The genealogy and formation of Black Mountain.

Christopher J. Hall
University of Windsor

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THE GENEALOGY AND FORMATION OF BLACK MOUNTAIN

BY

CHRISTOPHER J. HALL

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies through the Department of English in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

1982
ABSTRACT

The thesis selects three key poets, Walt Whitman, Ezra Pound, and William Carlos Williams, and outlines their significances as possible influences on American Black Mountain poetry. These poets are considered firstly in terms of a "propriocceptive" poetry, where the geographic and cultural entity of America seemed to demand and achieve an appropriately new poetic. Secondly, these poets are considered as key figures of technical advance in poetry, as evidenced in the poetics of Imagism and Objectivism. Attention is also given to Pound's notions of "ideogram" (as derived from the research and ideas of Ernest Fenollosa), paideuma, and periplum. It is suggested that America as poetic correlative, in the work of Whitman and William Carlos Williams, combines with the technical advances achieved by Pound and Williams, to lay the foundations for a relatively unified Black Mountain poetics. The thesis then attempts to indicate the differentia specifica of Black Mountain verse. The primary emphases fall on what Olson termed "projective verse," what Olson saw as the interdependence between breath and line length, the idea of "open field" composition, and the poem as a high energy-construct. Attention is given also to Duncan's concept of "time," and the manner in which Creeley's verse observes his own adage that "form is never more than extension of content."
In general terms, there is an attempt to indicate how Black Mountain was an essentially anti-humanist poetics of kinetic process, which placed its emphasis on the poet's relation to the "field," the surrounding external, phenomenal and perceptual environment. Central, here, is the concept of proprioception, and Olson's related insistence that the poem not suffer from the "lyrical interference" of the poet's ego, but that it enact its own evolving dynamic form, one perception immediately following on another.
I dedicate this thesis to those to whom I have been closest during my stay at Windsor: Diana, Ron, and Ron.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to thank all those who have, in any way, assisted me in the compilation of this thesis. In particular, I wish to thank Bev Stahlbrand, of the Department of English, for secretarial services rendered, and Ms. Martha Wolfe of Inter-library Loans at the Leddy Library. Above all, I thank Dr. Peter Stevens, my thesis Chairperson, for all his advice and assistance, for his rare blend of academic professionalism and a refusal to be boring or bored.
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I would be an historian as Herodotus was, looking
for oneself for the evidence of
what is said. . . .

Charles Olson, *The Maximus Poems*
CHAPTER I

Introduction

Black Mountain College (1933-56), Black Mountain (near Asheville), North Carolina, was an experimental educational and artistic community, which in its brief and controversial life fostered remarkable talents in all areas of the arts, and undoubtedly played a decisive role in the formation of much contemporary artistic thought and practice. The term "Black Mountain" has come, in particular, to signify a school of poetic theory and practice. Under the leadership of Charles Olson (Black Mountain poets have all acknowledged his leadership), Rector at Black Mountain College between 1952-56, a number of writers were to espouse a poetics which has remained influential in contemporary poetry, and also controversial.

It should be noted, however, that "Black Mountain" is very much an umbrella term. A valuable and comprehensive account of Black Mountain College has been supplied by Martin Duberman, in Black Mountain: an Exploration in Community, where he notes how a "Black Mountain" group of poets were first identified by the editor Donald Allen, in his seminal anthology, first published in 1960, The New American Poetry: 1945-1960. Duberman notes how Allen intended the term "Black Mountain" to denote poets associated
with the magazines *Origin* (1951-1971, ed. Cid Corman)\(^3\) and *Black Mountain Review* (1954-1957, ed. Robert Creeley),\(^4\) rather than with the college. Duberman comments that "Allen's careful distinctions have rarely been attended to by subsequent commentators on 'The Black Mountain School.'"\(^5\) Donald Allen identified ten poets to be included in the "Black Mountain" section of his anthology, and he gave them pride of place as the opening section of the text. In the Preface, his "careful distinctions" divide the ten as follows, and remain too succinct to be paraphrased:

Charles Olson, Robert Duncan, and Robert Creeley were on the staff of Black Mountain College in the early fifties, and Edward Dorn, Joel Oppenheimer, and Jonathan Williams studied there. Paul Blackburn, Paul Carroll, Larry Eigner, and Denise Levertov published work in both magazines but had no connection with the college.

Duberman usefully summarizes the situation thus:

In other words, the writers usually included in the category "The Black Mountain School" held varying relationships to Black Mountain as a place, a review and a section in a history-making anthology — the three measuring rods that categorizers have used to admit or deny a place in the school to given individuals.

In practice, Black Mountain included poets whose work was and is related at the levels of theory and practice, but it is not always easy to perceive a coherent, shared methodology. Olson and other Black Mountain practitioners adhered to no rigid theory or dogmatic manifesto. Black
Mountain became known as a "school" of poetry that was esoteric, and little understood even in America, but however strong Olson's views on poetry may have been, his ideas were never intended to be merely prescriptive. Both the content of Olson's writings, and the spirit and manner in which they are expressed, particularly when in correspondence with fellow poets, foster openness and individuality. Black Mountain remains a model of shared generosity of response, of intelligence, respect, and tolerance between fellow writers. But at the same time, the writings of Black Mountain are often not couched in the usual forms of academic, critical vocabulary, and the poetry can be "difficult." Olson's own poetry, and Duncan's also, is erudite, highly esoteric and eclectic as to source, perhaps even arcane. At best, Olson's theoretical prose presents ideas and information with visual concretion and a "projective" immediacy; at worst, it is convoluted and merely eccentric.

Perhaps as a result, Olson, and Black Mountain generally, are only now coming to academic recognition (particularly with the formation of the Charles Olson Archives at the University of Connecticut, and the related journal Olson (1974-1978, ed. George F. Butterick). Research on Olson and Black Mountain has been able to advance considerably in recent years, and notable, in this respect, is the publication, by Black Sparrow Press, ed. George F. Butterick, of the collected correspondence between Olson and Creeley. To date, three
volumes have been published, and more are expected.) This correspondence is relevant, for example, to discussion between Olson and Creeley on the relation between form and content. Creeley made a distinct contribution to Black Mountain poetics with his statement, initially reported by Olson, that "form is never more than an extension of content." We now have available the context of the occasion on which Creeley first makes this formulation: a letter to Charles Olson of 5 June, 1950. The correspondence also proves relevant to an understanding of the thinking that lay behind Olson's "Projective Verse" essay.

The thesis will commence with an account of the poetic influences, specifically within modern American poetry, which, it is suggested, are the roots, the most likely antecedents, for the poetry of Black Mountain. This chapter will not seek to be an exhaustive account of those figures and factors which allow for the subsequent formation of Black Mountain. Rather, it will select three key poets, Walt Whitman, Ezra Pound, and William Carlos Williams, and outline their significances as possible influences. They will be considered firstly in terms of a "proprioceptive" poetry, where the environment, the geographic formation of America, America as a new continent, a "new land," seemed to demand and achieve the formation of a new and appropriate poetic. The distinguishing features of Whitman's, Pound's and Williams' verse will be noted, along with key
theoretical and intentional statements by these authors. It is suggested that the conceptualisation of America as poetic entity and correlative, as instanced in Whitman's and William Carlos Williams' work, combines with Imagist and Objectivist technique, especially as evidenced in the technical advances achieved by Pound and Williams, to lay the foundations for the possibility of a relatively unified Black Mountain poetics.

A third chapter will seek to indicate a coherent body of Black Mountain theory and practice, as evidenced in the writings of its three leading exponents: Charles Olson, Robert Duncan, and Robert Creeley (they will be discussed in that order). In concentrating on these three poets as the most important representatives of Black Mountain poetry, the thesis adopts the viewpoint of Frank Davey, who in his Ph.D dissertation (1968) argued that these are the three key figures of Black Mountain. They are so firstly because each poet exemplifies a unity of intention, theory, and practice, and secondly because it is possible to discern in these three poets a relatively similar theoretical outlook (particularly with Duncan and Olson in certain respects). The chapter will seek to indicate how Olson and Duncan, in particular, conceptualise in very similar terms the relations between the poet and the natural environment. Both Olson and Duncan have specific ideas and attitudes with regard to nature, history, and the universe, and the poet in relation
to these. At the same time, it is hoped to indicate the
importance of process, in poetry, for all three writers:
the interactions of form, content, poet, environment, the
universal and the particular, which give rise to Olson's
concept of the field of poetic action (and with this the
related concept of proprioception).

In the context of this conceptual framework, which,
it should be stressed, is essentially anti-humanist in its
formulation, in that it seeks not to romanticise or
sentimentalise the (individual) poetic ego, but, rather, to
place it within a specifically "object" relation to the
universe, it is hoped to indicate the differentia specifica
of Black Mountain verse. Those technical aspects to be
discussed include what Olson termed "projective verse,"
what Olson saw as the interdependence between breath and line
length, the idea of "open" or "field" composition, and the
poem as "a high energy-construct."13 Attention will also be
given to Duncan's concept of "rime," and the manner in
which Creeley's verse observes his own adage that "form is
never more than an extension of content." The poetic practice
of Olson, Duncan, and Creeley will be discussed in the light
of these theoretical considerations. In the longer works of
Duncan and Olson discussion has, unfortunately, to be generalised.
Restrictions of space do not permit exhaustive accounts of,
say, Olson's Maximus Poems and Duncan's "Structure of Rime"
sequence. The same qualification also remains true for The Cantos
of Ezra Pound, and William Carlos Williams' *Paterson*.

Where spelling, in quotations, is unconventional and appears inaccurate, as is sometimes the case in quotation of, for example, Robert Duncan, it should be assumed that spelling follows the original (published) text.
NOTES

Chapter I - Introduction


4 Publication dates given in the text do not include an earlier, first edition of The Black Mountain Review, whose one issue appeared in 1951. It was not edited by Creeley, and there is no reason for linking the two publications. The 1954 series began a journal which was, and remained, quite distinct from the earlier effort. (See Duberman, p. 387.)

5 Duberman, p. 388.

6 Allen, Preface, p. xii.

7 Duberman, p. 388.


9 George F. Butterick, ed., Charles Olson and Robert Creeley: The Complete Correspondence, 3 vols (Santa Barbara,
The collection is expected to comprise further volumes, to be published.


CHAPTER II
Influences and Antecedents

Walt Whitman (1819-1892)

Whitman's poetry, first published in the 1855 edition of Leaves of Grass, set some remarkable precedents for the 'new American poetry' which was to emerge from the late 1940's onwards. There is some evidence to indicate that, to varying degrees, Whitman may well have been a fairly direct influence on such poets as Ezra Pound (1885-1972), William Carlos Williams (1883-1962), and Robert Duncan (1919-). And certainly, some other 'new' poets with whom this thesis is not centrally concerned, for example, Hart Crane, Allen Ginsberg, and Frank O'Hara, indicate in their work a strong Whitman influence. The remarks which follow are intended, however, only as a general indication of how Whitman's poetry provides an historic analogue for many later developments. For with Whitman's death in 1892 and the publication of the ninth and final edition of Leaves of Grass (the edition of 1891-1892), American poetry possessed a composite source of radical formal innovation, and a thorough-going example of a poetry which accepted no limitations on content.

The key to an understanding of Whitman's innovations is the concept of 'organic form.' Organic form supplies the method
and process by which a long poem might be written; it supplies
the unifying principle by which a sequence of long poems could
degree as one work, one book. Leaves of Grass is not only a
symbolic title; the title is, in itself, an indication of how
symbolism could be subsumed within organic form: poems,
literally the "leaves" of the book, cohere 'naturally' into a
whole. And the title also has social implications; it symbolizes
how the poet is only one among many; he takes his place in
society, and attempts no detachment, assumes no superiority.
The symbolism here supplies a method as to how life is to be
lived -- 'naturally,' among one's fellow men. For the content
of the poetry is to be of the 'natural' forms of life: of how
the poet as individual relates 'organically' to man and
nature in both the country and the city, in the democratic
formation of America, and among the universal forms and
significance of "kosmos." And Whitman is to declare, in the
poem "By Blue Ontario's Shore," that he is "A man before all --
myself, typical, before all."

Although Whitman's poetry was to prove not at all typical,
it does have its own influences, chief among whom is Emerson
(1803-1882). Although the concept of organic form can be said
to have its roots in the writings of Coleridge and Schlegel,
Emerson's 'transcendental' symbolism combines, in an essentially
idealist manner, with his perception of the possibilities of
organic form. In his essay "The Poet" (1876), Emerson writes:
almost a manifesto for those freedoms of poetic form which
Whitman and more contemporary poets were to assume and practise:

For it is not metre, but a metre-making argument that makes a poem, -- a thought so passionate and alive that like the spirit of a plant or an animal it has an architecture of its own, and adorns nature with a new thing.

It is easy to see here one of the fundamental claims of modern and postmodern American poetics: that the rhythms, lines, stanzaic and other units, and, in short, the totality of the poem's form, should arise naturally, and should not be derived from form in the sense of externally imposed moulds. In the early 1950's, such a concept of organic form was to receive a particularly succinct formulation with Creeley's comment: "form is never more than an extension of content." This was to emerge as one of the fundamental tenets of Black Mountain poetics. Just less than a century previously, such a concept of form is implicit in Whitman's reiteration of Emersonian, organic form. In the 1855 Preface to Leaves of Grass, Whitman comments:

The rhyme and uniformity of perfect poems show the free growth of metrical laws and bud from them as unerringly and loosely as lilacs or roses on a bush, and take shapes as compact as the shapes of chestnuts and oranges and melons and pears, and shed the perfume impalpable to form.

"Free growth" is the key term here. Organic form allows complex interrelation between a poem's parts, and between whole poems when combined and juxtaposed in sequence and book form. Such interrelationship of parts suggests, for Whitman, the
metaphor of the human body, and this metaphor provides "subtle analogies" for the understanding of the relationship between poetry, poetic form, and the world. In his poem "Kosmos," the poet is one

Who having consider'd the body finds all its organs and parts good,
Who, out of the theory of the earth and of his or her body understands by subtle analogies all other theories,
The theory of a city, a poem, and of the large politics of these States.

