particular person, a "man of action" who exemplified the movement of his era by his civic and private life on the ground, and by his ability to bring "order" to the civilization of which he was a part. In the *Cantos*, such men included Sigismondo Malatesta, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Benito Mussolini, and Kung—men connected in Pound's mythology by their right thinking and ability to lead by example. Whether we agree with Pound's assessment (modern readers, on the whole, do not) is not the issue here: the consistency of his choices is, and speaks again to the theory driving the ideogram. To Pound, these men's "actions" aligned them against the disorder of their own era, which was, in Malatesta's time, most evident in the corrupt rulers of the Italian city states he served. As Pound writes of Sigismondo in *Guide to Kulchur*,

> In a Europe not YET rotted by usury, but outside the then system, and pretty much against the power that was . . . Sigismundo cut his notch. He registers a state of mind, of sensibility, of all-roundness and awareness . . . All that a single man could, Malatesta managed *against* the current of power.
>
> (*GK* 159)

Given the value Pound laid on action and order, we might read men like Malatesta as "creators" or archivists themselves—men who, in this poet's estimation, were first to arrange the particulars

of history (their own actions and motivations) into an exemplary order. Indeed, in the early essay "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris," Pound sees the kind of work he is doing in the archives as an example of resurrecting that order by first understanding the history of the era:

> [I]f one wished an intimate acquaintance with the politics of England or Germany at certain periods, would one be wiser to read a book of generalities and then read at random through the archives, or to read through, let us say, first the State papers of Bismarck or Gladstone? Having become really conversant with the activities of either of these men, would not almost any document of the period fall, if we read it, into some sort of orderly arrangement? Would we not grasp its relation to the main stream of events?
>
> ("I Gather," *SP* 42–3)

Having delved intentionally into the archives of the Quattrocento, Pound pieces together their history one document at a time; as he writes the Malatesta cantos, each detail "fall[s] . . . into some sort of orderly arrangement" that helps readers "grasp its relation to the main stream of events." He explains further, developing his concept of the "luminous detail" that predated the terminology of the ideogrammic method: "Any fact may be 'symptomatic', but certain facts give one a sudden insight into circumjacent conditions, into their causes, their effects, into sequence, law. . . . A few dozen facts of this nature give us intelligence of a period—a kind of intelligence not to be gathered from a great array of facts of the other sort" (22). In the Malatesta cantos, Pound seeks to recreate the order of Sigismondo's world by locating and aligning similar pieces of historical and literary material so that they might compel readers—and rulers—to follow the example set by the men who exemplified these periods. In a sense, then, it is "men of action" who both determine and reestablish "original" order, and the poet's task is to discern that order out of the fragments of history at his disposal. This is done through the building up of a new historical register that, piece by ideogrammic piece, accretes into a new index of meaning as readers grasp the essence of the periods and civilizations of which he writes, particularly in the

early cantos.

In Pound's poem-archive, the adoption of material depended not on any intrinsic historic value of the records themselves, but on whether the material was, as the epigram to this chapter suggests, truly "living"—further extending the radical of action at the center of the ideogram. It is the ability to distinguish the "living from the dead" which intrinsically links ideogrammic practice to the archive, as Pound's metaphor suggests: "Nevertheless, the method I had proposed was simple, it is perhaps the only one that can give a man an orderly arrangement of his perception in the matter of letters. . . . We apply a loose-leaf system to book-keeping so as to have the live items separated from the dead ones" ("How to Read" 18). It is telling that Pound's metaphor for the selection of living material—that of a bookkeeper culling records in use from records no longer in use—comes out of archival practice.[31] In keeping business records, he explains in *Guide to Kulchur*, bookkeepers used the loose-leaf system to "separate archives from facts that are in use, or that are likely to be needed for reference" (38). In this way "old accounts, accounts of deceased and departed customers [that] formerly blocked the pages of ledgers" are now relegated to a shelf, leading to more "effective" business (55, 38). For Pound, what was useful did not often correlate with what was most recent, but with what was relevant to the present time, fulfilling archivist Brien Brothman's query many years later, "Do records periodically become young, active, and useful again, though not perhaps for their original . . . purpose?" (54).

"As archivists," writes Mary Jo Pugh, "we are interested in records both as the evidence of actions taken and for the information they contain" (14). For Pound, both the "evidence of actions" and "information" of particulars are key to the ideogrammic method and to his research

practices—but it was the selection of "living" material that was at the root of his appraisal process, and the archival action which lends his poetry such vital force. As noted above, the hope for the ideogrammic method was to "get off the dead and desensitized surface of the reader's mind, onto a part that will register" (*GK* 51). This connection between the "live" part of the reader's mind and the "living," action-oriented radical of the ideogram was central to Pound's selection and arrangement practices even beyond the *Cantos*.

In the frontispiece to his 1936 treatise on history and education, *Guide to Kulchur*, the poet brings archival work together with the ideogram in an example that showcases both the "living material" he believed was vital to his purpose and his abiding interest in Sigismondo Malatesta. Returning to the subject that infused his early cantos with documentary precision, Pound uses the frontispiece to describe the Tempio Malatestiana, which for the poet functioned as a spatial representation (read: ideogram) of the work of Sigismondo to promote culture through both art and action. Above the frontispiece is a photographic reproduction of a wax seal that was used by the Malatesta family; the image on the disk is a man's face in profile, to the left is the letter *S*, we assume for Sigismondo's son, Salustio, who is mentioned later in the book as being "there in the wax" (159). Together with the text of the frontispiece, placed just below the seal, it creates an ideogram whose radical we might call the action of historical curiosity, linking several "finds" together in a long paragraph whose rhetoric shifts and swerves with each new brushstroke:

> This wafer of wax is caught, as was the custom, between two surfaces of paper in a letter from the young Salustio Malatesta. The Pisanello medals are known, the seals are unknown or less known. I give the reproduction of this one to indicate the thoroughness of Rimini's civilization in 1460. If you consider the Malatesta and Sigismundo in particular, a failure, he was at all events a failure worth all the successes of his age. He had in Rimini, Pisanello, Pier della Francesca. Rimini still has "the best Bellini in Italy". If the Tempio is a jumble and a junk shop, it nevertheless registers a concept. There is no other single man's effort equally

> registered. Sigismundo brought back Gemisto's coffin, and I leave the reader to decide whether without that incitement to curiosity even Herr Schulze wd. have dug up the illegible ms. in the Laurenziana or anyone noticed the latin pages bound in at the end of an almost unfindable edtn. of Zenophon. 1460, 140 years after Dante.
>
> (ii)

We might read the "wafer of wax" as a metaphor for the tenuous connections between pieces of historical information, for Pound mutable and moldable as wax, yet firmly imprinted with the stamp of a single active mind. The rarity of such a mind is further emphasized by the scarcity of such "unknown or less known" seals relative to the more "known" Pisanello medals, and in the fact that the less common seal stands as a symbol for "the thoroughness of Rimini civilization." Yet comparison doesn't end there. The poet next moves to the artists hired by Malatesta to work at the Tempio: Pisanello, Pier della Francesca, Bellini—again, examples of rarity standing as exempla for civilization. But the value of rarity is soon turned on its head as the Tempio takes on the "impression" of the man who, like the seal itself, infuses the whole with the stamp of his personality: "If the Tempio is a jumble and a junk shop, it nevertheless registers a concept. There is no other single man's effort equally registered." Here Pound seems to reverse his earlier logic: before, a single wax seal stood for civilization; now, the entire "jumble and junk shop"—on the surface, a negative description—"registers" the "concept" of Sigismondo. The general now stands for the particular, a single man. Through this reversal, which we glean through comparing the varied "pieces" of the ideogram, Pound indicates that it is indeed possible to tell the difference between the mass of "junk"—the "heteroclite mass of undigested information" as he calls it elsewhere in *Guide to Kulchur*—and the single treasure that might stand for a civilization (36). Perhaps most significant, all of this hinges on archival research: as the final piece of the ideogram states, if it weren't for "incitement to curiosity" we would not have access to "illegible

ms. in the Laurenziana" or the hidden Latin pages "bound in at the end of an almost unfindable edition of Xenophon" that open Sigismondo's history to us; a text of Petrarch, according to Peter D'Epiro, found by accident in a "codex of one of the Lords of Malatesta" whose printing is the final action in *A Draft of XXX Cantos* (xxix).

At one end we have the happy accidents of research, at another the intentional work of the archivist searching through the codices of an almost forgotten history. Between accident and intention, Malatesta's Tempio emerges as a concept that makes a distinct impression upon the reader's mind. Yet as Pound implies, this would not be possible without the action of historical curiosity: unless someone physically searches through the mass of material, unless someone becomes curious, the markers of civilization, and the work of men like Sigismondo Malatesta, will fall away unnoticed into the recesses of history. In Pound's conception of what it means to sift through history, the role of archival research, and by extension the archivist, is pivotal. Yet as this example of "reading" through the living history of the ideogram of historical curiosity suggests, the role of the poet-archivist is only half of the equation. To get to understanding the reader must also participate, to the best of her ability and knowledge. Pound's historical project in fact goes much further than simply selecting and placing documents and facts of history before the reader's eyes. It extends into the question of access, raising the issue of who can read, who can critique, and who can enter.

A Question of Access: Entering the Cantos

In Pound's poem-archive, the reader's task is to recognize exemplary facts and apply ideogrammic reading to them: glimpsing connections and relations across history as the depth of

each particular is explored. Yet Pound's ideal of the ideogram flashing across the screen of the reader's consciousness contradicts the deep reading we see in his description of "luminous details" above and in the level of historical detail needed to gloss his ideograms. In fact, reading the *Cantos* can feel, for initiates, more like this tongue-in-cheek description by W.D. Snodgrass:

> [L]ife with Ezra has come more and more to be a daily mid-semester test. I must spend hours each day watching him flash (a little faster each day) note cards containing significant phrases (a little shorter each day) past my nose. For each snippet of phrase I must produce a full historical context together with the received interpretation. Should I pass this test I prove my love so strong that I have laid aside my own vision to memorize his.
>
> (qtd. in Pryor 27)

Entertaining as this analogy may be, it hints at some serious challenges for Pound's readers. In Pound's ideal, the reader is able to compare *across* material without having to bury him or herself in piles of reference—thus the memorization of facts flashed by the student's eyes. Yet for modern readers this is no easy task. As are many of the ideograms in the early *Cantos*, the examples from Canto 4 and *Guide to Kulchur* are complex and difficult. The former requires a knowledge of ancient history (Cadmus and Troy) and classical literature (Pindar and Catullus); the latter, information on a range of little-known historical facts and personages from fifteenth-century Italy. Yet as Peter Nichols reminds us, the average reader's common knowledge is different today than it was in Pound's time: "Our culture has become increasingly remote from what Pound simply assumed were the principal reference points for any thinking person—Homer, Sappho, Horace . . . The list is long but Pound's network of allusions rarely outstripped a good middle-class education at the time his poem was written" (10).

Further than this, the complexity of knowledge necessary to understand each element lies not in information laid out on the page, but often in the nuance and detail of the back stories which do

not appear in the poem—a referential move on Pound's part. As Sean Pryor writes, it can be "easy to forget that the *Cantos* are so difficult" when one is "equipped with Carroll Terrell's *Companion* and a shelf of critical works" (27). Yet, as Michael Bernstein points out, "Many sections do not mean very much, even to the most sympathetic reader, without extensive annotations. . . . The argument made by some of Pound's admirers—that the text can be understood in any significant sense without external aid—is a pure fiction" (143, 145). Alan Golding sees this as a divisive act on the poet's part: Pound "divides . . . between the few initiates in the sacred realm of poetry who see by the light of immediate, self-evident truth and the many laboring in dullness, who need poetry's instruction and yet . . . are refused it or seen as immune to it" (87). If individual annotators of the *Cantos* spent a lifetime glossing Pound's references, how is a common reader to attempt understanding?[32] More than this, are the *Cantos* meant to "alienate and belittle" the common reader, or as Sean Pryor suggests, does their "difficulty assume the intelligence of every reader" (32)?

As Fenollosa wrote, "Two things added together do not produce a third thing but suggest some fundamental relation between them" (14). The ability to "read" the ideograph was based on an ability to understand the "fundamental relation" between parts, a task that requires at least some knowledge of each part together with an ability to compare. It is these abilities that raise issues of accessibility in Pound's archive, which is linked, as it is for practicing archivists, to the purposes of the archive. Is it the archive's purpose to preserve material? To act as a monument to culture or make permanent the record of a period or person? To teach its users how to research more effectively, or to encourage them to value their cultural heritage? To enable the dissemination of information? For Pound, it was all of these and more. The archive of the *Cantos*

functioned to collect the very best parts of civilization, but its purpose, particularly in the beginning, was unquestionably didactic: just as “men of action” model the ordering of civilization to us, in the opening cantos Pound models to his readers the “right” use of history, both through his selective practices, which, as we’ve seen, upset the traditional archival principle of original order, and in his broader conclusions about civilization, which Pound assumed (much like Eliot in his notion of the objective correlative) would be similar for every reader when presented with the same set of “facts.”[33]

In a sense, we might see Pound’s educational purpose as similar to that of the modern archivist, whose role in part is to teach patrons about “the complexity of archival sources, finding aids, and archival practice”—something we might glean from a thorough study of the poem and from Pound’s own critical writings on his poetic practice (Pugh 26–27). As the archivist facilitates the user’s interaction with the archive, the poet facilitates the reader’s entrance into and experience inside the poem. Indeed, as Cox and O’Toole note, it is the archivist him or herself who is in the best position to tell users how a particular archive works (125). Yet there is a limit to this analogy. Archivists, after all, are expected in their professional capacity to mediate patrons’ entrance into their collections, as Dazzi did for Pound (and indeed, as Pound expected of him). But poets have no such obligation to readers. I would argue, in fact, that it is the difficulty of the poem that makes the *Cantos* so alluring to readers: if only they can find a way in, they may also discover, through serendipity or intention, what living material lies at its root. Whether they have to break down the doors or negotiate a Reader’s Ticket to get there, persistent readers will find a way.

Yet the reader’s journey might, like Pound’s at Gambalunga, start out as one of

frustration. Just as Pound expects much of his readers in understanding the literary and historical fragments that make up the poem, his expectations for ideogrammic reading are quite high, and are best understood once one has gone *outside* of the poem to his critical writings. As Catherine Paul contends, speaking about examples of exemplary works given in his 1911 essay "The Spirit of Romance" in terms that might well apply to his inclusion of ideogrammic fragments in the *Cantos*, the poet does not, as a rule, make his pedagogical methods clear: "The trouble . . . is that he does not show his readers which specific qualities are aesthetically valuable . . . nor does he give readers specific tools with which to make judgments for themselves. Rather, he indicates that certain works are valuable, leaving the reader to discover the missing steps" (87). By Pound's harsher critics, this might be viewed as a problem of communication between poet and reader, leading to legitimate concerns about how "open" his poem is to the everyday reader. Yet, I would argue, it also speaks to the high standards Pound has for those who would enter. Instead of considering the difficulty of the poetry an impediment to understanding, motivated readers might instead take it as a challenge.

The question at the center of accessibility is precisely this: how do Pound's requirements for the reader impede—or open up—entry into the *Cantos*? What must the reader bring to the table to gain full access to Pound's limited access collection? How does the motivated reader bypass the scholarly cult of Poundian exclusion? To explore this question, we turn to the poet's attitude toward the university systems of Europe and America, laid out in the textbooks he published in the 1930s, which extend ideogrammic selectivity into the dynamics of the teacher-student relationship.

Pound's Ideogrammic Method Applied to the New Learning

Pound's recognition of the need for selection—which he connected to a critical faculty or ability to "read"—was informed in part by what he saw as a great lack of humanistic learning at the undergraduate level, an issue he had raised as early as his own undergraduate days at University of Pennsylvania and at Hamilton College. Gail McDonald notes in her study of Pound, Eliot, and the American university that despite his formidable knowledge of poetry and languages, Pound was more of a "humanist generalist" than a specialist when it came to scholarship (10). The poet held deep-rooted suspicions toward the kind of study that closed off other circuits of learning and experience, particularly those that shut off lived life from the classroom or did not allow intellectual curiosity to develop. McDonald writes,

> Pound had the idea of an alternative education, not always clearly defined and not always coherent, but having something to do with the breadth of learning, with making connections among things learned, with anchoring generalities to the tangible things of daily life, with seeing through facts to essences, and with the creative relationship of the student to the object of study.
>
> (10–11)

In *Guide to Kulchur* generally and in the *ABC of Reading* and "How to Read" more specifically, Pound outlined a system for learning that is, in fact, quite specific in its objectives. It was based, as Pound himself stated, on the "scientific" application of the ideogrammic method, taking Pound's poetic performance across interdisciplinary lines and into his critical writing. The needs for coordinated learning; for interdisciplinary sharing; for breadth, depth, and scope of knowledge; and for an ability to compare *across* disciplines and languages are key to learning "how to read," and have strong correlations with the ideogrammic method.[34] They also speak to Pound's conception of what is possible in the archive, and for whom.

In "How to Read," Pound complained that while at university, he had met "no man with a

view of literature as a whole, or with any idea whatsoever of the relation of the part he himself taught to any other part" (15). The problem as he saw it was two-fold: first, "the system, as a whole, lacked coordination" (15). Second, and related to this, comparative learning between subjects was not encouraged. There was no interdisciplinary sharing of resources or research when Pound was at university or when he taught a few years later; there was very little crossover from one classroom experience to another.[35] Students learned based on categories of knowledge that had been handed down to them from earlier eras, dead categories that built into catalogues of dead facts. As he writes in *Guide to Kulchur* a few years later, "Are the categories hitherto used in, let us say, University teaching, in our time, and in our fathers', really serviceable? Does any really good mind ever 'get a kick' out of studying stuff that has been put into water-tight compartments and hermetically sealed?" (*GK* 32). To add to this, those authors and professors who did "attempt synthesis [between categories], often [did] so before they . . . attained sufficient knowledge of detail: they stuff[ed] expandable and compressible objects into rubber-bag categories, and . . . they limited their reference and interest" ("How to Read" 16). To Pound, an understanding of the *scope* of knowledge (how far the "rubber-bag categories" *actually* stretched) was as important as knowledge of the particulars themselves. Without breadth and scope of knowledge, together with an accurate understanding of his or her own subject, a teacher could not synthesize, compare across fields, or make sound generalizations that connected back to particulars.

In his own learning, Pound had sought out expert teachers who could, like William Pierce Shepherd at Hamilton, teach language and literature as well as the connections between them—Pound not only learned French, Italian, Spanish, and Provençal from Shepherd, but also under

his tutelage became immersed in the poetry of the troubadours, whose attention to the relationship between sound and structure became the basis for his earliest poetics.[36] Years later in "How to Read," Pound would ask why students, when studying English novels, were not directed to French novels of the same period, or why when there was a "groping toward association" (which was not often) the material chosen for comparison did not seem relevant to the course of study (19–20).[37] How could students learn "how to read" if they were not shown the relevant material from the irrelevant; the good books from the bad; the live material from the dead? What should a student do when faced with the "heteroclite mass of undigested information hurled at him daily and monthly and set to entangle his feet in volumes of reference" (*GK* 23)?—an issue, we might note, that extends to the historical archive.

Pound addressed the question of "how to read" through an extended description of his favored composition method as it applied to teaching and learning. In "The Teacher's Mission" he calls for "dispassionate examination of the ideogrammic method (the examination and juxtaposition of particular specimens—e.g. particular works, passages of literature) as an implement for the acquisition and transmission of knowledge" (*LE* 61). His methods were two-fold. First, in each of his "textbooks"—most notably *ABC of Reading* and "How to Read"—he offered either an anthology or a shortlist of reading to guide students to the most exemplary poetry in the Western tradition—not unlike his method of ideogrammic selection in the *Cantos*, where he chooses both the content and its arrangement. Bernstein's comment on Pound's desire to layer the *Cantos* with historical citations is applicable to this anthologizing impulse: "Among the reasons he so often points us towards those texts to whose arguments he is willing to grant authority, is a desire . . . to establish a corpus of 'safe' texts, of books that may be trusted amidst

the swarm of other, either ignorant or corrupt, claimants" (33). Although Bernstein doesn't couch this in terms of "living" or "dead," the canon-making impulse implicit in these lists and short anthologies fits that criteria. Indeed, Pound's reason for naming texts as "classic" was that they contain "a certain eternal and irrepressible freshness"; in a canon, exemplary texts are kept "alive" well past the period in which they were written, recalling the loose-leaf method (*ABC* 14). As John Nichols writes, the selections contained in these anthologies were meant to be read in a new way: "Pound envisioned anthologies as opportunities to inculcate methods of reading literature that work against what he perceived as readers' habits of following—rather than determining—links among poems, narratives across poetic traditions" (184). By promoting "a comparative poetics, a rereading of poems one against another" Pound also encouraged readers themselves to eventually become "surrogate editors" (184, 176). Through their "interactive . . . formats" he hoped the texts would "train readers to participate in his vision of a poetic history"—not unlike his expectation that readers would extend the *Cantos*' vision of right rulers such as Sigismondo beyond the poem by being able to recognize other factive personalities (183).

Second, Pound offers a description of the task of ideogrammic reading through a series of analogies in the *ABC of Reading*, which are further expanded in the essay "How to Read." Although they are applied in these texts to the situation of the anthology, they may also, once understood through the lens of ideogrammic reading, be applied to Pound's expectations for readers of the *Cantos*. According to the book's dedication, the *ABC* models a way of "reading" or "learning" that can be acquired by anyone who "has [not] yet arrived at full knowledge of the subject without knowing the facts"—in other words, any student who has not yet been poisoned by the dead categories of the academic system (vii). Given in swift succession, these images

function as examples of the ideogrammic method, performing the method of reading Pound would like readers to learn and recalling our own attempts to compare across disparate facts of literature and history in the *Cantos* and in the frontispiece to *Guide to Kulchur*. In the *ABC of Reading*, subtle differences between the student and teacher (terms I am fixing for purposes of this argument)[38] can be discerned as we parse the continuum of critical reading skills necessary to the ideogrammic method, skills which build from the level of novice to master: from observation to comparison, combination, knowledge, selection, and finally teaching and criticism.

This spectrum of skills also opens up the issue of access that is at the heart of Pound's relationship to the archive. Despite the fact that the *ABC* was marketed as a textbook/anthology (presumably for classroom use), *who* can progress to expert reading (i.e. a teacher or critic) is not immediately clear. Is Pound's audience in *ABC* students? Teachers? General readers? Critics? A coterie of artists or writers? An examination of his analogies reveals that the question of who may become an expert reader comes down not so much to *access* as to *accessibility*. Access indicates the *right* to enter while accessibility indicates *ease of access*, that is, whether a reader's entrance is made easier by extrinsic means, such as the knowledge a teacher may bring to the text or the annotations provided through a gloss, or intrinsic means, including the reader's own desire to learn (something Pound saw as requisite for learning). In Pound's poem-archive, we find that anyone may gain entrance; access is open and even encouraged by the poet. Yet not every reader will become an expert; this depends, I would argue, on both the motivation of the reader and on her material situation: whether she can access information through glosses, teaching, or even digital means. Yet intriguingly for Pound, the lack of easily available "expert" resources such as

these was not so much a loss as a gain. Less knowledge of the "deep" reading into the history that makes up his poem might, in his estimation, lead the reader to a truer appreciation of the poem, albeit a less nuanced one. Though it might strike modern readers as counterintuitive, particularly those who have invested great amounts of time and energy in understanding his more difficult work, Pound was more interested in what readers left with than with what they brought to the table in terms of knowledge. Yet as Pound explains in *ABC*, teachers did provide an invaluable service to students, on that modeled critical faculties that were very useful to understanding not only his poetry, but other works of literature.

To teach the comparative method, one had to cultivate the ability to select. In fact, each of the analogies offered by Pound in the *ABC of Reading* has to do with the necessity of choice among the vast amount of material one must deal with when learning "how to read"—a task similar to that of archivists appraising collections or educating users in archival use, for as Mary Jo Pugh writes (eerily echoing Pound in *Guide to Kulchur*), "Most users have no experience integrating and understanding the *undigested mass of information* so often found in primary sources" (Pugh 27, emphasis mine). Pound introduced the idea with a quick sketch, asking what we are to do in "an age of science and abundance" when the written word is being manufactured at a rate much faster than the possible rate of consumption: "The weeder is supremely needed if the Garden of the Muses is to persist as a garden" (*ABC* 17) he states without further commentary, leaving it to the reader to assess through the examples that follow what exactly the task of "weeding" might consist of, and who may be qualified to do it.

In a performatively paratactic move (one that, we'll see, is modeled in the next example), Pound shifts immediately to a second analogy, this time from science: "The proper METHOD

for studying poetry and good letters is the method of contemporary biologists, that is careful first-hand examination of the matter, and continual COMPARISON of one 'slide' or specimen with another" (*ABC* 17). For a person to learn "how to read" she must build up a critical faculty which hinges on the ability to judge one item against others or understand one item in relation to others, an ideogrammic reading practice that extends across interdisciplinary lines. Added to this is "careful first-hand examination" of materials—a close attention to the object at hand which may be linked to Pound's early imagist poetics in which "direct treatment of the thing" was crucial to efficient uses of language (read: a precursor to ideogrammic compression). Significantly, students are required to jump into the method without the aid of further information or analysis; "COMPARISON" doesn't have to do with knowledge that has been stored away, or with the expertise of a specialist. Like entries in an anthology, it is all there before our eyes. What's more, with the pieces already selected, the method of comparison is available to all. Any student may learn to observe and compare. It isn't about the level of knowledge or education, it's about cultivating a critical faculty.

In such an "open access" model (with the pieces given), the anthology is a book that is open to any reader. Yet Pound assumes, as Catherine Paul has reminded us, that nothing more is needed for the cultivation of the critical faculty than the texts themselves, or, in the poem-archive of the *Cantos*, the disparate pieces of historical information chosen for the page from the archive. Thus, Pound's expectations for the reader's ability to comprehend the clues—to compare, in the *Cantos*, at the surface level of detail without mastering the history of the particulars—often outpaces the student's knowledge, leading to questions about accessibility. Going further, the student is not required to select materials for observation and comparison herself; that is the task

of the teacher or expert, who isolates material for her within a limited set in order to scaffold learning: "If you were studying chemistry you would be told that there are a certain number of elements, a certain number of more usual chemicals, chemicals in use, or easiest to find. And for the sake of clarity in your experiments you would probably be given these substances 'pure' or as pure as you could conveniently get them" (*ABC* 38). In this example, set back-to-back with the "loose-leaf" analogy discussed earlier, the closed set of common elements stands opposite the "heteroclite mass of information" the student is normally faced with; it has already been culled to a shortlist of chemicals which will be most useful in learning basic chemistry, like a literary canon or anthology which will aid the student in analysis.

In fact, we might note, this is the same skill Dazzi practiced in gathering sattecento paintings to show at the Querini. The "experiments" that take place are done in a controlled setting, with elements that have been purified, divested of contamination that might confuse the results. From all outside appearances, it appears no new discovery is possible here, only observation as the student watches, observes, and compares results as she mixes set combinations of elements. Still, the task of combination implied in the chemical metaphor does indicate the possibility for genesis; if we think back to the ideogram, it is in the compounding of elements that they become "greater" than their sum. This excess is what Pound hoped students would be able to glean to as they observed and compared, despite the lack of deeper knowledge.

It is when Pound extends the scientific analogy from comparison to selection that his focus shifts from student to teacher, who must deepen her knowledge through reading and research. "And if the instructor would select his specimens from works that contain these discoveries and solely on the basis of discovery—which may lie in the *dimension of depth*, not

merely of some *novelty on the surface*—he would aid his student far more than by presenting his authors at random, and talking about them *in toto*" ("How to Read" 19, emphasis mine). Here, selection comes together with *depth* of knowledge, as in the ideogrammic model for reading the historical and literary particulars in the *Cantos*. It isn't the immediacy of comparison on the surface that will yield the best result, but selection among items from "the dimension of depth"—a dimension whose size and scope is not yet apparent to the student. In the Malatesta cantos, for example, the deep split between Sigismondo and the papacy may not be obvious to the reader in these lines from Canto IX: "And Sigismundo got up a few arches , / And stole that marble in Classe" (IX.36). A more thorough understanding of the history reveals that the marble was stolen from the Basilica in Ravenna to *cover over* the original church that became the Tempio. The act emphasized Sigismondo's disregard for the church and for those who followed its precepts; the people of Ravenna as well as Pius II were deeply angered over the theft, but even more so by his covering the original Tempio with nonreligious symbols (Terrell 44–45). As Pius writes in the final "post-bag" letter of Canto IX, Sigismondo "built a temple . . . full of pagan works . . . The filigree hiding the gothic" (IX.41). The reference to the stolen marble thus brings up a whole history that is connected by bits and pieces over the course of that Canto. Just as clues to the Tempio's renovation are hidden behind the filigree, so to speak, so too is the history behind Pound's argument, told piecemeal. Returning to the depth/surface figure in the *ABC*, the teacher relies not on the immediacy of observation but on learning that has already taken place; his own recourse in teaching is to his own stored knowledge. The task required of the teacher is to choose examples from "works that contain these discoveries"—discoveries, that is, that have been made by others' observations and are now contained in books and other documents.

Implicitly, then, the task of selection is a matter of research and specialized reading, outside the range and ability of the average student or general reader. Thus, as in the example above, in the *Cantos* we might see annotators as modeling the kind of "deep reading" that is necessary to appreciating the full scope of Pound's poem; as Pound readily admits, it is the teacher's task to "aid the student" in acquiring the necessary knowledge. Even so, we should recognize that the uninitiated reader might still glean the essence of these lines: Sigismondo stole to build the Tempio and somewhere along the way distanced himself from orthodoxy; the reader with access to historic particulars simply gains deeper, more nuanced insight.

The instructor's role also reaches into criticism. Like the biologist sorting through slides, the teacher must not simply align materials for comparison, but choose from among the samples which few, out of the many, will yield the best possible combination to support the result, a general statement that "applies in all of the cases"—what readers of the *Cantos* get from the total image of the ideogram (*ABC* 22). Armed with both facts and an ability to compare, the instructor has the ability to make sound judgments which are applicable generally, and to a general audience. As Pound states, "A general statement is valuable only in REFERENCE to the known object or facts" (*ABC* 26). This extends the critical faculty from one of assessment (observation and comparison) to one of teaching (knowledge, selection, and public judgment), or, to put it another way, from being a teacher to becoming a critic (another level of expertise). The critic's voice reaches even further than the teacher's; she is competent in broadcasting her choices to a reading public and disseminating knowledge to a wider audience. It is notable that Dazzi, despite being a little known archivist from a "small town" in Italy, reaches the level of "critic" with library patrons and members of the public.

If for the teacher it is possible to teach from the depth of knowledge, comparing across categories to cull the best information to present to the student, what is possible for the student who must analyze these details as surface material only? What happens when the student is, as happens in the *Cantos*, left alone to compare and observe details that are not given full explanation? Is combination still possible? A final analogy from art explains how the ideogrammic model of reading explodes as the student learns to read *across* material, adding combination (which was only gestured at in the example from chemistry) to the tasks of observation and comparison. The analogy, which originates in the *ABC*, is extended across several sources. In the *ABC of Reading*, the student is figured as an "amateur of painting" and the teacher, a gallery manager who has selected and arranged the pictures hung in an exhibition. "Any amateur of painting knows that modern galleries lay great stress on 'good hanging', that is, on putting important pictures where they can be well seen, and where the eye will not be confused, or the feet wearied by searching for the masterpiece on a vast expanse of wall cumbered with rubbish" (38).

Here again, selection has been placed in the hands of those more knowledgable of the collection, this time gallery owners. Unencumbered by the task of having to search through "a vast expanse of wall" to locate the "masterpiece," the "amateur" is free to compare at will among the masterpieces, taking combinations from among the sampling set before her eyes. In contrast to the experience of readers of the *Cantos*, any *more* information on the paintings' styles or even the artist might deaden her experience. Pound expects the gallery-goer would be able to tell the artists apart, but whether or not she could name them is of no consequence (though if she possessed that background she would be able to use it):

> May I suggest. . . . that I have a certain real knowledge which wd. enable me to tell a Goya from a Velasquez, a Velasquez from an Ambrogio Praedis, a Praedis from an Ingres or a Moreau, and that this differs from the knowledge you or I wd. have if I went into the room back of the next one, copied a list of names and maxims from good Fioentino's *History of Philosophy* and committed the names, maxims, and possibly dates to my memory?
>
> (*GK* 27–8)

Memorization of "[n]ames, maxims, and . . . dates" is no way to grasp the living knowledge embodied by these paintings; such secondary knowledge may be useful to the teacher or critic, but here, it is the naïve student who is to make the discovery through firsthand, immediate access to materials. As Pound writes much earlier in "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris," reinforcing the educational value of first-hand knowledge, "A few days in a good gallery are more illuminating than years would be if spent in reading a description of these pictures. Knowledge which cannot be acquired in some such manner as that of visiting galleries is relegated to the specialist" (*SP* 23). The amateur, in other words, needs no special knowledge to compare.

This is just the kind of experience that, in Pound's estimation, Manlio Torquato Dazzi was able to offer patrons at the Querini Library in Venice. The sattecento exhibition, which has become a kind of touchstone in our understanding of Dazzi's abilities as a forward-thinking archivist, is a real-life example of the exhibition examples above. Through it, Dazzi applies both a teaching faculty in making the paintings available to patrons for comparison and study and a critical faculty in selecting them. We can assume that visitors likely came with little knowledge either of the paintings or of the history of the era. Pound writes, "Sattecento portraits that had been scattered . . . have been assembled. The visitor is now aware of an 'existence'; of something quite definite having occurred in XVIIIth century Venice" ("Possibilities" 79). Further, there is a "whole room of Venetian life—I suppose 60 scenes—showing the whole

habits, celebrations, modes of living" (80). Not only was it possible to glean the essence of an era from this collection, it also transformed the collection at Querini from "a secondhand junk shop" to a model of order and critical selection. Taken together, the collection presented to those who viewed it a sense of the *virtù* of the era—a spirit of the eighteenth century that would not otherwise be accessible.

Here again we might apply the logic of the ideogram's undivided, indivisible whole: when the paintings are read through the ideogrammic lens of observation, comparison, and combination, it becomes possible for the non-expert to grasp the whole of what the parts convey together, which far exceeds the sum of the individual pieces or paintings. Through his own critical, selective function, Dazzi makes such a reading possible, modeling to students of art as well as to everyday library patrons how one might read ideogrammically across a century's worth of fine art, becoming through use of his selective faculty not only Pound's ideal reader but an ideal teacher as well. That visitors have little knowledge of individual paintings is no matter; each is able to leave with more than he or she came with. If they fail, it is only by virtue of their *in*ability to compare.

Interestingly, we find a similar instance of this in Adrian Stokes' 1932 architectural survey of Italy, the *Quattro Centro*, which takes the Tempio Malatestiana as the embodiment of Sigismondo's *virtù* in fifteenth-century Italy. This is Stokes' assessment Sigismondo's relationship to the Tempio:

> Sigismondo's Tempio expresses Sigismondo. There he is, projected directly onto stone, not as a suggestion or a story, but as something immediate. It is an effect impossible to other generations. All the fifteenth century genius for emblem, for outwardness, centered in Sigismondo. The impetus of all times to art was, without disguise in that age, the impetus as well to civilized living. Artists needed little

abstraction to project Sigismondo into stone.

(188)

We are left to wonder: is it Pound's *Cantos* (which Stokes was familiar with) or Stokes' own meticulous survey of the Tempio (laid out elsewhere in this book and in his more famous *Stones of Rimini*) that led him to this claim? Pound, I would argue, would hope for the latter. For indeed, his concern in the frontispiece and in our study of the Malatesta cantos is not that we understand each of the separate "pieces" of Pound's ideograms, layered and collaged one over the other like the competing styles in the "junkheap" of the Tempio, but that we get a glimpse of the man *behind* them, the collector who "ordered" this monument's construction. It is these qualities which Pound believes even uninitiated readers may grasp whole as they peer into the Tempio through the *Cantos* or through this frontispiece, for it is a man of action who orders the whole. Malatesta's assemblage in the Tempio mirrors to us the selective action of the picture hanger in the gallery or the archivist in the collections—and in Stokes' estimation, even the common visitor to the Tempio would be able to glean something of Sigismondo's essence in the living stones of Rimini.

If the gallery-goer who has no previous experience with painting can still learn by comparing pictures, it follows that the reader of the *Cantos*, by extension, should be able to read the poem, made up of surface fragments, without the aid of a gloss. But as we've seen from our own brief glimpse into Pound's *Cantos*, the ideograms in the poem (including the earlier example of the frontispiece) do not always lend themselves to immediate interpretation. Rather, with their layered and complex historical and literary material they often come across to the new reader as illegible signs which can be interpreted only through the aid of expert guidance. Yet as I've argued, if the reader is motivated enough—as Dazzi was in his own study of Massato, in his

keen interest in classical music, and in the paintings of the Sattecento—she will find a means to enter, even if entrance is, at first reading, only at the level of the page. And if it is not—if a teacher or critic can encourage and guide the critical faculty—all the better. That first entrance might well lead to a lifetime of appreciation and deepening knowledge.

"Loving the Past to Excess": The Legacy of a Small-town Archivist

The weeder in the garden. The biologist. The modern gallery. Each of these carefully drawn analogies has in common the tasks of selecting, ordering, and critiquing; in each, it is an expert and not a student, one trained with thorough knowledge of a particular field, who carries out the tasks. It is, as in the example of the poetic "exhibition," only one who is capable of comparison who will benefit from wandering at will through the gallery without a "gloss" to inform her of the relationships between the paintings. And it is only a gallery owner—or a learned librarian—who can choose what to hang. What is necessary, in the end, is one thing: not accessibility, but a sort of keenness and interest, even love, for the material at hand. And that is what the person of Manlio Torquato Dazzi offered. Indeed, it is an archivist Pound knew well who best exemplified the poet's model of an exemplary reader, one who was able to transfer his own comparative skills to a critical, teaching register in spite of his own local "limits." Of Dazzi, Pound wrote, "The man built with what he had in his charge… I can take off my hat to a man who knows how to live where fate set him and in the years Chronos has provided" (80).

Yet Dazzi, as we've seen, was far more than a keeper of state records in a small corner of Italy: by extending the habits of ideogrammic reading into the public arena, by being a promoter of culture who could share his refined taste on the local stage, he became not only a gatekeeper

for the collections under his care, but a teacher who showed patrons how they might begin to understand that knowledge. Dazzi offered a real-life example of what it means to extend the comparative faculty to the general public, making the knowledge needed to take that ability to the next level accessible (read: easier to access). He became the means by which patrons of the library were able to become students not just of the eighteenth century, but of Pound, translating and explaining the English of the Hell cantos to them. And he modeled what it means to promote free access to learning and to history in the *commune*, to the public, reminding us, again, of the necessity of both access and accessibility to the learning process.

If he erred in Pound's estimation, it was not because of his limited sphere or even because he was not, as Sigismondo was, a "man of action." Dazzi failed (and, largely succeeded) only in his love for what he knew best. Late in the composition of the *Cantos*, Pound would remember the librarian as a shade whose love for antiquity marked him as loving the past perhaps to excess. Contrasting the futurist F.T. Marinetti with his archivist friend, Pound wrote in Canto 72, the first of a set of cantos written in Italian,

> Venisti tu Torquato Dazzi a
> ninna-nannarmi i versi
> Che traducesti ven'anni or sono per svegliar Mussato?
> Tu con Marinetti fai il paio
> Ambi in eccesso amaste, lui la'avvenire
> Et tu il passato.
>
> (LXXII.426)

> Torquato Dazzi
> have you come?
> sing a lullaby of the verses you translated
> twenty years ago to wake Mussato.
> You making a pair with Marinetti
> You wanting the past too much, he the future
>
> (LXXII.433, trans. Pound) [39]

Italian Pound scholar Massimo Bacigalupo has translated the last lines differently, more literally, replacing “want” with “love” (Barnes 21). For indeed Dazzi was a lover of past, one who granted Pound access to his collections and who shared his deep admiration for the troubadours and all that marked his corner of Italy with lasting cultural meaning. More than an archivist and friend, Dazzi was for Pound a great example of what was possible at the local level for a man “whose name does not appear in heavy advertising,” a man whose place on the public stage was limited by his locale and ambition but who did not let those limits impinge on his ability to accomplish all he could within them. Dazzi was not simply a small town keeper of ancient codices and manuscripts who occasionally organized a concert or exhibition for the public, but, in Pound’s estimation, a fellow man of letters working in a smaller sphere to “buil[d] with what he had in his charge”—an archivist and teacher of the highest order (“Possibilities” 80).

The example of this small-town archivist highlights Pound’s populist impulse as well as the difficulty of his verse epic for those readers he was most interested in reaching—those who might, like Dazzi, come to share his vision for all that is “living” in civilization, extending access beyond privileged readers who had ready access to expert knowledge. It finds its counterpart in the next chapter, which explores Charles Olson’s *Maximus Poems* as a “limited” archive of a different kind. While for Pound, Dazzi’s “local limit” functioned as a distiller of taste and knowledge that worked to build his critical faculty and extend it to others, Olson imposes a “local limit” on the materials and scope of his poem in order to better understand his own place in history and the limits of the human. Olson’s remove from Pound’s shaping mechanisms, as well as his acknowledgment of the individual’s power in enacting history, will have resonance in later chapters as contemporary poets Susan Howe, Jena Osman, and Robert Fitterman reconceive

not just the place of the poet in shaping history, but the space and agency of the historical subject within the limits and possibilities of emerging human history.

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[1] In a letter from Paris dated 15 September 1922, Pound had written to the librarian, Aldo Francesco Massera, to inquire about the Broglio manuscript and asking him to provide assistance locating "all other published works that contain information about Sigismondo" (qtd. in Bennett 14; see also Lucchi 231). It is not clear whether he received a reply from Massera, but it is clear that Pound informed him of his visit.

[2] I do not retain Pound's spelling of Malatesta's first name, "Sigismundo," but use the historically correct "Sigismondo," following the majority of scholars. See for instance the work of Lawrence Rainey and Peter D'Epiro.

[3] Chris Chapman details this little-known history in "Pound's Italian Renaissance," pp. 553–556.

[4] Published in Italian in 1908, *The Dutch Manual* was a textbook on archival practice, widely accepted throughout Western Europe through the mid-twentieth century. The *Manual* standardized a provenance-based approach to archives in which records were organized based on "the original organization of the archival collection" rather than by subject matter or chronology (Cook, "What is Past" 21). According to Italian archive theorist Luciana Duranti, it represented "the first real effort to articulate systematically the concepts and methods that find their validity in archival theoretical ideas with internal logic and consistency, rather than in their historical, legal, or cultural context" (qtd. in Mortenson 2).

[5] See Rainey, "From the Patron to *Il Duce*" for accounts of Pound's early fascist leanings as they correspond to his research into Malatesta. Chapman contests Rainey's reading in "Rethinking Pound's Italian Renaissance."

[6] See D'Epiro 4–5 for a detailed list of what Pound used from the Broglio mss. As D'Epiro maintains, Pound owed a "considerable debt" to Broglio, for instance adding details on the sale of Pesaro (the "wangle" and "wiggling" of Canto 9) and his address to the troops before going against the papal armies in the final lines of Canto 10.

[7] In this period of Italy's archival history, the terms "librarian" and "archivist" were used interchangeably; many of the smaller bibliotecas had only one librarian to serve in both capacities, and libraries contained both modern collections and historical archives. Only a few of the Archivi di Stato housed archives only; until modernization these were often maintained by the church (Ricciardi 127).

[8] Though the postcard can be dated to March 10, and his visits to Rimini March 12 and the week of March 19, J.J. Wilhelm also places Pound at Cesena's Biblioteca Malatestiana on March 17, giving a short account of his friendship with Dazzi. It is possible that Pound, having had success at Cesena a week previous, returned to pick up on some research before he tried the Gambulunga again. See Wilhelm 324.

[9] Letters between Dazzi and Pound reside at the Yale's Beinecke Library (Dazzi to Pound) and in the archives of Italian publisher Vanni Scheiwiller (Pound to Dazzi) (Casella 79). Some of these, written in Italian, are printed in Lucchi 241–245.

[10] This final letter, written in Italian, includes a 2-line note from Pound to Dazzi and a longer letter from Olga Rudge to Dazzi. It can be found in Lucchi 248–49.

[11] Information on the library is very limited in English. A description can be found in Italian at the official website for the library, www.malatestiana.it.

[12] The UNESCO Memory of the World program, started in 1995, is a program of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization whose stated goals are to "facilitate preservation . . . of the world's documentary heritage[,] . . . assist universal access to documentary heritage[,] . . . [and] increase awareness worldwide of the existence and significance of documentary heritage" ("UNESCO Memory of the World").

[13] The discussion of Isotta's place in the Tempio has been rehearsed by numerous Pound scholars. In short, Pound's basis for the "lover" theory, based on the entwined "S" and "I" on the building's exterior, was a misinterpretation by nineteenth-century historians which was repeated in several of the books Pound consulted, including Antonio Beltramelli's *Un tempio d'amore*, published in 1912. See especially Rainey, "The Malatesta Cantos" 16–17 and Chapman 545.

[14] I follow the method in most Pound scholarship of citing by canto, then page number, with no line numbers.

[15] Pound quoted a few lines of Dazzi's translation in "Italian" Canto 72. See David Barnes 23–24 and O'Driscoll, "Ezra Pound's *Cantos*" 180, for a reading of these lines.

[16] See, for instance, Pound's comments in a letter to Dazzi from 1941on a recent book of his friend's poetry. "I think that with 'Quarzo' and 'Voce' you have greater objectivity than before," he writes, somewhat blandly (my translation, Lucchi 52).

[17] Scholars dispute the "authoritarian" nature of his study. As Massimo Bacigalupo writes, somewhat scathingly, "Pound's *Guido Cavalcanti Rime* is to be read as the work of a poet copying for his own use the text of another poet. Since Pound believed he had some authority as a medievalist, he couched his transcription in the trappings of textual study" ("Rapallo and Rome" 252). Pound writes in the foreword to the volume, "The text was already established for the most part. There was little need for a new editor. But before putting out a bilingual edition I had a just curiosity. I had to know and not just suppose that the text . . . was correct" (qtd. in Ricciardi 151).

[18] For more on the relationship between Pound's poetics and historiography, see Bernstein's opening chapter in *The Tale of the Tribe*, which includes an excellent discussion of "luminous details" as they relate to the scientific method and historical research; see also Jin for a book-length analysis of the ideogram and Jackson for an early reading of the ideogrammic method in the Malatesta Cantos. None of these scholars connects the ideogrammic method to Pound's

criticisms towards university learning, which is integral to Pound's concept of ideogrammic reading.

[19] In his dissertation on Louis Zukofsky's *"A"* and the historical archive, Thomas John Nelson briefly addresses Pound's archival role in shaping *The Cantos*, finding that Pound's practice is similar to the archivist's in selecting and preserving documents. Nelson's approach differs from mine, however, in that he does not consider the implications of archival practice as they relate to questions of power or to his interaction with Italian archivists and archives (see especially chapters 1 and 2). In addition to not going beyond the practical similarities between the practitioners of long poems and working archivists, Nelson also cuts his historical survey of archival research to the period in which the poets in his study were working (not beyond the publication of *"A"* in the late 1960s).

[20] Here, I stand between O'Driscoll, who also sees the *Cantos* as an index but does not comment on Pound's archival practice, and Nelson, who sees the *Cantos* themselves as a preservationist archive. I read the *Cantos* as a limited access archive in which the ideogram recasts "original order" in order to encourage new reading practices, particularly comparative, in the reader. See Nelson 18–19, 34–44; O'Driscoll, "Ezra Pound's Cantos," 173.

[21] Many scholars have used Derrida's *Archive Fever* and Foucault's *The Archeology of Knowledge* as the basis for theoretical analyses for the archive, and in fact, they are central to my arguments in chapter 2, which discusses the work of Charles Olson in relation to Derrida, and chapter 4, which discusses works by Jena Osman and Rob Fitterman in relation to Foucault. For examples of work on Derrida, Foucault, and the archive, see David Bell, David Greetham, and Rob White. See also Terry Cook, "Archival Science and Postmodernism," for a discussion of Foucault's place in archival theory, esp. 9–10.

[22] See Manoff and O'Driscoll and Bishop's "Archiving 'Archiving'" for an overview of interdisciplinary approaches to the archive, including the social sciences, the humanities, and library science.

[23] In parenthetical references, I use *ABC* to reference *The ABC of Reading*, *GK* for *Guide to Kulchur*, and *LE* for *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*.

[24] See Hugh Kenner's chapter "The Invention of China" in *The Pound Era* for a fascinating discussion of Fenollosa's and Pound's misreading of the ideograph.

[25] What White writes of the "organicist historian" is true of Pound: "The Organicist historian will tend to be governed by the desire to see individual entities as components of processes which aggregate into wholes that are greater than, or qualitatively different from, the sum of their parts. Historians who work within this strategy of explanation . . . tend to structure their narratives in such a way as to depict the consolidation or crystallization, out of a set of apparently dispersed events, of some integrated entity whose importance is greater than that of any of the individual entities analyzed or described in the course of the narrative" (15).

[26] This falls in line with Fenollosa's assertion that the Chinese language "has no grammar" because, without proper prepositions (which would link clauses into clear cause and effect) the "thing and action are not formally separated"; his skepticism towards the copula ("is") of English sentences furthers the paratactic, comparative model of reading Pound favored when he adopted the ideogram (16).

[27] As Bernstein comments, the objectivity of the ideogrammic method was a "fiction": "[T]he appeal of the ideogrammic method as a technique for structuring an enormous amount of historical data arises because . . . it lets the poet present single details which, by being combined, will *naturally* suggest a particular argument or interpretation, thereby establishing the text's governing fiction: it is up to the reader to 'draw his own conclusions'; the poet is only presenting objectively verifiable 'evidence' for a case upon which the reader-'jury' must past the final verdict… [T]he truth of the narration [is] guaranteed by the poet's strategic refusal to assume the role of a sole, originating source of articulation" (38–39).

[28] I am indebted to George Kearns' reading of this ideogram in his *Guide to Ezra Pound's Selected Cantos*, 26–7.

[29] As Thomas Jackson writes of Sigismondo in an early piece on the Malatesta cantos, "The public man is forever undoing the private man and the interests of the private man are forever interfering with the needs of the public man" (242).

[30] Fenollosa wrote this about the action and compression that goes into making a poetic image: "The more concretely and vividly we express the interactions of things the better the poetry. We need in poetry thousands of active words, each doing its utmost to show forth the motive and vital forces. We cannot exhibit the wealth of nature by mere summation, by the piling of sentences. Poetic thought works by suggestion, crowding the maximum meaning into the single phrase pregnant, charged, and luminous from within" (18). The use of "luminous" no doubt links to Pound's use of the term in his pre-ideogrammic theory of "luminous details," first described in "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris," published in parts between 1912 and 1913 in the *Dial* during the same period he was translating Fenollosa.

[31] Archivist Mary Jo Pugh explains, "In its narrowest sense, the word *archives* means the records of organizations, created or accumulated in the course of daily activities, and used by the organization because they are useful for continuing administration" (13).

[32] Poundian scholars, especially those who provided glosses to the endless references to historical and literary material in the *Cantos*, undertook a monumental task. Caroll F. Terrell's gloss, *A Companion to the Cantos of Ezra Pound*, is 791 pages and includes, among other aids, an index to the Chinese characters in the *Cantos* and their ideogrammic meanings. *The Cantos* themselves are 824 pages. See also the work of Cookson and Kearns.

[33] By this I do not mean to imply that there is no interpretation possible on the part of the reader. Rather, I wish to emphasize the broader implications of Pound's methods, which, particularly in the early Cantos that I am focusing on (the Malatesta Cantos, but also those that lead up to them),

are more clearly didactic than in the later poetry. Pound's desire that reader understand the essence of the era in which Sigismondo Malatesta lived is clear through his later criticism, most notably in *Guide to Kulchur* whose frontispiece highlights the "thoroughness of Rimini" as connected with the Malatesta family.

[34] Pound believed the ideogrammic method to be universally applicable, evident as early as Fenollosa: "Such a pictorial method, whether the Chinese exemplified it or not, would be the ideal language of the world" (Fenollosa 35). This "ideal language" was indeed transferable to other contexts, as Pound comments in *Make It New*: "This method is too necessary a conclusion from all the more intelligent activity of many decades for there to be the least question of its belonging to any one in particular" (8).

[35] Pound in a letter to Van Wyck Brooks dated 10 December 1957: "During the past decade I have been unable to get one single professor to indicate another live mind on his OWN campus. The departments do not communicate with one another." The follow up letter, dated 13 January, suggests that "A little collaboration, or at least communication between half a dozen literates COULD get some sanity into the curricula" (qtd. in McDonald 109).

[36] For more on Pound's education in romance languages and introduction to the troubadours, see Kenner's chapter, "Motz el Son," in *The Pound Era*.

[37] In a section labeled "Defective Relativities," Pound writes, "Let us grant that some bits of literature have been, in special cases, displayed in relation to some other bits, usually some verbose gentleman writes a trilogy of essays, on three grandiose figures, comparing their 'philosophy' or personal habits" ("How to Read" 19–20).

[38] For purposes of my argument and to reflect Pound's own terminology in much of his discussion, I am fixing the terms "student" and "teacher" in this section. Although a student may become a teacher, it is helpful here to consider the "student" as a true novice and the "teacher" as a guide.

[39] Ezra Pound's translation of Canto VXXII appears in a *Paris Review* piece edited by James Laughlin, who transcribed Pound's English version to typescript with notes. The translation was printed in the New Directions version of the *Cantos* beginning with the thirteenth printing in 1996.

Chapter 2

Charles Olson and the Limited Archive

Scholarship in history… is the same thing as care of [a] Swedish cabinet maker.
—Charles Olson, *A Bibliography on America for Ed Dorn*

Man is forever estranged from that which he is most familiar.
—Heraclites, quoted as the epigraph to Olson's *Special View of History*

If Ezra Pound's controlling metaphor for the task of the poet-historian in his verse epic was "sorting the living from the dead" from the historical archive, Charles Olson's was that of the builder or maker whose "care" and "attention" to craft are similar to a poet's, both in choosing materials and in executing their emergent form. Both poets were interested in the "living" material of history, and in those people who shaped civilization as we know it: Pound at the level of global history, roving among historical facts and persons across time and space to find the best exempla of civilization, and Olson on the grounds of the local, limiting his initial material and scope to the history and real-life persons of Gloucester, Massachusetts, where he set the first book of the *Maximus Poems*. That Olson expanded the range of the poem beyond the local in later *Maximus* books indicates a shift in his developing poetics and historiography and provides rich ground for comparison to Pound's own poetics of the archive.[1] It also extends Olson criticism, which so far has considered the dynamics of contraction and expansion in *The Maximus Poems* only in terms of epic, into the larger context of archive studies.[2, 3]

Thus far the only scholars to place Olson in the emerging field of archival-literary studies have been Stephen Collis and Jonathan Nelson, neither of whom take *The Maximus Poems* as a central focus.[4] Collis' article on "archival tactics and the poet-scholar" (which also considers the work of a later poet in this study, Susan Howe) looks at Olson's early prose work, *Call Me*

Ishmael (1947), as an example of "idiosyncratic usage" of historical documents which "divert[s] the archive from its academically sanctioned use in institutional scholarship into antinomian uses as poetry and poetry-scholarship" (73). According to Collis, Olson, whose "fourteen years study" on Melville was conducted in the archives at Harvard's Widener Library, the Library of Congress, and the New York Public Library Archives, took from Melville a great respect both for his use of sources and his deep knowledge of them (61). In a letter to Merton Sealts, Olson writes that "H[erman] M[elville] is STOREHOUSE" (qtd. in Collis 67). And in *Call Me Ishmael* he writes of Melville, "He was a skald and knew how to appropriate the work of others" (*CMI* 39, qtd. in Collis 67).[5] Although Collis does not connect Olson's work in *Call Me Ishmael* to *The Maximus Poems*, we might see in Olson's reading of Melville the poet's nascent interest in producing accurate, source-based history and an approach to the use of historical documents that both respects their contents and makes of them something *more*, following Collis' definition of one of Olson's terms in *Call Me Ishmael*, "Usufruct": "the right to use or enjoy something belonging to another, to use the fruit of another's work or property" (67).

Jonathan Nelson's chapter on *A Bibliography on America for Ed Dorn* appears in a 2007 collection of articles, *Olson's Prose.* In it he offers a detailed overview of Olson's method of archival research handed down to his student at Black Mountain, poet Ed Dorn, noting for instance Olson's search for obscure archival documents, and glossing his oft-cited advice to "dig one thing or place or man until you yourself know more abt that than is possible for any other man" (*Bibliography on America* 14). Most helpful is Nelson's assessment of Olson's knowledge of original order, context, and arrangement, all terms familiar to practicing archivists, and his assertion that "the archival form of a long poem is an extension of its documentary content"—

linking the arrangement of Olson's poem to that of a working archive (123). Nelson does not, however, comment on the shape of *Maximus* as the body of work grows and shifts under the poet's hand. The article looks only glancingly at *Maximus*, mentioning just one example of Olson's use of "at least five private documents" on Massachusetts ship history in "Letter 16" (127). Unlike Collis, Nelson's straightforward approach is more of an explanation of Olson's *modus operandi* than it is a critical assessment of his creative or critical oeuvres. Nonetheless, both works provide excellent grounding for a more nuanced application of Olson's archival practice to the content and shape of *The Maximus Poems*.

Rather than assessing Olson through the day-to-day practices of the archivist as Nelson has done—a similar approach to the one taken in my opening chapter on Pound—the current chapter addresses Olson's role as preserver and shaper of Gloucester's history through the conceptual frameworks suggested by Jacques Derrida and Diana Taylor in their discussions of the theoretical archive. These discussions frame the role of the archivist in the public sphere, noting the ways in which the historical archive is complicit in determining the structures of power attached to the writing of history, and the ways in which the archivist not only becomes the conservator of that history but takes a generative role in determining its meaning for present and future generations. Olson's interest in preserving not only Gloucester's written history, but also its lived, embodied history in the early *Maximus* Poems, marks his venture as a poet-historian in new terms, moving him beyond Pound's "objective" view of history into a preservationist view of history and vested interest in the place and people of Gloucester.

In *Archive Fever*, Jacques Derrida theorizes the position of the archivist in the public sphere, a role Olson, the public poet of Gloucester as well as its historian, willingly took on as he

wrote *The Maximus Poems*. Indeed, "poet-historian" is not only a probable but a possible configuration of the term "archivist," who in Derrida's etymological assessment is both a guardian and interpreter of historical documents in a particular "domicile" (2). According to Derrida, the first archivist or "archon" was a public figure who kept records and made laws. He managed the archive, housing and arranging its holdings, and created the laws which determined its boundaries and power. In ancient Greece, the archon, like the epic poet, served both a preservative and critical function. Derrida writes, "The archons are first of all the documents' guardians. They do not only ensure the physical security of what is deposited . . . They are also accorded the hermeneutic right and competence. They have the power to interpret the archives" (2). Olson's dual role as preserver and shaper of Gloucester's documentary history places him squarely within Derrida's definition for the archon, a role which also gave him "publicly recognized authority"—that is, public sanction—to select, order, and arrange his history of Gloucester, determining its boundaries and laws for inclusion and exclusion (2). Interestingly, Olson places himself not above or outside of the archive he is creating, but directly inside it as an inheritor of the history he is recounting; as we will find, this internal positioning at the poem's outset has implications for the growth of the poem-archive from the seed of Gloucester's founding history to its growth far beyond Gloucester's shores.

Going beyond historians' privileging of written history, Olson desires in *The Maximus Poems* to preserve the history of physical experience, that is, the embodied experience of the lived world. Performance studies scholar Diana Taylor explains in her book *The Archive and the Repertoire* that there exists a "rift . . . between the *archive* of supposedly enduring materials (i.e., texts, documents, buildings, bones) and the so-called ephemeral *repertoire* of embodied

practice/knowledge (i.e., spoken language, dance, sports, ritual)" (19). In *The Maximus Poems*, Olson attempts to preserve both kinds of knowledge: what is written down in the annals of history (town records, written histories, maps, logs), and what is passed down as experiential or anecdotal knowledge (the skilled trades, stories passed down through oral transmission). Archive and repertoire work together to preserve Gloucester in Olson's *Maximus*. Written history preserves the memory of physical knowledge such as one finds in the old crafts of seamanship central to Gloucester's identity. Physical familiarity with the present world leads to the kind of attitude that can preserve the polis, and that will go down in Olson's written history. As Taylor notes, the assumption that embodied knowledge can be passed down through written history is inherently problematic. But for Olson, whose poetics were based on the belief that writing itself arises out of the body ("The HEAD, by way of the EAR, to the SYLLABLE / the HEART by way of the BREATH, to the LINE") such a task was both possible and necessary (*HU* 55).[6] The repertoire of the skilled trades and crafts—what Olson saw in Gloucester's seamen, carpenters, and artists who together I label "craftsmen"—offered to the poet a vehicle by which to preserve and maintain what was most vital to Gloucester: a stance of "care" and "attention" that would keep Gloucester aware and alert and serve as a model for maintaining the polis.

By polis I do not simply mean "Olson's sense of a city"—that is, an extension of the Greek city-state embodied by Gloucester and the "the quality of the relationships between people"—nor do I believe Ann Dewey's definition of polis as "a structure of experience shared by its citizens" is adequate to explain the term (Von Hallberg 57, Dewey 38). The polis is more than simply communal and experiential; it also has to do, as Von Hallberg notes, with the "public life of the city" and further than this, with its care which is entrusted to certain members of the

community who have the “polis / in their eye” (58). In the larger poem these include poets and philosophers who exemplify Olson’s stance of attention and sharpness in relation to their work. But in early *Maximus*, “polis” is framed by certain men of Gloucester whose care for their work marks them with the same “sharpness” of eye: the city’s fishermen, builders, and other skilled workers. Rather than seeing these men as outliers, in the early sections of *Maximus* (up to “Letter 23”), they are integral to his vision.

Taking cues from both Derrida and Taylor, then, the main part of this chapter explores Olson’s poetics of the archive as it relates to the figure of the craftsman.[7] A central though understudied figure in early *Maximus*, the craftsman embodies characteristics of the artists and tradesmen who populate Gloucester. Though Olson refers more often to the term “trades” than he does to either “crafts” or “arts” (as in his phrase, “the sea, finally, was not my trade” in “Maximus, to himself” [I.52]), his repeated use of words like “attention,” “precise,” and “care” indicate the defining traits of craftsmanship. Where the arts emphasize invention and the trades a broad, general set of skills, the crafts require mastery of particular skills, like a fisherman’s ability to spot a school of fish from a distance, or a shipbuilder’s to precisely caulk the cracks in a ship. The craftsman produces objects by hand, with intimate knowledge of the materials and process of making. Further, the craft object serves a practical use—in the case of *Maximus*, Olson’s craftsmen ensure the health of the city both through the objects they create and, extending the definition of craft further, through the stance of “attention” or “care” they take in their creation. The craftsman’s relation to the craft object—and to the process of making—is one of submission and awareness. As David Pye, a mid-century professor of industrial design at the Royal College of Art, London, explains in his seminal work, *The Nature and Art of*

Workmanship, craft is often defined by “truth to materials”— forming the object according to the material at hand, for instance along, not against the grain of the wood (45). Such attention to materials and to the object’s use, together with precision, mastery of skill, and humility are all marks of the craftsmen of Gloucester, and of the Maximus type who emerges in the poem’s opening sections.

Much as a practicing archivist limits selection according to the needs of the governing body which commissions it, Olson limited his selection of materials in early *Maximus* on his need to reconnect humankind to the knowable, lived world within Gloucester. As he writes in *A Special View of History*, citing Heraclites,

> Man is forever estranged to the degree that his stance toward reality disengages him with the familiar. And it has been the immense task of the last century and a half to get man back to what he knows. For it turns out to coincide exactly with that other phrase: *to what he does*. What you do is precisely defined by what you know.
>
> (29)

The implications go further than the “poet . . . being alienated from his community, his society” (Von Hallberg, “Olson’s Difference” 22). They signify the alienation of all people from their origins. If Milton’s epic was written “to justify the ways of God to man,” writing *The Maximus Poems* was for Olson an attempt to restore the estranged body of man back to “what is most familiar”—the real, physical, lived world.[8] To do this, Olson based his selective criteria in early *Maximus* on an initial discipline of limits, limits which were rooted (much like the craftsman’s) in submission to the local materials, people, and surrounds of Gloucester.

This is not, however, where Olson’s project remains. As the poem expands, its scope moves outward, incorporating materials from civilizations and times far from Gloucester and raising questions about Olson’s selective methodology. In the final part of the chapter I

interrogate Olson's shift from the local, insular poet of the polis to the outward, projective poet in the larger world, asking whether a poetics of expansion contradicts Olson's discipline of limitation and submission, or whether the limits imposed in early *Maximus* were simply that: an initial discipline that folds into a larger plan for the poem-archive. What, if anything, remains of the discipline of the limit at the end of Olson's long poem, and what implications does this have for the verse epic as archive in the twentieth century?

Olson's *Maximus*: An Epic of Local Proportions

Olson, like Pound and Williams, approached verse epic by bridging historical and creative methodologies. Like his predecessors, he used primary documents not simply as source materials in his "poem containing history" but appropriated the contents of ships' logs, volumes of local history, letters, personal anecdotes and the like to create an intricate patchwork of collective documentary history surrounding the town of Gloucester, the locale he understood to be the starting point for westward expansion. Although he admired Pound's historical methods and Williams' localized scope, he also took exception to his "poetic fathers," shaping *Maximus* into a verse epic that he hoped would solve what he saw as major imperfections in their long works (Von Hallberg 24).

As Olson put it, his job in creating a new verse epic after Pound and Williams was to marry their two "halves" together by overcoming their faults: Pound's overarching ego and Williams' inability to handle the breadth of historical content necessary for epic (*SW* 83).[9] Like Williams, Olson moved beyond Pound's ego by limiting his epic to a single locale. Rather than imposing his personality upon a wide range of sources, he let his work—and epic speaker—be

shaped from the outset by locally available materials. But locale is also where he took exception to Williams: "by making his substance historical of one city . . . Bill completely licks himself, lets time roll him under as Ez does not, and thus, so far as what is the more important, methodology, contributes nothing" (*SW* 82–3). Williams also, as Von Hallberg notes, "simply never went back far enough into history" for Olson, who like Pound believed the backward glance should extend toward the ancient, and even mythological past ("Olson's Difference" 24). Olson indeed found greater value in Pound's methodology, in particular his approach to historical material, but saw in it Pound's own central flaw: "though all material is time material [Ez] has driven through it so sharply by the beak of his ego, that, he has turned time into what we must now have, space & its live air" (81–2). In Olson's ideal verse epic, the epic figure would move through "space & its live air" without the encumbrance of the ego and without, as Von Hallberg puts it, "obliter[ating] chronology"; early *Maximus* re-envisions the hero as submissive to the materials of his own time and place before moving outward in later sections to encounter other times and places ("Olson's Difference" 19).

To overcome the ego and handle time appropriately, then, Olson focused his epic on the long history of a single locale and crafted an epic hero who rises up from its center to be shaped from within (rather than being external to it). As such, *The Maximus Poems* do not follow the Malatesta Cantos with the silent, omniscient authority of Pound presiding over their cuts and starts, several centuries and civilizations removed from the action. Rather, in the opening songs and letters of *Maximus* an epic voice inserts itself into the current life of Gloucester-town, positioning itself as a careful observer of the town's actions and motivations. In this stanza from

"I, Maximus of Gloucester, to You," Maximus, figured as a bird who glimpses the waters beyond Gloucester by which its men make their trade, pauses to look and listen:

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

Taking the position of a bird building a nest (a much softer image than Pound's "beak" of an ego), Olson's epic speaker has the vantage of an observer who is also an insider, a near-native with the ear of the town and the voice of a bard (I.2).[10] By positioning his speaker as internal to the history recounted, Olson repositions epic authority as emerging from rather than external to it. As he writes in a letter to Cid Corman dated May, 1953,

> the authority which the [poem] must rest on [is] . . . the building-up, over the space & shape of it, of individuals & events so crucial
>
> (they need not be, I take it, 'significant people or happenings, or 'intelligent', or necessarily 'natural'(common, or whatever is WCW's guide to choice)—
>
> It is not the fall of a prince who is proud, or of a dope who gets tangled (American naturalism), or the peacocks of history (either of my own, or of any chosen time—like the Quattrocento, say)
>
> it is any of them, whom, in my 'wisdom', I come to know. And use.
>
> ("Letter," 45–6)

This statement refigures several aspects of Pound's epic: the hero is not "significant" or "intelligent," nor is he an exemplary "peacock" of history like Sigismondo Malatesta of the "Quattrocento" or "common" like the characters of Williams' *Paterson*. What matters to Olson is the people he "come[s] to know" in his everyday interaction with the people of Gloucester "and use" in the documentary history of the town's annals and the anecdotes which people the town's past.

Following this, Olson is not interested in recreating the structures of Pound's ideogrammic, "RAG-BAG" history which ranges over space and time to collate the best examples for direct comparison (*LO* 129). Like the development of a small town's history or the layers of sediment in rock, Olson's order is serial, incidental, and accretive, "the building-up, over the space and shape of it, of individuals & events." As Robert Von Hallberg notes, the letters tend toward a linear, but not necessarily straightforward structure, a strategy which "lures the reader" to interpretation as anecdotes, documents, people, and places proliferate (*Scholar's Art* 62). The reader responds by attempting to piece together the initial history of the event to determine the motivations of those involved—for instance, the division of New World settlers over the question of "puritanism / or . . . fish," that is, religion or capitalism, in "Letter 10" (I.45).

Though both poets employ parataxis, Pound's ideogrammic method relies on a more immediate "juxtaposition of distinct elements" to build a "perception of . . . unity" (Von Hallberg 61). As my last chapter details, such unity is built through the reader's expanding interpretive abilities which rely on a knowledge of Pound's source materials. The method is what Hugh Kenner has termed "subject rhyme"—Pound often gestures toward whole subjects with a single, discrete phrase, which must then be "rhymed" (often at a slant) with two or three others to create the ideogrammic image: "a house of good stone rhymes with mountain wheat, strong flour, the mind of Agostino di Duccio, and the proportions among the plain arches at St. Hilarie in Poictiers" (Kenner 93). Olson, in contrast, uses parataxis to jump back and forth between registers and sources without changing his subject. In "Letter 6," for example, Olson shifts between a discursive, philosophical discussion beginning "polis is / eyes" and several related

anecdotes about the "sharpness" of Gloucester's fishermen, shifts that are signaled by line breaks, indentations, and the use of open parentheses (see "Letter 6," I.26–28). The correlation between these registers is no enigma; the fisherman in the anecdotes are the living example of the "eyes" of the polis, and the basis for Olson's assertions. Further, the loose threads of both sharp-eyed fishermen and those "few [who] / have the polis / in their eye" are picked up in later sections, signaling an accretive, serial method across the poem as a whole, a kind of woven tapestry of repeated patterns and subjects whose meaning emerges slowly and over time (unlike Pound's serialization, which does not follow chronological order) (I.28). Olson's desire is not to leap across history or geography as Pound has done, but to get there by the slow movement of a body reading and writing history *in time* and of a body moving physically, with keen knowledge of its environment, *in space*. In contrast to Pound's willful wanderlust, Olson extends himself in space from a central location, Gloucester, and a vital time, its founding history.

As Olson's poem progresses, the "inside" voice of the epic speaker shifts to incorporate documentary materials which situate the speaker even more clearly inside the delineated world of Gloucester, marking him by his inclusion in the collective history of the town and as an individual within it.[11] Indeed, as he implies in "Letter 3," individual and collective history are integral to the history of Gloucester: the tansy he "rolled in as a boy / and didn't know it was / tansy" becomes "tansy / for my city . . . [t]ansy / for all of us" (I.9). It is only by the speaker's first situating himself—first locating himself—literally "in [his] own backyard" that that he can begin to tell the collective history of the town. As Olson writes in "Letter 23,"

> I would be an historian as Herodotus was, looking
> for oneself for the evidence of
> what is said
>
> (I.100–101)

The speaker of Olson's epic will journey to locate "evidence" in the documents he finds as he peruses the town's historical archive and listens to "what is said" among the people he knows; his evidence will also come through observation and recording, through his "sharp"-ness of "eye" which connects the poet's body to that of the polis (I.2). Through such meticulous, individual interaction with the stories and documents of the town's past, the history of Gloucester begins to emerge on Olson's page.