To understand such interrelationship is to partake of its possibilities, so that the poet is one "Who includes diversity and is Nature."
6 The logic of such an identity of the individual with the universe allows Whitman to refer to himself as "Walt Whitman, a kosmos."7 And "Song of Myself"-is a sustained celebration in terms of the poet's empathic ability to embrace all aspects of humanity, all experience, all geography, all space and time, until, through a process of endless cataloguing, interspersed with lyric 'arias,' the dialectic of self and other is obliterated in the fused and massed proportions of the poem. That such a method allows of no limitation on content is emphasised by Whitman with his comment, in "By Blue Ontario's Shore," that "I reject none, accept all, and then reproduce all in my own forms."8 Organic form, then, allows Whitman not merely to catalogue the relations between men, nature, and the universe, but to embrace opposites, even where this might appear contradictory, and to subsume these within the poem's totality.
of vision (the poem's equivalence of American democracy, and, in effect, a democratisation of the poem's form):

Do I contradict myself?
Very well then I contradict myself,
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)

The poem becomes, essentially, its own universe; it is an enactment of large poetic vision, and attains its own meaning by means of movement and process. This is a direct antecedent for the long poem forms of Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, and Charles Olson (1910-1970). Pound's Cantos (1925-69) employ the same method of organic, sweeping inclusiveness, the same style of cataloguing on a cultural and historical basis. In Williams' Paterson (1946-58), the long, book-length poem becomes akin to an environment, a city; and Williams' notion of Paterson as a 'city-man' ("A man like a city") would seem to echo Whitman's use of body metaphor, and his claim to be a "kosmos" and to "contain multitudes." Similarly, Charles Olson's Maximus Poems (1953-76) employs the same technique and sense of geographic, historic, and cosmic sweep as is found in Whitman, Pound and Williams. The poetry of Robert Duncan also has affinities with this method of working -- designated by Olson as "open" or "field composition," and often referred to as "open field." Whitman's Leaves of Grass, whatever contrasts might be found at more detailed levels of analysis, supplied an essential and antecedent model of poetic form for all these poets. Leaves of Grass established a distinctive means of formal working where
the poem functions as some vast sprawling amoeba, enveloping and ingesting, digesting and transforming whatever materials are to hand. There is no limitation on poetic content; anything is fit for inclusion in the poem, whatever appears appropriate and validated by the ongoing constructionality and directionality of the poem.

The elision of the individual with the cosmic is given emphasis by Whitman's insistence on the unity of body and spirit. Perhaps as an extension of Emersonian, transcendental symbolism, where outward forms are manifestations of transcendant, spiritual reality, and this combined with Whitman's inclination to forms of Eastern mysticism, for Whitman there is no Cartesian duality. Rather, body and soul are one, and the individual is, if only as symbol, an aspect of transcendant reality. The following lines from "Song of Myself" illustrate not only this thematic aspect of Whitman, but also the familiar 'parallelism' and 'reiteration' (themselves perhaps influenced by the language of the King James Version of the Bible) which replace traditional metrical and stanzaic forms as the essential structuring devices of Whitman's free verse: Whitman insists:

I have said that the soul is not more than the body, And I have said that the body is not more than the soul, And nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's self is.

If, for Whitman, body and soul are one, then sex and sensuality are manifestations of love and mystic union and joy. This unity of potential opposites establishes, and is established
by, the processes of procreation, which, in *Leaves of Grass*, become correlative with poetic creation. The poems often celebrate an ambiguous mixture of platonic friendship ("adhesiveness," "amativeness," "comradeship") and an empathic sexual relatedness that is at times a frank expression of sensuality and sexual longing — for example, section 11 of "Song of Myself," beginning "Twenty-eight young men bathe by the shore."  At times this becomes a fairly explicit confession of homosexual attraction, particularly with the "Calamus" poems. This correlative relationship between sex, procreation, and poetic creation is made explicit in the "Children of Adam" sequence, where Whitman declares that the poems spring "From my own voice resonant, singing the phallic, / Singing the song of procreation." And in "Ages and Ages Returning at Intervals," the act of poetic creation is one of "Bathing myself, bathing my songs in Sex, / Offspring of my loins." This is not merely a symbolic relation for Whitman, but, rather, an indication of the manner in which sexuality is the fundamental basis of all life and activity; its energies of desire and enactment make possible all movement, activity, process, and meaning. In a passage which illustrates the familiar 'envelope' pattern of Whitman's lines expanding in length as the stanza progresses (often paralleled by a contraction in line-length as the stanza closes, and hence a verbal and visual enactment of sexual movement), he states:

Sex contains all, bodies, souls, Meanings, proofs, purities, delicacies, results, promulgations, Songs, commands, health, pride, the maternal mystery, the seminal milk.
And Whitman's free verse attains, in "I Sing the Body Electric," a lyrical orgasmic vigour, one which was to indicate new possibilities, certainly in terms of poetic technique, for modern American poets:

Limitless limpid jets of love hot and enormous, quivering jelly of love, white-blow and delirious juice, Bridegroom night of love working surely and softly into the prostrate dawn, Undulating into the willing and yielding day, Lost in the cleave of the clapping and sweet-flesh'd day. 18

If, for Whitman, the verse strives to enact specifically sexual union and joy, in more general terms the-organic form of the poetry enacts; or 'bodies forth,' the energies of natural process, social interaction and organisation (particularly in terms of the city, as celebrated, for example, in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry"), and American nationhood. In these general terms, Whitman refers to poetic creation as a process whereby "I permit to speak at every hazard, / Nature without check with original energy." 19 And he refers to poetic inspiration in the same terms of urgent energy: "Through me the afflatus surging and surging, through me the current and index." 20 Such an emphasis on process, enactment, movement, and energy prefigures much of the poetry of William Carlos Williams, and in particular that of Charles Olson, who was to place considerable emphasis on the poem as a "high energy-construct and, at all points, an energy-discharge." 21

Olson's Maximus poems and Williams' Paterson are, above all, celebrations of the energies inherent within environment
and place, and, implicitly, are microcosms of a larger American totality. (Williams invokes the city of Paterson, New Jersey, whilst Olson, in the *Maximus Poems*, focuses on Gloucester, Massachusetts.) Whitman, in *Leaves of Grass*, supplies the precedent for this insistence on America and its special status in terms of geography, society, and history, and its marvellous potential for the future. In such poems and poem-sequences as "Starting from Paumanok," "Song of Myself," and "By Blue Ontario's Shore," Whitman embarks on a virtually epic quest to cover and catalogue America through space and time. In "Starting from Paumanok," Whitman declares "I will make a song for these States," and in "By Blue Ontario's Shore" he indicates that America provides the content of his poetry: "These States are the amplest poem." This last does, of course, echo his statement in the 1855 Preface that: "The United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem." And Whitman looks ahead to the potential perfectability of American society. The history of other nations may already be written but "Not so the great psalm of the republic. Here the theme is creative and has vista."

Although Whitman's patriotism receives its most poignant expression in his lament for the assassinated President Lincoln (the threnody "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd"), in the sequence "Children of Adam" Whitman stands essentially as mythmaker to the new society, the bard who will sing America's future into existence. In this sequence Whitman adopts the persona of Adam ("I, chanter of Adamic songs"), so that he
adopts, in effect, a mythic sub-structure which universalises the formation of the new America in terms of the Old Testament creation story of Adam and Eve. Whitman celebrates, here, an essentially pre-lapsarian America, where the tragedies of the Civil War (the essential theme of the "Drum-Taps" sequence) and the death of Lincoln are not felt presences. (The positioning of "Children of Adam" within "Leaves of Grass", prior to "Drum-Taps" and "Memories of President Lincoln," is perhaps an indication of the extent to which Whitman's overall structure and organisation of the book suggests qualifications of individual poems and poem-sequences.) Although both slavery and war are referred to, as the "auction" of a man's body, in the poem "I Sing the Body Electric," and hence, section 8 of the poem implies, are a form of corruption of the body akin to female prostitution, America, in the "Children of Adam" sequence, is a mythic, flawless Eden, paradisical in its resources, and limitless in geographic extension. Thus, in social terms, America is the potential place of spiritual rebirth, expressed in democratic social and political structures. In turn, this implies that for Whitman America is the ground and correlative of a new poetic, where he will sing of mystic union and joy, and the natural harmony of nature and society, and the realised energies of sex, procreation, and mythic poetic creation.

This is the fully implied structure of Whitman's organic unity of form and content, and the totality of vision made possible by such unity. It was to be a source and model of a new American poetics for such diverse talents as Hart Crane,
Allen Ginsberg, Frank O'Hara, and also, although perhaps to a lesser extent, Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams. And with regard to the extent to which Whitman functioned as an immediate influence on Black Mountain poetry, Robert Duncan has certainly given testimony as to his sustained reading of Whitman, and the importance he attaches to his poetry. Any immediate influence of Whitman on Olson and Creeley would appear to be minimal. Rather, Whitman supplied an historic analogue and possible source for the poetics of Pound and Williams, and these poets may, in turn, be regarded as having played a decisive role in the formation of a modernist poetics which allowed of the subsequent formation of Black Mountain.

Ezra Pound (1885-1972)

Ezra Pound's reaction to Whitman was generally negative, and certainly ambiguous. But despite the hostility expressed in "A Pact" (Lustra, 1916), "I make a pact with you, Walt Whitman -- / I have detested you long enough," Pound could, in the same poem, acknowledge Whitman's pioneering role in the development of modern free verse:

It was you that broke the new wood,  
Now is a time for carving. 
We have one sap and one root --  
Let there be commerce between us.  

Generally, however, Whitman was for Pound a virtual apotheosis of the faults of American writing; he was the "American keynote," which "is, as nearly as I can define it, a certain generosity;
a certain carelessness, or looseness, if you will. . . .” 31

Once decamped from America to London, in 1908, Pound became associated with the new "Imagist" poetry, 32 and effectively became its leader, editing the Des Imagistes anthology in 1914. This 'movement' included among its number H.D. (Hilda Doolittle), F.S. Flint, Richard Aldington, T.E. Hulme, and Amy Lowell (who became the dominant member of the group after 1914). Imagism might be seen as a reaction against the sort of "carelessness, or looseness" Pound detected in Whitman, as well as a rejection of the polite and sentimental versification of the 'Georgian' poets. Certainly, Pound strove to oppose the Imagist virtues of concretion, exactitude, and economy of language, to the *vers libre* practised by many of his contemporaries. He comments in "A Retrospect" (*Fawness and Divisions*, 1918): "Indeed, *vers libre* has become as prolix and verbose as any of the flaccid varieties that preceded it." 33

It is in "A Retrospect" that Pound lists the three principles of Imagist writing agreed upon by himself, H.D., and Richard Aldington in 1912. These principles were:

1. Direct treatment of the 'thing' whether subjective or objective.
2. To use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation.
3. As regarding rhythm: to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome. 34

These three principles served merely as a brief manifesto, and Pound gave further comment, most notably in the various essays and notes which comprise "A Retrospect," some of which had
appeared originally in 1912 and 1913 in journals. In "Credo,"
in "A Retrospect," Pound emphasises the desired qualities of
hardness, economy, and an exactitude that is as much emotional
as it is linguistic:

It will be as much like granite as it can be, its force
will lie in its truth, its interpretative power (of
course, poetic force does always rest there); I mean
it will not try to seem forcible by rhetorical din, and
luxurious riot. We will have fewer painted adjectives
imposing the shock and stroke of it. At least for
myself, I want it so, austere, direct, free from
emotional slither.

There can be seen in such remarks not only a qualification of
Whitmanic, American "looseness," but also an insistence by
Pound that free verse does not sacrifice craft and control.
And in "Re Vers Libre," in "A Retrospect," Pound quotes
T.S. Eliot as remarking: "No verse is libre for the man [sic]
who wants to do a good job." At the same time, in "Re Vers
Libre," Pound argues that rhythm best arises out of the
particular instance, the unique formation of the individual
poem:

I think one should write vers libre only when one
'must,' that is to say, only when the 'thing' builds up
a rhythm more beautiful than that of set metres, or
more real, more a part of the emotion of the 'thing,'
more germane, intimate, interpretative than the measure
of regular accentual verse; a rhythm which discontents
one with set iambic or set anaapaestic.

The concept of the uniquesness of both the poet and the poem
is one which Pound stresses in "Credo":
I believe in an 'absolute rhythm,' a rhythm, that is, in poetry which corresponds exactly to the emotion or shade of emotion to be expressed. A man's rhythm must be interpretative, it will be, therefore, in the end, his own, uncounterfeiting, uncounterfeitable.

And it is in "Credo" that Pound indicates how much he owes to Whitman's and Emerson's notions of organic and appropriate form, for despite Pound's qualification that "most symmetrical forms have certain uses," he thinks that "there is a 'fluid' as well as a 'solid' content, that some poems may have form as a tree has form, some as water poured into a vase." (Pound does not elaborate on this comment, but presumably the tree metaphor applies to organic form, whilst the vase is the imposed shape of set, metrical verse and its attendant rhyme-schemes and fixed-length stanzas.) Pound also echoes Whitman's own use of discreet (discrete) symbolism, where the symbols are subsumed within the totality of the poem's organic structure, when he advises, in "Credo," "that if a man use 'symbols' he must so use them that their symbolic function does not obtrude."

Thus far, Pound's notions of poetic practice contain potential paradox. The poetry may partake of highly individual (open and organic) form, and yet it is to be 'hard' and economical. It is to devolve upon emotional states and occasions, and yet it is to be "austere." There is to be technique and craft, yet Pound wished for a poetry which aspired to the freedom and condition of music. The poetry is to be "direct" and use natural objects for its most appropriate symbology, yet meaning
is to devolve upon its "interpretative" power. These potential paradoxes are resolved in the concept of the image, which Pound defined, in "A Few Don'ts," as "that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time." This definition became the kernel of Imagist theory. Pound further commented:

It is the presentation of such a 'complex' instantaneously which gives that sense of sudden liberation, that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art.

A sense of liberation from space and time, instantaneous perception transfiguring and surpassing the normally time-bound limits of both literature and personal experience, is fulfilled in Pound's best Imagist work. This quality is present, for example, in "In a Station of the Metro" (Lustre, 1916):

The apparition of these faces in the crowd; petals on a wet, black bough.

It is, perhaps, not an exaggeration to say that here liberation from constrictions of space and time is the fully developed significance of the poem. An element of the quotidian, faces in a city crowd, possess a beauty which transfigures the scene, and makes appropriate to the poet's 'presentation' a radical juxtaposition of natural imagery with urban detail. In practice, a great deal of Imagist poetry devolved, as does Pound's 'Metro' poem, upon the use of metaphor, implied
comparison, and 'arresting' juxtaposition. Such poems as
Pound's "In a Station of the Metro" also have affinities with
Japanese "hokku" (haiku) and other eastern forms, where
emotions, moods, feeling-states are communicated with an
extreme simplicity of means.

Whatever the limitations of Imagism, and Pound was
to develop beyond Imagism after 1914 (when Amy Lowell effectively
split and weakened the group), the central achievement of
Pound and the movement was the discovery that, in a manner
which resists easy elucidation, the effective poetic image
creates an unprecedented convergence of perception and
intellectual appreciation, is a form of revelation which
radically extends the possibilities of poetry, and brings a
normally time-bound form of art into closer affinity with the
freedoms of the visual and plastic arts (painting and sculpture).
It is possible to appreciate how the 'objectivist' poetics of
William Carlos Williams and others is a natural development
from such poetry, with their emphasis on the processes of
perception, and the poem as a process of enactment. Imagist
and objectivist poetry would appear to be closest at that
point where the poem 'presents' or enacts its own meaning.
And in an attempt to emphasize the inherent movement and
process implicit in Imagist poetry, a poetry which is
open to the accusation of being overly static, Pound attempted
to equate the image with the 'vortex' of Wyndham Lewis'
aesthetics. (Lewis' ideas were propounded in the journal Blast,
The Fortnightly Review, Pound attempts to connect Imagism and Vorticism, stating:

The image is not an idea. It is a radiant node or cluster; it is what I can, and must perform, call a VORTEX, from which, and into which, ideas are continually rushing.

The question of the dynamic aspects of poetry became increasingly important for Pound after 1913, when, at a time when he was becoming increasingly doubtful of Imagism's value and potential, he was brought into close contact with the work of Ernest Fenollosa. (Pound met Fenollosa's widow in 1913, and was subsequently appointed his literary executor; although Pound had always been interested in Fenollosa's work, in particular his pioneering translations of Japanese 'Noh' dramas and Chinese classical poetry.) The full implications of Fenollosa's work became clear to him when, among other unpublished notes, he found the essay "The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry." Here, the special characteristics of Chinese as a literary language have implications for a theory of language and poetry. Fenollosa's essay emphasised how the separate and combined characters ('ideograms') of written Chinese present the 'bare bones' of meaning, and do not possess the linking and explanatory syntax of English (and other Western language) sentence-structure. Fenollosa's essay made clear, for Pound, how Chinese poetry was akin to the method of presentation Imagism had been
striving for: juxtaposition without explanatory and linking matter, concision, and the achievement of an 'equation' for mood and emotion. Whilst this was essentially a vindication of Imagist practice, it did, at the same time, confirm Pound's doubts. It became clear that the essential limitation of Imagism was its undynamic quality. For according to Fenollosa:

The sentence form was forced upon primitive men by nature itself. It was not we who made it; it was a reflection of the temporal order in causation. All truth has to be expressed in sentences because all truth is the transference of power. The type of sentence in nature is a flash of lightning. It passes between two terms, a cloud and the earth. . . . The form of the Chinese transitive sentence, and of the English (omitting particles), exactly corresponds to this universal form of action in nature. This brings language close to things, and in its strong reliance upon verbs it erects all speech into a kind of dramatic poetry.

Emphasising how the great strength of English is its many transitive verbs, and, concomitantly, its recognition of energies and processes within nature, Fenollosa comments, in the same essay, that Shakespeare's English gains impact from his use of preeminently transitive verbs: "Rarely will you find an 'is' in his sentences." From this point on, Pound was fully aware that the limitation of Imagism was its presentation of inert 'things,' rather than a play (or vortex) of energies. The Cantos might be regarded as the eventual attempted solution to this crisis of method, although they were only a long-term development.

Pound's theoretical and critical ideas on poetry became
distilled, eventually, in "How to Read" (1929), ABC of Reading (1934), and the anthology Confucius to Cummings (1964, edited by Pound and Marcella Spana). Of these, the most notable is "How to Read," where Pound remarks that "Great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree." William Harmon comments:

This maximal charge of meaning presumably makes of a linguistic construct the highly efficient concentration -- image, vortex, ideogram -- that presents an emotional and intellectual complex so directly and so powerfully that its operation seems, at any rate, to take but an instant of time.

In "How to Read" Pound extends his critical terminology with the categories of melopoeia, phanopoeia, and logopoeia, (although they first appear in his writings from around 1918). Melopoeia is poetry "wherein the words are charged over and above their plain meaning, with some musical property, which directs the bearing or trend of that meaning." It is "poetry on the borders of music and music is perhaps the bridge between consciousness and the unthinking sentient or even insentient universe." Phanopoeia is "a casting of images upon the visual imagination." This category is concerned with the ability of language to combine with the imagination in the creation of 'etched,' lapidary, eidetic images that are the poetic equivalent of visual perception. This category is concerned with those characteristic qualities of Imagist verse which have been discussed, notably concretion, exactitude, and emotional force. Pound comments that "in
phenopoeia we find the greatest drive toward utter precision

of word. 55 Pound refers to logopoeia as "the dance of the
intellect among words,"56 and this category emphasizes
verbal play, irony of context, and both enhancement and
dislocation of connotative power, and so forth. Pound sums
up by saying: "all writing is built up of these three
elements, plus 'architectonics' or the form of the whole."57

Despite this tantalizing comment, Pound's remarks on questions
and concepts of form, both in "How to Read" and elsewhere,
are left at a minimum. Whilst this appears an inadequacy,
it may have only been honest for Pound to refuse to commit
himself on problems which he explored in the practice of
his poetry. Pound's later work, for example the long poem
(or sequence) Hugh Selwyn Mauberley (1920), but most notably
The Cantos, might be said to be experiments in form, where
Pound is deliberately testing the limits of formal possibility.
Such experiment courts failure, and failure is explicit in
the thematic content of Hugh Selwyn Mauberley, and implicit
in the adopted provisional, aleatory, and fragmentary modes
of The Cantos.

In Hugh Selwyn Mauberley the formal experiment is
conducted in terms of persona, and is an ironic echo of
previous exercises in the use of 'masks,' most notably with
the collection Personae (1909). Personae met with favourable
reception from the critics, and ensured Pound's entry to
avant-garde poetry circles. Mauberley, on the other hand,
is a 'failed poet' who would, in any case, reject both avant-
garde acclaim and academic critical opinion. The chief
critical problem which the poem poses, notably the relation
and attitude of Pound to Mauberley, in the two sequences or
sections that comprise the work (the titles of the poems
"Envoi (1919)" and "Mauberley (1920)" indicate how the two
sequences are separated by time and historic juncture, rather
than change in persona and voice), has created a divergence
of critical opinion. J.J. Espey argues that Mauberley is
very distinct from Pound, is very much the opposite of him.\textsuperscript{58}
Both Mauberley's sexual failure and his sterile 'Nineties-ish
poetry contrast, for Espey, unfavourably with Pound; and
"Medallion," for example, is a poem which contrasts
unfavourably with Pound's "Envoi (1919)."\textsuperscript{59} Donald Davie,
however, has concluded that the poem sequence has no real
cohesion at all, that the question of the Mauberley persona
is best dismissed, and the poems read individually.\textsuperscript{60} Davie
reminds: "As for the theory of the persona, which served
Yeats so well, it seems only to have confused Pound and led
him to confuse his readers."\textsuperscript{61}

Most of these difficulties disappear if it is realised
that the poem is an elaborate exercise, by Pound, in both
melopoeia and, more predominantly, logopoeia, in which Pound
ironically surveys his own poetic impasse, the sterile legacy
of 'Nineties-type poetry and art (notably the Pre-Raphaelites),
and the failure of the 'Art for Art's sake' attitude to confront
social and historic issues such as the catastrophe of the
First World War. Whilst both Mauberley and Pound himself are
indicted for personal self-absorption and lack of a social role ("Nothing, in-brief, but maudlin confession, / Irresponse to human aggression"), Pound can, to some extent, understand and forgive, as their failure has been partly determined by the economic basis of society, which in turn has led to the prevailing cultural climate and sterility. (The precedent is supplied by Greek classical art and culture, an ironic contrast throughout the poem to modern poetry, which was destroyed by the advent of both Christianity and a money economy. This is the implied emphasis of Poem III of the first sequence ("Contacts and Life") of Hugh Selwyn Mauberley.)

Poem II of "Mauberley (1920)," via the epigraph attributed to Ca'd Ali, establishes sexual passion as the index of true beauty, and as such the basis of all poetry. Mauberley, however, has "drifted" in a state of either unrequited love or failing relationship for the three years which closed with "Envoi (1919)," for which failure Pound is also forgiving (the three years of failed love correlate, approximately at least, with the period of the First World War, so that personal and social disaster are inextricably interconnected, and at more than a level of irony). The ironic recognition of loss, in "Medallion," when the uninspired artificiality of the verse emphasises how the loved singer at the piano is now merely an 'image' to be committed to memory, is a qualification of the "Envoi (1919)" lyric. Superbly achieved though the lyric is, partaking directly of English poetic tradition, it is 'unrealistic,' and out of context with the personal and
social realities of 1920. The poem, in its totality, is a complex and ironically detached comment on failure at three interconnected levels: sexual love and passion, poetry and art and cultural standards generally, and moral and social responsibility. The poem's unity of form and content is achieved, if at all, in terms of Pound's ironic inability to write a poem which will cohere in any very obvious or convincing manner — in other words, the question of failure is embodied in the poem's form. The shifting and ambiguous tone and structure of the poem become Pound's comment on the problems of modern poetry.

The question of artistic failure recurs with the culmination of Pound's work, The Cantos (1925-69). Here, failure is implicit in both the content and the form of the poetry. The content of The Cantos combines materials from many sources, — literary, philosophical, cultural, and historical — and reworks them in terms of a continuously evolving collocation of fragments. Notable aspects of such content are: Homer, whose Odyssey provides a theme of quest; medieval Italian poets such as Cavalcanti and, in particular, Dante, whose Divine Comedy, together with Vergil's Aeneid, suggests a motif of Descent into Hell; classical Chinese poetry; Browning's poetry and his hero Sordello; anthropological material from the work of Leo Frobenius, incorporated with material from study of myth by Fraser and Ranke; Chinese and American history; and economic theory, particularly with the concept of usura, whose corrupting influence is embedded in
modern capitalism. The Odyssean theme of quest emphasises Pound's own attempt to catalogue and examine the cultures of both east and west on an historical basis, and combines with the Descent into Hell motif, and yet also a motif of metamorphosis as derived from Ovid and mythological material from Fraser and Ranke. Pound's highly personal and unchronological presentation of history has both positive and negative aspects. On the one hand, it is a study of cultural decay, in terms of Greek and Roman 'high' culture, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance to the present. On the other hand, Pound points to such periods as the Confucian age in China, and revolutionary America, as examples of social and political upheavals which proved to be culturally valuable. Pound's historic quest is not epic in the sense of possessing plot or narrative continuity, but it is epic in Pound's own, somewhat vague sense of "a poem including history." Such a content implies a wish to create a new social and cultural order; as such it is reminiscent of Whitman, and looks toward Williams' Paterson and the Maximus Poems of Charles Olson. Failure is implicit in such a content, in that the poetry is working at the limits of epistemology, the limits of historical knowledge. From this point of view, Pound's poetics may be interpreted as an attempt to transcend traditional epistemological categories. The question remains, however, as to what extent The Cantos represent a failure determined by history.

Knowledge, in The Cantos, is, however, mediated by a formal method which William Harmon has termed a "strategic
palimpsest of cultural layering and conflation of separate texts." Here, the sense of vortex, the conceptual advance on Imagism which Pound understood by and through the 'ideogrammic' method derived from Femcloes, allows the content to combine in a series of radical juxtapositions (a basic technique of Imagism) and disjunctions. And discursive and vernacular passages are allowed to alternate with explosions of lyric and imagistic power. The notion of 'ideogram,' of possible networks of interconnection and meaning, allows some of the material to reappear, albeit in changed contexts, throughout the poem(s), and is a fundamental aspect of the form of The Cantos. Michael Alexander regards the form as being "polyphonic rather than symphonic, and developing cyclically or spirally rather than in a straight line of narrative." 

In terms of an influence on the poetics of Black Mountain, such a formal strategy is Olson's 'open field' method of composition virtually complete; the influence on Olson is obvious and direct. And three aspects of form, in particular, in The Cantos, prefigure Black Mountain poetics. Firstly, the concept of paideuma, discovered by Pound in the writings of the anthropologist Leo Frobenius, allows Pound to examine culture with a sense of totality and historical continuity. It is this concept which, for example, allows Pound such confidence when he assumes he is able to know a culture through its written texts; such cultural artefacts are the product of social and historic development. Hugh Kenner has
And what Frobenius meant by a paideuma — a people's whole congeries of patterned energies, from their "ideas" down to the things they know in their bones, not a Zeitgeist before which minds are passive — validated the Cantos and underwrote Pound's notion that the Cantos were "the tale of the tribe."

Paideuma prefigures the conceptual methods of both William Carlos Williams in Paterson, and Charles Olson in the Maximus Poems. A second conceptual aspect of form is periplum (from the Greek, 'circumnavigation') which refers to a coastline as seen from a ship: "periplum, not as land looks on a map / but as sea bord seen by men sailing." Periplum becomes, for Pound, a metaphor for the processes he employs in The Cantos; periplum is essentially the idea of an unfolding of consciousness, of the mind voyaging. From here there is a very natural development to Olson's insistence on the poem flowing and developing from one perception to another — a central tenet of Olson's poetics. Such a process created the possibility of a poetry which communicated on the instant, and not by means of what he regarded as outmoded 'Socratic' discourse. A third aspect of Pound's technique in The Cantos, which prefigures Black Mountain poetics, is what Hugh Kenner refers to as "subject-rhyme." This is, essentially, a process of parallel inference and metaphoric implication. To quote Kenner:

The Cantos affords a thesaurus of subject-rhymes. Many heroes rhyme with Odysseus, and 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. Hilaire in Poitiers.
Pound's use of "subject-rhyme" prefigures Robert Duncan's use of the same technique, which he refers to as "rime.