"Attention / and care": Olson's Poetics of Craft

Unlike Pound's spectator in the gallery, selecting from the dross of human output the best examples of civilization, for Olson the poem emerges through the process of creation and according to the materials at hand, like a house beneath a master carpenter's hands, or civilization in the New World shaped by those who seek to inhabit it. The analogy extends to the craft of the poet-historian, who exhibits a similar degree of "attention" and "care" toward his work—terms invoked by Olson to indicate keys to mastery of craft.[12] In the case of *Maximus*, the poem-archive of Gloucester grows and shifts beneath Olson's hands, turned, as it were, by Olson's masterful guidance on the lathe of the town's collective history. As Olson writes in *A Bibliography on America*, "scholarship in history . . . is the same thing as care of [a] Swedish cabinet maker" (9–10).

Though there is no direct comparison between history-shaping and craft in *Maximus*—indeed, no scholarship that connects history and craft in Olson's work—references to craft abound in early *Maximus*, ranging from the fine arts to the trades. The work of a metal smither opens the first stanza of the opening poem, with the figure of Maximus compared to the phallic

image of a sword's "metal pulled from boiling water," a "goldsmith's scale" at the ready to measure his "58 carats" (I.1). This image of craftsmanship is contrasted with the nests fashioned by birds and nets and ropes woven by fisherman, objects closely linked to the everyday livelihood of the fishing town of Gloucester. Woodworking is also central on the early poems: the carving of the bowsprit of "I Maximus of Gloucester, to You" hints at the carpentry and shipbuilding in "Letter 7." Also present are the fine arts: in the work of painters Marsden Hartley and Helen Stein in "Letter 7," and in the figure of the statue in the town's center, "my lady of good voyage," who holds in her arms a "carefully carved wood . . . schooner" in place of the infant Christ (I.2). The literary arts also have their place, as the shaping of books and magazines for print becomes a negative example in editor Vincent Ferrini in letters 3 through 6: "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. . . // . . . Let them cease putting out words in the public print" ("Letter 3," I.9). For Olson, an editor like Ferrini is particularly liable for the "good [of] the city"—as a public figure his pandering to writers who don't share Gloucester's interests to fill the pages of *Four Winds* is an egregious misuse of his power, not least because in Olson's opinion he does not choose well.

Indeed, for the craftsman of Gloucester, mastery of one's trade, whether in painting, carpentry, printing, or shipbuilding was integral to the health of the city and to the individuals who inhabit it. In the opening poems of *Maximus*, those who are best in their trade, who exhibit the highest levels of skill, are set apart from the majority. Their "sharpness" of eye enables them to carry out feats like the fisherman Burke of "Letter 6," who "was that good a professional, his eyes / as a gulls are," directly influencing the outcome of the venture (I.27). Such skills benefit

the community of Gloucester, connecting craftsmen directly to its maintenance regardless of their position within it:

> Eyes,
> & polis,
> fisherman, & poets . . .
> both:
> the attention, and
> the care
>   however much each of us
>   chooses our own
>   kin and concentration.
>
> (I.28)

Whatever "kin" one comes from—English, Portuguese, or Italian, as Gloucester's fishermen were—and whatever "concentration" or trade one chooses, "attention, / and care" are possible and, for at least a few, necessary (I.52). Without it, the town of Gloucester would not, in Olson's estimation, continue. "Fishermen, & poets" thus serve an important civic role, based not on "kin and concentration" (as with Derrida's archon) but on the "attention, / and care" they give to their work. This attitude carries preservative possibilities: both for the the generations-long history of their craft and in their "care" for their work in the present, an attitude that may be passed down to a new generation through Olson's written archive.[13]

If Gloucester is to be preserved, one thing beyond skill and care is needed: a knowledge of the history of specific skills *written down* for others to read and learn from, a task that becomes all the more important as the trades are lost to time. Although the passing down of physical skill was most often done through a hands-on apprenticeship, Olson recognized that as trades disappeared, so too did their value to Gloucester. Though he couldn't impart the actual *doing* of casting nets or fashioning cabinets, he could impart the significance of these skills to the reader by presenting an accurate portrait of them. In *A Bibliography on America*, Olson

compares Edward Merck, the "master historian up to now on the Oregon Triangle," to carpenters:

> —and a carpenter doing it is the same thing, or a sailor, or anyone who really knows what he is doing doing it; and if you are lucky, and you stumble upon someone in print telling you how to do it, if, say, it's something like lowering a whale, say, which ain't done anymore, lowering a boom (cf sd Melville on how a whale uses his flukes . . . that exactitude of process known) . . .
>
> (9)

The link between archive and repertoire is nowhere clearer than in this passage: "anyone who really knows what he is doing doing it" can and must be preserved by "someone *in print* telling you how to do it" (my emphasis). Although this implies repertoire can be passed directly through a written medium, that is not Olson's emphasis here (nor is there evidence for it in the poem). Rather, emphasis falls on the ability to impart the *knowledge* of the craft so that it can be accurately *represented* to the reader. "[L]owering a whale . . . ain't done anymore" but Melville, as a skilled writer who knew the intimacies of whaling firsthand, is perfectly positioned to convey its "exact . . . process" to the reader, conveying the process with the "care" and "precision" that are in keeping with the ideals of the polis.

In *A Bibliography*, the act of "doing"—that is, the act of craft—is directly extended to include the writing of history. As such, there is an archival necessity in the work of masters like Melville, a need to immerse oneself in whaling (as he did before writing *Moby-Dick*) to preserve the craft of whaling in prose, and for Olson to immerse himself in Melville's prose in order to gain the knowledge of the culture of whaling, now lost. For Olson, knowing how to do something in the old way implies knowledge of what keeps a community intact; its preservation is based on first-hand knowledge of and ability to impart past practice to future readers, who might gain something of that way of doing and thinking from the exchange.

But there are further links between the physical work of craft and the writing of history. Common to both, as Olson writes of Melville, is "that exactitude of process known." Precision or exactness is key to what makes someone "sharp" or "care"-ful. Olson explores this theme of precision in his description of the work of master carpenter William Stevens in "Letter 7" of *The Maximus Poems*:

> How much the cracks matter, or seams in a ship, the absolutes…
> Only: no latitude, any more than any, elite. The exactness
> caulking, or "play", calls for, those
> millimeters
>
> No where in man is there room for carelessness
>
> (I.132)

Stevens, like Melville, exhibits an "exactitude of process" in keeping with his craft. His ability to exact to the millimeter the caulk necessary to keep the vessel afloat also points to the tension that exists between "exactness" and "latitude"—one is only given the "latitude" to "exact" repair only if one has taken care to train the "eye" to see the cracks and seams and, further, the skill to repair them. As the poet-historian suggests, linking attention to the creative process of poetry, what exists between these is "play." In the right hands, limits generate creative output. As David Pye writes of the craftsman's "truth to materials," "wrought iron work in the hands of a good smith is beautifully free and diversified within its limits" (49).

As in *A Bibliography*, difference in this passage is not of kind, but of degree: the poet, the fisherman, and the carpenter all have the potential to repair, maintain, and even shape the polis, but only by the degree to which each has delved deeply into their crafts. For Olson, such delving implies specialization.[14] As he advises Ed Dorn, then a student at Black Mountain, "one must dig one thing or place or man until you yourself know more abt that than is possible to any other

man. It doesn't matter whether it's Barbed Wire or Pemmican or Paterson or Iowa. But exhaust it. Saturate it. Beat it" (*BA* 13). If the advice is followed, and saturation takes place, the poet's "sharpness" of eye for the material, as well as his ability to shape it, becomes expert. Like Ahab's harpooner or Gloucester's sharp-eyed fisherman, he can through his deep knowledge penetrate history and gain the latitude to "play" inside it.

In *The Maximus Poems*, such craft and care is modeled in the early poems by craftsmen across disciplines. As the speaker says later in that stanza, Stevens becomes an example that the poet will "in present circumstances / keep my eye on"—"eye" being the measure of "sharpness" or "care" elaborated on in Letters 6 and 7. Not only is there a connection between these men across Gloucester's history (from its colonial past to the poet's present), but in the way in which they train one another—across time, across craft, but in the same locale—to keep the care of the polis always in their eye. Indeed, such modeling across mediums reveals Olson's pedagogical purpose in the early *Maximus* poems. Olson's ability to isolate those who exhibit "care" and "attention" to their trades—his own particular master craft in the world he wishes to preserve—both educates the reader in the ways of these crafts, preserving the importance of their practice for future generations, and models to them the "sharpness of eye" needed to identify others of like mind who share an interest in preserving the polis.

Through careful selection, which is the work of the poet-archivist, Gloucester's stance of care is preserved. Indeed, what is left when craft has fallen away is precisely this attitude: when fishing and shipbuilding no longer form the core of Gloucester's industry, what remains is the attention and humility modeled for us by the town's craftsmen and by the poet. Yet the work of these masters is not forgotten: Olson preserves the quality of their skill through the *written*

medium of poetry; thus, the poem becomes an archive—a repository of knowledge—for a way of life that is quickly falling away.

“That crucial thing . . . the job in hand”: Black Mountain and Craft

That much work done by hand—like whaling in Melville’s time—had fallen out of common knowledge and need by mid-century was noted by many at Black Mountain College, where Olson became rector in 1951 just as the *Maximus* poems were beginning to take shape.[15] Anni Albers, wife of Joseph Albers and a teacher of the craft of weaving at Black Mountain commented in 1944, “The crafts . . . have had a long rest. Industry overran them. We need too much too quickly for any handwork to keep up with. . . . We do not depend on their products now, but we need again their contact with material and their slow process of forming” (6). The necessity for quickly made products following World War II only deepened the rift between the singly-made, hand-worked craft object and its competition, the factory-made, mass-produced consumer product, a division that extended from nineteenth-century industrialization through modernism’s machine age.[16] For Olson, this was not simply a post-Marxian concern about the worker’s alienation from the product of his or her labor. Also disappearing was knowledge of the *physical* aspect of making, with its immediate perception of materials and intricate, often hard-learned techniques—techniques which needed to be passed from one generation to the next if they were to survive.

As was the case for many of the artist-teachers at Black Mountain, Anni Albers’ artistic production and teaching focused on process and materials rather than the finished product—a practice and pedagogy Olson endorsed in his own work (which is perhaps ironic given that the

Albers left the school in 1949 before he became a regular fixture on the campus).[17] "If we want to learn to do, to form," wrote Albers,

> we have to turn to art work, and more specifically to craft work as part of it. Here learning and teaching are directed toward the development of our general capacity to form. They are directed toward the training of our sense of organization, our constructive thinking, our inventiveness and imagination, our sense of balance in form—toward the apprehension of principles such as tension and dynamic. (5–6)

Olson's own poetics and pedagogy, his sense of tension and dynamic in the field of composition and his apprehension of the relative balance of materials and their physicality on the page and in space were also shaped by the thinking of those he worked with—and those who preceded him—during his tenure at Black Mountain.[18]

As Mary Emma Harris notes in her study *Black Mountain and the Arts* (the only study to consider Olson's relationship to craft, although through a historical lens[19]), "the relative nature of forms, a nonlinear sense of continuity and coherence, and the importance of process . . . in the creation of a work of art" were all important to the "New American art" emerging from the college in the early 1950s (182). For Olson, who became fascinated by the kinetics of dance in his early years at the college, the physical aspect of creating was central. As Harris notes, he "admired arts whose movement of creation and art were the same—the dancer, the jazz musician" (182). In them, he saw the possibility for making and doing to come together; process and product were one. A similar physicality was evident in crafts (though the product was, of course, separate). In a letter to Marguerite Wildenhain, Olson describes these "old-fashioned arts" in comparable terms to the projective in verse: "Objects. Solids. Speech as Solid. Kinetic. Movement. Honor" (qtd. in Harris 191). If the process-oriented climate at Black Mountain contributed to Olson's open field poetics, so too did a growing awareness in Olson of the

physicality of making that the poet came to associate with a more direct perception of the world around him.

Craft had always played a part in the curriculum at Black Mountain, though throughout the life of the college it took a back seat to those classes taught by writers, painters, musicians, architects, and choreographers for which the college became famous. Josef Albers, who was in charge of the art program in the 1930s, had intended the college to have multiple crafts studios taught by “Masterhandwerkmen”—master craftsmen and practicing professionals who could impart to students the high level of design and technique he and Anni had learned at the studios of the German Bauhaus in the early 1930s (Harris 20). He could not, however, secure the funds necessary to employ instructors and furnish the studios, which he had hoped might eventually support themselves and provide furniture and textiles for the college (following Black Mountain’s desire to be self-sustaining) (183). Olson would face this same challenge when he assumed leadership, finding it impossible to staff the woodshop with a master craftsman though it remained open to students.

Though classes in woodworking, bookbinding, photography, and printing were eventually added as student interest arose, it was Anni Albers who was at the heart of the craft curriculum, teaching textile and weaving classes. Albers, too, was concerned with reconnecting maker and medium, although in relation to her own field of weaving and textiles. Students in her introductory courses often worked with materials for several weeks without being taught techniques or terminology, in order, she said, to gain “direct experience of a medium” (qtd. in Harris 24). Teaching in this way she hoped to re-establish the connection between design and craft lost in an age of mass-production, insisting that “the designer as artist-craftsman be

concerned with the total form and work directly with materials rather than at a drawing board" (24). Similarly, Olson hoped to remedy the cult of traditional verse—formal poetry handed down with strict rules for meter, rhyme, and lineation—still prevalent in 1950. To rid poets of "the verse that print bred" he taught direct, tactile use of materials including breath, line, and syllable to create a field of tensions that determined the form of the poem, rather than form determining content (*HU* 51). He insisted in "Projective Verse" that poets pay attention to the syllable as a unit of breath, for it is only by direct apperception of sound, through the body of the poet onto the page, that the "right form" of the poem can emerge (52). Such a physical awareness of sound, for Olson the "minimum and source of speech," aligns him with Albers' "direct experience of a medium" (52). Like Albers, Olson wanted to give back to the poet the tactile knowledge and expertise of making that would, they both believed, positively influence the "total form" of the work.

Albers also insisted that attention to material should directly influence the outcome of the artist's work: textile creation was "a process involving a response to the capacities and limitations of materials, a knowledge of the characteristics of weaves, and an acknowledgment of the specific functional requirements for the textile in mind" (6). Her description hits upon a defining criteria of craft: besides being material-specific and use-specific, it is created based on the specific limits of the medium out of which it is formed. This description falls in line with David Pye's "truth to materials," which not only characterizes the stance of the worker to the material but the tenor of the product itself, whose quality is conveyed by the precision of its final form. Olson's own poetics mirror this sentiment: "Right form, in any given poem, is the only and exclusively possible extension of content under hand" (*HU* 52). Indeed, what is necessary if

the poem is to be shaped into "right form" is "attention": "*Any* slackness takes off attention, that crucial thing, from the job in hand, from the *push* of the line under hand at the moment, under the reader's eye, in his moment" (55). Such attention is deeply embodied, set in proximity to the physical body: "*in* hand," "*under* the reader's eye." Craft requires an immediate, physical knowledge of the materials "under hand" as well as a willingness to submit to their processes and outcomes.

Albers's and Pye's recognition of the limit of the material in crafting the final product links them to Olson's notion of the poet-craftsman of the polis for whom physical limits and material constraints become a creative and generative, not restrictive, condition for what is possible. According to Albers, such constraints are often beyond our control, environmental factors which force us into a productive submission. She writes, "We have to learn to respond to conditions productively. We cannot master them but we can be guided by them. Limitation from the outside can stimulate our inventiveness rather than confine it" (5). Olson echoes this recognition of limits in "Letter 5":

> I am not at all aware
> that anything more than that
> is called for. Limits
> are what any of us
> are inside of.
>
> (I.17)

Of course, as archon of Gloucester, it is Olson's prerogative to name the limits that will define the poem's boundaries. That he defines the limits themselves universally—"limits / are what any of us / are inside of"—and that he distances himself from his own agency through passive constructions—"is called for," "are inside of"—indicates his desire, despite his position of power, to submit to given limits, making himself equal with the objects and persons who inhabit

the poem. Olson does not see himself as creating limits, but as identifying those that already exist for "any of us." (And "any" is even more pointed here: it implies those who recognize limits, not "each" of us—a clear allusion to the "single" and the "many" of "Maximus, to himself" and the "few / [who] have the polis / in their eye" [I.52].) By this he aligns himself with the craftsman, whose relationship to materials is also one of limitation and constraint, rather than with the artist, who invents and designs from above and outside. In *The Maximus Poems* Olson redefines the role of the poet-craftsman as one who shapes *from inside*. As we'll find, even when the scope of the poem expands to include more far-reaching history and places, Olson will remain squarely within these bounds.

The limits of composing verse epic have much in common with the material and physical limits encountered by the craftsman. By working with the materials of history, Olson works with the "given" of the past event. The documents and stories he references describe events that have already taken place; he is limited to the past these sources impart, not only to the event but to its representation. As '*istorin* he has the prerogative—indeed the self-given mandate—to interrogate and interpret his sources, but as archivist he is constrained to make accessible what he knows to be true of those events. This imperative he carries out through careful, studied quotation of source materials which leaves little room for (re)invention. The limits are also bodily: for the poem to emerge with "right form," the poet must always pay "attention," not letting "*any* slackness" inhibit the outcome. The poem is borne through the filter of the poet's body—"the HEAD, by way of the EAR to the SYLLABLE / the HEART, by way of the BREATH, to the LINE." His work on the page is aligned with what happens outside the poem in the field of action:

> [E]very element in the open poem (the syllable, the line, as well as the image, the sound, the sense) must be taken up as participants in the kinetic of the poem just as solidly as we are accustomed to take what we call the objects of reality; and . . . these elements are to be seen as creating the tensions of a poem just as totally as do those other objects create what we know as the world.
>
> (*HU* 56)

By Olson's submission to the process of creation through the attentive stance of his body, he makes himself an equal participant with other objects in the field of action and bridges the distance between the human individual and the unknown world of objects, making "that which is most familiar" known. As poet cum craftsman on the page, Olson inserts himself in the kinetic field that is Gloucester, a position from which Maximus may arise out of its center. With each new object the scope of the poem—its force field—subtly changes, as does the position of Maximus within.

William Stevens: Craftsman of the Polis

The physicality of working directly with materials, the necessity of deep knowledge and training within a discipline, the recognition and use of physical and material limits, and the pedagogical, archival imperative to pass along instruction describe several key traits of the craftsman—and that of the poet-historian—around whom the "Maximus" type is shaped in the early *Maximus* poems. Taking a close look at a particular Maximus figure we've already met, William Stevens, clarifies the relationship between the figure of the craftsmen who inhabit the early poems and the role of Olson as an archivist, setting similar limits and paying attention to similar constraints. Olson's eventual break from the figure of the craftsman as "first Maximus" signals a shift in the poem's trajectory that is key to understanding his poetics in the larger poem.

It also brings the poem back to its epic intentions: to explore and tell the *history* of Gloucester and the world beyond its shores.

The first "Maximus" type identified in Olson's long poem—the precursor to the epic figure around whom the poem is shaped—is a carpenter, the early settler William Stevens, who is featured in "Letter 7" just after Olson has expounded in "Letter 6" about the rarity of those who have the "polis / in their eye." Stevens, introduced in my earlier discussion of the "precision" it takes to be a master of one's skill, adds two elements to our understanding of the craftsman: he introduces the trait of humility necessary to carry out the constructive task, and he deepens our knowledge of what history—in particular archival history—means to Olson's "poem containing history." In 1642, the carpenter William Stevens "left Plymouth Plantation, / and came to Gloucester, / to build boats." Olson writes:

> That carpenter is much on my mind:
> I think he was the first Maximus
>
> Anyhow, he was the first to make things,
> not just live off nature
>
> And he displays,
> in the record, some of those traits
> goes with that difference, traits present circumstances
> keep my eye on
>
> for example, necessities the practice of the self,
> that matter, that wood
>
> (I.30–31)

Stevens embodies for Olson the kind of care and attention that characterizes his own stance to one's own time and place: by first recognizing the limits of the self and the world, one is able to practice and produce inside them, a trait he elsewhere terms "humilitas" (*HU* 60). Limited to the materials at his disposal ("*that* matter, *that* wood"), Stevens makes out of the given something

new. He is the first to "display" this trait of "making things" in the New World, the first to apply his shaping mechanism to the new "nature" rather than simply "liv[ing] off nature" in exploitative fashion like those at Plymouth Plantation whom he willingly left behind because of their insistence on commodifying it for personal gain.

Though the materials one uses to shape the vessel might be the same (the same historical documents, the same new world material), what one does with them, and how one sees and shapes them, mark the difference between those who, like Stevens, craft with "attention," and those who, like the men who followed Standish, have anything but its "care" in their eye. Steven's singularity marked him with "traits" of "difference" from those who exploited the landscape for personal economic gain. Such men, led by militant enforcer Miles Standish, had vied in the early years of the Massachusetts Bay Colony for fishing rights in a skirmish that typified the lust to commodify the New World Olson so despised, a lust which for Olson was still evident in present-day Gloucester.[20] Indeed, Stevens is described in the stanza prior to this by his "difference" from those who are "too proper," that is, too invested in ownership (propriety)—at Plymouth, at Boston, and eventually even at Gloucester (I.30). In later books, Olson fleshes out Stevens' history even further:

> [P]reviously to coming
> to Gloucester this man had built the largest
> ship then known in England – and had been
> so desirable Spain's spies had sought to
> buy him . . .
>
> he would have lived a life as large as
> John Winthrop Jr also refused.
>
> (II.48)

Stevens' distance from the history of expansionist greed, exemplified by his "refus[al]" to be "bought" by Spain—together with earnest attention to his craft—earns him the title of "the first Maximus." As first Maximus he is also the "first to see tansy / take root," the first to see the "tansy city, root city" of Gloucester establish itself (I.30, I.11, I.10). That tansy—or rootedness—has become "rare" is knowledge the poet does not realize until he is old enough to recognize the privilege of being "root person in root place": "Tansy from Cressy's / I rolled in as a boy / and didn't know it was / tansy" (I.9). `

Like tansy, the carpenter Stevens is also rare. His desire to "fend for himself" without relying on a competitive market to drive his individual interests marks him with a humility, an egolessness, that is in keeping with Olson's own ideas of the poet-historian whose task is to "find out for oneself" (I.30, *SVH* 20). Indeed it is at the very juncture of fending/finding that the poet-historian and craftsman come together for Olson. In Steven's case, "fending for oneself" means carving out a singular stripe in the material of the new world without regard to the competitive viability of one's actions. For Olson's poet-historian, "finding for oneself" means "looking for oneself for the evidence of / what is said" without paying heed to historians' consensus on the past, which is only there to "CONFUSE confuse CONFOUND": "It is unbearable what knowledge of the past has been allowed to become, what function of human memory has dribbled out into the hands of these learned monsters whom people are led to think 'know'" ("Letter 23" I.101, *SW* 17, *HU* 12). As we've seen, Olson is able to verify his own human experience by becoming familiar with the materials of its making, starting with the contents in his "own backyard." In the process he becomes a Maximus type himself. As Von Hallberg writes

of Olson's use of Herodotus' *'istorin* in "Letter 23," "[m]eaning must derive from individual experience, or it is of no use—every man [is] his own Maximus" (94).

Notably, it is not through any special privilege that the stance of humility necessary to the Maximus figure is formed. As the poet writes, the eyes of the craftsman are not "sharp" by "gift… love of self… [or] god," but rather by use, by the shaping and refining of one's individual work "under" the material at hand ("Letter 6" I.29, *HU* 55). Olson describes the relationship between the loss of ego and the emergence of craft in his definition of "objectism" in "Projective Verse":

> Objectism [is] a word to be taken to stand for the kind of relation of man to experience which a poet might state as *the necessity of a line or a work to be as wood is, to be as clean as wood as it issues from the hand of nature, to be as shaped as wood can be when a man has his hand to it*. Objectism is the getting rid of the lyrical interference of the individual ego, of the 'subject' of his soul, that peculiar presumption by which western man has interposed himself between what he is as a creature of nature (with certain instructions to carry out) and those others creatures of nature which we may, with no derogation, call objects. *For man himself is an object*, whatever he may take to be his advantages, the more likely to recognize himself as such the greater his advantages, particularly at that moment that he achieves *an humilitas sufficient to make him of use*.
>
> (*HU* 59–60, my italics)

Scholarship has made much of Olson's "getting rid of the lyrical interference of the individual ego"—indeed, some Language writers take this as a primary statement on the rejection of Romantic subjectivity which is a starting point for their own practice[21]—but more important to my discussion is the relationship between the lessening of ego and the emergence of craft, here figured literally as wood being shaped by man's hand. Note the equality of the relationship—man's hand is "to" the wood, not above or below it. He is constrained by the materials and conditions of its emergence. The language of the passage echoes the verses on Stevens: one hears in the "necessity of a line or a work" the "necessities the practice of the self, / that matter, that

wood" ("Letter 7" 1.31). The organic metaphor for the craft of poetic composition is based on a third term: wood is shaped first by "the hand of nature," then by the hand of man. The poet-craftsman has the same relationship to the material as nature does to the material: it is an organic, emergent shaping that takes place.

What exactly is "necessary" for the craftsman in this equation? Olson's answer, as we have seen, is "humilitas," a right relationship to nature in which man recognizes himself as an object equal to the objects he is shaping. As Von Hallberg writes in his gloss of the passage, "man must purge himself from the presumption by which he has set himself apart from nature's other objects" (85). Olson explains the concept in an unpublished precursor to "Projective Verse," an essay he titled "About Space" that he enclosed in a letter to Frances Boldereff on March 21, 1950:

> Man as object is equitable to all other nature, is neutron, is thus no more than a tree or pitchblende but is, therefore, returned to his abiding place where he always is whatever his notions, the primordial, where he can rest again as he did once with less knowledge to confirm his *humilitas*.
>
> (123)

To "abide" and "rest again," one must get back to humilitas, a trait Olson explains to Boldereff is all too rare in the West: "Men have lost, in the slackening of the tensions in the West, the necessary *humilitas*" (57). With the threat of the "slackness [that] takes off attention, that crucial thing, from the job in hand," both the poet and the craftsman of the polis must hold, at all costs, this stance of humility (*HU* 56).

Humilitas restores man to his proper place in nature, a position from which he can shape its materials for human use. Like Anni Albers' desire to teach future designers the intricacies of the material of craft, and to submit to its processes, Olson hoped in *The Maximus Poems* to begin

the restoration of man to the natural world through pointing to models of those who are intimately familiar with its processes: the craftsmen of Gloucester whose masterful, “care”-ful work he archives in the early poem. Olson’s selection of those who had mastered such crafts served in the early sections of *Maximus* as a limiting factor in the archive he was building. Returning once more to Olson’s advice to Ed Dorn concerning historians and carpenters, the key to preserving of the attitude of care is to follow those who “really know what [they are] doing doing it.” Such knowledge and mastery—within limits—is the defining factor in Olson’s poetics of the limit at the outset of *The Maximus Poems*.

“Undone Business”: Measuring the Local

That Olson’s poem would break from its initial discipline of limits is gestured toward in the poem that precedes the penultimate letter in the 1957 volume of *The Maximus Poems* (later retitled *Maximus III*). Significantly, “Letter, May 2, 1959” also glances back at William Stevens. In these lines, Olson compares the early economic failures of Gloucester’s founding generation across time and space, triangulating the New World, Egypt, and England in order to gauge Gloucester’s place in the larger world. This is not the first time distant locales and histories have been mentioned in *Maximus*, but these lines evidence a wider scope of global and mythical reference—and a more deliberate grouping of far-ranging source materials—than has been apparent until now in the larger poem:

> [Gloucester is] not without other means of maintenance, have good timber, And
> A very sufficient builder (Stevens)
>
> But that these times,
> of combustion, the seas

the Peoples of the Sea Menaptha fell Kadesh they were there Ramses II
Greeks

from the sea Lebanese

to Gloucester these Englishmen what was Bruen doing

Piscataqua Bristol Z. Hill Wm Barnes Gloucester
Gloucestershire William Addes Frampton on Severn
Devon: Avery Parsons Southmead Dutch Dorset Ste-
vens alone London…

From

then to now nothing
new

(I.147)

In these lines, Stevens stands as a representative of Gloucester, the gauge of the local who will help Olson to "measure [his] song" across the poem (I.44). Though the carpenter still exemplifies the very highest levels of "maintenance" and "sufficien[cy]" in the New World, Stevens' craft falls short in comparison to the economic prowess of England. Gloucester, which until this point has been "our / scales," has moved into the arena of the global (I.46). Olson declared earlier in this letter that "I am not here to / have to do with Englishmen" (I.145); now he finds himself comparing his history of Gloucester with two other histories: Victor Bérard's *Did Homer Live?*, which tells the story of the fall of Egypt to "The Peoples of the Sea," and Charles Edward Banks' *Topographical Dictionary of 2885 English Emigrants*, which ties the names of Gloucester's original settlers with their cities of origin in England (1.146).[22]

Through these sources—one a ranging history of ancient Greece, the other a local, specialized record related to Gloucester's founding history—England serves as a countermeasure to Gloucester, which is unable to compete economically with the country of its origins. Unlike Stevens' interaction with Miles Standish, it is not the competitive viability of the individual that

is at stake, but rather the possibility for Gloucester, made up of European immigrants, to thrive in the soil of the New World. In these "times, / of combustion" it is the sea that links "this stuck-out / 10 miles Europe-pointing / cape" to its antecedents, first to its direct lineage in England and then to more distant Egyptian history (I.147). The sacking of Egypt by the "Sea People" of Menaptha, a little-known history unearthed through Olson's interest in the original father of epic, serves as a foil to the *lack* of men in Gloucester who might trump their mother empire in fishing. Stevens, whose "sufficien[cy]" up to now has been enough to tip Gloucester's scale towards the good, is not able to make good on the "timber" available to him (a reference to wood that is set aside for future use, i.e. Gloucester's economic potential). The failure isn't a matter of distance so much as time. In Book II's "the winning thing," Olson will link Stevens to the lineage of persons who eventually crafted the vessel that saved New England: the schooner, ostensibly (according to Olson) invented in 1713 by the men who apprenticed under Stevens in Gloucester (II.48–9). It isn't until some twenty years after Stevens' death in 1793 that his contribution, invisible in written history, but discovered by Olson through his research into the historical record, surfaces. Stevens, who "dwindled, on the face of the record" was the "head of something—the winning thing— / got hidden all these years" (II.48).

In fact, Stevens' disappearance from the public record—his inability to put Gloucester on the map of the larger world though he "founded Troy / on this side of history"—presents a problem for the sustainability of the "first Maximus" (III.29). Olson tells the back story in Book III: After refusing to pay homage to Charles the Second, Stevens runs away from Gloucester and subsequently loses his position as "primary Selectman" (III.28). His self-chosen removal indicates a failure of the Maximus type to act publically, in both space and time, in sight of those

who might look to him as a model. His resistance to authority is the hinge: though he gains the character of *humilitas* in the New World by resisting Spain's offer for personal gain and notoriety, by putting his personal convictions above public service and turning away from Gloucester he forfeits his right to the title of "first Maximus." The job of the epic poet and archon is to act *in public* on behalf of a people and place; it is Stevens' failure to enact public duty that causes Olson to search for new models, and to expand his scope of comparison beyond Gloucester.

Indeed, it is in comparison to places and people distant from Gloucester—in time *and* place—that the poet begins to take the measure of the local, an act that effects a necessary expansion of both source materials and content. Measurement is important to this outward movement. As Olson writes in "Letter 9," he plans to

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

Once the poet has established himself in the place of his origin, he will take measure of his own backyard and of himself. Comparison happens on several levels: the personal ("my" song, "me"), the poetic ("my song"), the historical ("the sources of my song"), and the metapoetic ("my forces," which gestures toward the "force field" of open field poetics).[23] As the scope of the poem moves outward, new elements will hang in relative balance and tension with the others, forcing comparison across these levels and allowing the poet to measure himself against a widening array of "sources" and "forces." These levels will also be compared to one another: the personal and the poetic ("me" against "my song") the historical and the metapoetic ("the

sources" against "my forces") and so on. Through all of this the poet will remain within the bounds of the expanding poem, an object in tension with the others.

Before expansion can begin, however, the local must be measured against itself. In "Maximus, to himself," the poet compares his own position within the poem to the "song" he is creating, questioning both his historical method and pedagogical intentions:

> The sea was not, finally, my trade.
> But even my trade, at it, I stood estranged
> from that which was most familiar . . .
> …
> I have made dialogues,
> have discussed ancient texts,
> have thrown what light I could, offered
> what pleasures
> doceat allows
>
> (I.52–53)

Olson fails at his "trade," poetry, on several fronts: he fails to learn what it has to teach him ("doceat"); through it he fails to reconnect to what his is "most familiar" with; and he fails to understand the full measure of himself in the place he comes from. As he writes later in the letter, "the stem of me . . . was neither diminished / nor increased, / by the communication." He cannot gauge his position in the larger scope of the poem or in the world. Even source work—the work of writing history—fails, for as Olson writes in the same letter, his experience as Gloucester's historian has so far led to "testing / And missing / some proof" (I.53). He fails to carry out the Herodotean mandate to "look / for oneself for the evidence of / what is said" (I.100–101). Though it approaches an admission of defeat (indeed, it comes close the confessional sections of Eliot's *Four Quartets* on the failure of poetry), this letter in fact marks a turning point for the poet—and the poem—towards the world beyond Gloucester's shores, as its final lines imply:

It is undone business
I speak of, this morning,
with the sea
stretching out
from my feet

(I.53)

In order to complete the business he started the poet will have to travel beyond Gloucester in time and space, pulling far-ranging references and sources and enlarging his scope and content beyond his initial discipline of limits and the "first Maximus." The journey that started from his own backyard will take him, as the lyrical "stevens song" of Book III invokes, to places on the other side of time[24]:

the city
is only the beginning of the earth:
…
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

(III. 39–40)

Here in this song that ends the saga of William Stevens, beyond the city, beyond "the rules of sea-faring far far from Gloucester," a new "measure" introduces itself. Instead of measuring against the scale of Gloucester, or against a representative "first Maximus," the poem will be measured "by the law of the proportion / of its parts." If history is the memory of time, as another title in the *Maximus* cycle suggests, proportion will be its measure. And just as Olson gauged the degree of attention and sharpness of Gloucester's craftsmen, he will continue to interrogate the commitment and perception of those who inhabit—and practice—history: "Be

reminded that you listen, and are more or less impressed by, a man according to the degree & kind of his perception, his commitment" ("History," qtd. in Von Hallberg 112).

The Open Archive: "Space & . . . live air"

Though Olson's scope broadened as his project moved beyond the "local" of Gloucester, we need not characterize this poetics of expansion as antithetical to his original project of a limited archive—for of course Olson himself recognized the necessity of being open to the future, that to start in one place does not mean you end up in that same place, unchanged. His was not a closed poetics that assumed itself a closed whole; neither does it follow the circular logic of history in Eliot's *Four Quartets*, where to start over is to "know the place for the first time."

Olson's projective poetics reveal that his view of history is not closed; it is one in which one strikes out from the present, both into the past and into the future, starting with a firm recognition of one's present before moving outward "projectively" to "act" in space and time. To get there, to where one may move and act "in space & its live air," one must submit to one's own time and place, to establish the "rhythm" which is particular to one's own origins and which is absolutely necessary for outward movement.[25] Olson explains this trajectory in a letter to Cid Corman dated October 1951, just months after publishing the first set of Maximus poems: "man as common has to be restored by way of you or me as particular" (*LO* 82). The method is historical. One must "grab hold, first (in order to accomplish the common) by DOCUMENTATION—the specific . . . (exact particular specific anecdote)" (82). As we've seen in early *Maximus*, man is established in and restored to the place of his origin by the "evidence" he

finds in his own backyard. It is only after establishing his documentary "history"—whose best practitioner, Olson writes, is Herodotus—that the writer can move beyond it.