With his collection *The Opening of The Field* (1960), Duncan begins an exploration of formal possibility which he titles "The Structure of Rime." 70

Although it is difficult to see *The Cantos* as anything other than provisional, and an experimental failure, albeit a magnificent failure, their ability to be a strong, direct, and enduring influence on contemporary poetry is an indication of their power and their importance. Pound's own humble confession of failure would appear to be contained in these lines from "Canto CXVI":

> But the beauty is not the madness
> Tho' my errors and wrecks lie about me.
> And I am not a demi-god,
> I cannot make it cohere. 71

*William Carlos Williams (1883-1963)*

Walt Whitman and Ezra Pound were both early influences on William Carlos Williams' poetry. By the time Williams met Pound, during his freshman year of medical training at the University of Pennsylvania, he had, among other poetic efforts, filled eighteen copybooks with a free verse derived from Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. The influence of Whitman was quickly superseded by a response to Pound and his Imagist ideas. Later, Williams was to comment:

> The thing is that "free verse" since Whitman's time has led us astray... Whitman was right in breaking our
bonds but, having no valid restraints to hold him, went wild. He didn't know any better. At the last he resorted to a loose sort of language with no discipline about it of any sort and we have copied its worst feature, just that.

The influence of Pound was more pervasive and longer lasting, and is evident with Williams' second book of poetry, The Tempers (1916). The collection Spring and All (1923) indicates how Williams has managed to incorporate many of the Poundian and Imagist virtues, such as directness, a 'hard' and uncluttered diction, and an avoidance of the use of symbol. But unlike Pound, Williams eschews the obviously erudite and allusive; emphasises the use of an 'everyday' diction, and 'presents' material from the immediate, modern American environment. These were to remain distinguishing features of Williams' verse, and the American environment and 'the local' became the basis of Williams' long poem Paterson (1946-58).

But whilst it would appear to have become a critical commonplace to say that Williams' early poetry is Imagist in style, with Spring and All the poems emphasise not so much the isolated image, but processes of perception and poetic apprehension. The poems become an enactment, they are dynamic, and movement is incorporated as an aspect of poetic technique. And as early as the collection Sour Grapes (1921), "Overture to a Dance of Locomotives" emphasises movement and its enactment within the poem:

— rivers are tunneled: trestles cross cozy swampland: wheels repeating the same gesture remain relatively
stationary: rails forever parallel
return on themselves infinitely.
The dance is sure.73

Here, the way in which enjambment enacts both movement
("wheels repeating / the same gesture") and stasis ("remain relatively / stationary") makes apposite the notion that the
lines of the poetry are equivalent to the "rails forever parallel." The eye movements of the reader, between ends and
beginnings of lines, suggest that it is the lines of the
poem which "return on themselves infinitely." The metaphor of
the dance becomes not only a metaphor for locomotives, but
also for the poem. The poem enacts its own meaning; metaphor
dances into enactment. One can see here why poets who were to
be heavily influenced by Williams, particularly Black Mountain
poets such as Olson and Creeley, tended to avoid metaphor at the
same time as they prized enactment. Enactment, when successfully
achieved in a poem, tends to obviate the need for metaphor.
This understanding becomes a central tenet of 'objectivist'
aesthetics, and later of Black Mountain.

At the same time, Williams does not intend the poem to be
a "copy" of nature.74 This distinction has to be emphasised
as, superficially, Williams' intentions might often appear to
be otherwise. With the two versions of "The Locust Tree in
Flower" (An Early Martyr, 1935), for example, Williams
experiments with breaking normal syntax, particularly in the
second version, to enact visual perception as focus on detail:
green - stiff - bright - branch - white.75 The suppressed
syntax of the highly compressed second version emphasizes an instantaneousity of perception, and the poem still manages to cadence towards an achieved sense of natural beauty. But however much the poem presents material from the perceived environment, "The Locust Tree in Flower" is a highly specific selection of detail, and the main thrust of Williams' method is the creation of the poem itself, the poem as independent, made object. This is the emphasis which lay behind the term "objectivist," and this term should not be confused with any wish to present an object or objects from the perceived environment. (Williams used the term to categorize both his own work and that of fellow poets Louis Zukofsky, Charles Reznikoff and George Oppen; together they founded the Objectivist Press.) In his Autobiography, for example, Williams acknowledges how Imagism had been useful, for a time, in "ridding the field of verbiage," but that it had "no formal necessity implicit in it." Objectivism, Williams makes explicit, was an attempt to restore necessity at the level of form:

But, we argued, the poem, like every other form of art, is an object, an object that in itself formally presents its case and its meaning by the very form it assumes. Therefore, being an object, it should be so treated and controlled...

And in his "Introduction to The Hedge (1944)," Williams comments on the work of the objectivist poet:

It isn't what he says that counts as a work of art, it's what he makes, with such an intensity of perception that it lives with an intricate movement of its own to verify its authenticity.
Whilst, as has been noted, Williams tended always to use a fairly straightforward, 'normal' diction, the diction of speech, and material was most often from the immediate 'given' environment, objectivist poetics were, in practice, capable of considerable complexity. "Poem" (Collected Poems 1921-1931) is a deceptively simple attempt to enact the movement of a cat as it climbs over a jam closet. At first glance the poem appears no more than an imitation of nature, one which can be enjoyed for its own sake. On another level, the poem begins to question the validity of objectivist poetics, as it implicitly raises the question of the ability of the poem to be technically equal to the occasion — to what extent can line-length, rhythm, duration of stressed and unstressed syllables, and so on, create a successful imitation of nature? The cat gingerly mounts the closet only to trap one foot in a flower pot. The cat's mistake jolts the reader into realising that the success of the poem's enactment is in question. Readers who do not realise this find, in any case, that at this point the poem abruptly ends; presumably, they are left wondering why.

The same question of whether the poem is equal to the occasion is present with "The Red Wheelbarrow" (Spring and All). It is doubtful whether the poem could be classed as either purely objectivist or purely imagist, but is, rather, best understood as an objectivist enactment of the presentation of an image. The poem ritually and rigorously enacts the
image in a formal movement through four two-line stanzas, each of which has a first line of three words and a second line of one word only. So much depends upon an imagist's ability to reproduce with exactitude and economy, and this the poem does, systematically presenting, with each of the final three stanzas, one component element of the overall image. As Louis Zukofsky notes, the first lines of the final three stanzas do this in terms of surface (red, glazed, white), and the second lines in terms of substance (barrow, water, chickens). 81 What has to be emphasised, however, is that Williams achieves this with no suggestion of metaphoric or symbolic meaning; even connotation, for example, of the 'reassuringly lonely,' has little or nothing to support it. The visual scene simply is, and depends upon the poem's ability to be equal to certain conjunctures and occasions in nature and the poet's environment. The poem suggests, virtually defines, that the poet can write only of and through the environment; certain occasions demand that they become the occasion of poetry. As Williams writes in "The Desert Music" (The Desert Music and Other Poems, 1954), a poem is written out of "an agony of self-realisation / bound into a whole / by that which surrounds us." 82 In the same poem Williams notes that this is a responsibility he "cannot escape," 83 for there is "only the made poem, the verb calls it / into being." 84 Robert Creeley is to echo these thoughts in a number of his own statements, and a strong Williams influence is present in a
great many of his poems -- particularly those which possess the elliptical ambiguity of "The Red Wheelbarrow."

Although, in "The Desert Music," the poet hears an "insensate music," he insists that his response "is based on the dance." The dance requires "measure," so there is "only the counted poem, to an exact measure." It is Williams' insistence on measure that is the chief source of his dissatisfaction with Whitman:

No verse can be free, it must be governed by some measure, but not by the old measure. There Whitman was right but there, at the same time, his leadership failed him.

Williams prefers the term 'measure' to that of 'rhythm,' because rhythm is

an aimless sort of thing without precise meaning of any sort. But measure implies something that can be measured. Today verse has lost all measure.

Williams' most notable contribution towards the achievement of an adequate modern measure, or prosody, is the "variable foot," which functions as an aspect of his 'triple-decker' or 'step down' line. Williams invented this form of line, and first used it in *Paterson* Book Two, section III. The "variable foot" resists easy elucidation, but is, basically, an extremely flexible form of quantitative measure (that is, it is based on duration of sound), where the 'beat' is not determined by counted and / or stressed syllables. Williams attempted to explicate the variable foot in a letter to Richard
Eberhart, where he gives two "approximate" examples, and advises that each numbered line be apportioned one "beat." 89

This is the first example:

(1) The smell of the heat is boxwood
(2) when rousing us
(3) a movement of the air
(4) stirs our thoughts
(5) that had no life in them
(6) to a life, a life in which. 90

It becomes immediately apparent that such a measure is, in practice, extremely subjective, and dependent on the individual voice and ear. On the other hand, it might be argued that all forms of prosody are, ultimately, subjective and often relative to context. Two factors which allow further understanding of Williams' use of this line are, firstly, that individual sections of the line (those sections as numbered in the example above) would appear to serve as an emphasis of content; Williams, however, does not appear to have made comment on this aspect of the variable foot. Secondly, the line is intended to work in conjunction with an 'everyday' diction. Williams comments, in the letter to Eberhart, that such a measure "gives resources to the ear which result in a language which we hear spoken about us every day." 91 And John C. Thirlwall reports Williams as saying to him that "the iamb is not the normal measure of American speech," and that "the foot has to be expanded or contracted in terms of actual speech." 92 In the letter to Eberhart, Williams adds that the variable foot is an attempt to restore to verse the quality of music, and in one sense
this explains why Williams required a line and prosody whose
use and effects were, above all, flexible; Williams comments:
"by measure I mean musical pace." 93

One reason why Williams was anxious to establish an
'everyday' poetic diction was because this would result in
a specifically American idiom. In Book Five of Paterson,
Williams includes part of a transcript of an interview with
him on poetics, and here he comments:

We poets have to talk in a language which is not
English. It is the American idiom. Rhythmically, it's
organised as a sample of the American idiom. It has
as much originality as jazz. If you say "2 partridges,
2 mallard ducks, a Dungeness crab" -- if you treat
that rhythmically, ignoring the practical sense, it
forms a jagged pattern. It is, to my mind, poetry. 94

The search for an American idiom is, for Williams, part
and parcel of the search for a new American poetics. His
search culminates in the writing of Paterson (1946-1958), a
long poem and a paideuma in the manner Pound had, by now, begun to
establish with The Cantos. But Paterson, unlike The Cantos,
is specifically a poem of place, namely the city of Paterson,
New Jersey, although this city is implicitly representative
of a larger American totality. Here, the movement, the
rhythms and processes of Williams' writing partake directly
of life, embody the energies of modern America, and create
a collage of American landscape, society, and history.

Working as a complex, multi-layered construct, Paterson
fuses imagery and symbolism with organic, open form, and the
poem is organised initially around the concept of a man-city, a city-as-a-man, which has its correspondence in woman imaged as a flower, or several flowers:

A man like a city and a woman like a flower -- who are in love. Two women. Three women. Innumerable women, each like a flower.

This city-man embodies a number of dramatis personae who include, most importantly, Dr. Paterson, Noah Faitoute, Paterson, and, at first, the poet himself. These personae function as vehicles for a unified speech and action, implicitly heroic in their attempted articulation. On a mythological level, the city-man is a geological giant, lying on his right side on the bank of the Passaic River facing Garret Mountain and with the torrential noise of the Passaic Falls resounding in his ear.

The Passaic Falls and River symbolise language; specifically, a primitive and universal stream of inarticulacy. It is the role of the poet, a social role Williams would seem to suggest, to clarify the noise of incoherence and inarticulacy, and so define meaning in the outpourings that present themselves to consciousness:

(What common language to unravel? combed into straight lines from that rafter of a rock's lip.)

In Book One of Paterson Williams sees American society as having suffered a divorce between language and meaning; so
that, symbolically, consciousness has become split off from primitive roots of motive and instinct (desire). Appropriately, the giant lies opposite his female counterpart, divided from her by the Passaic River and its torrents of failed communication. This geographic, female persona rests her head in the park of Book Two, and her female consciousness, which Williams associates with dream, thus embodies the dreams of the Paterson community. (Book Two, "Sunday in the Park," is an ironic comment on modern American culture.)

This basic conceptual and organisational framework allows Williams to feed into his poem a variety of informations from a variety of sources, and the poem becomes an evolving empirical discovery of place -- and Williams insists, in this context, that there are "no ideas but in things." Williams is able to work the whole at levels of myth, épic, locality, history, symbolic topography, and a debate on the relations between life and art (Williams includes material from, among other sources, personal letters). The nature of creative energy (often appearing ambiguously destructive), in whatever form it assumes, be it art, sexual love and passion, flame, radioactive fission, economic productivity, is an explicit theme of the poem; and concomitantly, "rigor of beauty is the quest." That the poem enacts an enveloping and developing process of transforming and transfiguring its content, placing disparate materials in new alignments, combinations, and juxtapositions,
is one aspect of how, in terms of energy, the poem fuses form and content. In the poem itself, Williams refers to this method as "Pulling the disparate together to clarify / and compress."⁹⁹

The process which Paterson, in its totality, shows forth, is nothing less than the formation of a new poetics, albeit one that is indebted to the influence of Ezra Pound. But Williams' specific emphasis on American locality is not the result of Pound's influence, and Paterson becomes a modern myth of America not merely at a level of personal reference and meaning, but, rather, in terms of Williams' role as mythmaker to the new society. Locality and history function, for Williams, not merely as symbol or correlative, although they may do so when required; rather, they serve to fuse personality with landscape, when the poet speaks not merely of but from the land, the 'ground' of a new poetic -- Williams' task is "to interrelate on a new ground, difficultly."¹⁰⁰ As do Pound's Cantos, in many respects, Paterson delivers into Olson's hands a model of the Maximus Poems (they are a paideuma of the locality of Gloucester, Massachusetts) virtually complete.

Summary

Whitman's Leaves of Grass made possible the birth of a new American poetics. Following Emerson's initial example, Whitman constructed a book whose relationship of part to whole
is, at every point and level, an example of organic form.  

_Leaves of Grass_ becomes an enactment of large poetic vision,  
where the poetry finally coheres as a book that is a unified  
celebration of America, human energy and potential, and the  
ability of the ego to subsume itself within a democratic  
concern for a new land and society. Whitman's poetry is notable  
for an abandonment of traditional prosody (regularly accented  
metrical forms), the adoption of a flexibly variant line-  
length, and the use of reiteration and patterns of parallelism  
in place of more traditional structuring devices. Above all,  
there are seemingly no epistemological limits to a poem's  
content; America supplies a geography and a people who are  
limitless in possibility. The celebration of America is  
combined with a mystical sense of comradeship, and also of  
sexual union and joy, which are ultimately of cosmic  
significance (Whitman refers to "kosmos").

Pound's poetics are, however, opposed to Whitman's  
"looseness." And in contrast to Whitman's celebration of  
America, Pound's content is international and cosmopolitan in  
its origins — Pound does not feel bound to American possibility.  
Pound's wish for a poetry of hard, concise diction and precision  
of form is realised in the "image," and the poetics of Imagism.  
Wyndham Lewis' concept of "vortex" supplies Pound with a sense  
of the dynamic potential of the image (it is now "a radiant  
node or cluster"), but Fenollosa's pioneering work on the  
structures of written Chinese reaffirms Pound's realisation of  

the essential weakness of Imagism -- its static quality, its lack of kinetic. Pound consequently adopts Fenollosa’s notion of the Chinese ‘ideographic method’ as a formal method which will bring the disparate parts of a poem into a kinetic play of linked suggestive possibility. It is at this point that Pound’s poetics align themselves with the energies of Whitman’s pushing, evolving lines. And image, vortex, ideogram, together with the technical possibilities of melopoeia, phanopoeia, and logopoeia, now combine with cultural and historical informations to cohere in the paideuma of The Cantos. The organic, evolving open form of The Cantos, their geographic, historic, and cosmic sweep, become reminiscent of Whitman’s Leaves of Grass, and will share the same attempt to work at the limits of epistemological possibility. The Cantos, in turn, provide a model for both Williams’ Paterson and Olson’s Maximus Poems. Black Mountain poetics will adopt, in particular, the technique of “subject-rhyme,” when Robert Duncan will refer to it as “rime,” Olson will adopt the metaphoric and formal possibilities of the concept of periplum.

The poetry of William Carlos Williams might be understood as uniting the precision of Pound’s Imagist poetics with the ‘direct speech’ diction of Whitman. And Williams also combines Poundian precision with the qualities of energy and enactment of Leaves of Grass. This fusion results in the concept of the “Objectivist” poem. Objectivist poetics stress the poem’s enactment of meaning, its own formal becoming into its own
movement and object-like independence. Williams' poetry presents material from the everyday, surrounding environment, and does so with an appropriately everyday American speech and idiom. Often Williams' poems might ambiguously straddle both the Objectivist and the Imagist modes, when the result might be the elliptical resonances of "The Red Wheelbarrow." Such poems prefigure the nature of Robert Creeley's aesthetic. Whitmanic organic form combines with Poundian techniques of openly evolving patterns of juxtaposition and co-location (in The Cantos) to result in Williams' own paideuma of Paterson. Paterson (as Olson's Maximus Poems are to be) is implicitly a poem of America in its larger totality, and hence reminiscent of Whitman's Leaves of Grass. In turn, Williams' Paterson and Pound's Cantos supply a model for the poetry of Olson's concern with American "polis," or ideal community, the paideuma of the Maximus Poems. Williams' poetics, as Olson's, are fundamentally concerned with energy, both creative and destructive. Both poets are to seek a new American poetics; both are to unite locality and present time with the intersection of geography, culture, and history. Both are to follow Pound, and establish process as the fundamental mode of a poem's evolving structural and formal possibilities.
NOTES

Chapter II - Influences and Antecedents


5 Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass, eds. Bradley and Blodgett, pp. 392-93.

6 Whitman, p. 392.

7 Whitman, "Song of Myself," in Leaves of Grass, p. 52.


14 Whitman, p. 38.


16 Whitman, p. 107.

17 Whitman, p. 101.

18 Whitman, p. 96.


20 Whitman, p. 52.


25 Whitman, p. 714.


27 Whitman, p. 98.

comments not only on Whitman's influence on his own poetry, but also on that of O'Hara and Ginsberg. He comments, in particular, that he does not regard Ginsberg's lines in Bowl as Whitmanic, but, rather, under the primary influence of Christopher Smart. For Duncan, "Frank [O'Hara] is more Whitman than Allen [Ginsberg] is." (Fass, p. 69.)


30 Pound, p. 45.


32 Pound can be said to have himself invented the term "Imagist." In a letter to Harriet Monroe, dated 18 August, 1912, he refers to one of his own poems as "an over-elaborate post-Browning "Imagiste" affair." (See The Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941, ed. D.D. Paige (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1950), p. 10.)


34 Pound, "A Retrospect," p. 3.


Pound, p. 9.

Pound, p. 9.


Pound, p. 4.

Pound, "In a Station of the Metro," in Selected Poems 1908-1959, p. 53.


Fenollosa, p. 29.


Pound, p. 25.


Pound, p. 25.
58 See J.J. Espey, Ezra Pound's Hauberley: a Study in
Composition (London: Faber and Faber, 1955).
60 Donald Davie; Ezra Pound: Poet as Sculptor (New York:
62 Pound, "The Age Demanded," Hugh Selwyn Mauberley,
included with Selected Poems, p. 110.
63 Pound, ABC of Reading (Norfolk, Conn: New Directions,
1954), p. 46.
64 Harmon, p. 73.
65 Michael Alexander, The Poetic Achievement of Ezra
Pound (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California
66 Hugh Kenner, The Pound Era (London: Faber and Faber,
67 Pound, "Canto LXI," in Ezra Pound: The Cantos
68 Kenner, pp. 92-3.
69 Kenner, p. 93.
70 See Robert Duncan, "The Structure of Rims," in
The Opening of the Field (New York: Grove Press, 1960),
pp. 12 et seq.
72 William Carlos Williams, "On Measure -- Statement


77 Williams, p. 264.

78 Williams, "Author's Introduction to The Wedge, 1944," in Selected Essays, p. 257.

79 Williams, "Poem," in Selected Poems, p. 70.


83 Williams, p. 109.

84 Williams, p. 110.
86 Williams, p. 109.
87 Williams, "On Measure -- Statement for Cid Corman,"
     p. 339.
88 Williams, p. 337.
89 Williams, From a letter to Richard Eberhart, May 23,
     1954 ("A New Measure"), in The Selected Letters of William
     Carlos Williams, ed. John C. Thirlwall (New York: Ivan Obolensky,
     1957); rpt. in Modern Poets on Modern Poetry, ed. James Scully
90 Williams, p. 72.
91 Williams, p. 72.
92 Williams, as reported by John C. Thirlwall, in
     Thirlwall, "Ten Years of a New Rhythm," included with
     Williams, Pictures from Brueghel, p. 183.
93 Williams, Letter to Richard Eberhart, Modern Poets
     on Modern Poetry, p. 71.
94 Williams, Paterson (New York: New Directions, 1963),
     p. 225.
95 Williams, p. 7.
96 Williams, p. 7.
97 Williams, p. 6.
98 Williams, p. 3.
99 Williams, p. 20.
100 Williams, p. 20.
CHAPTER III
The Poetry and Poetics of Black Mountain:
Charles Olson. Robert Duncan, and Robert Creeley


We have lived long in a generalising time, at least since 450 B.C. And it has had its effects on the best of men, on the best of things.

This comment by Olson, in his essay "Human Universe" (1950), is an example of his ability to maintain an historical perspective on the poetry and culture he sought to revolutionise. The historic divide he mentions, 450 B.C., marks, in Olson's opinion, the birth of Socratic discourse, of Greek Philosophy and rationality, the beginnings of western logic and epistemology, the growth of modern language usage, and, concomitantly, the death of poetry and of culture generally. Olson's struggle was for a new poetic, and a radically different appreciation of language and reality. Olson's writing is an attempt at a reorientation to nature and the universe; one which places human personality and experience in a specifically 'object' relation to the universe, and which rejects any anthropocentric world-view. For Olson, the nature of the universe is not to be apprehended in 'Socratic' rational discourse. The modern philosophy of science, notably the writings of A.N. Whitehead, indicates an end to comfortable,
A rationalist assumptions and cosmologies. In "Human Universe" Olson makes a rapid paraphrase of Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, and this another reason why, in the same essay, Olson can say that

The harmony of the universe, and I include man, is not logical, or better, is post-logical, as is the order of any created thing.

Since 450 B.C., in Olson's view, the intellectual legacy of Greek thought has been merely reification of the universe. (Olson talks of Socrates' "generalising," Aristotle's "logic and classification," and Plato's "forms as extricable from content.") The kernel of Olson's argument, and hence the title of his essay, is that man has become estranged from the universe and its processes precisely because western intellectual detachment does not allow of an engagement of human action with the universe as process; 'Socratic' western man does not exist in a "Human universe." And Olson is to commence The Special View of History (1970) with an epigraph from Heraclitus: "Man is estranged from that with which he is most familiar."6

The solution Olson proposes for this condition of alienation is extremely radical. Primarily, he proposes the rejection of Socratic and rationalist epistemology, in order that we may "find ways to stay in the human universe, and not be led to partition reality at any point, in any way."

Secondly, human action must mesh with the kinetic processes
of nature and the universe, and in so doing abolish false distinctions between interior consciousness and an external world:

There must be a way which bears in instead of away, which meets head on what goes on each split second, a way which does not -- in order to define -- prevent, deter, distract, and so cease the act of, discovering.

Olson combines this plea with a phenomenological view of consciousness; in Olson's opinion, the unanalyzable instants of sense perception are the only basis of knowledge. In any moment of the "field" of perceived reality, a person is sustaining a multiple, ongoing, evolving set of perceptual influences and informations. A person absorbs sensory experience from his or her phenomenal "field" and, in turn, reacts. This is a subject-object relationship, and to quote Olson in The Special View of History:

One will get nowhere in catching the traffic of the human universe if one does not recognize that a man [sic] is at once subject and object.

And in "Human-Universe" Olson comments:

For any of us, at any instant, are juxtaposed to any experience, even an overwhelming single one, on several more planes than the arbitrary and discursive which we inherit can declare.

The implications for poetry and art are that they should aspire to the same kinetic nature as 'reality' (the 'real' being here the content of the artist's "field"). Olson insists:
There is only one thing you can do about kinetic, re-enact it. Art does not seek to describe but to enact. And if a man is once more to possess intent in his life, he has to comprehend his own process as intact, from outside, by way of his skin, in, and by his own powers of conversion, but again.

The particular implications for poetry are that language use, speech-acts, become 'pre-Socratic' in nature. For when language meshes with this "field" of perceived environment, human action and reaction, then the result is not Socratic discourse but "shout (tongue)." And Olson comments that "The distinction here is between language as the act of the instant and language as the act of thought about the instant." Olson's creative project became an attempt to formulate and put into practice a poetics which would be appropriately kinetic, and partake of "the act of the instant."

If "Human Universe" may be regarded as Olson's most inclusive statement of his "stance toward reality" (The Special View of History is a later and more specialised document), the most important statement of his poetic method is the essay "Projective Verse" (1959). This essay became most widely available, in published form, from 1965 and 1966 onwards, but it should be noted that it was included with "Statements on Poetics," a theoretical section of Donald Allen's seminal anthology The New American Poetry: 1945-1960 (1960). The same year also saw the publication of Olson's The Distances and the first volume of The Maximus Poems.

"Projective Verse" should be understood as an attempt,
by Olson, to outline a poetics where the poem is a product of a play of forces, is established by conjunctures within the poet's field, which, in turn, working via the poet's perceptions and writing abilities, recreate themselves in the poem. The poem itself then becomes akin to a field of force(s). In short, from every aspect of the universe, nature and perceived reality, the poet is a medium who transforms a play of forces into written form; it is as though, in the act of writing, the universe and reality allow their processes to flow through the writer and reproduce themselves in the ongoing construction of the poem. Olson, in "Projective Verse," terms this method "Composition by Field." It is in this context that Olson talks of "energy," and in a celebrated edict on kinetics in poetry Olson says:

A poem is energy transferred from where the poet got it (he will have some several educations), by way of the poem itself to, all the way over to, the reader. Okay. Then the poem itself must, at all points, be a high-energy-construct and, at all points, an energy-discharge.

The poem thus aspires to "language as the act of the instant," or "shout (tongue)," and is intimately connected with a poet's breathing "Because breath allows all the speech-force of language back in." 

In "Projective Verse," Olson is content to let the relationship between language and breath remain close to a mere assertion ("I swear it"), although once Olson puts his ideas in schematic form it becomes apparent that poetry, "the
LINE," is an expression of physiological condition: "the HEART, by way of the BREATH, to the LINE." If the term "the HEART" appears vague and ambiguous, which ordinarily it is, Olson uses it because he wishes to refer to both physiology and emotion; for Olson, they are one and the same. Olson discusses his ideas for the "Projective Verse" essay in letters to Robert Creeley of June 1950, and the links between physiology and emotion, and emotion and the rhythmic determinants of the poem are suggested in a series of tantalizing comments in the letter of 21 June, 1950:

I have a hunch that, emotion being what it is, its control on our breathing is such, that any of us, who stay out in the open, in the OPEN FIELD, will, unknown to ourselves, declare, every so often, unawares, a base beat and flow which will, order is such a part of the law of rhythm, also declare itself. And I hunch that, when a poem works, in the OPEN, it is just for this reason, of a controlling constant against which all variants break and play.

This key link in the argument of "Projective Verse," virtually suppressed in the final published form of the essay, is supplied in Olson's work Proprioception, where a schema is outlined of how perception, thought, "soul," and "self," the "unconscious," are functionally, not merely conceptually dependent on physiology. So that the term proprioception denotes a process whereby the poet sustains reality, the ongoing processes of nature and the universe, perceives a "field" of such reality in terms of instants of sense
perception, and incorporates such perception in terms of and by means of the internal processes of the body; when the resulting sensory-motor activity (including the putting of pen to paper in the writing of a poem) may be seen as further extensions of processes within nature. This is, essentially, an ecology of language and poetry. The environment is perceived, incorporated in terms of physiological process, and, in turn, physiology determines the timed thought and emotion of the creative act.

Olson's schema "the HEART, by way of the BREATH, to the LINE" is the second half of a proposition whose first half is: "the HEAD, by way of the EAR, to the SYLLABLE." The combined work of mind and ear in the production of syllables requires exactitude: "the exaction must be so complete, that the assurance of the ear is purchased at the highest -- 40 hours a day -- price." But for Olson, it is in the formation of the line where most skill and control are required:

it is the LINE, that's the baby that gets, as the poem is getting made, the attention, the control, that it is right here, in the line, that the shaping takes place, each moment of the going.