Once man is established in the present by use of particulars, he projects himself outward by way of "rhythm"—something accessible to him only from his experience and submission to his own time and place. Rhythm implies movement, an ability to move within the universe; it is by such rhythm that man becomes projective: "There is only one thing you can do about kinetic," Olson writes in "Human Universe," "re-enact it. . . . [H]e who possesses rhythm possesses the universe" (*HU* 9). By starting from his origins, Olson re-establishes his dynamic in nature. Commitment and interest—both key concepts for the early Maximus figure—are now possible: "You can begin to make yourself a master of materials which (my guess is) is EXACTLY THE SORT OF MATERIAL WHICH YOU *ARE*—which you are INTERESTED IN—which you will, ahead, be COMMMITTED TO" (*LO* 83). Here we see, in perhaps its clearest enunciation, the link between history, craft, and Olson's outward movement from individual citizen to Maximus-at-large. In the earliest Maximus poems, the poet becomes a "master" of materials—a craftsman of the highest quality—able to shape, contain, and establish rhythm in the present, local scope of Gloucester by his commitment and attention (read: interest) to the material. By this, the poet shapes the history and story of the "polis" on the lathe of its collective history, a history that includes the poet's own. Read through Corman's letter, we can read localism as one of several disciplines—perhaps as the initial discipline—that makes outward movement possible in Olson's growing archive.

But moving beyond Gloucester is also, as we've seen in the failure of the first Maximus, necessary. It allows the poet to explore untested regions, times, and sources in order to take

measure of himself and his song in an ever-widening, ever-expanding poem-universe. According to Derrida, such expansion follows the trajectory of the archive: “The archivist produces more archive, and that is why the archive is never closed. It opens out of the future” (68). The past is a limited record; Olson cannot preserve the old crafts even if he can preserve the attitude and stance which kept their traditions alive. His recognition of this, and his movement beyond William Stevens and toward a world “far far” beyond Gloucester, marks the later (pro)portions of the poem as a mature vision of projective poetics, one which includes both a future and a past for Gloucester. “The question of the archive is not, we repeat, a question of the past,” Derrida writes. “It is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow” (36). For Olson to open his archive—and Gloucester—to the possibility of a future, the poet’s stance must turn outward, bursting the hermetic container of the town and exploding Maximus into the “space & . . . live air” of what lies in the unknown, untested beyond.

Three letters from the end of Book III—three letters and four months before Olson’s death by cancer in January 1970—the poet attempts an ending that will contain all that has come before. Linking Ancient world to New and Gloucester to the Nation, this monument of a poem, the written history of the archon of Gloucester is still, with its mole-like digging, a poem containing history. The poem ends with the promise of a future that will hold, where the proportions do not find limits but expand forever, a universe slowly opening in the wake of infinite space and time:

> Melkarth of Tyre—
>   Lebanese of Gloucester, Herodotean
> report: the proportions
> now declared to be without end—

or beginning other than that they valuably,
occur . . .
there is now no break in the
future, a thing does flow etc and
intensity
is the characteristic throughout
the system.   Why I raise
monuments
by this River and have sd it does take a mole to join Gloucester to
the Nation.

(III.225)

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[1] I limit the first half of my discussion of Olson's verse epic to the first 23 letters of the the *Maximus Poems*, published in 1957 but composed before 1953 (they make up the first 104 pages of the 165-page volume). The sections that follow, *Maximus IV, V, VI* and *The Maximus Poems: Volume Three* become much more global in scope—a tendency I comment on later in this chapter.

[2] See, for example, Michael Bernstein's reading of the later *Maximus* poems which "in a movement strikingly similar to Pound's at the end of *The Cantos* and Williams' in Book Five of *Paterson* . . . shift[s] from a public and historical discourse to a private exploration of cherished themes" (266). In Bernstein's reading, *Maximus IV, V, and VI* expand from "Gloucester's history and the destiny of its modern inhabitants" to "the poetic imagination itself, in its interaction with the landscape *of the entire earth* . . . Olson is less interested in any one particular narrative sequence than in the general laws of heroic action, the fundamental principles underlying all 'forwarding'" (267, his emphasis).

[3] I agree with Miriam Nichols's assessment that "contemporary interest [in Olson] is modest, particularly among academic readers" (23). As she maintains, much of the recent scholarship, while expanding Olson studies in new directions, seems reliant on currents in literary criticism rather than on an abiding interest in Olson's work, in part because "the method and stance Olson labored to articulate . . . has been largely consigned to literary history" (23). See, for instance, readings on gender (Mossin, Wellman); ecocriticism (Corey); disability studies (Hart); place (Davidson and Case); and politics (see Siaganian). Still, a few new and quite excellent monographs have been published in the past decade. See, for instance, Bram on the influence of Alfred North Whitehead; Dewey on the coterie culture of Black Mountain; DuPlessis on masculinity; and Nichols on perceptual experience.

[4] I might also note the June 2010 Olson Centennial at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, British Columbia, which included a roundtable discussion of "Olson archives." Like much of the interest in archives by modernist and late-modernist scholars (a similar phenomenon occurred at the 2006 Modernist Studies Association, "Out of the Archive") the focus was not on Olson's own use of archives, but on what we as scholars are to make of and do with his vast collection of manuscripts and notebooks, so far unorganized or collected into usable form by those who do not

have access to them at the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center at University of Connecticut or the Humanities Center at University of Texas–Austin.

[5] Although their interest does not extend to archival aspects of Olson's work, several scholars have considered his historiography, notably Bernstein, who compares his approach to the "poem including history" to Pound's and Williams' in *A Tale of the Tribe*, concluding that in *Maximus I, II and III*, Olson's historiography is "little more than a nostalgic gesture towards a system already obsolete" (262); see note 2 in this chapter for Bernstein's reading of later *Maximus*. Robert Von Hallberg's *Charles Olson: The Scholar's Art*, a seminal study of Olson's historical approach, considers Olson's distrust of institutional, objective history in favor of a history that emerges from people's actions (see 159–169). Yet Olson is still invested in the documents of history, particularly as they relate to the local history of Gloucester. In his article on Olson's use of sources in the first volume of the *Maximus Poems*, Mark Karlins characterizes Olson's methods of quotation, noting Olson's techniques for distancing himself from the source material using closed and open quotes to create a multivocal texture in the poem. For Karlins this indicates an adherence to historical material as objective and nonsubjective: "In this volume not the singular voice, particularly the singular spontaneous voice, but the heterogeneous and cumulative voice of recorded history with its faculty for transmitting authority and stability predominates" (60). Although I agree that many voices populate the *Maximus* volume 1, Olson's speaker is not, I would argue, making an appeal for historical objectivity so much as he is, through multivocal sourcework, appealing to a sense of collective, shared history which has no central authority.

[6] I have used the following abbreviations for commonly cited works by Charles Olson:
LO *Letters for Origin*
HU *Human Universe and Other Essays*
SW *Selected Writings*
BA *A Bibliography on America for Ed Dorn*
SVH *The Special View of History*
The Maximus Poems are cited by book and line based on Butterick's 1983 edition.

[7] I use the term "craftsman" to denote those who work in the fine arts (traditionally artists and poets), crafts (traditionally jewelers, cabinet makers, and artisans), and trades (traditionally seamen and builders). The difference between these terms hinges on several factors: invention, technical skill, precision ("finish work"), and practical use. Craft is the middle ground between these, where use, precision, and skill, all words used by Olson in the poem, are highly valued, but unlike the arts, invention or design is not. With its attention to materials and emphasis on finish work, it is also differentiated from the skilled trades, where "rough" work is often accepted as the norm (and a "finish" carpenter will finely craft the finish). For more on the distinctions between art, trade, and craft, see Pye, 1–37; see also Adamson.

[8] I use "man," following Olson's terminology, throughout the paper. My purpose in using this term is to preserve Olson's meaning, which is clearly not gender-inclusive. Thus, "humankind"

or even "mankind" would be a misnomer. See note 13 for more on Olson and gender; see also note 8 in my chapter on Susan Howe.

[9] See also Von Hallberg 23–25 and Perloff 296.

[10] For another example of the speaker's inside position, consider following passage on the "lady of good voyage" from the second section of "Letter 2":

> Only the lady
>
> has got it straight. She looks
> as the best of my people look
> in one direction, her direction, they know
>
> it is elements men stand in the midst of,
> not these names supported by that false future she,
> precisely she,
> has her foot upon. (I.6)

According to Butterick, the statue of the lady stood directly in the town's center with the names of fallen seamen engraved into her stone base. Holding a carved ship in her hands instead of the Christ child, she stands for the history of the central fishing trade of Gloucester, looking out towards the sea (*Guide 18*).

[11] As Butterick's gloss makes clear, there are many instances prior to "Letter 23" in which material is incorporated without attribution, for instance the use of definitions from Webster's College Dictionary in "Tyrian Business" (*Guide* 60–65). This is, however, different from direct quotation of primary *historical* documents, a method used increasingly after Letter 23 to model "finding for oneself / the evidence of what is said."

[12] This isn't to suggest that Pound was not also invested in craft. Indeed, his thorough knowledge of versification and play with language, along with his intense research into the work of such early masters as Dante and Arnaut Daniel indicate a deep appreciation for and mastery of poetry as craft, in particular the musicality of language (see Kenner's chapter, "Motz el Son," in *The Pound Era*). My discussion of Olson, however, focuses on an aspect of craft Pound did not share: the idea of the poem as a crafted object similar to objects created by hand. Neither Pound's critical or poetic work explore this analogy, which speaks to Olson's understanding of the physical materiality of the object under hand.

[13] Although I'm describing Olson's stance as meritocratic, it cannot pass unnoticed that no women pass muster for having the "care" of the polis in their eye (nor are there many mentions of women in the early poems—rather, they are the objects of art, like "Helen Stein's eyes" or the "Lady of Good Voyage", or they are distanced from the text like the female historian and one of Olson's main sources for local history, Frances Rose-Troupe). Indeed, the trades mentioned in the early poem are traditionally practiced by men: shipbuilding, fishing, and carpentry. That the domesticated "crafts" traditionally relegated to the realm of women (spinning, weaving, knitting, and sewing) all require precision, skill, and a good "eye" (not to mention canning, which

"preserves" the goods of Gloucester more literally) passes without notice by Olson. The feminization of "craft" may explain why he chooses not to use that term as extensively as "trades" in the poem. Olson's patriarchal stance has come under scrutiny in the past decade, as recent works by Mossin and DuPlessis attest; see also Wellman.

[14] This is one place where Olson and Pound come together. The depth of reading *across* disciplines described in this paragraph corresponds to Pound's pedagogical desire for students to learn "deep" research across disciplines, an impulse that is archival for both Pound and Olson.

[15] Several critics have rehearsed the history of Olson's tenure at Black Mountain, often in the context of its artistic or cultural history (for a recent example, see Katz and Brody's 2003 study of the college as an "experiment in art"). Most notable to Olson scholarship, Ann Dewey has considered the formation of "Black Mountain poetry" in relation to the coterie culture of the college, and several studies (Von Hallberg, Sherman, Byrd, and an unpublished dissertation by Hoeynck) have considered the impact of Alfred North Whitehead, whose work was popular during Olson's tenure at the school, to the Black Mountain poets (see note 15). In addition, anecdotes of life at Black Mountain College have appeared in journals and in collected volumes (see Lane and Dawson). In a 1986 interview, Ed Dorn derides such attempts to get at the spirit of Black Mountain: "The interest in Black Mountain was not so much to impart what it was able to do for the individual in terms of enlightenment, but the gossip about what it was as a social organism" (2). Only the work of Mary Emma Harris has considered the role of craft in relation to Olson's work Black Mountain, although her study is historical rather than critical in nature.

[16] For a discussion of modernism and the decline of craft, see Shiner, Metcalf, and Adamson. Shiner and Metcalf also discuss the decline of the Arts and Crafts movement in relation to the fine art/low craft divide.

[17] See Harris 20–28 for a more complete history of Joseph and Anni Albers at Black Mountain. According to Harris's account, the Albers left the college in the spring of 1949 during a sabbatical year, and did not return (116). There is no evidence that they crossed paths with Olson, who was hired as a lecturer by Ed Dahlberg the previous fall. Yet their ideas continued to circulate, influencing pedagogy of the fine arts and crafts curriculum, in particular the commitment to process over product.

[18] Much of the critical work on Olson and Black Mountain centers on the influence of Olson's poetics on fellow poets and artists of the "Black Mountain" school, including students Ed Dorn, Joel Oppenheimer, and Jonathan Williams, and fellow instructors Robert Creeley and Robert Duncan, as well as the poets associated with Olson's poetics including Denise Levertev, Cid Corman, LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka), and Larry Eigner, among others. For more on Olson's influence, see John Osborne's general introduction to Olson, "Black Mountain and Projective Verse."

[19] Only Mary Emma Harris, in her 1987 book on the arts at Black Mountain College, has written extensively on the relationship between Olson and craft at Black Mountain. Her discussion, however, is less centered on a comparison of his poetics to other arts at Black Mountain than on

his role as rector in shaping the craft program during the late years of the college. Though he "undoubtedly held the crafts in high esteem" she does not draw a comparison between the work of the crafts as Black Mountain and Olson's own writing (191). See Harris, 182–202.

[20] In his vilification of current-day "neon" and "mu-sick" in "Song 1" Olson makes clear his distaste for the glossy, money-driven commodities that exist simply to drive the economy of expansion, threatening the cohesion of small towns like Gloucester that are part of the founding history of the nation. A further example of suspicion towards expansion and economic interest is Olson's dispute with Ferrini over the literary journal *Four Winds*, whose glossy finish and sub-par contents he compares to the "neon" and "mu-sick" of the streetcars and flashing signs of the city, which are marks of economic expansion and competition on the Eastern seaboard. The main conflict of the founding of Gloucester was competition over its fishing grounds by the men of Plymouth (led by Miles Standish, the settlement's military arm) and the men of Dorchester Company, who stood their ground against Standish. The bloodthirsty greed of Plymouth is contrasted with the single-minded tenacity of the Dorchester men, who eventually settle Cape Ann, out of which Gloucester is formed.

[21] In "Langauge Poetry and the Lyric Subject," Marjorie Perloff notes that "perhaps *the* cardinal principle of American Language poetics . . . has been the dismissal of 'voice' as the foundational principle of lyric poetry," a move she connects to Ron Silliman's dismissal of "simple ego psychology" in his introducton to *In the American Tree* (1986), which questions the assumption that "a poetic text represents . . . the human as unified object" (Silliman qtd. in Perloff 406). Another statement against basing poetry on individual ego can be read in the 1998 "manifesto" by Language writers Ron Silliman, Carla Harryman, Lyn Hejinian, Steve Benson, Bob Perelman, and Barrett Watten: "If a wider, more inclusive address in the poem has been a central concern of our poetics, this openness to the world has taken place at a point where language occurs as a 'not-I' that, by definition, is beyond the poet" ("Aesthetic Tendency" 269).

[22] See Butterick, 318–322.

[23] This passage might also be read in terms of *inward* measurement, particularly with the phrases "my forces" and "my energies." This is, however, in keeping with outward expansion. The later books see Olson expanding both away from Gloucester toward the greater world and larger history, but also toward a more mythical view of the self, which expands along with it. Olson's subjectivity in the later books can thus be understood in terms of a poetics of expansion (see note 2).

[24] Interestingly, comparison has been Olson's intention from the beginning. As Olson writes, "The 'hero' of my poem (Maximus, of Gloucester) is in truth Maximus of Tyre. And thus, whether I liked it or not, at a very early point, in fact 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" (qtd. in Butterick, *A Guide* 9).

[25] It is a trajectory that recalls Olson's original, unrealized project for Maximus, originally titled "West," an epic that would start from Gloucester (in Olson's view the founding city of the

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nation) and extend across the continent before bridging the world, ancient and modern, and include mythical precursors to the Maximus figure. Olson proposed *West* in 1945, in the spring before he drafted *Call Me Ishmael*. As Butterick explains, “It was to be a tale ‘of space’ . . . and it was to be linked somehow to the earliest culture-hero Olson as aware of, Gilgamesh of Ur . . . as well as to the figure he called Bigmans—an obvious prototype, by name alone, of Maximus. Most extraordinary . . . only a few days later in the same notebook the poet proposed a ‘book’ on Gloucester that would include many of the same characters, local fishermen and residents, who later turn up throughout the poems” (xx).

Chapter 3

Susan Howe and the Persistent Archive

> "Here we are"—you can't
> hear us without having to be
> us knowing everything we
>
> know—you know you can't
>
> Verbal echoes so many ghost
> poets I think of you as wild
> and fugitive—"Stop awhile"
>
> —Susan Howe, from "Souls of the Labadie Tract"

> "For something to work I need to be another self."
>
> —Susan Howe, Thompson interview

If Charles Olson preserves in *The Maximus Poems* a world that is rapidly falling away, poet Susan Howe positions herself at a further remove, after the point of departure, gathering traces and glimpses of what has already passed into the annals of history and bringing to light what hasn't made it to the page but remains silent and hidden in the detritus of the literary and historical archive. For Howe, more important than the stance of "projective man" toward the history of his own time and place are the particulars that are effaced when history overwrites the marginalized "Other": those whose existence has been left out in the exchange of power that dominates the writing of history. "If History is a record of survivors," she says, echoing Walter Benjamin, "Poetry shelters other voices" ("Difficulties" 25).[1] In her thirty-five-plus years as a poet, Howe's project to "tenderly lift from the dark side of history, voices that are anonymous, slighted—inarticulate" has captured a corner in the critical market ("Statement" 15).[2] Indeed, Howe stands in line as the primary female inheritor[3] of the "poem containing history," a role she admits she cannot get away from: "My poems always seem to be concerned with history. No

matter what I thought my original intentions were that's where they go. The past is present when I write" ("Difficulties" 20).

Like Olson, Howe is interested in a particular epoch and locale in American history: colonial and nineteenth-century New England: "An idea of firstness or earliness is always what my work is after" (Wray 82). To get to "firstness" she goes to the document, to "records of events, histories of places, dictionaries, legal documents, changes in the land, artifacts" (76). Grounded in "particulars," her research often centers on

> a material object such as a book, or a manuscript, . . . often a historical moment, or a specific person. . . . Esther Johnson, Emily Dickinson, Mary Rowlandson, Hope Atherton, Anne Hutchinson, Thomas Shepard, Clarence Mangan, Herman Melville, Charles and Juliet Peirce—the only way for me to reach them, or for them to reach me, is through the limited perspective of documents.
> (Thompson n.p.)

As Howe infers, she is attempting via the archive to revive and incorporate texts and voices that have long been lost to history, overlooked, abandoned, rendered mute: "My writing has been haunted and inspired by a series of texts, woven in shards and cordage of classic American nineteenth-century works; they are the buried ones, they body them forth," she writes in *The Birth-Mark* (45). And in *Souls of the Labadie Tract*: "My retrospective excursions follow the principle that ghosts wrapped in appreciative obituaries . . . can be reanimated by appropriation" (15). Her subjects, always marginalized figures in their own time, are often but not always female: "If you are a woman, archives hold perpetual ironies. Because the gaps and silence are where you find yourself" ("Talisman" 158). For Howe, traces of the past still exist in some real form in the present: "They *were* and somewhere they still *are*. Traces are here" (Difficulties 23). Yet for Howe, documents are "all we have to go on" (Wray 76). Getting back to the origin through archival documents is an inherently limited search with limited rewards. As David

Clippinger writes, “[Howe] recognizes the impossibility of rendering *the* origin. The textual thread . . . is never finished, but is rather infinitely deferred and extended; the poem is a ‘re-reading re-tracing once upon’” (“Resurrecting” 82; Howe qtd. in *Singularities* 41).

Tracing and threading are apt metaphors for Howe’s method of construction. With techniques from appropriative modernist collage whose lineage she traces back to the commonplace books of Cotton Mather[4], Howe cuts and splices from primary documents and literary works onto the page, working and reworking the material as she circles her subject. “It is this ‘cutting and pasting’ (and erasing) process,” she states in a 1997 interview, “that bring me to the subject in the end” (Wray 83). Howe herself came to poetry through her work as a visual artist, and Olson’s use of the page—as well as his approach to history—was a starting point for her: “The early edition of the *Maximus IV, V, VI* published by Cape Goliard was crucial. I would open it up, and what he was doing with the space of a page and with history would set me off” (Keller 20). She was particularly drawn to the pages with unusual typography, something she credits his editor, George Butterick, with helping to preserve.[5] Her early work was done, like his, using a Smith Corona typewriter with which she could manipulate “the field of the page”: “You could physically grasp each [page] and shift and pull it around the plate. You could scumble [sic] lines together and turn the paper sideways and upside down” (Thompson n.p.).[6] Besides giving Howe “early permission” to pursue the page as field[7], Olson’s ability to “see” set him apart from other practitioners of twentieth century verse epic (Keller 20)[8]:

> Acute visual sensitivity separates *The Maximus Poems* from *The Cantos* and *Paterson*. . . . *Maximus* is for viewing. . . . At his best, Olson lets words and groups of words, even letter arrangements and spelling accidentals shoot suggestions at each other, as if each page were a canvas and the motion of words—reality across surface. Optical effects, seemingly chance encounters of

letters, are a BRIDGE.

("Where Should the Commander Be?" 5–6)

Howe's own approach to the page can be glimpsed in this description. Both poets use the page as a "field" or "canvas," and in each "letter arrangements . . . spelling accidentals . . . [and] seemingly chance encounters" create a "dynamic" "reality," a field of moving parts that answer to, interpolate, question, and resist one another. With her investment in interrogating the writing of history, Howe's visual poetry extends Olson's work further, laying the ground for a revaluation of historical tensions that find new motion on her page through competing, interruptive language. All of this makes for a poetry that is acutely sensitive on multiple levels: visual, aural, and linguistic.

Clippinger's description of one of her earlier poems, *A Bibliography of the King's Book, or Eikon Basilike* (1989), showcases the visual difficulty (or, we might say, visual "sensitivity") of Howe's work: "Some words utterly efface others and multiple lines run concurrently and create a visual cacophony. Textual hierarchies are visually deconstructed, and exact pages are mirrored inversions of one another" (155). Similar techniques of overwriting, erasure, mirroring, and multidirectional writing can be found in many of Howe's collections, including *Singularites* (1990), *The Nonconformist's Memorial* (1993), *The Midnight* (2003), and *Souls of the Labadie Tract* (2007). Indeed, from *Eikon Basilike* onward, the visual thickness of the material on the page often occludes and overwrites verbal meaning, gesturing toward the stratification of archival material, buried layer by layer, and performing the violence of written history by recreating the tensions and forces among textual (and actual) histories. Even in works where the text is not visually splayed and splintered—for instance in the "word squares" and "grids" of

Singularities that show up again in *Pierce Arrow* (1999)—language is decontextualized, irregular, difficult to piece into a narrative or track to its sources.

This refusal to integrate source material is perhaps more a carryover from Pound than from Olson, and it is a hallmark of Howe's "poem containing history." Miriam Nichols writes that while Olson often engages in a reportage whose narrative is more or less cohesive, Howe "makes no effort to integrate the pasted scrap into a narrative. The scrap sits . . . like some mute testimony of an other time that is lost to writer and reader alike, or a speech impediment that delays the unfolding of narrative" (224–5). In contrast to Olson's desire to incorporate fragments into an ever expanding universe and Pound's to educate the reader in selecting between the living and the dead in history, Howe uses fragments to recreate both the violence of excision and the impossibility of a return to the original. The result is a text that is haunted, both by what it contains and what it does not: "[H]er *scraptures* drag the mystery of a lost or virtual context into the poem, and this other dimension then haunts the poem's scapes as something unthought" (224–5).

In Howe's most recent work, *That This* (2010), what is left *out* of the poem is at least as important as what is left *in*—a "lost or virtual context" that haunts the poetry almost tangibly in its absence. Of course, the origin is exactly what *cannot* be located in the poem. As Peter Nicholls writes, "Howe's writing remains keenly aware of the historical contexts which lie obscurely beyond the poem's edge. Such contexts can never be made fully present . . . but it is that impossibility which redefines the hermeneutic drive as a search for what Howe calls 'trace-stories' rather than for origins" ("Unsettling" 588). In *That This*, Howe does more than circulate "trace-stories"—she takes the impossible search for the origin to task, interrogating its limits and

questioning its partial results. This is made possible, in part, by excluding her own words from the poem and instead speaking through the words of others. Indeed, the central poem of *That This*, "Frolic Architecture," takes to a further extreme than any of the author's previous work the direct citation and appropriation from the historical and literary archive that are characteristic of her poetry. Nearly all of the fifty visual poems in "Frolic Architecture" are made up *primarily* of appropriated remnants and scraps of archival documents often used at greater length and with a greater degree of repetition across the poem than in works like "Hope Atherton's Wanderings" (in *Singularities*) or "Melville's Marginalia" (in *The Nonconformist's Memorial*), both of which are more apt to borrow single words or phrases than whole passages (more of which later). These are alternately copied and torn from the original document, or in the case of primary archival documents, retyped by Howe before being printed, ripped and spliced, then placed on the page. These poems represent a new direction in Howe's poetry that pays greater heed to the history of their transmission[9] even as they return to her earlier methods of cut, paste, and copy and to her work as a visual artist.[10] They also take us back to a more direct experience with the archive (though it is still clearly mediated), and toward a poetry that asks more of the reader, who must now discern meaning from scraps so fragmented as to elude comprehension without very extensive source- and guesswork. For in "Frolic Architecture," the sources tell the story.

Though she recognizes it can only be done partially, through "a history of a shadow" or "a shadow of a shadow," as the poem's opening lines tell us, Howe is attempting to recover what she can of the past through material traces that have been irrevocably separated from the original source (39). Inheritance, natural right, appropriation from the commons, copyists' texts, and archival collections all play a part in this transfer. So does an attempt to inhabit the Other

("myself into another," as the opening poem reads) in order to bring the object of desire more fully to the page. Yet what we have on the pages of the central poem, "Frolic Architecture," are not simply "a shadow of a shadow" but very partially rendered copies of copies. Howe has gathered and collaged scraps and remnants from books of literature, archival material, and family letters—all of which are handed down to us as part of the transmission processes available in our culture and which reproduce, in many cases verbatim, the original "text" from which the copy we see is derived: printing and publishing, hand to hand transmission, and annotated archival editions.[11] These scraps become vehicles of partial knowledge which, when identified and read back into the sources, can help us discern the ways in which their fragmentation comments on the possibility for knowledge after death, when the name is the only "real existence" left of the object it stands for ("Disappearance" 20). This repiecing of sources (a kind of backwards patchwork) also becomes a way to understand Howe's relationship to history and to the historical archive.[12] Part elegy and part research narrative, *That This* testifies to the persistence and enigma of the fragment, and to the (im)possibility of its being made whole. Bearing material traces of the past, the archive is at the center of these concerns. It is in that place that Howe locates many of her sources and it is for her a place of familiar return.

"Trace-stories": Sourcework and Guesswork in "Frolic Architecture"

To test the hypothesis that Howe's argument can be discerned through the interaction between what is included and what is left out, I follow a three-part method of reading in "Frolic Architecture": the page is assessed first through attention solely to what is on the page, without recourse to the original material; next, it is read alongside and back into the source; lastly, the

source is read against my original reading and against the larger poem to determine their interaction.[13] My reading attempts to follow the poem as the reader experiences it; rather than leading with sources, in these opening passages I let the language on the page lead to initial analysis, then add in sources to build up to interpretation over the whole as we gain more pieces of the puzzle. For indeed it is a puzzle that Howe presents us with: one whose "trace-stories" require rigorous searching out[14] and whose surprising connections comment not only on the position of the marginalized female Other (as in much of Howe's work) but on the possibility for her agency against the backdrop of editorial selection and transmission.

The first visual poem of the series is made up of two vertical scraps surrounded by white space:

in one. No sun
ıor did the waxin
ɔt yet did the ear
n the circumamb
ed her arms alon
l, though there v
e could tread th
air was dark. N
; all objects w
ld things strov

ıent
n the
der h
own
ocean
e lan
nd ai
sea ;
ned t

("Frolic Architecture" 41)

Before knowing the source, our eyes search out elements common to both fragments. In both, partial subject-verb-object constructions ("sea . . . -ned," "could tread," "no sun . . . did," "did the ear(th)," "air was dark") and spatial words like "along," "through," "circumamb(ient)," and "(un)der" gesture toward narrative, a potentially apt entry, given Howe's troubling of narrative in her earlier work.[15] Continuing with a provisional narrative reading, the "ocean" or "sea" is a

possible setting, perhaps "lan(d)"[16] as well; "no sun" and "air was dark" indicate that it is night, or that we are in a world ("ear(th)") lacking sun; "her arms" indicates a female subject who coexists with non-specific "objects" and "things"; "circumamb(ient)" implies the subject or setting is surrounded on all sides, perhaps "tread[ing]" water in the "sea"; "air was dark" introduces an element beyond water, but it is unclear what the relationship might be between air, sea, and lan(d). As with many of the fragmented lines and jagged, partial words, it is impossible to establish any definitive relationship among the various parts. Still, the passage seems to be centered around an indeterminate female in difficult to discern surroundings, and the use of three of the four elements indicates a concern with the most basic of origins: the physical, elemental world.

The source adds much to our reading: a 1941 dual-language edition of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* translated by Frank Justus Miller and published in two volumes by Harvard University Press. The lines are excerpted from the first page of the poem, in which the earth is being formed from chaos:

Before the sea was, and the lands, and the sky that hangs over all, the face of Nature showed alike in her whole round, which state have men called chaos: a rough, unordered mass of things, nothing at all save lifeless bulk and warring seeds of ill-matched elements heaped in one. No sun as yet shone forth upon the world, nor did the waxing moon renew her slender horns; not yet did the earth hang poised by her own weight in the circumambient air, nor had the ocean stretched her arms along the far reaches of the lands. And, though there was both land and sea and air, no one could tread that land, or swim that sea; and the air was dark. No form of things remained the same; all objects were at odds, for within one body cold things strove with hot, and moist with dry, soft things with hard, things having weight with weightless things.

God—or kindlier Nature—composed this strife; for he rent asunder land from sky, and sea from land,

(Book I.5-22, underlined portions in "Frolic Architecture")

Set in context, Howe's excerpted scraps open onto a very different landscape: that of the universe just prior to being formed out of "a rough, unordered mass of things." The "sun . . . moon . . . earth . . . and ocean," all personified as female, are yet to be shaped; though "land and sea and air" exist, "no one"—no person—is yet created to inhabit "the lifeless bulk." The elements, though present, are "warring" and "heaped in one," not yet separated into distinct categories: "cold" and "hot," "moist" and "dry," "soft" and "hard," "weighted" and "weightless." (We might add to this list of binaries form and chaos, light and dark, living and nonliving.) "God" or "Nature" is both the author of "the strife" and the one who, on the next page of the epic, "from the blind heap of things . . . set [the earth and elements] each in their own place and bound them up in harmony" (lines 24–25).

Read against this backdrop, the indeterminate female presence who hovers uncertainly in Howe's scraps (and whose fiction I would like to keep in play for the moment) seems indeed lost. Her potential journey from being part of the unformed mass to becoming a fully formed, distinct being, could have fantastic results: she would have the reach of the ocean and be able, like the sun, to carry her own weight in the air. Although formed by the authoritative "God—or kindlier Nature," she would be released from the "blind heap of things" into a world of radiant light. Yet, "set in [her] own place," she might also be "bound up" in the "harmony" of the spheres, unable to shift her position, raising questions about female agency in the formation of the self. Several concerns gestured at in Ovid's opening poem are applicable here: the formation of the self out of given materials; the problem of categorization and order that is common to creation narratives as well as to any chronicle of history; and the power relations intrinsic in

shaping and developing unordered material, which remind us of the selection processes and editorial tasks of both archivists and epic poets.

Indeed, as the pages of "Frolic Architecture" progress, a female figure appears repeatedly, always in the same typeface and -size, speaking in the first person in passages that suggest a kind of hesitancy or lostness that we might trace back to the opening poem: on 55 she describes a world in which the "(inha)bitants are strangely wandered, lost"; she herself is "lost, or at a River" on 72; on 70 she questions where "she should go etc." She also experiences internal confusion: on 55 she reveals that she has been "seized with" "distemper"; on 57 she is "carried [by] her ideas" and "much ravished" by them; on 58 she "(ha)rdly knew who or what I was"; and on 81 she "remain[s] insensible . . . without one chain of thought." Before revealing the source of these statements (they do, in fact, come from a single, real-life source), let's consider one more passage in full, keeping the female persona in play:

> kept up I always hoped for
> ; I seemed to be set at gre
> concern with it, it then ap
> that the inhabitants were
> and it seemed comfort tc
> confusions of worldly affa
> mind in general tho melar
> ught of the dangers I wa
> fear I was not prepared
> in small hand on p
> tray pencil commonplace
>
> aper band/n.d. Folder 137

("Frolic Architecture" 54)

Although clearly written in the first person ("I always hoped," "I seemed to be set," "the dangers I"), the lines yield little in the way of explaining the actual circumstances of the speaker although they do continue the hesitant language and indeterminate surrounding of the other examples.

What does she "hope for," and what is she "concern[ed] with"? Who are the "inhabitants" in relation to the speaker, and in relation to the "confusions of worldly affa(irs)"? What "danger" is she in? What is she "not prepared" for? What "comfort[s]" her and what does she "fear"? Although it is clear the speaker is reflecting upon some kind of distress, it is not clear what is causing the distress or the degree of danger the speaker is in.

The passage is hedged in by archival markings that help to identify the source and link the story back to the archive out of which it comes: "paper band/n.d. Folder 1376" and "in small hand" are markings on the folders of the family papers of Jonathan Edwards, the influential Puritan pastor and theologian who has frequented Howe's works.[17] The papers, along with Edwards's sermons and manuscripts, are housed at Yale's Beinkecke Library, one of Howe's familiar haunts. Folders 1376 through 1385 hold the journals of Hannah Edwards Wetmore, sister of Jonathan Edwards and the author of these fragments which appear regularly throughout "Frolic Architecture."[18] The source for this excerpt is a passage from Hannah's "private writings" recounting her near-fatal illness during the 1736 flu epidemic, a section excerpted by Howe multiple times in the text (see especially 56, which picks up and extends some of these lines):

> But though my distemper was hard upon me, yet my courag**e kept up**. My spirits seemed generally in a pleasing posture, and [I] **always hoped for the best**. My mind was much solemnized **; I seem[ed] to be set at gre**at distance from this world, and to have no **concern with it. It then ap**peared to me a vain, toilsome place, an**d that the inhabitants were** strangely wandered, lost and bewildered. **And it seemed a comfort to** me that I was so separated from the **confusions of worldly affa**irs by my present affliction and danger; my **mind in general, though mela**ncholy, was yet in a quiet frame. When I tho**ught of the danger I [wa**s] in, it was not without a deep concern, for **fear I was not prepared** for death. . . .
>
> (Minkema, n.p., cited lines in bold)

From the excerpt, it is clear that Hannah's concern has to do with her fear of dying; more subtly, she is feels detached from the world she is leaving behind, whose inhabitants, already at a "great distance," seem suddenly alien to her, "strangely wandered, lost and bewildered." In the nether world between life and death—a scene that recalls Ovid's creation story—Hannah claims allegiance to heaven even as she fears she is not prepared for what awaits her. Hannah's making Other of the world she is leaving—her choosing of one side in the earth/heaven binary—is a theme that carries through "Frolic Architecture": exploring boundaries, edges, and thresholds, especially death, which lead to a transition to other "forms" beyond those of we have experiential knowledge. They also gesture toward trespass and transgression. Her fragments, which include journal entries detailing illness and vision, spiritual aphorisms, and quotations from scripture and theology, reveal a female persona whose journey toward a spiritually realized self is often impeded by qualms about orthodox belief and behavior even as she is entranced by what she sees across forbidden thresholds of desire, freedom, and spiritual vision.