Here, in the making of "the line," Olson objects to "slow things," such as similes, adjectives, rhetorical devices, and discursively "observation"; these must not be allowed to substitute description for enactment:

The descriptive functions generally have to be watched,
every second, in projective verse, because of their
easiness, and thus their drain on the energy which
composition by field allows into a poem.

Olson also objects to poetry which elevates the ego
of the poet to a greater importance than the objects by which
he or she is surrounded. Olson wants the poem to be inclusive
of objects in the environment, and the poem is to aspire
to their condition as they partake in the kinetic processes
of nature. Olson terms such a poetics "Objectism," and this
is a concept virtually synonymous with William Carlos Williams'
"Objectivism." (Olson's emphasis, here, that Williams'
Objectivism was a term chosen for its opposition to
subjectivism in poetry, would appear to be misplaced.) Olson
chiefly defines Objectism as

the getting rid of the lyrical interference of the
individual as ego, of the "subject" and 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 other creatures of nature which we may, with
no derogation, call objects.

And, says Olson, if the poet does not erect ego over the
objects of the environment, such that he or she "is contained
within his own nature as he is participant in the larger
force," then "he will be able to listen, and his hearing
through himself will give him secrets objects share."}

If, as Olson suggests, the poet is to be "participant
in the larger force," it is easy to appreciate how the poet's
skill, in projective verse, is not only listening for the sounds of syllables and paying close attention to the line, but knowing how, at the same time, to let the form and content of the poem freely evolve in such a manner that "his shapes will make their own way."\textsuperscript{32} Olson comments:

From the moment he ventures into FIELD COMPOSITION --- puts himself in the open --- he can go by no track other than the one the poem underhand declares, for itself.\textsuperscript{33}

Olson suggests that the key to this process is to observe the precept that "One perception must immediately and directly lead to a further perception."\textsuperscript{34} Olson instructs:

USE USE USE the process at all points, in any given poem always, always one perception must must must MOVE, INSTANTER, ON ANOTHER.

And in a letter to Olson of 5 June, 1950, Robert Creeley lets drop a remark which would appear to be the logical corollary of all of Olson's own thinking, and which Olson includes in "Projective Verse." Poetry, says Creeley, cannot place its emphasis on form, but, rather, form evolves out of content: "form is never more than an extension of content."\textsuperscript{35} Creeley's remark, once taken up and adopted by Olson, becomes a central tenet of Black Mountain poetics; and whilst Olson (and often Robert Duncan) are to apply this principle to long, sequential forms, it is to receive its most rigorous application in the relatively short forms of Robert Creeley's verse. This formula
also has what might be thought of as its visual equivalent:

Olson, in "Projective Verse," realises that the advent of the
typewriter enables the poet to combine ear and eye in the
formation of the line with a greater precision than was
previously possible. The typewriter can

indicate exactly the breath, the pauses, the suspensions
even of syllables, the juxtapositions even of parts of
phrases, which he intends. For the first time the poet
has the stave and the bar a musician has had.

Olson's appreciation of the technical advance in poetry
made possible by the typewriter, is one aspect of his acute
historical consciousness. In one sense, projective verse was,
for Olson, appropriate to contemporary reality; it might be
thought of as the appropriate postmodern poetic response to
such events as the First and Second World Wars. Implicit in
Olson's work is the realisation that the individual ego and
its "lyrical interference" are shamed into inadequacy when
confronted by twentieth century horror, atrocity, and tragedy
on a mass scale. He is aware that he lives at a great divide
in history, but, at the same time, will not accept the
despair expressed in, for example, T.S. Eliot's The Wasteland.
In the poem "La Préface" (1946), he juxtaposes the year of his
birth to the open parenthesis of an already evolving future,
and the closed world of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries:

Draw it thus: ( ) 1910
It is not obscure. We are the new born, and there are no flowers.
Document means there are no flowers
and no parenthesis.
The poet lives at an intersection of place and time; both in terms of geography and the minute particulars of environment, and the historic conjuncture of the present with "millenia." Olson's most developed thought on such matters is contained in The Special View of History, but he provides Ed Dorn, in A Bibliography on America for Ed Dorn, with a diagrammatic schema of his concepts. This is the diagram in the simplest form in which Olson gives it:

\[ \text{millenia} \quad \times \quad \text{person} \quad \text{process} \quad \times \quad \text{quantity}^{39} \]

It is this historical schema which provides the core conceptual background to such key works of Olson as "The Kingfishers" and the Maximus Poems.

"The Kingfishers" (written in 1949, first published 1950, and included with The Distances, 1960) marks Olson's emergence to full poetic vocation; he has both a projective strategy and an insistent thematic concern. It is a position poem, in which Olson attends to cultural and historic crisis, and with this the need to act (concerns reflected also in the Maximus Poems). "If you don't know Kingfishers, you don't have a starter!" Olson wrote Cid Corman.\(^{40}\)

The kinetic intersections of millenia with place and persons are enacted in the poem in terms of successive renewals and decay of civilisations of both East and West. The poem presents a variety of juxtaposed historical informations and
references, but at the literary level the processes of the poem become complex. Finally, Pound and Eliot would appear to be invoked only to be rejected. The rejection of Pound is qualified, however, by the use of the Poundian ideogrammic method, itself derived from Fenollosa's theorising, and also by the use of collaged fragments—a distinctive feature of The Cantos. As Sherman Paul notes, "Olson does not disguise but honors his debt to Pound in "The Kingfishers." The ideogrammic form immediately tells us to whom he has gone to school."41 Pound and Eliot are, perhaps, best regarded as poetic antecedents, rejected, in the poem, not so much for their poetic methods as for the cultural (and certainly, in the case of Pound, political) conclusions at which they arrived. Olson ironically adopts a Poundian tone, almost as parody, in a rejection of both Pound's 'maggoty' corrupt fascism and Eliot's Wasteland despair:

shall you uncover honey / where maggots are?

I hunt among stones. 42

Many lines and allusions in "The Kingfishers" can supply a large number of ironical and interpretative variants, and this has its correlative equivalence in the kingfishers themselves, which are present in the poem in several literary modes. Firstly they are present as religious legend and ritual symbol (here the Mayan blends with the Christian); secondly, they are present as poetic symbol, derived from both classical
Chinese poetry and T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*; thirdly as a generalised imagery of kinetic movement and flight; and fourthly as documentary fact.

Olson utilises the ideogrammic method to correlate historic junctures in the cultures of both East and West, and the primary contexts offered are those of Mayan civilisation, perhaps the greatest of pre-Socratic civilisations, and revolutionary China (the communist victory of 1949). Mao is offered as a contemporary model of destructive-creative willed action (this parallels the poem's creative destruction of the ideologies of Pound and Eliot), and the fundamental irony here is that Mao is attempting to rejuvenate the East with an ideology (marxism) derived from the West. Appropriately, the instinctual flight of the kingfishers is into the setting sun, the West, to obtain their blood-red breasts emblematic of communism. Olson 'projectively' enacts their flight in terms of typographical spacing, and, at the same time, interpolates Mao's metaphoric slogan:

The light of the dawn is before us. Let us rise up and act.

Here, Olson is counterposing his recognition of the need for change and willed action to the despair of Eliot's *The Wasteland* — "kingfisher" being the verbal reverse of the impotent Fisher King of Eliot's poem, who is unable to save contemporary culture and civilisation. For Olson, "What does not change is the will to change."
Directly juxtaposed to the quote from Mao is a reference to the "E on the stone." Davenport recognises this as a reference to the epsilon carved on the omphalos or navel stone at the oracle of Delphi, Boiotia. The meaning of this inscription had been lost by Hellenistic times, but Plutarch discusses seven possible interpretations of it in his essay "The E at Delphi." Davenport establishes a link between the stone at Delphi, the sacred place of Apollo, and the sun, Apollo's planet. Davenport perceives how Olson uses the ideographic method to conjoin Delphi (the ancient West), Mao (the contemporary East), and the kingfishers (active and poetic will to change) in relationship to the sun:

All three ideographic elements are held in a relation to the sun: the Delphic stone religiously, Mao metaphorically and rhetorically, the kingfisher mythically.

Thus the Greek West declined when it lost conscious relation to natural process (the sun as creative source). The East, on the other hand, confronts a new dawn (the sun rises in the East).

"The Kingfishers" is a poem which proposes the possibility of poetry in its contemporary and historic development as one solution to the problem of how to combine consciousness with willed action. Of direct relevance, in this context of cultural change and evolution, is the concept of "feed-back," derived from modern electronics and cybernetics. If the nest-building of the kingfishers becomes a paradigm of decayed poetic practice, as "these rejectamenta" become "a dripping,
fetid mass,"49 then nevertheless, "not accumulation but change,
the feedback proves, the feedback is / the law."50 Olson
here unites the 'process philosophy' of Whitehead and the
cybernetics of Norbert Wiener51 with the insistence on the
pre-eminence of process. Process is reality, for Olson via
Whitehead, is "This very thing you are."52 It is for this
reason that the kinetics of projective verse become the most
suitable mode and manner of approaching history, for they
partake of and show forth the kinetics of history as process.

With The Maximus Poems (1953-1975, three volumes), Olson
embarked on a paideuma, a poem constructed in terms of
intersection of people, time, and place, and centred on the
fishing port of Gloucester, Massachusetts. (As with William's
Paterson, what is local becomes implicitly representative of
a larger American totality.) Although Olson is dealing here
with the particulars of locality, he regards this as a basis
for engagement with universal process. Olson was to instruct
Ed Dorn:

Best thing to do is to dig one thing or place or man
until you yourself know more abt [sic] 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.

And then U KNOW
everything else very fast; one saturation job (it might
take 14 years). And you're in, forever.

Olson's favored method is that of istoria, to 'find out for
oneself,' and Olson considered this to be the original concept
of history, prior, that is, to the advent of Socratic discourse,
logical thought, and the assumption that history is linear in its causal development. And in Letter 23 of The Maximus Poems Olson says, "I would be an historian as Herodotus was, looking for oneself for the evidence of what is said." Olson's syntactical ambiguity suggests the manner in which history and the personal present (for Olson, there is no distinction) may be fused as quest and as written evidence newly presented to posterity. The Gloucester environment makes possible the presentation of the past as particular, not merely the local as nostalgic sentiment, and this, in turn, makes possible the immediacy of the writing. Olson emphasises that he is dealing in facts: "facts, to be dealt with, as the sea is, ... played by, said he, coldly, the ear." Olson utilises persona with "Maximus," whose identity is chiefly that of Maximus of Tyre, a little known, eclectic philosopher of the second century A.D. Such a persona emphasises how Olson sees the poet's role as akin to that of philosopher. Frank Davey, in Five Readings of Olson's Maximus, emphasises how Maximus of Tyre's writings propound views which are very similar to Olson's own; on such matters as, for example, man's relation to nature, social organisation, profit and financial exploitation. Davey emphasises how Maximus, as Olson's persona, becomes, in The Maximus Poems, "Gloucester's sophist, Gloucester's teacher ... Gloucester's enemy of arrogance and exploitation, Gloucester's advocate of communalism.
Gloucester's keeper of the universe's laws."

Davey adds: "Stated conventionally, Olson's use of Maximus implies that Olson is to Gloucester, in its specific place and time, as Maximus of Tyre was to that city in his."

Thus the invocation of Maximus of Tyre creates an analogue between the modern and ancient worlds, and between Gloucester and Tyre as fishing ports of both the West and the East. Gloucester, thirty miles north-east of Boston, was, in the nineteenth century, one of the leading fishing ports of the world, and a modern equivalent of Tyre in its time. And the Phoenician port of Tyre was captured only after Alexander the Great had laid siege, by means of a causeway or 'mole.'

Extending the analogy between the two cities, Olson conceives of Gloucester as an island, separated from the mainland by the Annisquam River and Highway 128. Highway 128 encircles Boston and ends in Gloucester, bringing with it mainland values. In the final poem of the first volume, "April Today, Main Street," Olson asks: "as the mainland hinge / of the 128 bridge / now brings in / what, / to Main Street?"

The influence of the mainland, Olson makes clear, brings in only those influences that would undermine portia, Gloucester as an ideal community. Olson is both in the community, and, at the same time, via the persona of Maximus, is detached enough to observe cultural process. When Olson slides with Maximus, if only in terms of vulnerability, he is "Off-shore, by islands," but is able to "tell you / what is a lance, who obeys the
figures of / the present dance."62 This emphasises how Olson's view of Gloucester is one of perceived process, for, as Olson says in Letter 6, "polis is / eyes."63 Olson as Maximus, in this context sees Gloucester from the coast, from "Off-shore," and hence as a peripilum -- in Pound's words, "as sea bord seen by men sailing."64 When Olson / Maximus takes this view he sees only a creeping mainland commercialism, "mum-sick,"65 and asks:

But that which matters, that which insists, that which will last, that! o my people, where shall you find it, how where, where shall you listen when all is become billboards, when, all, even silence, is spray-gunned?66

The irony is that for so long Gloucester, as polis, had, in Olson's view, put up an exemplary struggle for independence and survival. Gloucester had functioned as a community free of commercial exploitation, and had survived, in terms of fishing, by cooperation with natural process. Such survival is emphasised by, for example, Olson's reference to the fourteen men of the Dorchester Company, marooned at Stage Head by the ship Fellowship in 1624. It is emphasised also with the struggle of Captain Hewes to maintain independence from the Plymouth theocracy. Despite the use of persona, and the non-humanist emphasis of Olson's historical approach, Olson's strategy is essentially to adopt "nakedness" and incorporate the past as present process:
that all start up
to the eye and soul
as though it had never happened before.

"One loves only form," says Maximus of Gloucester, and finally it is Olson's regard for Gloucester as a form or way of life, for the form of Gloucester's community, which shines through all attempted detachment — and in this sense, the form of The Maximus Poems may be seen as an attempt to defend a way of life:

where gulls now paper
the skies

where fishing continues
and my heart lies.

Robert Duncan (1919—)

This exposed, open form ("Projective Verse," Olson named it in poetry) began to appear in the 1940's. With the Pisan Cantos of Ezra Pound and Paterson of William Carlos Williams, with the Symphony in Three Movements of Stravinsky, I began to be aware of the possibility that the locus of form might be in the immediate minim of the work.