Ecstatic Dispossession: "me mystically one in another"

Turning back to Ovid, what remains outside of Howe's text provides important clues to discerning Howe's purpose in "Frolic Architecture," particularly in regard to her use of appropriated text. With her use of the opening lines from *The Metamorphoses*, Howe is gesturing toward the epic tradition, yet she places her poem at a distinct remove. The *Metamorphoses* is itself a departure from epic form[19]; Howe distances her poem even further by skipping the invocation of the Muse and the purpose for writing, both of which appear in the original just above the fragmented scraps:

> My mind is bent to tell of bodies changed into new forms. Ye gods, for you yourselves have wrought the changes, breathe on these my undertakings, and bring down my song in unbroken strains from the world's very beginning even unto the present time.
>
> (Book I.1–4)

Two main concerns of "Frolic Architecture" emerge from these omissions. First, and not surprising given Howe's oeuvre, is the exclusion of spiritual authority offered by the epic muse, who helps shape the poem to come, creating order from chaos. Second, and connected to this, is the passage between form and formlessness, which will have implications for the various "bodies" in the poem, Hannah's in particular: physical, textual, and archival.

In the essay preceding the poem, aptly titled "The Disappearance Act," Howe contrasts her view of the spiritual capacity of language with that of Sarah Edwards, wife of Jonathan Edwards: "For Sarah all works of God are a kind of language or voice to instruct us in things pertaining to calling and confusion. . . . Each soul comes upon the call of God in language. I read words but don't hear God in them" (12). Howe's disbelief that spiritual truths inhere in words is connected to her desire to pull from the historical archive the traces of those who have gone before, whose voices she resurrects yet whose reality remains subject to questioning: "Maybe there is some not yet understood return to people we have loved and lost. I need to imagine the possibility even if I don't believe it" (17). In order to imagine it—to imagine, for instance, the impossible return of her late husband, Peter Hare, who is elegized in this volume—Howe replaces the invocation that is missing from her fragmented version of Ovid with an invocation of her own. On the preceding spread, which is the opening page of "Frolic Architecture," are two couplets that make up one of the few extended uses of original, personal verse:

> That this book is a history of
> a shadow that is a shadow of

me mystically one in another
Another another to subserve.

(39)

The lines are both regular and irregular: nine syllables each, they are neither the plodding pentameter of blank verse nor the heroic hexameter of Ovid. There is repetition ("is a shadow of/ a history of" at the end of the first two lines), doubling ("a shadow that is a shadow"), and even tripling ("another / Another another"), yet the meter does not reinforce these connections, particularly in the tripping second couplet. As an opening, the lines do not offer a definitive purpose for the poem. Instead they function as a predicate (beginning "that this") to an original statement that does not appear, reinforcing Howe's suggestion that "a piece of a sentence left unfinished can act as witness to the question proposed by a suspended ending" ("Ether" 126)—or here, an absent subject. In the grammar of these lines, the assumed speaker (the "me" in line three) is not the actor, but rather a passive object, several steps removed from agency and a receptor of the prepositional force of the sentence, if we read the grammar as continuous across these lines: "a history of / a shadow that is a shadow of / me." The "me" is also passive in its role "another another to subserve." Is this a triple remove—three "anothers" to match the history to shadow to shadow progression? Or is it double—"Another another" (i.e. a *different* other) "to subserve"? And with the proliferation of the possessive "of," what (or who) belongs to whom?—a history *belonging* to a shadow *who* is a shadow of me *who has somehow found herself* mystically in*[side] an "other"?* Not only is the subject absented, the possession and agency in the grammar of these couplets interrogate the possession and subjectivity of their contents.

For indeed it is "possession" which interests Howe in these lines. Instead of the epic invocation of Greek epic, Howe opts for another: the possessive invocation common to the

mystic and ecstatic traditions. Instead of calling on the muses (or any other "divine" authority) to guide her, Howe calls or invokes "others" to inhabit the text, evacuating her authorial role as generator of the text. In the mystic tradition, invocation leads to possession ("me mystically one in another"), in which a person's conscious state is replaced with another personality who is "called in"—the literal meaning of invocation—and acts through the body of the one possessed. The possessed may speak in the words of others, recite a text, and become "other" than herself. Self-awareness may be replaced by another entity. Such is the task to which Howe, as collator and copier of this text, calls herself in "Frolic Architecture": to vacate herself so that the voices of "an other," or multiple "others," may enter and inhabit the body of the text. As she states in an interview with John Thompson, "For something to work I need to be another self" (n.p.). Possession gives agency to the "ghosts" that haunt the body of the text as well as the hand of the poet:

> "Here we are"—you can't
> hear us without having to be
> us knowing everything we
>
> know—you know you can't
>
> ("Souls of the Labadie Tract" 58)

Even though she vacates herself, the poet isn't entirely absent in this process. Howe's hand acts in the poem to order and shape it, taking the role of the elided muse who doesn't speak directly but whose role in shaping events (i.e. the "event" of the page) is a tangible mark of her presence. As Kathleen Crown writes, Howe does not "subscribe to a poetic practice in which the poet as passive recipient allows the material to take over the page. Rather, [she] . . . get[s] in the way of outside material—filtering, editing, and reordering it" (n.p.).[20] Although Howe lets other voices inhabit her text, the placement of these voices on the page is her own, and it is through the

archival process of selecting, copying, ordering, and placing fragments that she recreates the historical tensions out of which they emerge, troubling history once again as she transmits it to a new audience and time and offering, as it were, an archive of fragments to her reader. Together with what doesn't make it in, these fragments tell a new story of Howe's creation that re-enacts and re-inscribes the historical forces at work at the same time as it resurrects and gives agency (albeit a mediated agency) to the ghosts that somehow still haunt its pages.

None of this is new to Howe's work. As Gerald Bruns writes, "For [Howe], poetry is a form of ghostwriting; or, to give the screw another turn, poetry is a certain way of inhabiting and resonating with a world in which even mere things—leftover, discarded, or forgotten like things in a desk drawer—are haunted" (42). In an interview with Lynn Keller, she admits her process in writing is often like (in Keller's words) "taking dictation" or "act[ing] as a medium":

> You don't hear voices, but yes, you're hearing something. You're hearing something you see. And there's the mystery of the eye-hand connection: that it's your work, it's your hand writing. Your hand is receiving orders from somewhere. Yes, it could be your brain, your superego giving orders; on the other hand, they *are* orders.
>
> (33)

The "something" heard by the poet isn't a voice from the air, but voices on the page—a kind of "visible earshot" as she calls it in *Souls of the Labadie Tract* (15). She "hear[s]" voices through "see[ing]" them on the pages of her sources ("hearing something you see"), and her hand is writing them down ("it's your hand writing"). In other words, the ecstatic dispossession of the poet comes through copying the words of others.

Howe's methods for copying fall along an appropriative spectrum: passages may be copied directly from the source using scans or photocopies, they may be transcribed from a source by hand, they may be "written through," taking bits and pieces of the source text and

mixing them with original verse, or they may be taken and changed into something new, hybridizing the source text with elements of original material. A comparison between Howe's earlier work and "Frolic Architecture" showcases the difference between these methods, and the new direction Howe is taking in her most current work. "Hope Atherton's Wanderings," the second section of "Articulations of Sound Forms in Time" which appears in *Singularities*, is an example in Howe's earlier work that incorporates both writing through and transformative text; its word grids mix scraps from Atherton's text (and the texts surrounding it) with vocabulary that gestures toward the sedimentation of language both before and during the pre-colonial era out of which his story comes. As the narrative loses force and the word grid takes over, Atherton's story, which recalls his experience of being separated from an army company during a 1676 raid on an Indian camp in northern Connecticut, falls into confusion:

Prest try to set after grandmother
revivd by and laid down left ly
little distant each other and fro
Saw digression hobbling driftwood
Forage two rotted beans & etc
Redy to faint slaughter story so
Gone and signal through deep water
Mr. Atherton's story Hope Atherton

―――――

Clog nutmeg abt noon
scraping cano muzzell
foot path sand and so
gravel rubbish vandal
horse flesh reyal tabl
sand eneys flood sun
Danielle Wanare Servt
Turner Falls Fight us
Next wearer April One

("Articulation" 6)

Narrative is gestured toward in the opening stanza, which suggests a journey is taking place: "prest," "set after," "distant each other," "fro." The second stanza includes similar language: "abt noon" signals a timeframe and "foot path sand . . . gravel . . . horse" describe means of travel. Still, there is a marked difference between the first and second stanzas: in the second, syntax thins out, leaving little to tie the words together. As the lines gain nominatives, they shed verbs and lose the connective tissue of conjunctions, prepositions, and clear subjects and objects. The implied "I" falls out, giving way to the single indeterminate pronoun "us." As Brian Reed writes of a word grid later in this sequence, "Howe gives us language so stripped down, so denuded of syntax that a reader could essay it in any direction—horizontally, vertically, diagonally, or at random—without finding a path capable of arranging the word-nuggets into a coherent picture or narrative. . . . [Yet] a persistent reader *can* find residual traces of Atherton's story" (pars. 12, 15). Peter Nicholls and Linda Reinfeld—persistent readers both—have each glossed this passage against its main source, George Sheldon's *A History of Deerfield, Massachusetts*. (Interestingly it is not Atherton's story but that of another settler, Jonathon Wells, whose escape from Indian captivity occurred in the same location but some twenty-five years after Atherton's wanderings, that Howe uses in the passage.) In Wells' account, Nicholls finds several single-word references that appear (in a different order) in the lines above:

> J.W. was glad to leave him, lest he shd be a *clog* or hindrance to him. Mr. W. grew *faint*, once when ye Indians *prest* him, he was near fainting away, but by eating a *nutmeg* (which his *grandmother* gave him as he was going out) he was *revivd*.
>
> (Sheldon qtd. in Nicholls 596)

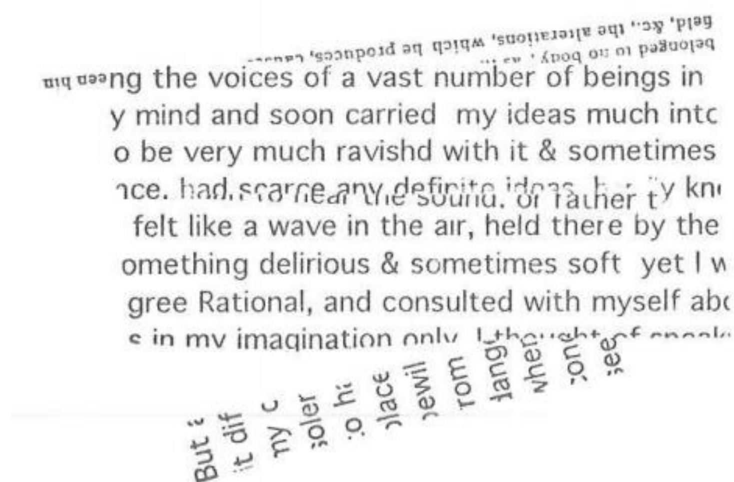
The context of the source cannot be read back into the poem directly; instead, Howe uses these single-word borrowings to suggest *another* shadow narrative that includes elements from the

source—a common device in her poetry. Thus, we might read “prest” in the first line to mean both hurrying and (possibly) being chased by Indians; in “faint,” “revivd” and “nutmeg” we read a narrative of hunger and survival; in “clog” we read anxiety about the “pressing” need to move on; the “grandmother” reference reminds us of the contrast between Atherton’s and Wells’ story: Wells is revived by food given to him by his grandmother which aids in his attempt to escape the Indians while Atherton, lost and wandering in the woods, approaches tribal members in an attempt to surrender and be given sustenance (is this why he is “prest try[ing] to set after [a Native] grandmother”?).

Even through difficult language, the poetry threads disparate elements into the warp and weave of narrative. Like a garment being restored, we may piece narrative back through such spots of language, with varying degrees of success (much of it, admittedly, is guesswork). The passage also reveals the degree to which “I”-voice, even when hybridized with source material as it is here, is, like narrative, unreliable, a broken means of transmission, a way to (further) trouble language and unsettle history. As Kathleen Crown writes in response to “Hope Atherton’s Wanderings,” “If the lyric ‘I’ has been understood as a framing structure that makes witnessing possible in poetry, Howe’s poems investigate those traumatic events that refuse to stay within its frame of reference, resisting our efforts at translation, explanation, and rationalization” (n.p.).

In a fascinating shift from Howe’s previous work, is the use of original material is—with few exceptions, notably the opening couplets and one extended passage on page 75[21]— absent from these pages. Instead, “Frolic Architecture” is made up almost totally of found text that is copied directly and at length from its sources, a striking contrast to the single words and phrases woven into “Hope Atherton’s Wanderings.” Where before Howe threaded her own words with

appropriated textual scraps, here she transfers others' words to her page using physical means of copying by hand or by machine, via photocopies and scans. Thus, whatever narrative there may be comes through her sources, and then only in fragments which occlude and overwrite one another, narrative cohesion torn away by deliberate operations of cut and paste which splice through blocks of text horizontally, vertically, and cross-wise:



(57)

What to make of this broken body of text? Following my original method of guesswork before sourcework, we may surmise, given the similar typeface and content to the earlier example, that the main fragment comes from Hannah Edwards Wetmore's journals; in fact, it is a continuation of her account of illness.[22] Several phrases extend the content of the earlier passage: the "voices of a vast number of beings" contrasts with the lost and wandering "inhabitants" of the earlier fragment; Hannah describes herself as "very much ravished"—perhaps with the voices?—and seems to waver between being "delirious" and "Rational," bringing up the theme of binaries and choice once again. A sliver of text interrupts the middle line: we can just make out "hear the sound, or rather" covering the lower half of "had scarce any definite ideas." It seems the music

Hannah hears, perhaps in delirium, is the only "idea" she can make out. The scraps above and below add to the intrigue: the font and size of the lower fragment match the larger block above, indicating it comes from the same source. We can discern several words here, though clearly the vertical splicing does us no favors in fitting these to the narrative: "but," "my," "place" or "solace", "from," "danger," "see." At first hearing, they seem to echo the first passage from 54 in which Hannah's ambivalence to the earthly sphere was so prominent. Here, her fascination with the music seems to have captured her imagination, distracting her from questions of mortality and pushing her toward otherworldly sensation, further divided from her own ailing body.

The text above the main block, which by its different typography and smaller type size indicates it comes from another source, is also rendered partially: "belonged to no body" sits above (or below, depending on the orientation of the page) "field, &ct., the alterations, which he produces." The lines are suggestive. Read against Hannah's excerpt and the earlier passage from Ovid, we are reminded of various bodies: Hannah's, ravaged by illness; the body of the earth, being formed out of a disorded mass; and of course the body of texts taking shape here. The source for this is a footnote in philosopher David Hume's essay, "Enquiries upon the Human Understanding," scanned or photocopied by Howe from a 1777 edition of *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*. In a fascinating move, the passage brings the issue of appropriation into the body of the text itself[23]:

> Where a man bestows labour and industry upon any object, which before **belonged to no body; as** in cutting down and shaping a tree, in cultivating a **field, &c., the alterations, which he produces, causes** a relation between him and the object, and naturally engages us to annex it to him by the new relation of property.
>
> (152)

Hume, a contemporary of Jonathan Edwards, is here commenting on the use of the commons—land that belongs to "no body"—and what happens when someone begins to make use of a particular piece of common land or an object on common land. In his explanation, what is common becomes owned only after "a man bestows labor and industry upon [it]," when it is "cultivat[ed]" or "alter[ed]" by him. Use leads to ownership: work creates a new "relation [of property] between him and the object," one that Hume sees as only "natural." The object or land then becomes "annexed" or attached to him; property is seen as an extension of the new owner, a prosthetic that extends his corporeal reach and, indeed, his very body.

Land annexation is an apt subject for the era out of which it emerges; in Hume's (and Hannah Edwards Wetmore's) lifetime, disputes with Natives over land turned gradually from skirmishes to treaties, the result being land that became freely available to New England's white settlers as Native people were forced either into submission or out of the territory. The violence of this history is still written on the land in place names that bear traces of that past even as the people for whom they were named are no longer.[24] With the inclusion of these lines in "Frolic Architecture," Howe brings these issues—with the possibility of harmful, even violent outcomes—to bear on the creative commons, bringing up questions of copyright, intellectual property, and literary inheritance: how does the law of common use and annexation apply to creative work made from the "commons" of the archive? To published material? To the story Howe is making out of Hannah's "private writings"? If Hume's rule extends to "any object," what is Howe saying about her own use of materials in "Frolic Architecture"?

As an appropriative poet, Howe has, of course, borrowed and even plundered from others' writing. As she states in *The Birth-Mark*, "To feed these essays I have dived through

other people's thoughts. . . . I have plagiarized. . . . I have borrowed. . . . I am indebted to everyone" (Birthmark 37-39, qtd. in Collis 67). Her influences, from Emily Dickinson to Herman Melville to Charles Olson, all made similar use of their predecessors. The use of the words of others recalls Olson's concept of "usufruct," defined by Stephen Collis as "the right to use or enjoy something belonging to another, to use the fruit of another's work or property" (67).[25] Like Olson, she borrows at will and at length, not always citing her sources but often leaving clues, or at least rendering them searchable.

The difference, of course, is the relationship between Howe and the text she is using: where Hume sees (rightly or wrongly) land and objects that are unused and therefore free for the taking, Howe borrows from work that indeed "belong[s] to another . . . the fruit of another's work or property." Although copyright law places Hannah's writings back into the commons (though the originals are under lock and key at the Beinecke), Howe seems to question the use of the commons for the creation of *new* property—or a newly rendered Hannah—in *That This*. Instead, she seems to be attempting to give Hannah's voice back to Hannah *herself*, but with full knowledge that any rendering of that voice, like any document from the archives whose fuller history is lost to time, will come to us muted, hesitant, and fragmented; it is as impossible to return Hannah's voice to her real, physical body as it is to render it exactly on the page.

I would suggest that while Howe sees value in continuing the work of *literary* predecessors—"What is writing but continuing?" she asks in *The Birth-Mark*—her relationship to the forgotten voices in the historical archive is different from her earlier work, and that is why her methods in *That This* have shifted to more closely reflect the *actual* words of the first-person speaker (143). If anything, she seems tied to the ethical imperative that she render Hannah's—

and any other "ghost's"—words accurately, without changing them. It is as if she has drawn a contract between herself and those who inhabit her texts, and that their growing agency—the ability she gives them to return to the present through her page—is palpable and real and even binding:

> I keep you here to keep
> your promise all that you
> think I've wrought what
>
> I see or do in twilight
> of time but keep forgetting
> you keep coming back
>
> ("Souls of the Labadie Tract" 55)

That these ghosts might "walk again and again," to borrow the title of a poem in *Eikon Basilike*, means that Howe has to answer to the past she resurrects, because the ghosts themselves "keep coming back"—as indeed is their right. Howe is faced with a conundrum: in order to revive voices in the archive so that they might once again own themselves, she must first take ownership of them or, as she phrases it above, "*keep* [them] here" (my emphasis)—a kind of physical enclosure of a body of text not dissimilar to the enclosure of the commons. It is an act she acknowledges as deeply problematic. Jan Vervoert articulates the phenomenon this way: "If through appropriation one seeks to (re)possess an object, what then if that object had a history and thus a life of its own? Would the desire for possession then not inevitably be confronted by a force within that object which resists that very desire?" (5). Indeed, as the ghosts in *Souls of the Labadie Tract* ask, "What do you wake us for[?]" (57).

Recognizing the agency of resistance, Howe asks forgiveness of ghosts for the use of their words, exclaiming in a moment of transparency, "I can't attempt to cross over / step by step

forgive forgive" (60). Acknowledging the trespass of "crossing over" the boundary of the past, she seeks permission to "act" on ghosts' behalf:

> Authorize me and I act
>
> what I am I must remain
> only suffer me to tell it.
>
> ("Souls" 37)

Although she attempts to displace the power of her "authori[ty]" by reversing agency, Howe's unease at the violence necessary to rescue voices from the archive is significant; there is indeed "suffer[ing]" in the poet's "tell[ing]" of their words; the broken body of text in *That This* is testimony to this. Yet there is also in these words a kind of grace, just as there is hidden safety in the word "keep." "Suffer me"— allow me—to suffer *with* you, to suffer also in the telling, she seems to say. Not telling—not entering into risk and trespass—would be another kind of violence.

As Jan Vervoert writes, we must approach ghosts in

> a determined way that still remains undetermined enough to allow them to present themselves . . . Appropriation then is about performing the unresolved by staging object, images, or allegories that invoke the ghosts of unclosed histories in a way that allows them to appear as ghosts and reveal the nature of their ambiguous presence.
>
> (7)

For Howe, of course, staging happens on the page, through the material transmission of the language of the archive. If we are to glimpse Hannah, then, it will be on the pages of "Frolic Architecture," in the fragmented body of texts and the unresolved tensions they exhume, in the tenuousness of the broken word and in the broken history of their telling.

"Copies of copies": Tracing Ghosts through Transmission History

Returning to the slim vertical section below Hannah's main text on 57, we find that Howe extends similar (though muted) concerns about the use of Hannah's words and the possibility that she may be harmed through Howe's appropriative actions. The remnant starts one sentence above the longer section glossed earlier on 54:

> **But** as my distemper prevailed upon me I was apt to be lost, and found
> **it di**fficult to free my thoughts. . .
>
> (Minkema, n.p., cited lines in bold)

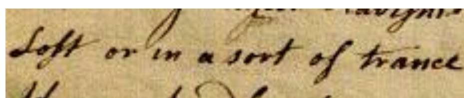
Spelled out more fully in the source text, the inclusion suggests concern for what is happening to Hannah as external bodies attempt to incorporate her—through forced orthodoxy, through annexation of her "private writings" into the Edwards family papers, and now through death which, like a book, threatens to close its contents over Hannah with irreversible finality. Lost, her thoughts fixed by a delirium that threatens her mind as well as her body, Hannah seems impossibly aware that something else—something other than herself—has taken control. By this agency, nascent here, she may yet find herself free.

Yet, for all of her seeming care about Hannah, there is something unsettling in Howe's rendering of Hannah's words in these pages. We begin to see this when we compare the larger passage on page 57 against its transcription, by Edwards family scholar Kenneth Minkema, and against the original (see Appendix to look at the original passage from Hannah's diary in full):

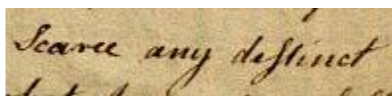
> And about that time I began to hear the sound, or rather to have strong and exceeding lively ideas, of music; the finest, most exalted and solemn by far, that I had ever any conception of before. My ideas were of its bein**g the voices of a vast number of beings in** the air. It solemnized m**y mind, and [~~soon~~] [soon] carried my ideas much into** the other world. I used t**o be very much ravished [ravishd] with it, and [&] sometimes** felt lost or in a sort of tran**ce: had scarce any distinct [definite] ideas, hardly kn**ew who or what I was, but **felt like a wave in the air, held**

> **there by the** music; and though I was s**omething delirious and [&] sometimes lost [soft], yet I w**as to a considerable de**gree rational [Rational], and consulted with myself abo**ut it, and concluded it wa**s in my imagination only. I [had] thoughts of speaki**ng of it to those about me, but forbore, lest that should abate the pleasure I took in it, or occasion the ideas to leave me.
>
> (Minkema n.p., cited lines in bold)

Changes from the original made by the transcriber are marked by yellow highlighting; these include changes to grammar (added commas), spelling ("ravished" not "ravishd"), and readability (adding "had" to amend "I thoughts of speaking"). Howe's changes, bracketed in red and blue, are of two kinds: first, in several cases she reverts back to the original, deferring to the writer's spelling and punctuation (notably the ampersand for "and" and the capitalization of "Rational"). Second, and more significant, she interprets some words differently, adding "soon" from the original (where it appears to be crossed out), and using "soft" instead of "lost" and "definite" instead of "distinct." A comparison to the original makes at least two of Howe's editorial decisions suspect:

Fig. 1 

Lost or in a sort of trance

Fig. 2 

Scarce any distinct

(Hannah Edwards Wetmore papers, Box 1377)

In both cases, the transcription is accurate, but the copying error made by Howe is common: the script for "s," with its connected loops that dip below and above the baseline, looks very much like a modern "f." Of course we must assume, given Howe's experience with primary documents in the archive, that she certainly knows how to read script from this era. What then, is she doing

by inserting two obvious transcription errors in this passage? On the one hand, she seems to defer to the original, getting us (it would seem) closer to Hannah; on the other, by inserting these errors she calls up the whole history of their transcription and provenance. While these variants do not fundamentally change the meaning of the passage, they do raise questions about Howe's handling of the material and her purpose here.

Another "willing" transcription error plays itself out across the text, this time revealing a discrepancy before we even get to the original or the transcription. Compare the following:

("Frolic Architecture 85)

(88)

In the first scrap we read "always in sight of happiness & never get to it but just within." The second replaces a crucial word: "in *chase* of happiness." Which is correct per the original?

(Hannah Edwards Wetmore papers, Box 1377)

Clearly, "in chase" is the accurate rendering (showing that Howe can indeed read the classic "s" when she chooses.) But "sight" *does* appear later in the passage: "What poor wretched creatures

are we always in chase of happiness & never get but just within *sight* of it." Intriguingly, the first instance shifts "sight" back to "chase," suggesting that Hannah has even less agency here; "see[ing]" but not "chas[ing]," recognizing yet not acting. Interestingly, the "error" here seems markedly intentional. Yet, like the example above, it does not fundamentally change Hannah's meaning. Rather, it makes the reader look more closely at the text—and its source—once the discrepancy is realized, and to consider Hannah's agency more closely.

Does Howe do damage to Hannah's story through this variant or others? I would suggest that in fact, Howe is not trying to distort or change Hannah's story so much as she is attempting to call up the kinds of changes effected when we "copy" the words of others—in other words, to bring attention to the material history of the text as she gives voice to Hannah on the page. This is part of the reason that Hannah's passages in "Frolic Architecture" are *re*copied by Howe rather than photocopied from the original as in the case of Hume. Not only does this give Howe authorial control ("Authorize me and I act") in configuring the passages for the page, it allows her to become a transcriber of Hannah's words, taking the role of the scholar-archivist as she makes them public for a new audience and a new time.

Calling up the history of editorial transmission puts into question what exactly is being transmitted as we deal with "copies of copies": how close can we come to the original, and to Hannah herself? It also makes it possible to trace this "history of a shadow" as Hannah's story plays out on Howe's pages—and to bring Hannah to us as an authentic voice *despite* and even *through* the troubled transcription history that reads like a palimpsest on the pages of "Frolic Architecture." It is hard to deny that something of Hannah makes it through to us in these pages. But ironically it is through deliberate errors in transcription that Howe allows Hannah to keep

more of her meaning, differentiating Hannah's voice from her own by subtly introducing mistakes. By calling out her own errors, Howe enters the text herself as a kind of ghostly trace of the history of the transmission of this particular text and voice, a reminder of the difference, however slight, between Hannah's words and Howe's rendering.

Intriguingly, the transcription history also reveals that it is not the pages in *Hannah's* hand that Howe goes to as a source, but rather those that have been *copied by other* hands (recalling the "hand-eye connection" above—it's "your hand writing" or, read differently, "your handwriting"). On the copyright page of *That This* Howe credits her sources: "Much of the material . . . is collaged from the 'private writings' of Hannah Edwards Wetmore, copied by her daughter Lucy Wetmore Whittelsey, now among the Jonathan Edwards papers at the Beinecke Library. In places I relied on Kenneth Minkema's transcription" (vi). Lucy is Hannah's daughter, and Minkema a prominent Edwards scholar and the head of the Jonathan Edwards Center which hosts online transcriptions of the family's archival collection. At either end of the timeline, then, Hannah's original words have already gone through others. What's more, Minkema has done more than simply transcribe Hannah's words; beyond making obvious emendations for grammar and readability, he has reordered them to reflect (and correct) the chronology that was not apparent in Lucy's transcription. Yet from Lucy we have a storehouse of material that does not appear in the original: many of Hannah's original writings are no longer in existence. This explains why Howe reverts not to Hannah's original in the examples above to but Lucy's—necessitating even more distance (this time, an irreducible distance) from the original.

By the time Howe retypes them for the pages of "Frolic Architecture" they are at least three transcriptions and many "anothers" removed from the source: from Hannah's hand to

Lucy's to Minkema's to Howe, who borrows something from each. Ghostwriting is at play here: in the act of seeing and copying (i.e. transcribing) Hannah's words from multiple sources, Hannah's hand is appropriated by Howe through the "hands" of others. Or is it? Is the message the same if the "medium" (i.e. the scribe or the substrate) is different each time? Or does the trace of the Real disappear further with each new inscription? "If names are only written and no 'originals' exist," Howe asks in "The Disappearance Approach," "do you have a real existence for us?" (20–21).

Liminal Visions: "Pursuing shadows and things"

The question of persistence and change over time is central to *That This*. Transition or transformation from one state to another—or one body to another—is a central trope of "Frolic Architecture," recalling Ovid's elided purpose to "tell of bodies changed into new forms." "Bodies" in the poem are multiple and transform in multiple ways: "bodies" of people who through illness or death see their physical bodies shift to new forms; the "body" of archival and literary material which may be reconstituted to new forms as it is physically torn and reconstituted on the page; even "bodies" of land which, as the Hume excerpt shows, shift from being commonly held to being annexed and privatized.

As the poem considers the implications and possibilities of being "changed into new forms," the liminal spaces *between* forms—the borders between life and death, present and past, self and other, freedom and limitation, inside and outside—are brought under interrogative light. We've seen one implication of this in the necessary trespass that Howe must take to recall voices from beyond the grave. But what of the Other who is brought up from the cusp of the past into

the present? What happens as it shifts from one form to another? What can we glimpse in that transitive in-between (a ghost escaping, an indecipherable scrawl)? What becomes possible when a ghost steps across impossible distance, risking trespass and enchantment?

Howe's work often takes place at borders, as Peter Quartermain writes: "Howe's work . . . 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 center" (86). In an essay on Rae Armantrout, Howe writes about "extremities" and "paths lost found forgotten. Border margin beginning" (209). "Transformations occur" across dividing lines: "Birth/Death. Inside/Outside. She/He. Moving/Staying. Finding/Losing."

It is in such borderlands—where limits are breached, where death (or another sublime) is glimpsed, where binaries touch—that we most often catch glimpses of Hannah Edwards Wetmore in the poem. These episodes also present moments of choice and agency, where to admit what is Other—to allow it *inside*, or more dangerous still, to venture *outside* to meet it—might lead to new vistas of self-realization; to entertain imagination is to risk "danger." One such moment we have already seen. As Hannah moves further away from her body during her "distemper," she comes closer to the afterlife, hearing bells and the voices of angels which spur her belief to a fever pitch and arrest her senses. At the same time, her view of the other world presents an unorthodox problem: she is experiencing first-hand a glimpse of the spirit-world, a view which cannot, given the antinomian fear in the Puritan community that one person might commune singly with the divine, be admitted to any but herself. Hannah desires both to be free to pursue what is outside the bounds of prescribed teaching and fears the consequences of doing

so. “O! That I had the wings of a dove, that I might fly away and be at rest,” she says in a passage that appears in an early spread (46–47). And rendered partially on 62, “I am plagued all my life long with a levity of mind, which flutters and tosses me to and fro, from one vanity to another, till I am weary, and heart-sick, and **pursuing shadows and things that I know are** nothing” (Minkema’s transcription, bold in poem). But are such visions “nothing”? If not, why do they induce in Hannah such fear and longing?

Vision manifests for a second time in a passage which appears multiple times in “Frolic Architecture” (see pages 42, 44, 52–3, 62, 70, and 81). Labeled in her daughter Lucy’s transcription as “A Vision,” the encounter takes place at the edges of Hannah’s father’s land:

> walking just below my father’s orchard (after I ha
> walking just below my father’s orchard (after I ha
> religion and the concerns of my soul my busines
> religion and the concerns of my soul my busine
> prayed for and labored after an awakening sense o

(52)

“**Walking just below my father’s orchard**” (an allusion, perhaps, to the original Garden), Hannah has been ruminating on her “resolution to make r**eligion and the concerns of the soul my busines**s,” even though in the past she has “often set [her]self to it, and **prayed for and labored after an awakening sense o**f my miserable condition.” Two fragments from these ruminations appear as overlapping lines: “religion and the concerns of the soul my business” and “prayed for and labored after an awakening sense” (the latter appears also on 42 and 44). If Hannah does not make the connection between her ruminations and the vision that follows (she states in a section that appears on 80 that it occurs “instantly, **without one chain of thought**”), Howe certainly does, and it is emphasized through the overlap of lines on the page. These lines

form a sort of border or fence, and indeed, the vision itself takes place at a fence on the edge of her father's property (see also 53):

> I remember the summer before my sister Jerusha's death,
>
> making
>
> and I was leaning over the soutn ience and thinking in this manner, that I was never likely to do better and where should I go etc.
>
> (70)

"Leaning over the south fence," she glimpses beyond the threshold of the everyday into something beyond. The fuller passage reads thus:

> **I remember the summer before my sister Jerusha's death**, about nine years ago (I was all that summer in a great hurry, and making stays was then my business): I was one evening walking just below my father's orchard (after I had taken up many resolutions to make religion and the concerns of my soul my business, and after I had often set myself to it, and prayed for and labored after an awakening sense of my miserable condition: and finding I yet remained very insensible, I thought with a great deal of concern about growing so old in sin, and remaining so insensible and negligent, notwithstanding so many means and resolutions[)]; and **as I was leaning over the south fence and thinking after this manner, that I was never more likely to be sensible than now, what should I do next, where should I go, etc.**, instantly, without one chain of thought, I saw a Bible open before me (or at least I had as lively and sensible an image of it on my mind as if I had seen it with [my] eyes[)].Which a little surprised me. . . .
>
> (Minkema, n.p., cited lines in bold)

Although the content of the vision doesn't appear in Howe's collage or elsewhere in *That This*, it is telling that in the very instant Hannah recognizes her doubt the possibility for faith also arises. The moment she sees the Bible is the same moment she gazes outside of the confines of her family's land toward neighboring holdings. What seems impossible for Hannah *inside* becomes possible and visible *outside*.

Yet even with the vision before her, she resists it. Hannah's fluctuations, between a desire to flee and explore and a desire to rest in the sure knowledge of her faith, indicate the "critical spirit in its restlessness" Howe wishes to express through her writing ("Personal Narrative" 15). And indeed Hannah fluctuates here. On 53 we are given the major portion of her vision:

> ter I had taked (after I had taken up many res-
> concerns of my business, an : after I had set
> to it, and praying sense of m , miserable con-
> my miserable ght with a great deal of concern
> sensible, I tho -and negligent, notwithstand-
> ing so old in aning over the :outh fence and
> notwithstand to be sensible :han now what
> made me cast in my mind w :ether I had not
> ural. But I considered I was ve y unable to jud
> I was leaning one chain ci thought, I saw
> manner, that an image of it on my mind as
> what should I e, but I attempted to read, but
> out one chain intercepting a id covering the
> I had as lively sible, and did not seem to be
> had seen it wi abruptly and :o strong that it
> I attempted to to look upo it as supernat-
> by a piece of s ower of imagination, and that

(53)

In the middle of Howe's rendering, two lines interrupt the text. Their transcription, in full, reads, "it **made me cast in my mind whether I had not** some reason to look upon it as supernat**ural. But I considered I was very unable to jud**ge of the power of imagination, and that there was many operations in my mind to me as unaccountable as this." Beyond reason, one of Hannah's rationales for not pursuing the vision is that it was occluded by another image which impeded her sight. At the time of the vision, Hannah had been employed in making stays (corsets), an

occupation which got in the way of faithfully pursuing "religion and the concerns of the soul." In "A Vision," she sees stays "intercepting and covering the pages":

> I attempted to read, but did as sensibly seem to be hindered by a piece of stays **intercepting and covering the pages**. This representation was exceeding lively and sensible, and did not seem to be lead into my mind by anything, but as it were thrown in abruptly and so strong that it made me cast in my mind whether I had not some reason to look upon it as supernatural.
>
> (Minkema, n.p., cited lines in bold)

This fragment is picked up in the middle of page 63 of "Frolic Architecture," above two others:

and covering the pages
suing shadows & things ,
ows & things, that I know are

(63)

Just as she expressed unease with trusting her own interpretation, here again Hannah places little trust in her inclinations; instead, her pursuits are seen as light and airy; as doubt-ridden (the reference to James 1:6, where the doubtful are figured as waves on the sea tossed to and fro); as no more than "shadows" and "things that I know are nothing." Where reason might argue, as Hannah does at the end of "A Vision," that the stays are indicative of "what a vast hindrance the cares and business of the world is to our making progress in religion," Howe seems to argue that it is Hannah's inability to cross the border into vision or admit fancy, but instead to allow self-doubt to shut down her desire for exploration, that impedes her search for experiential and spiritual truth. Howe also suggests, with the overlapping lines and occluding text here and in the fuller rendering of her vision on 53, that reason (i.e. doubt in the imagination) also occludes our own ability to see beyond the fences and walls that keep the boundaries between the everyday and the visionary distinct, calling up the question of trespass and reward once again. To see more

clearly (or simply to see *more*), we must willingly enter mystery, and open ourselves (as Howe does during ecstatic dispossession) to that which is *not us*.