Robert Duncan might be said to be the mystic of the Black Mountain poets. Although the nature of his mysticism remains too syncretic to be defined at all easily, it appears to be a transcendentalist vision of the world and the universe, in which all objects, all persons, and notably, all language are aspects of the divine. From this point of view, Duncan might be said to use language with an Emersonian sense of immanent,
transcendental manifestation. Duncan also possesses an Emersonian sense of organic form, and organicist imagery is everywhere apparent in his poetry. Duncan, in his regard for the transcendental basis of language, attempts a poetry of freely evolving forms, where the temptation to impose rational orders of thought is essentially suppressed. Duncan himself regards his chief poetic influences as Shakespeare, Dante, Blake, Whitman, Pound, and H.D., but his reading in literature, as well as his knowledge of mythology, mysticism, religious forms, and many other subjects, is deep and extensive. This erudition is called upon freely in his poetry, and many poems are richly and complexly allusive. But always Duncan writes in the context of the divine:

Central to and defining the poetics I am trying to suggest here is the conviction that the order man may contrive or impose upon the things about him or upon his own language is trivial beside the divine order or natural order he may discover in them.

This sense of an order, divine in origin, of which a poem partakes, is the most immediate area in which Duncan's poetics have an affinity with the ideas of Charles Olson. For where Olson seeks out the 'given' processes enacted by objects in the environment and the universe, Duncan conceptualizes the poem as 'given' by the divine. Very similar to Olson's warning that the ego of the poet must not be allowed to become a "lyrical interference," is Duncan's awareness of how the poet must not impose his or her own sense of rational
order and form, which may destroy the true nature and
direction of the evolving poem. (This attitude to creativity
also has a psychological aspect, Duncan being influenced by
the writings of Freud in particular.) Duncan, therefore, does
not readily seek to "revise" poems; any revision he regards
as constituting a completely new work. In the first section
of "Pages from a Notebook," "On Revisions," he says:

After Freud, we are aware that unwittingly we achieve
our form. It is, whatever our mastery, the inevitable use
we make of the speech that betrays to ourselves and to
our hunters (our readers) the spine of what we are
becoming.

It is in this context that Duncan can state "Writing is first.
a search in obedience," and in the poem "Brought to Love"
(Derivations: Selected Poems 1950-1956), Duncan talks of the
poet being "broken" before the demands of poetry:

breaking heart -- as bread -- no poem
without such a moment, broken, conquered
only by what we did not know
of the design. A dictate, the heart of things
towards wholeness
restores order.

In this context of "order," a major aspect of Duncan's
mysticism is a Platonism which regards external forms as
manifestations of a deeper, further reality. And in "A Poem
Slow Beginning" (The Opening of the Field, 1960), Duncan
talks of:
that first company
of named stars that in heaven
call attention to a tension
in design,
compel
as the letters by which we spell words compel,
75
magic refinements.

The environment, the universe, must be read for signs and
meanings (omens), and in "Food for Fire, Food for Thought"
(The Opening of the Field) Duncan notes how:

Language obeyd Xlares tongues in obscure matter.

We trace faces in clouds: they drift apart
palaces of air -- the sun dying down
sets them on fire;

descry shadows on the flood from its dazzling mood,
or at its shores read runes upon the sand
from sea-spurns.

76

It is for the same reasons that minute attention to language
might yield significant meanings (through puns, for example).
Duncan refers to "angelic syntax,"77 and introducing the
notion of the dance, a traditional symbol of the relation
between life and art (employed by Yeats, Eliot, William
Carlos Williams, and Olson, among others), Duncan says that
"In the feet that measure the dance of my pages I hear cosmic
intoxications of the man I will be."78 And in a simple, yet
telling, demonstration of how attention to language can
yield meaning, Duncan utilizes punning inversion of
"responsibility" to echo Yeats and suggest that "Responsibility
is to keep / the ability to respond."79
Duncan follows tradition, and the dance becomes the key symbol of his poetry; it is a symbol of the relation between life (for Duncan, divine process) and art, and it provides an appropriate imagery for the nature of organic, open form poetry. In "An Essay at War," in Derivations: Selected Poems 1950-1956, a transitional volume preparing for the technical advances of The Opening of the Field, Duncan refers to "The design of a poem / constantly / under reconstruction, / changing, pushed forward." It is:

the mind dance
wherein that shows its pattern:

a proposition
in movement.

In "Towards an Open Universe," Duncan speaks of the dance as involving a loss of ego (conscious, willed action) as the dancer engages with process:

The dancer comes into the dance when he loses his consciousness of his own initiative, what he is doing, feeling, or thinking, and enters the consciousness of the dance's initiative, taking feeling and thought there. The self-consciousness is not lost in a void but in the transcendent consciousness of the dance.

As a correlative for poetry, the dance emphasises how Duncan seeks a poetry of enactment, and with this, of course, Duncan is aligning his poetry with that of Williams and the Objectivists, and Olson's projective verse. In the same essay, "Towards an Open Universe," Duncan comments:
It is not that poetry imitates but that poetry enacts in its order the order of first things, as just here in this consciousness, they may exist, and the poet desires to penetrate the seeming of style and subject matter to that most real where there is no form that is not content, no content that is not form.

It is in the context of dance imagery that Duncan declares his alignment with the "field" poetics of Charles Olson. It is Olson's field become available for Duncan that supplies the title of The Opening of the Field, and in this volume, in "The Dance," Duncan acknowledges his debt:

Maximus called us to dance the Man.
We called him to call
season out of season—

In the same poem, Duncan invokes not only Olson but also Whitman, and the image is appropriately that of a meadow ('leaves of grass') as a ground of poetic concord: "Lovely / join we to dance green to the meadow." If "poetry enacts in its order the order of first things," the 'given' poem, the occasion of the poet's "field," is, for Duncan in "Often I Am Permitted To Return to a Meadow," "a place of first permission, / everlasting omen of what is." It is "an eternal pasture folded in all thought," and the poem is "a disturbance of words within words / that is a field folded." But the poem is curiously guarded in comparison with Olson's poetry. In this poem the field is "folded" and has "bounds"; it is "a given property of the mind / that
certain bounds hold against chaos." (This is appropriate, perhaps, in that this is the first poem of the volume, so that the process of opening -- implicitly an unfolding -- is to follow.) "Often I Am Permitted To Return to a Meadow" reveals its protective inwardness at the level of form also. The use of an array of romantic symbolism and courtly reference ("the First Beloved," "the Lady," "Queen Under the Hill," "a hall therein") is made appropriate by a context of flickering dream imagery, and the dance of the poem is a set of correspondences and linked opposites where image is transformed into image, light into shadow and vice versa.

The poem is thus a notable example of Duncan's use of "rime" (as opposed to the 'rhyme' of the phonetic equivalence of vowel sounds), where correspondence, parallelism, and metaphoric implication occur at many levels -- rhythm, imagery, occurrence, reference, may all generate rime. In the 'Meadow' poem, Platonic "forms," surface appearance, the "shadows that are forms," are manifestations of the (imaginative) reality of the First Beloved. Shadows and light (suggestive of an interplay of process) rime with the evanescence of "forms," rime with architectures which "fall," rime with flowers, with flames, which rime with the disturbances of words, rime with the movements of a children's game, rime with blown grass before "the sun's going down," which, finally, rimes with the end of dream and the end of the poem. "Often I Am Permitted To Return to a Meadow," qualifies its lyrical,
limpid surface, its seemingly effortless progression from image to image, with a complex pattern of rime, by means of which form and content are knit in terms of the elusive, changing reality of dream. Despite the hesitancy of the field being "folded," the poem is Black Mountain in its enactment, Black Mountain in the manner in which form arises naturally and organically out of content (is "an extension of content"), and Black Mountain for the way in which rime dances from image to corresponding image, one perception immediately following on another.

Duncan attempted some clarification of the concept of rime with "Notes on the Structure of Rime" (written for Warren Tallman, 1961). Here he establishes from etymological source (with the aid of his O.E.D.) rime as meaning "measured motion, time, proportion." Rime in sound, says Duncan, "is derived from our possible awareness (of occurrences) between total disresemblance of sounds and total resemblances." Duncan explores the implications of rime in the series of poems "The Structure of Rime," the first of which are included in The Opening of the Field. In "The Structure of Rime II," a "Messenger in the guise of a Lion" tells the poet that the Structure of Rime is "An absolute scale of resemblance and disresemblance," and that this scale "establishes measures that are music in the real world." In "The Structure of Rime I," "There is a woman who resembles the sentence. She has a place in memory that moves language." But she is an
ambiguous, or possibly threatened, figure, for, says Duncan, "I saw a snake-like beauty in the living changes of syntax." 94

In "The Structure of Rime III," the poet himself rises up into a "snake stance," thus lending considerable ambiguity to the linguistic role of the poet. 95 And in his "Notes on the Structure of Rime," Duncan's intentions are, perhaps, clarified when he explains that "The Structure of Rime" series are "in the shamanist genre of psychic double-talk," and a product of his admiration for the writings of St.-John Perse. 96 (Duncan lists among other influences on the work Blake, the Zohar, and Nietzsche.) 97 What holds for sound, says Duncan in the "Notes," holds also for correspondences and meanings:

We have a sense of recurrence or of nonrecurrence (that is, of number / measure) at the levels of theme, image constellation, syntactical units, etc. There are rimes of sentence structure. There are rimes of gender. 98

A "rime of gender" would appear to be provided by the Master of Rime of "The Structure of Rime IV," he presumably rimes with the "woman who resembles the sentence" of "The Structure of Rime I," and he certainly possesses her ambiguity; he is of the opposite of vision, into or out of the language of daily life, husband to one word, wife to the other; 99 breath that leaps forward upon the edge of dying.

Here the "Structure of Rime" series would appear to rime with the creation myth of the Old Testament. From this point of
view, snake-like syntax, in its tortuous involutions, tempts Eve, the sentence, to seduce male Rime from his function of establishing 'measure' (order or truth) as correspondences in the world of forms. Thus the poet's role is an attempt at redeeming a fallen language, one which hides rather than reveals the true order of things, so that poetry may "Create love as the leaves / create from the light life." 100 And in "The Structure of Rime VIII," the poet speaks of "a Lord that has allowed me to crawl thru interstices of Earth to restore truth after truth complete sentences of my Creator." 101 Conventional syntax is felt as restrictive, and the poet orders: "Grammarians from your side the never healing! Undo the bindings of immutable syntax!" 102 The plea appears to meet with no response as "The eyes that are horns of the moon feast on the leaves of trampled sentences." 103 "The Structure of Rime" series is, however, as Duncan warns us, "shamanist double-talk," and any attempt at providing an interpretative schema is undercut, for the most part, by a densely allusive imagery, a constant play of verbal wit and irony, and an evocation of Blakean tone, diction, and paradox that at times amount almost to parody (presumably, parody can be thought of as a form of ironic rime).

As noted, the open form and field working of The Opening of the Field declare Duncan's allegiance to Olson's projective verse, and "The Structure of Rime" is one attempt by Duncan at such a form of working as an extended series. The technique is
further extended with "Passages," of which the first thirty poems were published in *Bending the Bow* (1968). "Passages," form an ongoing sequence of poems of potentially unlimited inclusiveness, and which is probably less structured (more open) than similar works by Pound, Williams, Olson, and Zukofsky. Mythology, personal allusion, and reading from such sources as John Adams, Jakob Boehme, Baudelaire, Blake, Carlyle, Dante, Olson, and Pound are combined in a processed working which proceeds with Duncan's usual respect for the materials and the manner in which they will 'dictate' their own forms. The sequence is notable, in terms of content, for Duncan's inclusion of protest against the American intervention in Vietnam. In "Passages 25," "Up Rising" (*Of the War: Passages 22-27*, 1966), for example, Duncan writes:

> Now Johnson would go up to join the great simulacra of men, Hitler and Stalin, to work his fame with planes roaring out from Guam over Asia such blood and dreams as swell the idiot psyche out of its courses into an elemental thing until his name stinks with burning meat and heart honours. 10

Sometimes Duncan allows uneven passages, where the way of the poem seems temporarily lost; a procedure Duncan had adopted previously in such poems as, for example, "A Poem Beginning with a Line by Pindar" (*The Opening of the Field*). 106 The epigraph to "Passages I" appears to emphasize, in this context, how the "bounds against chaos" of "Often I Am Permitted To Return to a Meadow" have now been abandoned in favour of a
total openness. The epigraph, quoting the Roman emperor Julian the Apostate, reads: "For the even is bounded, but the uneven is without bounds and there is no way through or out of it." Generally, however, Duncan's method might be said to be summarised by himself in "Passages 2":

my mind a shuttle among set strings of the music lets a weft of dream grow in the day time, an increment of associations, luminous soft threads, the thrown glamour, crossing and recrossing, the twisted sinews underlying the work.

Robert Creeley (1926-)

At first glance, Creeley would not appear to fit easily into the category of a Black Mountain poet. His poems are usually short, and he has attempted none of the long, sequential, and paideuma forms which characterise the work of Olson and Duncan (although one exception here might be the work Pieces, 1968). And where Olson and Duncan both possess strong concepts of the nature of reality and the universe; Creeley is hesitant, unsure, and disinclined to make statements in large, abstract terms. As Creeley notes in the Preface to his For Love: Poems 1950-1960:

In any case, we live as we can, each day another -- there is no use in counting. Nor, more, say, to live than what there is, to live. I want the poem as close to this fact as I can bring it; or it, me.

But beyond the biographical reality of Creeley's involvement
with Black Mountain, for example, his teaching at Black Mountain College, his voluminous correspondence with Charles Olson, and his editing of the Black Mountain Review. Close attention to Creeley’s work reveals a strong sense of Olson’s “field.” From this point of view, Creeley sees the poem as being ‘given’ as being a contingent act devolving upon time and circumstance in a manner over which the poet has dangerously little control. Creeley also establishes, in the manner of the Objectivists and Olson’s “Objectivism,” a sense of the poem as an object enacting its own terms, form, and meaning. Many poems by Creeley seem to derive from the elliptical ambiguity of a poem such as William Carlos Williams’ “The Red Wheelbarrow,” where facets of the environment are selected and presented with a haunting sense of their innate significance, but where the poet is unable or unwilling to commit himself to discursive comment.