For resurrection to happen a grave must be robbed; stilled voices must be awoken, seized, taken. Only then may they be given new space and new breath. Such work requires a "cross[ing] over," a stepping into the Other's territory. On the part of the one seizing, this is trespass. On the part of the Other, it's a choice—to stay trapped in the confines of the past, unable to speak, move, or act—or to risk enchantment. At the end of "Frolic Architecture" we are, like Hannah, left at the point of choice, hovering, as the book's title suggests, in the liminal space between "that" and "this." In the penultimate poem of the series, two lines in the middle point to the ends of the spectrum of earthly and spiritual belief:

happiness if you lean upon an arm of flesh
death, and
hall have power
mine and his, be ye
only hope is from this world
is not for the clay to say to the potter why have you made
s the poor body of one, and

(92)

Here, "only hope is from this world" sits just above "is not for the clay to say to the potter why you have made," suggesting two very different ways to view authority, one worldly and one spiritual, and recalling the clash of warring elements in Ovid. At the very last, Hannah seems to hold contradictory ideas about where she should place her trust. Should she place it in this world, or in the one to come? In her flesh, or in the hope of spiritual epiphany? On the last page, in a

move that is classic for Howe, only a tiny remnant of text remains, impossible to piece back into the narrative of Hannah's journey yet suggestive of possible redemption:

(93)

The two fragments circle a widening silence at the center of the page, forcing us, one last time, to read naïvely, without a source. "Sudden"—the one word we can make out with confidence—lifts above and away from the other fragment as if in flight. The other—could it be "(b)iography" or "(bibl)iography"?—slips into the obscurity of the margin. At the risk of trespass, might we guess that what we are seeing is a "sudden" leap into the unknown, off the page, away from Howe's rendering, into the edge of mystery? Is what we see a ghost escaping?

But these are only hints and guesses. For of course if Hannah is to slip the text, Howe can't tell us where she has gone. And if she is gone, she is no longer ours to keep.

"Eas[ing] distance": Impossible Return and the Persistence of the Copy

The archive is a place of familiar return for Howe. It is a place she returns to again and again in her writing, both for sources and for the solace of dust, to experience firsthand the material traces of the individuals whose voices inhabit her work. It is a place she writes about with regularity, describing (much as the folders and manuscripts in the Beinecke are labeled in meticulous order) the physical characteristics of special collections rooms as well as the process by which she gains access, researches, and gathers their holdings to herself.[26] Yet for all of its familiarity, the archive is also a place of privilege and impossible distance. From her earliest

encounters with the printed word Howe has been aware of the complicity that marks her entry into libraries and archives, an entry gained through her connections to male power: first her father's, later first and second husbands'.[27] She is aware that, in some sense, "every researcher can be a perpetrator" (*Midnight* 121). Yet she is still compelled to enter. As she writes in the essay "Encloser," "In the dawning distance a dark wall of rule supports the structure of every letter, record, transcript: every proof of authority and power. I know records are compiled by winners, and scholarship is in collusion with Civil Government. I know this and go on searching for some trace of love's infolding through all the paper in all the libraries I come to" (*Birth-mark* 4).

In "Frolic Architecture" Howe replaces Hannah's search for God with her own incantory search for the original through traces, a search that is tied up with the history of transmission, right, inheritance, and the archive. Like Howe's search for her late husband Peter, Hannah's search is also unfulfilled, full of restlessness, longing, and desire. It is not satiated by the "truth" of religion offered by her upbringing any more than Howe's is for the "impossible return" of Peter. For both, the search represents what Hélène Aji calls the "asymptotic desire for knowledge . . . an epistemological adventure into the infinite archive; it can be seen as enacting the recognition of the impossibility to remember the past, and the compulsion to keep offering rememberings" (par. 15). Yet "even if ideas don't exist without the mind," Howe writes in the opening essay of *That This*, "there may be copies or resemblances" (22).

A critical question driving this search is the extent to which the copy gets at the thing itself. Howe is asking, in part, what our glimpse of the object has to do with the copy that is made, and what it has to do with the thing itself. What do memories of a person have to do with

the person we've known in life? What do paper traces of a person who existed centuries ago have to do with that person who once existed physically on the earth? If time's transitory nature leaves in its wake only memory and the decay of memory (copies of copies), what exists of the Real that was? "Can a trace become the thing it traces, secure as ever, real as ever—a chosen set of echo-traces?" Howe asks (29). If the very act of seeing creates an impossible distance between yourself and another—if the only way we can "have" is to "see at a distance"—what can we know of one another and what can we know of the past (*Europe* 11)?

In Peter's study, after his death, Howe comes upon letters from his late wife, family photographs, books she never saw him read (18). Standing in this family archive, her sense of trespass is as palpable to her as the weight of history that permeates the study. Her feeling is one of encroachment: of crossing borders into what is not properly hers, crossing over their earlier marriages to others; crossing over the children and ancestors they do not have in common; of crossing the threshold of Peter's private space, and his earlier selves, into the sacred space of his family's ownership. Yet she still goes there to find some trace of *him*: "I'll go to him—I'll find him" (18). Even at many removes—of his death, of their late history together, of the impossibility of his return—Howe grasps at a material sign of his continuing presence, holding onto objects they held in common through the right of marriage and inheritance and use.

"Susan, child of our history, come in, come on home" the portraits in Peter's home intone as she steps hesitantly to peer at their faces (18). If, like her, we give up safety and risk trespass to bring the past back in whatever form we find it, will we be able to touch and hold that impossible trace of the Real, and "ease distance"?

> Is one mind put into another
> in us unknown to ourselves

by going about among trees
and fields in moonlight or in
a garden to ease distance to
fetch home spiritual things

("That This" 104)

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[1] See also Howe's "Statement for the New Poetics Colloquium": "Malice dominates the history of Power and Progress. History is the record of winners. Documents were written by the Masters" (15).

[2] A search of the MLA International Biography yields 50 articles and book chapters over the last 10 years, and another 50 in the decade previous. In addition, three monographs have been written by Will Montgomery (2011), Steven Collis (2007), and Rachel Tzvia Back (2001); 8 dissertations from 2001 to 2011 and 6 from 1991 to 2000; and numerous critical articles by established scholars including Marjorie Perloff, Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Lynn Keller, Peter Quartermain, Peter Nicholls, Alan Golding, Ming-Qian Ma, and Gerald Bruns, among others.

[3] Several critics have taken up the question of Howe's gendering of the poetry and its push against patriarchal history, including Alan Golding, who writes about Howe's visual poetics in relation to her "particular brand of feminist poetics" (152); Lynn Keller, who considers Howe's position in relation to the male epic tradition in *Forms of Expansion*; and most recently Brian McHale, who looks at Howe's use of "Pythagorean" silence as a trope for women's resistance to the male-dominated long form.

[4] From the Thompson interview: "[Cotton Mather's] perpetual need to resort to citation [was similar to that of] T.S. Eliot, Marianne Moore, Ezra Pound, Williams, Zukofsky, Oppen, among the Modernists [sic] and a host of others during the 19th century including Emerson, Thoreau, Melville, and Dickinson. There are ways of doing this. Eliot and Pound want us to know the classics they have used for their own compositions. Moore adopts or adapts more anonymous sources and so does H.D. Emerson, whose essays were an amalgam of material he had written in his journal, has a wonderful late essay called 'Quotation and Originality.' Here he makes the tendency universal with an opening epigraph that may or may not be taken from someone: 'Every book is a quotation; and every house is a quotation of all forests and mines and stone-quarries; and every man is a quotation from all his ancestors.' You could say some American intellectuals have the mindset of tourists. We feel isolated and provincial (though in the age of globalism things may be changing), but I am speaking of my generation and before. Some of us are magpies, cutting this from that and that from this. Borrowing and assimilating according to the emotional dynamics of the materials we choose yes, but also because we lack confidence in our authenticity" (n.p.).

[5] Less directly but no less importantly, she has gained much from the man whose lifework it was to gloss Olson's *Maximus Poems*: George Butterick, with whom she corresponded in her early years as a poet and whose commitment to "bibliographic scholarship"—in particular the erasure that is necessary to subsume yourself to another's work as Butterick did. His work is seen by Howe as "one of the most generous gifts to poetry in my time" ("Talisman" 174).

[6] Further: "I used to enjoy the process of taking something to a Xerox machine, making several copies, bringing it home, *really* cutting and pasting, then going back to the copy store—so it was a moving process. Maybe it was a way of continuing to make visual art but bound to sound and narrative" (Thompson n.p).

[7] Kathleen Fraser notes the opening Olson provided to women experimental writers, including Susan Howe. Women writers investigating "the visual potential of the page . . . would have lacked such a clear concept of PAGE as canvas or screen on which to project flux, without the major invitation Olson provided . . . this, in spite of his inclusive/exclusive boy-talk" (7).

[8] Besides connecting the space of the page with the writing of history, she also credits Olson, along with Melville, with connecting the feminine in writing with textual gaps and silences: "The feminine is very much in [Olson's] poems in another way, a way similar to Melville. It's voice . . . It has to do with the presence of absence. With articulation of sound forms. The fractured syntax, the gaps, the silences are equal to the sounds in *Maximus*. . . . " ("Talisman" 180). Yet for all of his innovation, Olson's influence ends at this elusive feminine gesture, which remains only an undercurrent in his work—work that fails to incorporate female voices: "*What lies under?* Is the human universe definable if you have left women out of the definition?" asks Howe in the closing lines of her essay on Olson. "Where is the mother then?" ("Who Should the Commander Be?" 20). For more on Olson's interest in "matriarchy" see Rachel Blau DuPlessis, 131–136.

[9] The final poem in *Souls of the Labadie Tract*, "Fragment of the Wedding Dress of Sarah Pierpont Edwards," uses a similar method of cut-up, with some key differences. Although it is appropriative and, like "Frolic Architecture," includes scraps of language from the archival folders housing some of its materials, it is also clearly more lyric, with roughly half of its 14 pages including original, noncited material. The sources are also fewer in number.

[10] Howe explained her early methods of composition (referencing her work on *Eikon Basilike*, first published in 1989) in the Keller interview: "First I would type some lines. Then cut them apart. Paste one on top of another, move them around until they looked right. Then I'd Xerox that version, getting several copies, and then cut and paste again until I had it right. The getting it right has to do with how it's structured on the page as well as how it sounds—this is the meaning" (Keller 8). Compare this to a statement from "The Disappearance Approach" in *That This*, the essay that procedes "Frolic Architecture": "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" ("Disappearance" 31).

[11] As Fiona Green asserts, "Howe is always alert to the ways in which messages from the past have been intercepted. Attending particularly to the mechanics of textual transmission, Howe scrutinizes those editorial and institutional frameworks that come between her and the vestigial presences she wants to recover" (80).The structures that make reproduction possible have been critiqued extensively in her earlier work, especially *Eikon Basilike, or a Bibliography of the King's Book*. For criticism on *Eikon*, see Bruns; Clippinger, "Resurrecting the Ghost"; and Finkelstein.

[12] Though by no means the only approach to Howe's work, sourcework is particularly helpful in helping us discern Howe's relationship to the history she is using. As in many of my chapters, it is the use of documentary material, together with the method of construction, that gives insight into the historiography of the poet-archivist. Thus, I disagree with Peter Nicholls assertion that "unlike a writer such as Pound, Howe has no desire to send us back to her sources"—in fact, I think she does mean to send invested readers back into the archive, an example of her inheritence from Pound—but agree with his statement that "when we do have [the source] before us we gain a particular insight into Howe's mode of composition" (596).

[13] My method loosely follows Ming-Qian Ma's description of Howe's work as a "matted palimpsest," "a three-layered linguistic deposit, or a three-dimensional language experience: (1) the source text, often excerpted or duplicated in prose and other genred language, or indicated by a footnote; (2) Howe's text as an act of writing-through the source text; and (3) what this writing-through gestures toward" ("Articulating the Inarticulate" 478). I extend Ma's description by comparing instances of writing-through with instances of extended quotation, where the source text is duplicated rather than "written through."

[14] Much of the "searching out" was done through internet searches using short phrases and fragments of text; without this digital prosthetic, it's likely much of the poem would be impossible to annotate. Further than this, Howe often used searchable, downloadable versions of her main texts rather than more obscure library copies that might be inaccessible to the average reader. For instance, the transcripts of the Edwards Family Papers are available online through the Jonathan Edwards Center, and the edition of Ovid (Harvard, 1941) is the only version that is both searchable via html and available as a downloadable pdf. That these searches yield such clear results is testimony to Chomsky's claims about the potential for language to constantly recombine into new, non-reiterable forms. The utterance is singular, and it is one of the reasons why scholars of Howe may find her ghosts hovering—accessibly—in the virtual space of the internet.

[15] Narrative is an admittedly assumptive but, it turns out, productive choice for entering Howe's text. In this reading and those that follow, I rely on narrative in part because history, as it is written and verbalized, is often told through stories (thus inviting comparison between literature and history, both of which produce narrative expectations in the reader). In her previous work, Howe often troubles narrative, causing readers to question their assumptions and expectations for narrative emergence and cohesion (see, for example, my discussion of "Hope Atherton's Wanderings" later in this chapter). The troubling of narrative is no less true in "Frolic Architecture," which as we will see comes to no clear resolution and which follows no clear plot or path. My continued reliance on narrative is strengthened once the sources of Howe's core documents are acknowledged: Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and the diaries of Hannah Edwards Wetmore.

[16] I use parentheses to indicate guesswork in passages where text is broken off. Brackets are used conventionally to indicate changes to text when quoting.

[17] Besides several mentions of Edwards and his family in the opening essay in *That This*, Howe has written on Jonathan Edwards in previous work, most recently in "*Errand*," the single-page prose poem that opens *Souls of the Labadie Tract*.

[18] There are many more "clues" to Hannah's identity, from the copyright page of the book where Howe reveals her source as the "private writings" of Hannah Edwards Wetmore, to the mentions of the Edwards family in the book's opening essay and the birth and death dates of the Edwards family which appear in "Frolic Architecture" (see "Disappearance" 20-21 and "Frolic Architecture" 65 and 75). On 49, the archival markings for the main folder, are listed in scraps: "hand of Lucy Wetmore Whittelsey," "with comme[ntary]," "Box 24 Folder 1377." The Edwards family papers are also searchable online at the Jonathan Edwards Center, which has made transcripts of the entire Edwards collection available to the public.

[19] *The Metamorphoses* is epic in its invocation of the muse and statement of purpose, but it does not include an epic hero, and instead of a journey through a geographical landscape the poem moves from story to story in episodic fashion. It also does not begin in medias res, but with the genesis of the earth.

[20] As she states in an interview, the staging of each page is deliberate, and has been so from her earlier work: "First I would type some lines. Then cut them apart. Paste one on top another, move them around until they looked right. Then I'd Xerox that version, getting several copies, and then cut and paste again until I had it right. The getting it right has to do with how it's structured on the page as well as to how it sounds—this is the meaning" (qtd. in Keller 8).

[21] A series of what seem to be original lines appear in extended form on 75 with several disconnected phrases that relate to other material in *That This*: "haunts our being loosened" and "vocalism and remembrance of" are descriptive of ecstatic dispossession, while "original wild unbounded place" reminds us of Hannah's distemper and the unformed world in Ovid's creation story. By their unenjambed endings, these lines seem at first to be appropriated text, but from my extensive sourcework do not appear to come from any readily available source, including Howe's previous work. Though they appear with other scraps that show up elsewhere in the poem, notably the Edwards family birth and death dates, they are not hybridized with appropriated material, but rather set apart from appropriated text. They are also different from the opening lyric, in that the "me" does not appear.

[22] Although I do attempt, in this example and in those that follow, to let the passage speak first, the knowledge we now have of Hannah Edwards Wetmore precludes a truly naïve reading (i.e. without external knowledge). Still, by letting the passage speak before the source enters, I allow Howe's ghosts to speak to us with *less* mediation than they do once the sources (another kind of ghostly trace or photonegative presence) enter the discussion. Although my reading of Howe hinges on sourcework more than guesswork, the unmediated, pre-prejudicial, "naïve" approach offers a kind of freshness to our reading, as though the voices of these passages had, if only partially, shaken off the dust of the archives out of which they came.

[23] I was unable to locate the original to show Howe's exact "scrapture," but it is available online through a facsimile edition produced by Forgotten Books (see bibliography). The lines appear at the bottom of 152.

[24] Howe is deeply troubled by the misappropriation of land by white settlers and the violence done to Native tribes in the taking of it. See especially the preface to "Thorow" in *Singularities* 40–41, where Howe comments on the violent naming and renaming of places around Lake George, New York.

[25] For an extended discussion of the relationship between Howe and Olson in regards to the archive, see Collis, "Archival Tactics and the Poet-Scholar," especially the section labeled "Use" on 67–8.

[26] See, for instance, Howe's detailed description of the Emily Dickinson archives at Harvard's Houghton Library in *The Midnight* 121–127 and of the reading room at the Beinecke, where she read the Edwards family papers, in *That This* 30.

[27] In *The Birth-mark*, she writes about her early encounters with the library, mediated by her father: "During the 1950s, although I was only a high school student, I was already a library cormorant. I needed out-of-the-way volumes from Widener Library. My father said it would be trespassing if I went into the stacks to find them. I could only come with him only as far as the second-floor entrance. There I waited while he entered the guarded territory to hunt for books" (18). She writes about her first husband passing the privilege of library membership to her in *Souls of the Labadie Tract*: "David's position provided certain benefits to his family, most importantly, access to Yale's Sterling Library. 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" (14). Still, visits to the archive are not always without challenge. As she recounts her 1991 visit to the Emily Dickinson papers in *The Midnight* 121–127 (see note 27), she is denied entrance when the curator's letter giving her permission cannot be found (126).

Chapter 4

Jena Osman, Robert Fitterman, and the Networked Archive

> "The archive is the first law of what can be said."
> —Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*

> "Why do so many artists strive to remake, recopy, dismantle, and reconstruct the components of our visual universe? . . . To produce an alternative space and time, that is, to reintroduce the multiple and the possible into the closed circuit of the social, and for this, the artists must go back as far as possible in the collective machinery."
> —Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postproduction*

If Susan Howe is the inheritor of the "poem containing history" as I've argued in the previous chapter, her pursuit of resurrecting forgotten voices in the archive finds its counterpart in the work of poets Jena Osman and Robert Fitterman, whose work shifts focus from the archive of the past to the archive in the present. A scholar-poet in the post-Language turn, Osman writes in the tradition of Susan Howe, whose "poetry [of] submerged histories" informs her ethical engagement with the past and, significantly, with the way she presents the past in and for the present moment ("Statement"). Fitterman, a conceptual poet, participates in an archaeology of the present, culling material from websites and print media to offer an emergent history of the contemporary human subject. Both poets came of age during the advent of the internet; in their work, the concept of the archive has broadened from physical "archives" housed in official repositories and only accessible to a privileged few to the wider network of information available in the connected, wired present.[1] The networked archive includes *any* record of the past or present—whether it comes from a history book, an etymological dictionary, a newspaper, or an internet search. Using different methodologies and sources, Fitterman and Osman approach the question of how to engage with the history of human events using language that is attentive to its participation in and emergence into the evolving language of human discourse.

For Osman and Fitterman, the archive is not "that which collects the dust of statements that have become inert once more, and which may make possible the miracle of their resurrection" (Foucault 129). Instead, for both, the archive might be defined as a "network" of discursive relations, a concept developed by Michel Foucault in the *Archaeology of Knowledge*:

> Different oeuvres, dispersed books, that whole mass of texts that belong to a single discursive formation—and so many authors who know or do not know one another, criticize one another, invalidate one another, pillage one another, meet without knowing it and obstinately intersect their unique discourses in a web of which they are not the masters, of which they cannot see the whole, and of whose breadth they have a very inadequate idea. . . .
>
> (126)

Foucault's description focuses on the associative connections within a particular discursive formation among those who create it, recognizing that those inside know neither the extent of the network nor all of the participants. Single "authors" may make unique contributions, but the network is created by the intersections between them. Their work is set in time, informed by what comes before and influencing what comes after. A discursive formation includes iteration—authors "criticize . . . invalidate . . . [and even] pillage" one another, extending the conversation in new directions by returning to points that have already been made. Such a network can be extensive; although it may arise out of a particular question or discipline or historical moment, it is too large for any of those who create it to "see the whole." There is no "master" governing or ordering its structures.

For Foucault, the complexity of connections is an inherent characteristic of a discursive network. But it is the situation of utterance—the conditions in which material may be used or added—which marks it as archival:

> All these various figures and individuals do not communicate solely by the logical succession of propositions that they advance, nor by the recurrence of themes, nor

> by the obstinacy of a meaning transmitted, forgotten, and rediscovered; they communicate [according to] the conditions of operation of the enunciative function. . . . The archive is . . . that which defines the mode of occurrence of the statement-thing; it is *the system of its functioning*.
>
> (126–7, 129)

To understand a discursive network, one must be well versed not only in its content and the connections between its unique pieces, but in *how* and *why* a particular utterance is there at all. The "archival" aspect of discourse is that which recognizes the conditions of what may enter: "The archive is the first law of what can be said" (129). This, I would suggest, is a central concern in the poetry of Robert Fitterman and Jena Osman. For both, it is the reiterable phenomenon of discourse that sets one discursive formation or "network" apart from the other. Both focus on the aspect of utterance that recognizes that all that is said or done is built "on the shoulders of giants" (both known or unknown) and that, further, what is said contributes to emergent strains of meaning within a given network—shaping it from within according to the "enunciative possibilities and impossibilities that it lays down" (129).

Iterability is based on appropriation (or, as Foucault so aptly terms it above, "pillaging"), on repeating what has come before in order to reuse, modify, extend, rewrite, or argue with it. It may also be misquoted or misconstrued, its different pieces misallied within the discursive network—deliberately or not. Indeed, both poets see in appropriation the possibility for manipulation; yet at the same time, they recognize appropriation to be part of the cultural air we breathe. To participate in culture is to be complicit in practices of appropriation. Familiarity with appropriative practices also points to a current strain in the poetry of the new millennium, as Fitterman writes:

> The tendency toward the borrowed, the purloined, the sampled, the appropriated, the plundered, the plagiarized, has not only been substantiated by a late 20th

> century generation of loosely defined experimental writers, but it has been even more fully realized by a wave of younger poets and arts today who are at home with both the practice of appropriation and its cultural frame.
> (“Identity Theft” 12)

For Fitterman, appropriative practice has been loosed from its negative connotations. It is productive, providing a way to “participate in network culture” and “articulate our role in cultural production” (12). And Osman, citing the “cultural or documentary materials” used by many experimental poets practicing today, notes her own interest in “found language—particularly what might be considered ‘public’ (newspapers, law cases, press conferences, political propaganda)” (“Statement,” “After Language Poetry”). While each comes out of a different poetic tradition, both participate in what Brian Reed terms “redirected language: appropriating others’ words, redacting them, and presenting them as their own” (759). As Marjorie Perloff has written in her most recent book, *Unoriginal Genius*, “We seem to be witnessing a poetic turn [in which] invention is giving way to appropriation, elaborate constraint, . . . and reliance on intertextuality” (11). This shift “permit[s] the poet to participate in the larger, more public discourse,” a discourse that, to cite Gerald Bruns, “appropriates and renews what is given in the discourse that constitutes a social and cultural world” (Bruns qtd. in Perloff 11).

While such participation may be generative and positive, Fitterman and Osman both recognize that appropriation is also linked to power and intention, pushing back against Foucault’s suggestion that discourses are, as a rule, without “masters.” The answer lies somewhere between the extremes of human-regulated discourse and emergent systems of cultural knowledge. To explore both sides of this coin, Osman and Fitterman use appropriative practices to interrogate the role of appropriation in discursive networks.

According to theorist Marcus Boone, the term "appropriation" has two related meanings. First, it is "the act of taking something and making or claiming it as one's own, or using it as if it were one's own." Second, with attention to the stem from which it derives, it "denotes that which is proper to a situation or a person" (207). For both Fitterman and Osman, claims to ownership are tied to appropriative practice. Both recognize a network of power relations in which property or "right" is tied to power. Osman's most recent work examines the right to personal autonomy in the period of America's founding history; Fitterman's considers the right to own oneself in the current climate of consumer culture. In *The Network* (Fence, 2010), Osman critiques appropriative aspects of early Manhattan finance, centered around commerce and trade and, importantly, around black bodies. In the provocatively titled *Rob the Plagiarist* (Roof, 2009), Fitterman offers a critique of appropriation by interrogating the position of the subject as a product of and participant in contemporary consumer culture. Both suggest these networks can be seen differently through recognizing and naming often invisible patterns in the archive (i.e. in what can be said and in which circumstance) and by the process of "reframing" (a term from Fitterman), that is, reorienting our view of a particular discourse by using its own techniques of appropriation to subtly *change* how that discourse is understood.

Such action, often seen as transgressive, is at the heart of poetic-archival practice in this chapter. Instead of inscribing power and order onto a selected set of materials, as both Pound and Olson have done, Jena Osman and Robert Fitterman question that power and interrogate its structures from within. They also consider the imbrications between discursive formations, which, although self-functioning, are often synchronous and have direct influence on one another. Osman, for instance, considers crosscurrents between the epoch of slavery, America's

founding history, and the rise of financial institutions, and how these relate to the discourses of written history and language. Fitterman explores the networks of late capitalist culture and the virtual, anonymous world of wired reality, interrogating the subject of consumerism through the collective subjectivity of the internet. For both, movement within and across given networks indicates a spectrum of autonomy and limits for the subject of history.

In Osman's and Fitterman's works, objects of interrogation are based in historical moments or epochs that inform and speak to one another—even from the vantage of the past. In so doing, these authors address one of the drawbacks of Foucault's theory of the archive. Michael O'Driscoll and Edward Bishop write, "In Foucault's hands the archive becomes a mysterious and abstracted force removed from its own status as an event; removed from any kind of spatio-temporal realm; removed, that is, from history" (3). While Osman and Fitterman move away from a traditional view of an official, physical, static "archives," they are still steeped in historical moments and mine data from artifacts of the past and present. As such, they offer up the possibility to more fully engage not only with a critique of history but with a critique of the archive and the discourses that arise from it—within given structures of meaning.

Part I: Jena Osman and the Network of Early Manhattan

"A poem can help you hear the news that's behind the news."
—Jena Osman

A self-identified post-Language poet, Jena Osman links her own practice to an emerging, engaged activism not possible through the "detached eye of the 'language poem'" ("After Language Poetry"). Citing hybridized writing practices that increasingly include "cultural and documentary materials," Osman sees her own work as participating in the post-language turn.

Her hope for moving toward "connective, collective, and absorptive forms" is realized, in part, by the networked reality she depicts in "The Financial District." The poem, like others in *The Network*, is also informed by the borrowed language of an etymological dictionary and through the patterns of discourse she picks out of her active practice of historical research and reading, a practice that is deeply influenced by the work of Susan Howe.

As Osman writes, reflecting on similarities between her own work and that of Howe, "a poem can be a generous context for endlessly unwinding research. The research inevitably leads to wild connections that I could never have reached in a more 'defined' genre" ("Statement"). Like Howe, she believes the world as it is given in the present is often built upon histories whose values are hard to reconcile with the present moment. Both are interested in interrogating the present through language and history, but with different emphases. Howe's preoccupation with the past often leaves her in the moment of the past; although in essays and interviews she acknowledges the continuing role of dominant histories in our present (particularly male and white), in her poetry she tends to constrain her scope to a particular time period and person without returning to the present. Osman's recent work, on the other hand, may be described as exploring the present through the lens of the past: her focus is on the ways history has shaped the currencies of our thinking and in how it is presented to us in today's currencies of language. If Howe is rooted in the past, Osman finds her home in the present, and hopes through her work to engage with and offer a means for the subject of history to navigate the present, given world. As she writes in the opening poem to *The Network*, "Rather than invent a world, I want a different means to understand this one." Following Joan Retallack's concept of poethics, she is hopeful

that "forms of art—which Retallack describes as forms of life—can model the kind of world in which we'd like to live" ("Statement").

Through much of her work, Jena Osman has chronicled the history of the oppressed, particularly of African Americans in recent American and colonial history, tying racial oppression to the history of the marketplace. "Dead Text," the final poem in Osman's 2001 collection *The Character*, explores Rodney King's beating as presented in the news media, and how the framing of the sequence in slow motion, played with brutal repetition on televisions across the nation, is detached from the original instance of violence that occurred in real time. The frames in the sequence became a trademark for the riots that ensued. "This is the paradox of detachment; in order to see, an image must be alienated from its usual context," Osman writes. "We know not what we see. The fire becomes beautiful in its photograph. The man is beaten and seen as fitting into some order" (108). More than a comment on the aestheticization of violence (she is also referencing, obliquely, the fire of crosses on front lawns burned by the KKK or even lynching by fire), Osman is linking the production of an iconic image to an act of appropriation and to the circulation of symbols. As Michael Davidson writes, "Osman's point seems to be that the representation of actions . . . holds the possibility for appropriation" (51). Captured by a passerby and circulated by the media, King's beating becomes a vehicle by which one act of racial violence is linked to the entire system of racial injustice. History is written, Osman suggests, through the "order" created by images that circulate in the common air—an air made common by the media, and, we'll see, by the larger marketplace of accepted ideas.

Osman's recent volume, *The Network* (2010), is not centered on a single act of violence or a particular person, but on the long history of power upon which the New World was built,

more specifically on the appropriation of goods, people, and land that built into and continues to feed the network of commercial enterprise of which lower Manhattan is a central hub. Weaving together different strands of the history of New York, the poem "The Financial District," epic in scope, chronicles events by year from 1609, Hudson's landing at Manhattan, to 1920, a bombing outside of J.P. Morgan's bank. With reference to finance, early trade, government, media outlets, and infrastructure, Osman deftly ties the history of the slave trade to the history of Wall Street, beginning with the entry for 1711: "A slave market is established at Wall Street at the East River pier" (62). In making such associations apparent, Osman lays bare the origins of American trade as a racially-charged network of relations based on repeated acts of appropriation by those at the top—men in power claiming what is not theirs for their own use and for their progeny (thus ensuring their "claims" in perpetuity). In turn, Osman uses techniques of revisionist history and appropriation to expose and critique the structures of oppression that linger in our shared history.

Osman arranges the poem according to a strict tripartite form: each of the 12 sections opens with a map and chronology linked to a Manhattan street name; this is followed by a detailed etymological map of a key financial term like "boss," "credit," or "panic"; these subsections culminate in a third that comments, using narrative interspersed with citational prose poetry, on the intersections between etymology and history. The centrality of the map metaphor is apparent in both the etymological map (a tree diagram) and the chronology. Each chronology section is linked to a street name—"Cortlandt," "Wall," "Pearl," "Whitehall," etc.—which is "mapped" at the top with a snippet view of a larger historical map, lending the poem an archival feel. These street names are cross-referenced across the chronology, their bold type calling up intersecting histories and building to a network of connected events, places, and people. As

Osman writes in reference to the book's title, such mapping is intentional: "All of the poems come from different lines of research, and as I researched, I started to notice connections and synchronicities. . . . The network is really just a place to point to those moments of contact" (Rumpus interview).

"Mapped!": Noticing the (In)visible Lines of History

Mapping is a common theme in the poet's work, and one that is fully explored in "The Financial District." A professor at Temple University, Osman is herself a tour guide of sorts, leading students on a visual excursion of Philadelphia's "figurative statuary"—Revolutionary and Civil War heroes who carry weapons—in a lecture (now a print publication) she titles "Public Figures."[2] She writes about her experience in navigating that city's racial past in a short prose piece titled "Vine, Lens, Map": "Our streets are infused with racial history. The hidden strife of the past bubbles beneath the sidewalks; a new construction project reveals the graves of the enslaved and exploited." Against a backdrop of "costumed interpreters" and "packaged tour bus history," she notes with irony that the new Liberty Bell Center, which will house an iconic image of American freedom, is being built on the site of George Washington's slave quarters, a harsh reminder of the complicity of our founding fathers in the burgeoning slave trade. There is blood under our feet; we are walking on a past that is "raw, messy, unprocessed"—and which still has claims upon us:

> The bones, like vines, reach up and out and grasp our ankles, winding around them and locking all of us together whether we like it or not. . . . I want a form that makes visible the connective vine . . . It is not a choking vine, but rather one that you follow—a line on a map that brings you from there to here.
>
> (n.p.)

"The Financial District" takes just such a form. Mapping trajectories across history, tracing connections between specific places, people, and events, the poem "makes visible the connective vine" linking race to the market through the slave trade, the market to the growth of the New World through unethical land purchase and stacked land disputes, and the growth of institutions to the continuing history of taking what isn't one's by force. As Marcus Boon writes, "History . . . is the history of appropriations, of events of appropriation, of the endless chain of pacts, exchanges, territorial claims which fill conventional history books" (207). "Whether we like it or not," we are part of this chain of acts across time; we are not simply tourists passing through.

As Osman is well aware, mapping is itself a generator of contested space. In her opening quote to "The Financial District," she borrows a short exchange from James Fennimore Cooper's 1838 novel, *Home as Found*:

> "Mapped!"
> "Yes, sir; brought into visible lines with feet and inches. As soon as it was properly mapped, it rose to its just value. We have a good deal of the bottom of the sea that brings fair prices in consequence of being well-mapped."
> (41)

Several phrases mark the excerpt with subtle violence. The "visible lines" of the map, drawn by human hands to demarcate ownership of the New World, are told in feet and inches, small units of value that are synecdoche for the real scale of the land and ocean. The appropriation of land is seen as both "just" and "proper"—linking the material of the New World to ownership and right, meanings that are hidden in the word "properly." Mapping land means one can visualize and measure what cannot be taken in whole by the eye; by abstracting land to a paper scale one can justify claims to ownership, linking property to the vast, blank expanses of sea and land that have little to do with actual, lived places. In the same way, Osman's chronology of events across New

York's early history belies the real, visceral, lived history lingering in its words; the chronology is an outline, a map of a network that she implies is far more vast and complex than its simple, declarative statements would have us believe.

Connections across the chronology seem at first like what Boon might call "conventional history." The rise of institutions like New York's first library and university in 1754, the first printing press in 1693, and first newspaper in 1725 are set side by side with financial milestones and failures: the establishment of a stock market funded by bonds from Congress in 1790, the first bank, established by Alexander Hamilton in 1784, the panics of 1786, 1857, 1869, and 1907, the various moves of the stock exchange until it settles into its permanent location on Broad Street in 1865. As the chronology progresses, it is peopled by wealthy tradesmen, newspapermen, founding fathers, and statesmen. Pirates, loyalists, and blacks, both free and slave, hover at the edges: "1691: Pirates thrive. Captain William Kidd buys property on Wall Street" (58). Literary figures, inventors, entrepreneurs, and entertainers enter the history as asides to more central events (though often with racial overtones): "1835: P.T. Barnum starts his career as a showman by exhibiting a blind slave woman and claiming she had been George Washington's nurse" (83).

All have associations with Manhattan. Hamilton, for instance, moves to Wall Street in 1783, founds the Bank of New York the year following, and dies following a duel with Aaron Burr, the founder of another Manhattan bank, in 1804. Ironically perhaps, neither men's *political* history is mentioned; it is their history of *ownership* that is chronicled here, an ownership that extends beyond their ability to circulate banknotes. In a moment of undisguised irony we learn that "after the Bank moves, the building houses the first organization against slavery, The

Society for the Manumission of Slaves, of which Hamilton is a member. Hamilton owns slaves until his death" (77). Any history is selective, and Osman's is no exception: the connections across this history are meant to make us focus on links between ownership and power, institutions and force, racial oppression and white male rule. As a founder of the nation (he was the first Secretary of Finance, appointed by Washington), founder of the first bank, and an owner of slaves, Hamilton hits the trifecta of links in Osman's network of wealth, power, and racial oppression in young America.

It is apparent as the chronology expands that events—financial, institutional, and historic—are interconnected. War is linked to money: the stock market, which was occupied by British soldiers during the Revolution, funds of the War of 1812 and the Civil War, bringing it in 1863 to "full power" (89). Racial oppression is linked to money *and* war: in 1653, the "wall" of Wall Street is fortified "against the British and Native Americans . . . with slave labor" (52); in 1699, the wall is taken down and the stones used to build City Hall, the seat of governmental power. In 1711, "a slave market is established on Wall Street at the East River pier" (62); by 1743 inhabitants complain that "Said Meal (Slave) Markett greatly Obstructs the agreeable prospect of the East River which those that live in Wall St. would Otherwise enjoy" (66). When the stock market, by now established on Wall Street, funds the war of 1812, "free and enslaved black men build fortifications at Castle Clinton/Battery Park" (82). In 1850, continuing the money-war-oppression theme, 100 guns salute from the Battery to celebrate the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, which according to the chronology is "good for business" (88).

Further points of contact link the history of trade to racial oppression:

> 1655: The first slave ship direct from Africa arrives with three hundred Africans from Guinea.
>
> (52)
>
> 1678: New York is granted exclusive rights to bolt and ship cotton.
>
> (58)
>
> 1711: A slave market is established on Wall Street at the East river pier.
>
> (62)
>
> 1790: Congress issues 80 million dollars in bonds. A market is created under a buttonwood tree (now 68 Wall St.) for public sale of the stock.
>
> (77)
>
> 1825: Opening of the Erie Canal; New York port business booms.
>
> (82)
>
> 1863: Wall Street attains its full power by financing the Civil War.
>
> (89)
>
> 1903: The stock exchange opens in its current location at 18 Broad Street. The emphasis shifts from commerce to finance.
>
> (97)

Taken at face value, the story told here is that while the slave trade and shipping dominate early commerce, by the start of the twentieth century trade in goods and people has given way to finance, that is, using money to make money. Yet each of these items is connected by history that, at least in American memory, forms a collective fabric: cotton is tied to slave labor which in turn is tied to shipping which in turn is tied to a war that divides the union; there is a gradual but marked shift from trade in concrete items (people, goods) to abstract wealth (money, bonds). New threads are now added to the fabric, most notably that the location for the first regulated trade in slaves is the future location of the stock market: thus, the institution of slavery begets what is called in common parlance simply “Wall Street.” Marcus Boone reminds us that slavery is “an extreme example [of appropriation] . . . turning a human being into an object, into property

. . . claiming the right to define and use that being over and against that being's own self-determination" (207). By connecting the history of the slave trade directly to Wall Street, Osman suggests a correlation between the violent takeover of individuals and the aggressive techniques of a financial institution that, backed by political power (its bonds were issued by Congress, and its banks run by founding fathers), has the ability to shift the tides of war and define the terms of the new nation, including the definition of who does—and who doesn't—make up its population.

By making such connections visible and causal, by making us hold and name the "vines" that link together events and persons from our collective past, Osman exposes the truth of our nation's founding history: that the wealth of the New World—and particularly of New York's financial district—was built through acts of power and aggression. Such acts build into a network of power relations whose unequal distributions are felt through today's uneven currencies of race, class, wealth, and education. How far this "network" extends—and to what degree we (both as readers and as subjects of the same history) are complicit in and/or co-opted by its structures—is the question we're left to deal with. And although this message is not new, the vehicle of these particular facts in this particular presentation is. Osman is engaging in revisionist history, one which questions the orthodox interpretation of the history of the New World and reorients the reader to "read" that history with different eyes. Instead of heroic figures who lead the nation to greatness, she offers us founding fathers who give little thought to the connections between trading in humans and trading in wealth and power. That these are the same men who draft the new nation's constitution adds to the unequal power exchange.

It isn't an unearthing of little-known facts so much as it is a selective re-collection by Osman that leads us to make these connections; if we are searching, it is not for what lies

beneath the surface of history but for the connections *across* history which we have not, perhaps, recognized until now. Following Joan Retallack's concept of poethics[3], Osman makes these connections apparent to us by the act of "noticing": "Noticing becomes art when, as [a] contextualizing project, it reconfigures the geometry of attention, drawing one into conversation with what would otherwise remain silent in the figure-ground patterns of history" (10). Through poetry, we are brought into dialogue with the past because it enables us to recognize and then read for patterns that were not visible to us before—thus opening the possibility for future change. Such reconfiguration reorients the unexamined attitudes that we bring to the reading of history, attitudes that are themselves embedded in traditional interpretations and grand narratives of history, and that, unchecked, perpetuate cycles of power and abuse. The "visible lines" of the map have, as it were, been internalized. As Retallack writes, gesturing toward Pierre Bourdieu, "The contained, but squirming, matrix of habitual, value-laden, self-perpetuating practices, all but invisible until something dramatic goes awry, is in fact the continuous present of our experience of history" (17).

A term drawn from Gertrude Stein's "Composition as Explanation," the "continuous present" is another way of saying that we live in a world that is built on the past, yet that is constantly, through language, through poeisis (making through language), emerging before us. In other words, *language makes history*. Retallack challenges us to consider "what we make of events as we use language in the present, how we continuously create an ethos of the way in which events are understood" (9)—a charge that can also be applied to the writing of history. How we conceive of the past and how we present the past *in the present* is an ethical act. It is no mistake that the chronology is written in the present tense; like vines reaching up to grab and

connect us, Osman is implying that the past is still speaking today, that the present still bears (and will always bear) the weight of past actions and words, because those past actions and words are still in circulation. They are part of the common air. Osman's "noticing" of the racial rhetoric in Manhattan's early financial history—not hidden, but not usually brought into the light in more orthodox histories—is an example of a deeply ethical engagement with the past, revealing her practice as "poethic," bringing aesthetic and ethical ideals together.

Her ethical engagement also pulls the reader in. In the process of redirecting our attention, readers become participants in her project: as we "read" patterns into the history she presents, we too participate in the act of "noticing." Our act of reading is similar to the poet's process of research: we link together varied pieces of information as they are given; and as we read, we become increasingly aware of just how charged this history is: instead of a founding history of heroes and conquest, we are given glimpses of a systematic, cyclical history of oppression that maintains, among other things, white power at the expense of black personhood. Yet by refocusing our reading, the dominant version can be rewritten in our present actions and attitudes. By raising our level of attention, Osman inaugurates a heightened consciousness, a kind of new historical literacy in the reader. And she pushes us even further: she asks us to look more closely at the *making* of the history itself through considering what makes up the history, words themselves.

Roots and Branches: Etymology and "the first law of what can be said"

Etymology, the second section of the tripartite scheme of the poems, is a key vehicle in exploring the intersections between language and history in "The Financial District." With the

history of words gathered into the repository of the etymological dictionary, etymology is also linked to the archive, particularly to the fluidity of language exhibited in semantic, orthographic, and linguistic shifts that are tracked, using comparative methods, across time. These shifts and swerves mark the system of language as an archive *par excellence* as described by Michel Foucault in *The Archeology of Knowledge*. As discussed earlier, to Foucault the archive is not "that which collects the dust of statements that have become inert once more" (129). Instead, following his comments on what I have called the network of discursive relations, it is that which "reveals the rules of a practice that enables statements both to survive and to undergo regular modification. It is the general system of the formation and transformation of statements" (130). The archive is the system *and* the rules that make it, not only "the first law of what can be said" but "the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events" (129). Further, the archive of language is uneven. Some words gain significance while others fall unnoticed from the realm of possible statements; the same may be said of the meanings attributed to words. Etymology, as part of the discursive system of language, notices that words "do not withdraw at the same pace in time, but shine, as it were, like stars, some that seem close to us shining brightly from far off, while others that are in fact close to us are already growing pale" (129).

Like the archive of Foucault's description, etymological research takes into account when and how words enter language, and when they fall out of usage. It takes particular interest in tracing words that are in current use back to their "roots," showing connections between languages as they go (much as Osman's chronology shows connections between events). In a sense, the work of the etymologist (and the historian) is the reverse of the archivist's: instead of starting with the past, etymologists start from the present and work backwards in an attempt to

establish provenance. Following Foucault, the line of etymological inquiry does not often follow a straight line (as he phrases it, it is not “inscribed in an unbroken linearity” [129]). As Osman writes in the volume’s opening poem, an etymology is “a timeline in a spiral course through the sheaves” (7). If we attempt to “track, using only straight lines” we may miss the twists in the “fraying rope” of meaning (7, 5).

Osman’s interest centers on the connective possibilities this kind of history offers. Although word histories are rife with gaps (as she writes, “one direction [is] always shadowed by another”), the connections between words with common origins or “roots” are significant—and often surprising (9). Following the word tree for “peace” in the volume’s opening poem, “The Knot,”[4] she writes, “Although the word ‘peace’ came into its current form in 1358, one book states it wasn’t really ‘established’ until 1500. What went on in the world as it flexed from one spelling toward another. What kind of campaign. Derivatives include appease and pay.” For Osman, it is no small irony that the word “propaganda” comes from the same root for “peace” (5). Behind these words, she implies, are human agents shaping both language and history, living actors who may, like the statesmen in “The Financial District,” use “propaganda” or “pay[ment]” to “appease” warring factions. Yet without knowledge of “what went on in the world” (information that is often missing in etymologies), such histories can only ever be suggestive. The difference between “peace” and “propaganda” reminds us that, try as we might to pinpoint the origin of these divergences, the search for historical “truth” leads to inexact results. Like language, the history of human action is uneven in its dispersion, and any study of it must take into account “all the flaws opened up by . . . non-coherence, . . . overlapping, . . . [and] simultaneity” (Foucault 127). Even so, as for Susan Howe words and facts and even gaps may

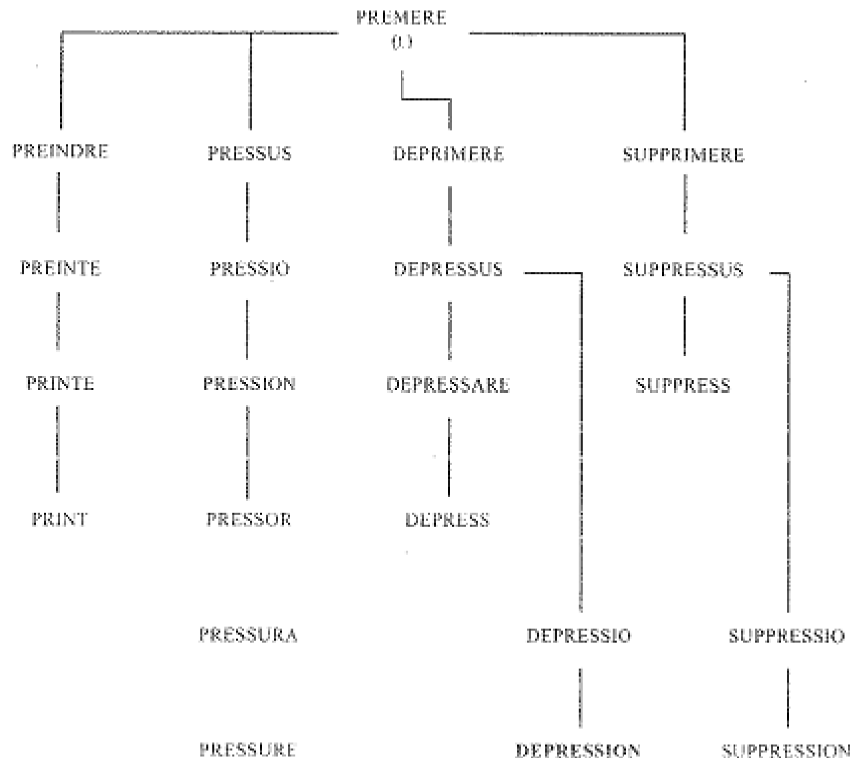
also be generative. There is something telling in the connections and breaks and strange ironies of the etymological map, something that Osman suggests is worth noticing.

The model for Osman's etymological pursuit in "The Financial District" is Chilean poet Cecilia Vicuña, who is quoted by Osman in the volume's first poem: "I follow Cecilia Vicuña's instruction to use an etymological dictionary: 'To enter words in order to see'" (3).[5] For Vicuña, individual words open to reveal their inner associations through etymology and the oral tradition.[6] As Kenneth Sherwood explains, "A single word can spin multiple variants through the careful application of ear and eye . . . [E]tymology becomes an occasion for poetry, crossing languages" (79). Etymology is a means to search out meaning across time; the history of a word is bound up in its variants which surface at specific points in the history of language. The "roots" of words—"ME → OE → OFris → OHG → MHG → G → ON" (*The Network* 7)—call up forgotten meanings, resurrecting them from the dust of the archive and enlarging their range of association for the reader. Such searching also calls up the history of being and thinking *with words* that makes up our world. Vicuña writes, "A history of words would be a history of being . . . Every people is its language, the vision they inherit. To create is to set out from the first image, the original pattern. . . . [T]o enter words in order to see, is the point of word working" (36, 38).

Although she is perhaps more skeptical of origins (or "the" origin) than Vicuña, Osman takes Vicuña's method for "seeing into" words as a model in "The Financial District"—but with significant differences. Glossing the English infinitive "to see," Vicuña calls up a whole spectrum of meaning in her poem "Palambrarmas": "To see, from the Indo-European root *wid*, Germanic *wit*, Old English wise, wit, knowledge. Latin *videre*, view, vision. Suffixed form *wid-*

es-ya, in Greek *idea*, appearance, form. In Sanscrit *veda*, knowledge and 'I have seen'" (35). Osman's gloss of "master" in "The Financial District" follows a similar pattern, but with far less description: "from great to Latin, he who is great, to Old French maistre, to Middle English maister" (50). Intriguingly, the word map on the previous page traces the same lineage, but in a different presentation and with different information: "MEG (IE) → MAGISTER (L) → MAGISTER (OE) → MAISTRE (OF) → MAISTER (ME)" (49). There's a curious split in Osman's etymology. In the word map we are given both the word and its origin, from Indo-European (IE) to Middle English (ME). A page later in we are given part of the definition—but without the words themselves. Intriguingly, this split pattern repeats throughout "The Financial District." Word maps are separated from their fuller etymological meanings, which appear, interspersed with material from the chronologies, in the third and final section of each poem. In that section, which I call the "commentary," words from the maps are not typically included with their definitions but simply *skipped over*, affecting our ability to contextualize the history of the word with the word itself and reminding us that discourse is most often experienced without its structures (here, words) being explicitly named.

The word map for "Depression," glossed in the "Wall Street" section, is a starting point for investigating Osman's method as it relates to appropriation:



(53)

In the map, "depression" is traced back to the Latin "premere" which means "to press or squeeze": "print," "pressure," "depress," "depression," "suppress," and "suppression" all derive from this root. Although they are not used in the chronologies, these words have definite links to the history told in the poem as a whole. There is, for instance, the early and influential work of printing presses and newspapers. There is the suppression of the British threat during the war of 1812 and of a slave revolt in Maiden Lane a century earlier. And though the chronology ends in 1920, economic "depression" is clearly foretold in the several "panics" mentioned in the chronology ("panic" is also mapped on 73). The words, however, gain the most traction in the "commentary section" of "Wall + Depression" where we can see their interaction with the events of the chronology:

> at first the wall was a palisade, a northern limit to keep the cattle from wandering off. Latin literally and figuratively, to squeeze, past participle has root which could well be the Indo-European root, perhaps with metathetic variant.
>
> *she disguises herself as a simpler person, so as to escape anyone's notice.*
>
> follow the small wooden line across the perimeter, from east river to west. Compare with Latin (stem, root), a wine-press, and perhaps Russian, Old Slavic to trample, Lithuanian to thrash, flog.
>
> *she circulates crosses borders, and hopes she is safe for the night.*
>
> there were two threats: native americans and new englanders. Perhaps also Sanscrit, he knocks with the foot.
>
> *three boys knock against the crowds of traders.*
>
> (54)

The section borrows directly from the chronologies and from Osman's source for the etymologies, Erick Partridge's 1958 *Origins: A Short Etymological Dictionary of Modern English*. From the former, we have the history of the "wall" for which Wall Street is named, described as "a palisade, a northern limit for keeping cattle from wandering off" and a "small wooden line across the perimeter, from east river to west" that will "protect" from the double threat of "native americans and new englanders." The lines differ slightly from their source in the chronology, the year 1673, given in the "Wall" section: "Stuyvesant [an early governor] orders a protective wall to be built from river to river to keep cattle from wandering off. It then turns into a wall to protect/fortify against the British and Native Americans" (52). Osman copies some elements of the chronology but adds to or changes others; we might note the shift from "British" to "new englanders" and the lowercasing of "native americans." The more formal "palisade" is used instead of "protective wall." The area covered by the wall is described in one version as "from river to river," in the other "from east river to west." Only the line about cattle (seemingly

the least important fact in this history) is taken verbatim. Perhaps importantly, the early governor Stuyvesant does not appear.

A more formal set of constraints is used in the etymological definition, which glosses the root "premere" at the top of the word tree:

> Latin literally and figuratively, to squeeze, past participle has root which could well be the Indo-European root, perhaps with metathetic variant. . . compare with Latin (stem, root), a wine-press, and perhaps Russian, Old Slavic to trample, Lithuanian to thrash, flog. . . perhaps also Sanscrit, he knocks with the foot.
> (52)

The full version, from Partridge, reads:

> L *premere*, to press (lit and fig), to squeeze, pp *pressus* has r *pre-*, which could well be the IE r, perh with metathetic var **per-*: cf L *prelum* (s *prelo*, r *pre*), a wine-press, and perh Ru *peret'*, to press, OSl *pirati*, to trample, Lith *perti*, to thrash, flog; perh also Skt *sphurati*, he knocks with the foot.
> (523)

There are several notable differences in Osman's version. Not only does she omit the words being defined, she also spells out several of Partridge's abbreviations, including the roots which, with the exception of the opening word "Latin," are not given in the word map on the page previous. She also neglects to include the comparative words from Partridge, *peret*, *pirati*, *perti*, and *sphurati*, which do not appear elsewhere in the poem. Further, the definition stops and then picks up again—something that occurs throughout the commentary. Although the breaks occur at natural points (before "compare with" and "perhaps also"), the shifts are abrupt. The etymology offers very little in the way of actual history, though it offers (like the word map for peace) hints and guesses: a wine press, trampling, knocking. Clearly, we're being encouraged to "compare" the pieces. But what do we make of the deliberate split between the word and its (admittedly brief) etymology? Of the sudden stops and starts? What do we say to the differences, also

deliberate, between the chronology and the way it is rendered in the commentary section? And what to make of the italicized sentences in between the prose paragraphs which seem to be telling a different (hi)story altogether?

First, we might notice that although Osman's appropriative methods are different for the chronology and the etymology, both are deliberate. The chronology she uses shiftingly, quoting and glossing at will; her modifications to the etymological dictionary, in contrast, are followed as a strict constraint. Both methods point, again, to Foucault's archive, where the uneven distribution of significance for an event or utterance must be taken into account against the larger discursive network. The dilation of one fact in the chronology, the elision of another, the exact repetition of another, is set in contrast with the regularity of constraint in the etymology—a constraint that is carried out with precision throughout "The Financial District." And yet the constraint is also, in a sense, arbitrary; though the rule once determined is followed exactly, the rule itself does not emerge from any kind of given process; it is placed *upon* language by the poet. Thus, it is neither arbitrary or natural; it is regulatory, shaped by a knowing human agent. Also deliberate is the action of separating words and points of history from their contexts and resituating them in the commentary section. Although it is possible to read this (along with the appropriation of material from Partridge) as a kind of violence, I would suggest that Osman is playing the flip side of the coin: language can fix meaning, but it can also generate meaning. By taking words and histories out of their original network of meaning and inserting them, as it were, into another, Osman allows such points of contact to proliferate, and opens an opportunity, once more, for reorientation, for *noticing*.

Second, we might note that the etymology, chronology, and italicized narrative comment on and extend one another's meaning. The "limit" of the wall and the "threats" it is keeping out can be linked to the attempted escape of the female figure (the "she") in the italicized sections. Her attempt to "circulate, cross borders" resonates with both the language circulating in the etymology and the "perimeter" her pursuers believe she is attempting to breach. She is in a literal sense being "squeezed" and pressed, hunted in limited territory with little hope of being "safe for the night." And there are hints of violence: "to thrash, to flog," perhaps even an omen of judgment in the "wine-press" where we remember, in the words of the national anthem, "the grapes of wrath are stored." The outside threat, it is implied, has been located within the walls of Old New York.

Out of the commentary, then, a new story is emerging that we might consider an "ethos" created by language in the present—a kind of poeisis that comments on and imaginatively extends the history given elsewhere in "The Financial District." Later in this section, the pursued woman will be interrogated "under a bare bulb" (57). We also learn she "can hear the dogs barking," and that "each bark jars her out of a shallow sleep between tree roots"— the "tree roots" a link to etymology, figurative this time (55). The "dogs barking," the three boys pursuing her, the interrogation, the crossing of borders, and the attempt to "disguise" herself "so as to escape anyone's notice" all indicate of a threatened subject position: that of a female slave attempting to escape her captivity. The consequences of being found are hinted at in the reference from the chronology for "Wall" of "public lashings of slaves up and down the block beyond the market established for their purchase" (55). It is also hinted at in the "crowd of traders" among whom she is trying (and failing) to hide in plain sight. Even in the line about

cattle (similar to "chattel") there is a reference to control and ownership, implying that the "she" in the italicized narrative is similarly objectified and commodified.

Yet this isn't the end of the story told in "Wall + Depression." Intriguingly, a reference to possible escape is made in the final lines of the poem:

> Late Latin concealment, becomes English (and Early Modern French-French) . . .
>
> *three boys read a map and determine that they must separate in order to investigate all avenues of escape.*
>
> illegal route, symbolic protest, a threatening anonymous letter. and Late Latin, hider (of another's slaves) supplied the form of English.
>
> (57)

Intriguingly, it is language itself that might offer a refuge. The fuller entry, from Partridge's etymology for "suppress," reads thus: "LL concealment, becomes E (and EF-F) *suppression*, and LL *suppressor*, hider (of another's slaves) supplies the form of E *suppressor*" (524). In the female subject's attempt to flee, language offers possible safety: she seeks sleep "between tree roots"—roots that, if we remember Osman's constraint, are concealed on another page of the poem, hidden from our view. Further, with the "threatening anonymous letter" and "symbolic protest," words themselves offer a "form" for concealment—they are, after all, changeable over the course of history, often by a single letter or symbol. (As she writes in "The Knot," foreshadowing this moment, "the 'e' drops from escape . . . the 'k' falls from the knife" [6].) Here the change of one letter, from "supplies" to "supplied," indicates that such a change has already taken place. Although she is trapped, in a sense, by history; although her subject formation is contingent in part upon language; and although her pursuers appear to be taking an ominous "divide and conquer" strategy, reminding us that the territory in which she is hiding is

indeed "mapped," Osman's rendering suggests that "avenues of escape" may in fact be "supplied" for the subject within the evolving discourse of language.

We might say also that the form of Osman's poem, with its gestures toward the strictures and contingencies of language, allows the possibility for subject formation but recognizes the difficulty of maintaining it against the already "mapped" territory of the given. We emerge as subjects of language into an overwhelming contingency, already formed by a history which is birthed through language. If the discursive system is unchangeable, then escape may not be an option. But if language and fact are generative, then we may yet break free from oppressive systems. The section begins with the unnamed female being "squeezed" and ends with the hope of her possible safety; what more might happen in this network of generative possibilities?

Intriguingly, the subject position of the female shifts over the course of the "Financial District," revealing the "network" to be more than just the history of lower Manhattan—it is also the present "network" of wired, technological reality in which we also are subjects. After being interrogated, the unnamed female "wakes up bruised in a cell . . . somehow she needs to find her connection" (60). "A body, barely substance, materializes beside her and circulates the key; it is part of the network" (61). After using the key "she's back out on the street, disappearing in the crowd of traders" (61). Her flight along city streets is now mapped along the terrain of the computer circuit: "the frequencies keep her running in complicated patterns through irregular streets" (74). Like a signal pulsing through a microprocessor, she has now become part of the connective reality of her present. She holds the "key" to valuable information in the circuitry of the network. When her pursuers finally corner her, all they see are "sparks of circuitry. red dotted lines stretch from hub to hub" (86). Her body, once marked by race, is now embodied as part of

the network; it carries “sparks of circuitry” with “red dotted lines” like veins mapped onto her skin.

When her physical body is burned—the ultimate act of racial violence—the “ash” that remains still contains some essential, reiterable part of her. In a phoenix-like resurrection, “she as ash in animate particles repeats . . . as ash she gathers, spreads, circulates. . . . The veins of the network scatter and recombine in her biology and smoke” (94, 96). Eventually she becomes part of the atmosphere, “a cloud of ash blinking red.” She is part of the air we breathe, part of the commons. And eventually, she returns to the earth and to language, where we remember she sought refuge in “sleep between tree roots”: “night trees bend and mingle their threads. she as ash in the forests and lakes” (101). Her ash will circulate through air and water; it will “mingle” with the “thread” of language in the “night trees.” In the end, the subject of this history has the ability to penetrate all of the varied layers of the discrete discourses that make up her world through iteration and exchange: “surface to surface, faint red lines exchange between the thick layers” (101).

Mobility and communication, then, are the final possibilities for the subject of Osman’s history, reminding us that, in the words of Cary Wolfe, “embodiment and embeddedness of the human being is not just its biological but its technological world” (xv). Situated among “technical, . . . informatic, and economic networks,” the unnamed persona of Osman’s financial district is able to operate fully within “external archival mechanisms (such as language and culture)” (xv). With access to language and the ability to move among discourses, the subject of this history leaves us with the hope that the generative possibilities of language *in the present*

outweigh the negative effects of oppressive history. That hope—in art, in noticing—is hope for our future, too.

Part II: Robert Fitterman and the Network of Consumer Culture

"Ours is not an age of invention but inventory."
—Rob Fitterman

"Imagine a distilled moment where the whole of American culture—its images, ideas, language, etc.—is electronically laid out before us for our inspection, digestion, processing, and all of us will have access to it, and that day has arrived" ("Identity Theft" 17). In poet Rob Fitterman's description, the internet operates as a kind of open-access archive, a book of all knowledge with networked possibilities for the subject of history—a situation not unlike that of the mobile, connected female subject at the end of Jena Osman's "The Financial District." As subjects of history and of the present we are also, like Osman's subject, linked to human discourse through multiple channels that both open and delimit individual and collective autonomy. Our navigation of such "networks," I've suggested, is based on our ability to appropriate from within given structures of meaning in order to reenvision these structures and renegotiate our subject position within them.

In *Rob the Plagiarist*, Fitterman engages in a critique of appropriation similar to Osman's—in particular of assimilated or naturalized assumptions of the right to "ownership"—but with a view towards consumer culture in contemporary America. If slavery marks the violent takeover of the individual, consumer culture is a sign of the cooptation of individual subjectivity. In Fitterman's analysis, American consumerism and commercialism co-opt the mind of the individual, who allows personal choice and autonomy to be replaced with a pattern of mimetic

desire based on products and services available in our ever expanding service economy. Mimetic desire, following René Girard, is the triangulation between owner, object, and self in which seeing the desire another person has to own a particular object leads an individual to desire the same object (or, in mass production, to own a copy of it). In Marcus Boone's analysis of Girard's theory, the object "exists as the sum of mimetic desires focused on it, and it takes on full meaning within an economy of displaced envy [and] jealousy" (36). For Fitterman, it isn't only objects but identities (or, more properly, *copies* of identities) that are on the market; mimetic desire actually *creates* the identities that are taken on by members of consumer culture. As conceptual writer David Buuck writes, "We literally fashion our identities through our consumption practices" (qtd. in "Identity Theft" 14).

Reframing our Multiple Identities: Participating in Consumer Culture

For conceptual writers like Buuck and Fitterman, the culture of consumption is all pervasive. Fitterman describes the 1970s/80s "mall" culture during which he and other conceptual poets came of age this way:

> The saturation of mass media culture and the relentless machine of corporate advertising . . . created [a] kind of cultural simulacra. As marketers quickly discovered, if the new, young consumer did not know what he or she wanted (salad bars, food courts), the market strategist could continually create new possibilities, fantasies, even new values or simulated values, crafted in board rooms, that exist side-by-side with "real" values.
>
> (13–14)

The smorgasbord phenomenon of "new or simulated values" has had a particular effect on conceptual writers for whom, Fitterman writes, "the notion of multiple identities and appropriated identities is a sort of native language" (14). Those who grew up in this era "became

comfortable with changing, chameleon personas, which continues today to be a boon for advertisers and marketers—a corporation could appeal to several identities within one consumer" (13). Yet despite its threat to an individual identity based on "real" versus market-created values (what these "real" values would be—and whether coherent identity is, in fact, possible outside of consumer culture—Fitterman does not articulate), consumer culture also provides the grounds for critical engagement. As Buuck writes, "Consumer culture actually invites a form of participation that is not only economic and political, but aesthetic as well" (Buuck qtd. in "Identity Theft" 14).

For conceptual writers, identity and writing methods are implicitly tied to consumer practice, in particular to overconsumption. Conceptual writing responds to the overload of goods and information not simply by applying limits to it, but by appropriating it, reusing and sampling what is already at hand: "The focus is no longer on the production of new material but on the recombination of [the] previously produced and stockpiled" (Dworkin xlii). Appropriation becomes critique as it re-enters the productive field, exposing the mechanisms that simulate authentic choice and making writers and readers reconsider their own place as products, willing or not, of the system. Conceptual writing is also, by definition, constraint-based, performatively mirroring the strictures of the system itself. As Craig Dworkin explains, conceptual writers are "more likely to determine pre-established rules and parameters—to set up a system and step back as it runs its course—than to heavily edit or masterfully polish" (xliii). In Kenneth Goldsmith's words (taken from Sol LeWitt), "The idea becomes a machine that makes the text" ("Paragraphs" 108).

In a throwback to Pound's complaint in *Guide to Kulchur* about the "heteroclite mass of undigested information hurled at him daily and monthly," it is not only the proliferation of goods but the wealth of information in our connected, wired world that drives conceptual writing (23). As Fitterman explains, "In this era of information culture or network culture, many artists and writers have opted for working with the abundance of material already available rather than contributing more knowledge to the overcrowded landscape of originality" ("Identity Theft" 15). Kenneth Goldsmith, the most well-known practitioner of the movement, insists that this does not spell the disappearance of the author: "How I make my way through this thicket of information—how I manage it, how I parse it, how I organize and distribute it—is what distinguishes my writing from yours" (*Uncreative* 2). While Goldsmith makes it a goal to "be boring"—his most recent book is titled, provocatively, *Uncreative Writing*—Fitterman's focus has more to do with possibilities for participation and critique: "Is appropriation a way for poets to participate in network culture? Does this participation lead to taking some ownership of our culture, or even responsibility? Is this a way to articulate our role in cultural production?" (12)

For Fitterman, critical appropriation centers on "reframing," a practice similar to Osman's restaging of material in "The Financial Network" but with a transgressive twist. In his description,

> The plagiarist takes a source and reframes it in order to call attention to its new context, to cull meaning from this shift. Further, the plagiarist promotes the instability of language as it pours into these new contexts. These new situations instigate uncertainty, which, in turn, instigates new ways to potentially realize our place as text artists in a network culture.
>
> ("Identity Theft" 15)

Reframing "highlight[s] a . . . disparity between the object and the commodified object," making it possible, once again, for the subject to discern the differences between the real and simulated

and perhaps even regain a measure of personal autonomy ("Why I Do" 10). For Fitterman, the purpose in reframing is not to "replicate or exploit the original." Instead it is "to turn up the volume on its difference as we drag these materials into our own expressions and carve our paths through the informational morass" ("Why I do" 10-11). Working appropriatively allows Fitterman to articulate his "own expression" and "carve [his own] path"—another gesture toward the retaking of the self that is possible *within* the network of consumer culture.

Fitterman's practices share critical space with the work of Nicolas Bourriaud who, in an update to Fitterman's description of 1970s/80s "mall" culture, sees the participation of appropriative artists in culture as a response to "the proliferating chaos of global culture in the information age" (13). In his definition of "postproduction"—a technical term taken from film and music editing that he applies to the work of the "twin figures of the DJ and programmer"—Bourriaud advocates the use of already circulating material, the negation of originality, the primacy of utility over meaning, blurred lines between consumption and production, and the market as site of appropriation (13). Bourriaud writes,

> When entire sections of our existence spiral into abstraction as a result of economic globalization, when the basic functions of our daily lives are slowly transformed into products of consumption (including human relations, which are becoming a full-fledged industrial concern), it seems highly logical that artists might seek to *rematerialize* these functions and processes, to give shape to what is disappearing before our eyes.
>
> (32)

In a performative gesture, the postproduction artist "reactivate[s] forms by inhabiting them, pirating private property and copyrights, brands and products, museum-bound forms and signatures" (94). Although differences exist between postproduction and conceptual writing—the former is based in art, media, and music, the latter in writing; conceptual writing is constraint-

based while postproduction claims to have moved beyond constraints[7]—they share the task of interrogating the visible and invisible codes of our market-based economy, in particular the ways in which it has infiltrated the private life of the individual. Such a task is all the more important in a culture where "multiple identities. . . have been engineered and . . . targeted by market strategists," threatening to drown out the possibility for individual identity (Fitterman, "Identity Theft" 14).

Google-sculpting: Critiquing our Networked Identities

To interrogate the "multiple identity" phenomenon, Fitterman maps the "network" of consumer culture onto the virtual network of the internet, an environment that has seen increased involvement in conceptual poetry both as a location for poetic output and, importantly, as a widely-accessible storehouse for information itself (thus, a kind of archive).[8] The internet brings together several concerns of conceptual writing: information excess, dispersed subjectivity, the diminishing of personal autonomy—not to mention issues of privacy, copyright, and privilege. Craig Dworkin writes, "In the twenty-first century, conceptual poetry . . . operates against the background of related vernacular practices, in a climate of pervasive participation and casual appropriation" (xlii). As an apparatus that inhabits and inhibits the everyday life of the subject—and whose material is used and reused casually, even habitually, by the majority of Americans without thought to these issues—the internet is ideal ground for staging critique. That it is a product of consumerism only adds to this; the privilege it affords those who can pay for access perpetuates a cycle of mimetic desire that is likely invisible to those inside of it. The internet also provides an interface which, like conceptual writing, is constraint-based. As Dworkin writes,

applying the language of the search engine to conceptualist methods, “conceptual poetry . . . often operates as an interface—returning the answer to a particular query; assembling, re-arranging, and displaying information; or sorting and selecting from files of accumulated language pursuant to a certain algorithm” (Dworkin xlii).

For Fitterman, the internet provides an opportunity to interrogate and recuperate the “multiple personalities” of the subject that exist in online and consumer climates. He writes, “It seems to me that for poets, this is an especially significant moment. Poets now have access to the language of countless individuals’ feelings and ideas from any historical moment” (“Identity Theft” 17). Yet for Fitterman, it isn’t his *own* subjectivity he is interested in. In “Identity Theft,” he wonders, “Can we express subjectivity, even personal experience, without necessarily using our own personal experience? Are our identities so fused and overwhelmed by consumerism that these distinctions are rendered meaningless?” (12) In the poem “This Window Makes Me Feel,” published in *Rob the Plagiarist*, Fitterman embarks on an experimental journey through the search engine (another window of sorts), asking whether it is possible to render a subjectivity that is not one’s own through appropriative practice, reusing the first-person words of others. In doing so, he offers the possibility both to interrogate the mechanisms that create multiple subjectivities, and to ask whether those subjectivities might be recognized or even validated by our response to them, however manufactured they may be. This is both exhilarating and dangerous: “Note the potential for collusion. Note the insistence on culpability” (Fitterman and Place 49).

In “This Window,” Fitterman uses Flarf techniques, or more particularly what is known as “Google-sculpting,” to create a kind of collective subjectivity based on internet searches.

Though it shares characteristics with “eavesdropping and quoting . . sampling . . . collage/cut & paste,” Flarf is distinguished, according to Mike Magee, by “the willful democratization of the method: the EXTENSIVE and even sole use of Googled material and the hyper-collaborative quality of the CONSTANT exchange” (Magee, “The Flarf Files”). In Flarf works, the results are often uncombed and thrown on the page without deliberate shaping, leading to surface-based, often silly results, or, as practitioners of Flarf delight in proclaiming, “bad poetry.” Google-sculpting takes a firmer hand in sorting and ordering search results. Though they may appear randomized (like a search engine’s), results have in fact been carefully selected and placed and in some cases slightly altered to fit the new framework of the poem. In many cases, the “sculpting” is done by adding constraints to tighten or hone or regularize the results, as is the case in “This Window.” It might also be noted that Fitterman’s main sources for this poem come from blogs and online communities; he seeks “real” people (and their online avatars), not fictionalized personas cultivated in web advertising and marketing. Thus, while their subjectivity might be, to the extent that consumer practice shapes it, manufactured, Fitterman is attempting, as far as he is able, to pillage the words of real people typing in real rooms in real cities.

In Google-sculpting, Fitterman follows a “baroque” or “impure” conceptual practice that is particularly well suited to an interrogation of the networked subject (Fitterman and Place 25). Conceptual works, according to Fitterman and Vanessa Place’s reading in *Notes on Conceptualisms*, fall along a spectrum: a “pure” work is driven solely by the constraint, while an “impure” or “baroque” work may allow editorial intervention or “more direct treatment of the ‘self’ in relation to the object” (22). Pure conceptual works, like those of Kenneth Goldsmith, can often be read through the constraint alone; all you really need to know about *Day* is that it

recreates the September 1, 2000 issue of the *New York Times*, complete with stock quotes and advertisements.[9] Baroque works, on the other hand, are more typically read through their *content* which tends towards disjunction and excess, overwhelming the reader with information that, as a rule, is displaced and remixed from its original context. As Fitterman and Place write, the "excessive textual properties [of baroque works] refuse, and are defeated by, the easy consumption / generation of text . . . in the larger culture" (25). Baroque works like Fitterman's challenge readers who find themselves caught inside excessive machines of text to reexamine the "easier" modes of consumption that shape our everyday lives and our experiences as subjects in a consumer-driven economy.

"This Window Makes Me Feel": Dispersed Subjectivity and the Contemporary American Subject

"This Window Makes Me Feel" is a case in point. To compose the poem, Fitterman entered the phrase "this makes me feel" into multiple search engines ("Identity Theft 17). Each of the five-hundred-plus sentences that make up the original poem[10] begins with the same six words, a declarative first-person statement which carries more and more resonance as we consider the framing of the poem in the last minutes before the catastrophic events of September 11, 2001, freezing a moment in our shared history that was, in retrospect, highly uncritical and unexamined. The opening page reads:

> *8:35 A.M., September 11, 2001*
>
> This window makes me feel like I'm protected. This window makes me feel like people don't know much about recent history, at least as far as trivia goes. This window makes me feel like I count and I enjoy knowing my opinions are heard so that hopefully I can help change the

> future. This window makes me feel like it's better to hear that other people have gone through it—it's like a rainbow at the end of the storm. This window makes me feel like the year I spent campaigning was worth it. This window makes me feel really good and also makes me feel like it heightens the sex when it finally happens. The window makes me feel like I did when I went to a heavy-metal hair stylist who wore a swastika belt buckle and I didn't say anything. This window makes me feel like there is a part of the news story that I missed. This window makes me feel like I have a tangible, relevant role in some ongoing process. This window makes me feel like I've won a prize, like I got a part in a movie. This window makes me feel like I do when I hug my dog. This window makes me feel like a special person to have them take a personal interest in my life. This window makes me feel like I'm on the ship in Ben-Hur. This window makes me feel uncomfortable like when I judge other people's sexuality.
>
> (90)

Culled from the internet, these sentences make up a collective subjectivity that is dispersed across the poem in equal measures as each successive sentence takes up what seems to be a new identity. If we suspend the impulse to read the sentences against 9/11—staying true to the premise that these voices are speaking *prior* to the event, and with no knowledge of it—they also take on a certain naiveté. Like the authors in Foucault's discursive formation, they don't know that other voices exist; they don't see themselves as part of a larger network. On the surface, they express emotions and reactions readers can relate to: the guilt of not speaking against bigotry, the desire for one's work to be validated by others, the recognition that we are not as knowledgeable about "recent history" as we should be. On a more basic level they speak to the desire to be known, recognized, "relevant," connected, *safe*. They speak also to guilt, embarrassment, self-involvement—making public what is assumed to be private but is in fact common. In their rawness and lack of sophistication, they speak to everyday, unexamined human experience. And yet, the *lack* of awareness in these subjects, the inability to grasp the system or to see their place in it, to recognize they are taking up subject positions that are not unique but ubiquitous, speaks

also to a kind of blindness. That these subjects are in positions of privilege (they assume, for instance, that safety, recognition, money, and access to the news and to education are a given) compounds their lack of self-consciousness. Complicity in the system is tied to a lack of awareness. By its accumulation of voices, Fitterman challenges our "easy" consumption and assimilation of such identities *even as* we might relate to or validate them through our own subjective experiences.

Fully-justified on either side, the text blocks appear in the same dimensions on each page, implying an equality of elements Fitterman claims is democratic: "The appropriator sees all objects as equal, as equally up for grabs" ("Identity Theft"16). Yet as we read, we begin to notice similarities among sentences: "This window makes me feel like I count and I enjoy knowing my opinions are heard so that hopefully I can change the future . . . This window makes me feel like I have a tangible, relevant role in some ongoing process." Rather than "removing [the] contents from their spiritual, ideological, religious or scientific frames," the poem in fact reifies categories that correlate to everyday experience ("Identity Theft" 16). In the sentences just cited, the recurring theme is attitudes toward work; a sentence on the next page reads, "This poem makes me feel like people rely on me to get the job done" (95). Such recurrences are meted out across the poem. While we might not be hearing the same person, we are hearing a commonality in tone and content, suggesting that subjective experience builds up into a sort of commons in these pages. The effect is similar to Michael Kelleher's description of reading *Metropolis XXX*, another of Fitterman's internet-culled works: it's "sort of like being read to by a thousand voices at once, none of whom [we] recognize, but all of which seem very familiar" (35).

In fact, the sentences of “This Window” might be characterized as an index of American subjectivity just prior to 9/11. They can be grouped under broad categories like money, sex, religion, work, masculinity/femininity, but also under more specific groupings that resonate with life in lower Manhattan, like tourism, New York City, and attitudes towards America. A main theme is shopping:

> This window makes me feel rich as I engage in this nonessential and expensive habit.
>
> (91)
>
> This window makes me feel rich but what a contradiction because I loathe capitalist hullabaloo yet still crave Vegas.
>
> (92)
>
> This window makes me feel like I have the best city lifestyle, with coffee shops and boutiques right outside my door.
>
> (93)
>
> This window makes me feel like the most spoiled woman in America.
>
> (94)
>
> This window makes me feel like I’m scouring shops in SoHo and Tribeca even though I live in a small, historical town, so access to these kinds of products in usually limited.
>
> (95)

The “window” in these sentences is as much a site of access as it is a reflection of the urbanized, moneyed American at the upper end of privilege. These subjects are “window shopping” in SoHo and Tribeca for identities that, consciously or not, are informed by their ability to purchase “boutique” items “right outside [their]door[s],” marking them as beneficiaries of the financial system whose wealth is concentrated in lower Manhattan. Many are the inheritors of the *other* side of Osman’s history, whose ancestors secured their rights to purchasing power during the early generations of America’s founding. Unlike their founding fathers, however, they are at

least to some degree aware of their privilege: "what a contradiction because I hate capitalistic hullabaloo"; "This window makes me feel like the most spoiled woman in America" (94). Despite their recognition of the excess of their lifestyles, they still engage in habits that secure their identities in products and services that are "nonessential and expensive."

Differences do, however, exist among subject positions. Sentences like the following, set side by side on page 97, reveal hidden class distinctions of lower Manhattan: "This window makes me feel like buying that new scarf was an extra little purchase just to make my day. This window makes me feel like nothing is mine—even the wristwatch I'm wearing was given to me." Even further: "This window makes me feel like I want to rob a liquor store just to make ends meet" (97). They also expose anxieties particular to the urban consumer who feels pressure to participate in the system: "This window makes me feel like I should own by now because there's a lot of real-estate going around here recently" (98); "This window makes me feel like I am unhip, out-of-touch, old, and I don't care if they are the latest fashion or on whose runway they were first spotted" (100). They even point to female dependencies on male control of finances, gesturing towards other cycles and networks of power beyond consumerism: "This window makes me feel like I need to go behind his back when I want to spend money" (92). The voices also articulate loneliness and isolation. In some cases, consumer desire is directly linked to the unmet need for connection: "This window makes me feel like I hate doing anything alone—I can't go to a restaurant and drink a cup of coffee in a café alone, shop alone, etc." (92). The irony, of course, is that despite all that these subjectivities have in common, they do not meet one another except in these pages, brushing past one another in collective isolation.

“This Window,” Post-9/11 Poetry, and Collective Trauma

Fitterman’s decision to place the poem directly before the events of 9/11 was motivated, in part, by an impulse to “document the moment before the attack,” to gather voices that made up America in the moments before the event, to freeze a moment in our collective history (“Identity Theft” 17). As such, “This Window” operates as a kind of monument or archive of a particular kind of subjectivity not yet touched by the outside threat of terror or financial instability that would soon reverberate from a battered Manhattan to the rest of the United States and beyond. In a sense, the sheltered “network” of lower Manhattan had not been broken or infiltrated; it had not been made conscious of itself or of its workings. Even so, Fitterman suggests, those inside it were still culpable, still complicit in its structures of privilege and exclusion, their identities formed and informed by their participation in the network of commerce of which lower Manhattan was already a ground zero of sorts. “This Window” shares something with poetic responses to 9/11 like this one by Alicia Ostriker, titled (in an eerie echo of Fitterman’s poem) “the window, at the moment of the flames”:

> and all this while I have been shopping, I have
>
> been let us say free
> and do they hate me for it
>
> do they hate me
>
> (qtd. in Gray 266)

Diane di Prima’s “Notes Toward a Revolution” takes a similar approach:

> What did we in all honesty expect?
> That fascist architecture flaunting
> @ the sky
> …
> While we mourn & rant for years
> over our 3000 how many

starve
thanks to our greed.

(qtd. in Gray 267)

The difference, of course, is in the framing. Fitterman's poem takes place at "*8:35 A.M., September 11, 2001"*—ten minutes before the first plane hit. Ostriker and di Prima, on the other hand, offer critiques *after* the fact, suggesting that the critical gaze is only possible in retrospect, when we look back over our shoulders. In essence, Fitterman is suggesting that the grounds for critique were already there; it doesn't take a terrorist attack to see America before 9/11 as a materialistic society peopled by recycled, market-created identities.

Still, Fitterman's poem can and should be read as a response to 9/11 that participates in the poetry that came out of it, not least because it was written in the months directly *after* the attacks. According to Georgiana Banita's reading, the main characteristics of post-9/11 poetry are "collectivity and accessibility, features directly inspired by the events that triggered lyrical effusion" (169). As she writes, "shared affectivity in response to grief has been a key issue in American poetry since 2001. This persistent negotiation of individual and collective views, personal and private meaning, is something that we hear in 9/11 poems, very often, as a democratization of the lyrical voice" (170).[11] And as Karen Alkalay-Gut comments, the street poetry that proliferated in the days after the event was written and consumed by a more general audience—a kind of collective reaction against "literary complexity" in favor of "[clear] communication and social messages" (258). While Fitterman's poetry shares these characteristics—particularly democratization of voices, the celebration of shared affect, and accessibility—what he presents in "This Window Makes Me Feel" is more than a set of subjective responses to the shared trauma of 9/11. Rather than recuperating the subject,

Fitterman asks that we first take a hard look at the structures that co-opt individual identity so that we might more rightly see our *continuing* complicity in those systems. By taking post-9/11 voices and reframing them as emerging from a pre-9/11 moment, he asks us to consider whether anything has truly changed in the American psyche since "the day that changed America."

Alternatively we can also read 9/11 back into the poem, changing our reading in both subtle and overt ways. Vestiges of the event circulate in the poem, reminders that, following Lytle Shaw's remark on the Flarf content of *Metropolis XXX*, exhibit "a kind of ghostly afterlife" (44). The opening lines, for instance, are a ghostly reminder of the *lack* of protection for those killed and wounded on that day: "This window makes me feel like I'm protected"; "This window makes me feel like violence is around every corner." The references to work and to a dearth of knowledge about a "news story" that is only partially understood resonate with those of us who know exactly where we were and what we were doing on that day. Sentences like the following set an uncanny cast over our reading: "This window makes me feel like I wish I could get up on the roof of my apartment building, but there's a revolving restaurant up there so no way"; "This window makes me feel like something weird is going on because there are a lot of birds swirling around or circling in on something" (100, 103). But such "references" are rare and only substantiated by their resemblance to the facts of that day.

More often we find ourselves inside a series of affective monologues which we may or may not resonate with—but which are all familiar to our post-millennial selves: "This window makes me feel powerful the way poetry does, or the poster I saw in a store window"; "This window makes me feel like a genuine rebel as I listen to some punk rock anarchistic lament on my Walkman"; "This window makes me feel nostalgic for things I've never done"; "This

window makes me feel like it's one step forward and two steps back, thereby severely limiting my business's net growth" (93–95). Karen Alkalay-Gut summarizes the import of the shared experience of 9/11 when she writes, "The rest of the world had the same intimate experience. The viewing of this event may have taken place while one was alone, but the intimate reactions of individuals in their private spaces, though unmixed with the responses of others at that moment, were both private and universal" (261). Intriguingly, the sentences of Fitterman's poem are also "private and universal," "intimate" yet shared, "individual" yet collective. The trauma of 9/11 brought about a rupture in daily American life; it made Americans rethink priorities and led to awareness of how we are viewed by the outside world; it led us to organize collectively and shift our gaze from the self to the outside, only to see ourselves reflected in others in a moment of heightened awareness and pain. Yet perhaps 9/11 isn't the only trauma experienced by the subjects of Fitterman's poem—subjects who we might remember are, beyond the interface of the virtual, very real. Perhaps being part of the system of consumer culture—being one of hundreds of manufactured identities—is itself also a kind of inescapable trauma, experienced collectively and expressed in common words.

It is the poem's close, with is gesture toward the memorialization of *another* trauma, that best characterizes the poem as a response to 9/11, offering the possibility that such collective yet intimate experience might, in fact, answer to the needs of a self-absorbed subject sculpted by consumer practice and driven by material needs:

> This window makes me feel like my own goals and those of the organization are in line when I talk about pay, promotion, and quality of work. This window makes me feel like I'm looking at a plate-sized moth on his back, the sun setting on the Bon Jovi sweatshirts and Princess Diana tees. This window makes me feel so truly cosmopolitan, so weirded out now that we have two Au Bon Pains. . . . This window makes me feel like I should explain that the photo is way hotter than

> I am in real life and most days I just wear whatever is on the floor. This window makes me feel disrespected and insignificant because I consider myself to be a serious, hard-working goal-oriented kind of person. This window makes me feel like I can.
>
> (104)

In the end, the subject needs nothing more to understand the system than to see it mirrored back to her in the words of others, and to hear, against the backdrop of familiar experience (work anxiety, chain restaurants, the death of Princess Diana, a rock concert, social networking) the bold assertion: "This window makes me feel like I *can*."

Conclusion: The Opening of the Archive

As Emma Cocker writes, summarizing the work of art critic Jan Verwoert, appropriation is a political gesture which "takes back a cultural surplus that is already ow(n)ed—or else it has the capacity to reveal or expose the late conditions of exploitation within the stolen object itself. Alternatively a more . . . redemptive reading can be gleaned where borrowed objects and pasts can be rescued from a process of commodification, where they are enabled to perform again once more" (n.p.). We see both responses in the poetry of Jena Osman and Robert Fitterman. At once critical and engaged, generative and questioning, their work exposes the fault lines of American consumer practice in the past and present, asking cogent questions about the autonomy and limitations placed on the subject throughout history. They consider ethical means to reinstate the subject of their poetries, both of which are marked indelibly by historical trauma yet are still able to articulate (or at least, gesture towards) a subjectivity that has not been fully co-opted by the systems of its making.

Their work also brings our consideration of the archive in twentieth and twenty-first century "poems containing history" to a close, but not without adding new and significant

understandings. First, in the work of Osman and Fitterman we see a shift from a past to a present orientation. Rather than resurrecting lost voices or histories from the past, both recognize the construction of the subject in the present as influenced by our past histories and, in particular, by the ongoing discourse of human language. They also shift from resurrecting single identities or subject positions (as in the work of Susan Howe) to a celebration of collective identity and a possibility for the subject to navigate the different "discursive networks" operating in our present.

Importantly, they also reorient us from a limited archive available to a privileged few to the "total" archive, an idea that is a product both of the information age and of a generational shift in ideas about archival access and privilege that extends across disciplines.[12] Though the archive, along with the internet, is not yet fully accessible, as its availability increases so too does access to archives which are being digitized, uploaded, and made available to the public to which they belong. Much like the uneven history of privilege and lack that Osman invites us to explore in her work, the change is slow and uneven, existing more often in theory than in practice. Yet the shift from a reliance on the *physical* record is evidence that the archive's mythology of power no longer holds sway. Indeed, appropriative poets who engage in history are using a wider range of sources that need not be linked to a physical archive or even reside in a history text. A major turn has taken place from privileging the "official" archives of the human past housed by state and government institutions, used by Pound at Ravenna, Olson in Gloucester's local history societies, and Howe at Yale's Beinecke. Perhaps most significant, then, is the reorientation from a closed, privileged archive to an open, accessible storehouse of human memory not limited by political or social power and not limited even by the physical,

tangible, fetishized notion of the paper record. As Jacques Derrida writes in *Archive Fever*, "Effective democratization can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation" (4 n.1).

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[1] I use the term "wider network" to imply that, while more accessible than the closed stacks and archives of universities and governmental organizations, the internet (like the archive) is by no means fully accessible, nor are its users fully literate in digital media. For more on accessibility and the "digital divide," see Mansell.

[2] "Public Figures," which began as a student lecture for the Penn Humanities Forum in 2006, is an ongoing project that has been presented in several formats, including numerous PowerPoint and slide presentations as well as a series of Flash works published in the online journal HOWE2. A print version came out in September 2012 from Wesleyan UP.

[3] Osman cites this description of Retallack's "poethics" in an essay on found poetry: "a form of life in which we would, in our most enlightened moments, want to live—which makes the intricate complexity of the intersecting intentional and accidental that is our world known to us through the sensory and imaginative enactment of complex forms" ("Poethics as Found Text"). Compare to her statement on poetics: "I've found the poet Joan Retallack's concept of "poethics" particularly useful in its hopefulness that forms of art—which Retallack describes as forms of life—can model the kind of world in which we'd like to live. For me, that world provokes complex thinking . . . it's a world that is difficult yet delightful" ("Statement").

[4] Osman uses etymological maps in several of the poems in *The Network*, most notably in the opening poem, "The Knot," and "The Financial District." In "The Franklin Party," she doesn't map etymologies but uses a vertical line between entries in the chronology that gestures toward the subtle changes in meaning that occur as that history unfolds.

[5] The quote comes from Vicuña's *Unraveling Words and the Weaving of Water*, which is cited by Osman in her notes and remains a source throughout the body of *The Network* (117).

[6] For Vicuña, exploration of the roots of words also comes from the oral tradition, in her case, Quechua. Like the history of slavery and mass appropriation of goods and land, the loss of the Quechuan language is another history of the new world linked to damage, loss, and forgetting.

[7] Bourriaud differentiates postproduction from the constraint-based procedures of conceptual *art*, a movement that predates the current work of conceptual writers by thirty years. As he writes, "While the chaotic proliferation of production led Conceptual artists to the dematerialization of the work of art [using constraints], it leads postproduction artists toward strategies of mixing and combining products" (45). Conceptual writing takes from both: it is similar to conceptual art in its constraint-based mechanisms for production, and draws on postproduction in remixing and combining cultural products. For a thoughtful analysis of the differences between conceptual art and conceptual writing in relation to their histories, see Dworkin xxii–xxxli. As Dworkin writes,

the current appropriative turn in writing is still catching up to its artistic counterpart: "I suspect that in another quarter century, the literary status of appropriation will be much more like it is for the visual arts today—where the debate has moved on to question well beyond such categorical anxieties" (xli).

[8] Fitterman and Place explain in *Notes on Conceptualisms*, "Because institutions of poetry and progressive writing already wield so little cultural and economic capital, conceptual writing has been increasingly shifting its attention to mass media and the larger bodies of language management, e.g., websites, ads, blogs, etc." (49). Poets like Fitterman and Goldsmith also make their full bodies of work available to the public through their personal websites, emphasizing the participation of their projects in the public sphere. For more on conceptual writing and the internet, see Goldsmith, "Why Conceptual Writing?"; Perloff, "Screening the Page"; and Dworkin.

[9] As Goldsmith says of his own work, "My books are impossible to read straight through. . . . You really don't need to read my books to get the idea of what they're like; you just need to know the general concept" ("A Week of Blogs"). Of course, many critics go further than simply reading the constraint. See, for instance, Darren Werschler Henry and Jason Christie for cogent readings of Goldsmith's *Day*.

[10] "This Window Makes Me Feel" is available in several versions. The version in *Rob the Plagiarist* (2009), which I use exclusively in this chapter, represents about half of the text available online at Fitterman's website (2002 version) and, paginated differently, on UbuWeb (2004 version). The *Rob the Plagiarist* version excises from the longer texts, following the same order but with no apparent pattern for inclusion or exclusion. While the opening sequences match in all versions, the final lines diverge, suggesting multiple readings for the poem's ending. The end-stopped last line in the *Rob* version reads, "This window makes me feel like I can" (104) The version on the website extends this: "This window makes me feel like I can see beyond my own problems and start to look into those of the people who live here" (n.p.). The UbuWeb version adds two more sentences beyond this: "This window makes me feel like I'm waiting on the petty cash window and I'm sure I'm going to get some grief about my receipts. This window makes me feel like I should look into getting a dog walker."

[11] As Lawrence Ferlinghetti claimed, there would be a poetry "before" and "after" 9/11: "Only a rich capitalist consumer society such as ours before 9/11 can afford artists and poets that basically present their own private concerns in works that have little relation to the world around them and nothing to say about the world" (qtd. in Gray 261).

[12] See, for instance, Schwartz and Cook on the need for transparency in talking about "power" and the archive; O'Driscoll and Bishop for an overview of interdisciplinary approaches to the archive; Anderson and Allen on the "archival commons"; and Kahle on access to "all knowledge" in the digital archive.

Coda: The Poethics of the Archive

> "It's the poetics of memory—what is made of it now—that might create a difference. . . . This is a question of po*ethics*—what we make of events as we use language in the present, how we continuously create an ethos of the way in which events are understood."
>
> —Joan Retallack, *The Poethical Wager*

As this study has explored in depth, the "poem containing history" has evolved over the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries alongside our conceptions of the historical archive which, for the majority of poets here, denotes a physical or digital grouping of historical documents collected, housed, and overseen by a governing institution. In this project, both the historical archive and the poem containing history have been understood as human constructions whose shaping mechanisms have implications for human agency in the historic moment, whether in the past or present. Both have served as critical lenses into contemporary views of history, whether the archivist or poet reinforces or lays bare the devices through which the archive or poem is formed. And in both, the selections made by the poet or archivist have in large part determined the stories that can be told, stories that make up part of the larger human record the poet and archivist hope to preserve through their work. Taking this beyond a comparative register, this study has also considered "poems containing history" as archives in their own right. Assuming the role of "poet-archivist," each poet has chosen material from a particular archive of historical materials (or several) and placed the re-collected material in a new arrangement, presenting a new history to the reader. In so doing these poets renegotiate the telling of history through the continuing tradition of verse epic, opening new possibilities for readers both to participate in and reorient their understandings of written history through the poetic medium.

The poets in this study have each had different interactions with the historical archive, and have created "archives" of their poems to serve different purposes. For instance, at the "current" end of the spectrum, Jena Osman and Robert Fitterman participate in "networked culture" by utilizing historic records in distinctive ways. Osman follows trails of human intention through written chronicles of New York's early financial history in order to encourage the reader to recognize patterns of white male power and privilege. Fitterman culls records from the emerging present of the internet to critique the mediated nature of the American subject in contemporary consumer and internet culture. Fifty years earlier, Charles Olson's own distinct relationship to the archive had implications for the shape of his verse epic: his belief in the value of local records provided a constraint for the early *Maximus* poems that limited the scope of the work in productive, generative ways. Similar to archive professionals, each of these poets sets limits and names constraints that give shape and purpose to the histories they are telling.

Despite strong family resemblances, it is important to see the archive and the poem containing history as separate entities, operating under different historical and disciplinary conditions. Decoupling the archive and the poem containing history reveals that rather than following a similar trajectory, each has developed along different paths, and not in tandem (though points of convergence do exist). Thus, Ezra Pound's conception of the archivist as one whose selective capacity can shape public taste was extremely forward-thinking for the early 1920s when Sir Hilary Jenkinson's view of the archivist as objective gatekeeper still held sway. Susan Howe's continued fixation on physical archives, even after the broadening of the archive into a digital register (a shift she recognizes), speaks to the continuing fascination and fetish of the physical record in contemporary practice. And Robert Fitterman, using the internet as an

"archive of everything," challenges the notion that the records of human history must continue to be attached to an official, institutional archive.

While the development of the historical archive and poem containing history may not always correspond neatly, it is worth looking briefly at changing definitions and conceptions of the historical archive over the last century to better understand their implications for the genre of the poem containing history. In contrast to developments in the poetry, these shifts and swerves have, on the whole, been accepted and assimilated into the field of archive studies, and have in turn impacted the disciplines that have participated in the "archival turn." Undergirding all of these changes is the awareness, articulated by Terry Cook and Joan Schwartz in 2002, that "archives . . . are not passive storehouses of old stuff, but active sites where social power is negotiated, contested, confirmed" (1). Archivists as well as historians have become more invested in understanding the material conditions by which archival materials are collected and by which materials are selected for inclusion in "official" history. In recognition of "minor" histories that in the past may have been designated as not worth preserving, then, archivists have expanded their holdings to include a wider array of subjects and events. While institutional archives began as a means to catalog official documents related to the state, today stories of individuals who are not movers and shakers of history, but rather everyday subjects of the contemporary world, are included. This is not to say such stories do not already exist in archives collected earlier: another "turn" has been the interest paid by historians in unearthing overlooked or obscured histories and in order to bring them recognition on the page. The archive has also broadened as a consequence of new technology. No longer is it simply a physical repository for historical documents and records, but a tremendously expansive digital storehouse that is, over

time, becoming more available to the general public. These changes have had a notably democratizing impact on users of the archive, the public to which the records belong.

While the trajectory of changes in the historical archive cannot be mapped linearly onto the development of the "poem containing history," it is useful to rehearse the ways in which changing concepts of the archive have manifested themselves in relation to the poems in this study. Over the course of the dissertation, and particularly in the final chapter, we've seen the notion of the archive shift in significant ways. In part, these modifications have been functions of the poems themselves, reflecting particular attitudes toward and understandings of the history they are telling; yet they also reflect changes in interdisciplinary understandings of the archive, and thus have broader applications outside of literary studies. First, there has been a general shift in access from a privileged to a more open model, in both archival collections and in poems containing history. While poems containing history can still be quite difficult to penetrate (one of Howe's more obvious inheritances from Pound), the history attached to them has been made available to us in new ways, perhaps most significantly through the digital interface of the internet. Intriguingly, the sources for Susan Howe's "Frolic Architecture," arguably the most challenging of the poems in my study, are widely available on the web, most notably Kenneth Minkema's transcription of Hannah Edwards Wetmore's personal papers. A "reader's ticket"—often in the past reserved for those with particular educational and social or even gender credentials—is no longer required to enter into the archival sources that make up the historical content of these poems.

Second, there has been a transition—again, in both conceptions of the archive and in its use in poems—from reliance on the "objective truth" of the physical record toward an "archive

of everything." While Olson limited his materials to what was available at local history museums and archives, and used these documents without questioning their validity, he also signaled the inclusion of a broader array of "historical" materials when he used oral history and anecdotes that take history beyond a written medium. (Pound used anecdotes too, but in a much more limited way.) Fitterman takes this further: by 2010 any item of writing is up for inclusion, even—indeed, perhaps especially—things that aren't *meant* to be remembered, like passing phrases written over the digital airwaves at a specific moment in time.

Third, and related to this, the temporal spectrum of the poem containing history has broadened to include materials from both the past and the *emerging* present—not simply the contemporary moment (which was chronicled by both Pound and Olson), but the present in the moment it is emerging. This is most evident in Fitterman's poetry, which in its culling of the digital present has challenged the idea that archives can only hold remnants of the past, and further, that archives need to be mediated by an official, governing entity. Digital technology has made it possible to record and catalog the present as it occurs, and has made it instantly accessible and available to users. This brings up important questions for the future of both the historical archive and the poem containing history: if everything can be recorded as a human artifact, what is important and on what grounds? What should be kept, and who should decide what is preserved? Who should have access to it? Should institutions or individuals make this determination? Fitterman's consideration of the terms of the mediated present speaks to this in part (particularly his recognition that there is no such thing as "unmediated" choice), but so too does Osman's reflection on what it means to write history in and for the present, with acknowledgement of the past out of which it is emerging. Such considerations open up

possibilities for renegotiation and reorientation of history, both as a discipline and as a philosophical orientation, acts of noticing that are necessary for both archivists and poets working today.

I've spoken so far about the need to decouple the archive and the poem containing history in order to understand the ways they diverge and converge. Yet what happens when we bring archive studies and the "poem including history" together is more than an aggregate of powers: when creative poeisis meets the sharp precision of historical particularity, especially the material, documentary history of the historical archive, it provides grounding for new acts of "noticing" that reorient us to new ways of seeing and acting and even making in the present. As Joan Retallack has written, "Noticing becomes art when, as [a] contextualizing project, it reconfigures the geometry of attention, drawing one into conversation with what would otherwise remain silent in the figure-ground patterns of history" (10). The writers who engage in this kind of work make visible, as I argued in my chapter on Jena Osman, lines of thinking that might not otherwise be connected; a similar act takes place when archivists and historians locate and name historic particulars—people, events, acts, documents—that have been obscured or lost in the backchannels of history. Yet a profound difference is at work here, one that is worth noticing: while archivists preserve the documents of history and historians pull strands of meaning from what is collected, poets *recreate* that history in tangible, even material ways for the reader. Although historiography may be written using compelling accounts that offer great meaning and historical insight to the reader, poetry can, through creative means, give material form and substance to that history without the obligation to stay within the formal constraints of scholarly work or even narrative conventions. Poetry's varied formal and structural resources offer means

to go beyond historical narrative and enter into a poeisis that is at once verbally, aurally, and visually creative and also acutely sensitive to the material conditions of particular histories.

Thus, in Susan Howe's poem-scapes, the forces of history appear in tense, visible strife across the page, and in Ezra Pound's Malatesta cantos the conditions of the Quattrocento are made material through bibliographic fragments taken directly from archival documents and dropped in the poem. One way poets take history further than historians and archivists, then, is that their work can *perform* the history it is telling in tangible ways. This performative quality, which arises from the attention the poets in my study pay to the materiality and making of their work, extends even further than composition by field or documentary poetic practice. It speaks to us also through the structure and shape of the poem, which can, as in Olson's *Maximus Poems*, contract and expand according to the scope of history being told. It materializes in Robert Fitterman's "This Window Makes Me Feel" in the constraint of starting each sentence of a fifty-page poem with the same clause, pointing to both the conformity and democracy of our digital present. And it manifests in Osman's use of an etymological dictionary to spell almost invisible changes in human agency by subtle changes in copying its entries into "The Financial District."

As I've written of Ezra Pound, for the poets in this study creative impulse shapes historical purpose. Yet there are limits to which a poet can engage in archival excavation or an archivist attempt a creative approach. Poets are not technically archivists nor are archivists poets. To some extent, these limits are based on generic considerations. Yet the elasticity of the poetic medium makes it a powerful vehicle for exploring the limits and possibilities in telling history: history can't incorporate poetry, at least not as a generic medium, but poetry can certainly "contain" and tell history. Poetry does not claim to be a replacement for historiography, but in its

ability to "tell it slant" poetry can reorient meaning as subtly and completely as a shaft of afternoon light in winter air. It can model for us new ways of seeing and hearing that encourage productive reconsideration of our own "figure-ground patterns of history," leading to reorientation of the subject and revaluation of the "objectivity"—and object—of that history.

It seems worthwhile at the end of this dissertation to ruminate on the ways that the poem containing history can extend the practice of collecting history by making it available in new and urgent ways to the public to which it properly belongs. For indeed the situation is critical. Through advances in storage technology, particularly digital archives and self-archiving, it is now possible to imagine a true "archive of everything" that is fully accessible and ever expanding and that has little to do with the physical, highly selective archives of the past. As Friedrich Kittler writes, "Today one can conceive (or dream) of recording everything, everything or almost everything . . . Everything that makes up the national memory in the traditional sense of the term—but just about anything at all—can and often is recorded: the mass is enormous " (qtd. in Derrida, *Echographies* 74). Yet that mass of data does not make history. Just as we need archivists to select and preserve what will be important to us in 50 or even 1000 years, we need poets as well as historians to help us understand the significance of these artifacts and documents. Choosing among the mass of data what is valuable to us from the past and from the everyday, poets pull arcs of meaning out of objects, facts, and discoveries, realigning them in new orders that challenge given meaning and take the human story in new directions. Poets can, through performative, creative agency, help us understand and interpret our position as subjects of an evolving history.

The questions I ask throughout this study about the position of the subject in history and about human agency and limitations are as relevant now as they were in Pound's time, and in some ways even more urgent. A central question confronting not only contemporary archivists and historically inclined poets, but also ordinary inhabitants of the twenty-first century, has do to, as it did for Pound, with information and selection: what do we do with the "heteroclite mass of information being hurled before us daily and monthly"?—now at every minute and second (*Guide to Kulchur* 23)? With that mass growing exponentially, the challenge grows as well. That poetry could and can offer answers to this question is an argument for the continuing value of the poem containing history in helping us negotiate the human condition in whatever present we find ourselves. Now more than ever, we need the multivalent, complex meanings offered to us through poetry, and to see the life worlds of our past and present reflected in poetry. It is a particular power of poetry, which both tells and enacts history, that can bring us close to a poethical framework, one that, in the words of Joan Retallack, will help us both understand and intend "what we make of events as we use language in the present, how we continuously create an ethos of the way in which events are understood" (11).

Appendix

Hannah Edwards Wetmore papers
Gen MSS 151, Box 24, Folder 1377
Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale

and I thought myself better, of my ... and about that time
I began to hear the sound, or Rather to have Strong,
& exceeding lively Ideas, of Musick; the finest most
exalted, & solemn, by far, that I had ever any conception
before, my ideas were of its being the voices of a vast number
of beings in the air. it Sollemnized my my mind, and
carried my ideas much into the other World, I used
to be very much Ravisht with it; & somtimes felt
Lost or in a sort of trance – had Scarce any distinct
Ideas, hardly knew who or what I was, but felt
like a wave in the air, held there by the Musick;
And tho I was somthing delirious & sometimes lost,
yet I was to a Considerable degree Rational, and
consulted with myself ~~and~~ about it & concluded it was
in my imagination only, I thoughts of Speaking of it
to those about me but forbore lest that Should abate
the pleasure I took in it, or occasion the ideas to leave
me at times I endeavoured to give a close attention to it,

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