Additionally, many of Creeley’s poems reach tentatively after form with Olson’s method of perceptual flow, one perception immediately following on another. Creeley also follows Olson in adopting the line as a function of breath and speech; but where Olson usually employs a strong, percussive, driving line, Creeley’s lines are hesitant, and the breath-groups of stanzas enact an exploratory, often elliptical attempt at completed thought or statement. Again, as with Olson, Duncan, and William Carlos Williams, Creeley often manipulates line length as an emphasis of content, with
enjambment creating variant syntactical possibilities. Closely associated with this hesitant unfolding of a Creeley poem is a more or less absolute observation of Olson's requirement that the poem not suffer from the "lyrical interference" of the poet's ego. A great deal of Creeley's poetry displays uncertainty of self and environment; in particular, he is often concerned with establishing understanding of all that is unsure and divisive in his relationships with women. Creeley comments in "The Carnival" (For Love: Poems 1950-1960), "My method is not a / tenderness, but hope / defined." If there is an affirmation at all, it is that of "For Love," in the same volume, where Creeley speaks of:

some time beyond place, or
place beyond time, no
mind left to

say anything at all,
that face gone, now.
Into the company of love
it all returns.

Creeley's chief contribution to Black Mountain poetics was, of course, his observation in a letter to Charles Olson that "form is never more than extension of content." As noted, Olson adopted this viewpoint and quoted it in his essay "Projective Verse." An example of how Creeley puts this idea into practice, allowing the poem to evolve its own completed form is "Waiting" (Poems: 1950-1965), and here poetry itself is the subject, the content of the poem. Here the poet "pushes" the words and the lines towards an.
attempt at completion, but the line breaks emphasise how
the words "awkward, catch / and turn him to a disturbed /
and fumbling man." In the second stanza, the poem constantly
threatens to return to the stasis of silence. In the third
stanza, the "limits" explored in previous poems threaten to
delimit the explorations of the present poem, such that,
in the fourth stanza, there is only "a quiet, a dull / space
of hanging actions," which marks only how "some time / has
come and gone." In the fifth and final stanza, the poem
is finally cadenced, into completion with the realisation
that "That risk / is all there is." Creeley, then, has a
view of poetry very similar to Duncan's notion of "obedience"
and being broken before the demands of poetry. For Creeley,
the poet is engaged in "risk" with each new attempt at
writing, and is, in this sense, always at the mercy of the
'given' possibilities of content, and the extent to which
such possibilities can be coerced into yielding form. "Waiting"
is a poem which attempts no overt metaphysic, but the recog-
nition of "risk" is redolent of Creeley's sense of life as
totality, "we live as we can, each day another," and poetry,
as an area of human activity, reveals how this is a condition
of risk.

A similar poem is "The Pattern" (Poems: 1950-1965), where
Creeley emphasises the contingent processes of language. Here, Creeley indicates a duality of creative ego, where one
"I" wishes to use language without restriction but is kept
within bounds by a listening "I" and the limits of language.

The "I" of desired linguistic freedom:

wants to
be free but
impassive lies
in the direction
of its
words.

Creeley is thus submitting ego to the discipline of obedience, obedience to linguistic process and possibility, and so asks himself "I / speak to / hear myself / speak?" The process of poetry is then, for Creeley, a listening to what it is one discovers one has to say, or can say. The possibilities of language reveal the poet's own thoughts to the poet, and this is, for Creeley, another area of constant uncertainty. Only with an accumulation of patient, exploratory attempts can any sort of direction, any sort of knowing, become possible. In "I Keep to Myself Such Measures..." (Poems: 1950–1965), poems are rocks, "simple markers," indicating where the mind has travelled, and "daily the rocks / accumulate position." But there is no way back in this process, poetry creates, rather, "a way only to / hopefully come back to / where it cannot. All / forgets. My mind sinks." Poetry is not, therefore, a means to certainty. After Creeley has nudged a poem's lines toward a tentative sense of completion, achieved perception is still elusive: "There is nothing / but what thinking makes / it less tangible." In "The Immoral
Proposition" (For Love), Creeley appears to adopt a nihilistic position. Not only do insecurity and uncertainty undermine the identity of the poet ("The unsure / egoist is not / good for himself"), but "nothing is competent nothing is / all there is."123 Such a position, however, is never allowed to obliterat e Creeley's determination to pursue the poem and drive it past all uncertainties. In "The Dishonest Mailmen" (For Love), Creeley states his intention as "The poem supreme, addressed to / emptiness -- this is the courage / necessary."124

Poetry is then, for Creeley, not an activity that carries with it any reassurance of communication and relationship, but it is, nevertheless, a mode of establishing one's presence in the world and assessing the terms of that presence. In his essay "I'm Given To Write Poems," Creeley quotes from Allen Ginsberg's poem "Song" -- "I always wanted, / to return / to the body / where I was born" -- and comments:

That body is the "field" and is equally the experience of it. It is, then, to "return" not to oneself as some egocentric center, but to experience oneself as in the world, thus, through this agency, or fact we call,125 variously, "poetry."

It is possible to see here a similarity with Olson's views on the proprioceptive relation of poet to field, and Creeley both acknowledges the validity of, and seeks to promote, Olson's poetics and theoretical statements.126 Creeley also shares Duncan's notion of poetry being 'given' to one by the field, by its "permission," and Creeley has commented:
I'm given to write poems. I cannot anticipate their occasion. I have used all the intelligence that I can muster to follow the possibilities that the poem "underhand," as Olson would say, is declaring, but I cannot anticipate the necessary conclusions of the activity, nor can I judge in any sense, in moments of writing, the significance of that writing more than to recognize that it is being permitted to continue. 127

Even more emphatic, in its denial of intentionality, and in its implicit recognition of the poet's submission to processes of the field, processes that for Creeley are non-rational and non-human in their orders, is the statement:

Poetry has, you see, no discretion of a rational order. It finds itself where it is, and in those circumstances it speaks; that's precisely its power. I would not choose that, as a place to be, humanly or rationally, I simply found myself there.

The question immediately raised is that which occurs in the context of much of William Carlos Williams' poetry: is the poem equal to the occasion, the given conjuncture of field and poetic resource? In "The Innocence" (For Love), Creeley presents the field as a contingent environment, as landscape: "Looking to the sea, it is a line / of unbroken mountains." 129 Creeley accepts such contingent reality with a child-like sense of seeing the world afresh, as though even the simplest facts of location in the world are being appreciated for the first time:

It is the sky.
It is the ground. There we live, on it.
This is, in turn, a source of reassurance and calm: "It is a mist / now tangent to another/ quiet." "The Innocence"
of the title might, then, refer to Creeley's child-like,'innocent' acceptance of physical environment, its reassurance,its "evidence" of a place in which to be: "Here the leaves/come, there / is the rock in evidence." Creeley is 'innocent'de of larger intentions with the poem, perhaps, but at the same
time he is nagged by a persistent guilt that he cannot push the poem towards any larger, further view of reality (adult perception, perhaps, as opposed to child-like seeing). The rock is evidence against him as a poet, and he confesses: "What I come to do / is partial, partially kept." 131 The innocence of the title, is, finally, that of the poet who has yet to discover that he cannot come to the environment, the "field," with poetic resources that are equal to its given immensities and demands on expression.

Creeley's realization, and the essential stance of his poetry, is that it is not mind which defines the field, but,rather, field which defines the mind. In "Distance" (Poems: 1950-1965), mind devolves upon given moments of perception ("The / mind itself, / impulse, of form / last realised"), 132 so that the process of the writing is an attempt to record such impulses, and somehow "stumble" after or on the given poem. Writing is:

nothing
otherwise but
a stumbling
looking after, a
picture

of light through
dust on
an indeterminata distance. 133

"Distance" is one example of how Creeley's reaction to
the field is often akin to painting. In many poems the lines
enact movement of eye and body catching light, space, pattern,
and visual form. In "Time" (A Day Book), Creeley presents
the immediately proprioceptive location of body to field,
and says:

Moment to
moment the
body seems
to me to
be there: a
catch of
air, pattern 134
of space.

And in "Morning" (Later), Creeley attempts to catch a moment
of vision framed by a window opposite the table where he is
sitting writing. The poem becomes akin to an enactment of a
painting or the act of painting:

Shadows, on the far wall,
of courtyard, from the sun
back of house, faint

traceries, of the leaves,
the arch of the balcony --
greens, faded white. 135
This poem is, perhaps, an indication of how much Creeley owes to Pound and Imagist writing, and also, of course, to Williams, for as an act of description it is absolutely minimal. Rather than set description, the poem enacts a play of light and circumstance naturally encountered, one which arises easily into a sense of the field supplying its own equivalence of (visual) art, and which in turn receives the quiet celebration of Creeley's poem.

Not to seek to describe is, of course, a corollary of 'open field' poetics, for to describe is to be passive and inert before the processes of the field. (As noted, Olson's injunction, in this context, is that "Art does not seek to describe but to enact.") Creeley has commented in this context:

I never really wanted to describe anything. I think what I most hoped for was to be in the actual state of feeling where the statement became equal-ly with the act of whatever else was present. I don't like the sense of writing about things, and never have. I love to write when I'm brought to it, when I have to.

Creeley's poetry, then, celebrates process and the field as content evolving into form, not in terms of description but, rather, in terms of the kinetic enactment of content, its dynamics often registered in the emphases of line length and enjambement, and rhythm working either with or against inflections of voice and syntax. This receives its most coy expression in "A Piece" (The Finger: Poems 1966-1969), an
example of Creeley's most minimal poetry, where the content is rhythm enacted in terms of verbal count:

One and one, two, three.

The aesthetic value of such a poem resides in its ability to demonstrate how simply and economically poetry can cadence phrases into formal completion, by means of rhythm and verbal emphasis combined. At the same time, beyond its element of parody of regularly accented poetic forms, it indicates how poetry often devolves upon the movements and rhythms of the dance. It indicates the technical resources which lie behind Creeley's poem "The Finger" (The Finger: Poems 1966-1969), where the love relationship is enacted dance, and the poem is to communicate in terms of that dance:

And the power to tell is glory. One unto one unto one. And though all mistake it, it is one.

. . . . . . . . .

Lovely, lovely woman, let me sing, one to one to one, and let me follow.

Creeley is, of course, echoing Duncan here, and Duncan's use of the dance as a symbol, and here Duncan aligns himself with poetic tradition, of the relation between life and art. Creeley echoes Olson's enactment of the rhythms of natural speech in a poem such as "I Know a Man" (For Love), where conversation
with a friend, which switches abruptly from the lofty metaphoric ("the darkness sur- / rounds us") to the prosaic ("shall we & / why not, buy a goddamn big car"), is interrupted by the friend's interpolation "for / Christ's sake, look / out where yr going." It is interesting to note, in the context of this poem, that 'car' metaphors come easily to Creeley's mind when he discusses the art of poetry. Writing is:

like going into a spin in a car -- you use all the technical information you have about how to get that car back on the road; but you're not thinking 'I must bring the car back on the road, ' you are bringing the car back on the road or else you're off the cliff.

Creeley made this comment in interview with Charles Tomlinson, and Tomlinson replies to the metaphor with the observation that "All this would seem to be part of Olson's insistence that you move rapidly from one perception to another in a poem or simply bog down." Creeley does seek to follow Olson's precept, and Creeley's poetry is often most impressive when the poems achieve a relatively long length and can expand into a full perceptual flow. Examples of such poems are: "Anger" (For Love), "Distance" (Poems: 1950-1965), and "The Finger" (The Finger: Poems 1966-1969). In these poems, the risk of the poem losing direction, of going over the edge of the cliff, is constant, but often the poems are cadenced miraculously into completion by rhythm and achieved clarity of perception. "The Finger" is particularly fine for the manner in which a meeting between
mythic strangers is transformed into "radiance" by, as noted,
the rhythms of the dance:

She was young,
she was old,
she was small.
She was tall with
extraordinary grace. Her face
was all distance, her eyes
the depth of all one had thought of;
again and again and again.
NOTES

Chapter III - The Poetry and Poetics of Black Mountain


Through Pound, especially through Pound's renderings of Fenollosa and Confucius, Olson may have come to the notions of reality as process, the dynamism of objects, and the ethical imperative of action, but until he read Whitehead Olson seems not to have felt the coherence of these and other ideas in a system that could legitimately be called a metaphysics.


4 Olson, p. 4.

5 Olson, pp. 4-5.


7 Olson, "Human Universe," p. 5.

8 Olson, p. 6.
Olson, *The Special View of History*, p. 32.

Olson, "Human Universe," p. 5.

Olson, p. 10.

Olson, p. 3.

Olson, p. 4.


Olson, "Projective Verse," p. 16.

Olson, p. 16.

Olson, p. 20.

Olson, p. 19.

Olson, p. 19.


Olson, p. 18.
Olson, p. 19.
Olson, p. 20.
Olson, p. 24.
Olson, p. 25.
Olson, p. 25.
Olson, p. 16.
Olson, p. 17.
Olson, p. 17.


42 Charles Olson, "The Kingfishers," included with The Distances, p. 11.


44 This is a translation of the French in the text. See Olson, "The Kingfishers," p. 6.

45 Olson, p. 5.


53 Olson, A Bibliography on America for Ed Dorn, p. 13.

54 Charles Olson, The Maximus Poems (New York: Jargon /


59 Davey, p. 10.

60 Davey, p. 10.


62 Olson, p. 1.

63 Olson, p. 26.


65 Olson, The Maximus Poems, p. 3.

66 Olson, p. 2.

67 Olson, p. 107.

68 Olson, p. 3.

69 Olson, p. 108.


72 Duncan, "Pages from a Notebook," included with "Statements


76 Duncan, "Food for Fire, Food for Thought," in The Opening of the Field, p. 95.

77 See Duncan, "The Structure of Rime I," in The Opening of the Field, p. 12.

78 Duncan, p. 12.

79 Duncan, "The Law I Love Is a Major Mover," in The Opening of the Field, p. 10.


81 Duncan, p. 9.


83 Duncan, p. 217.

84 Duncan, "The Dance," in The Opening of the Field, p. 9.

85 Duncan, p. 9.

86 Duncan, "Often I Am Permitted To Return to a Meadow," in The Opening of the Field, p. 7.

87 Duncan, p. 7.

88 Duncan, p. 7.

Duncan, p. 42.


Duncan, p. 12.

Duncan, "The Structure of Rime III," in *The Opening of the Field*, p. 16.

Duncan, "Notes on the Structure of Rime," p. 44.

See Duncan, pp. 44–5.

Duncan, p. 44.

Duncan, "The Structure of Rime IV," in *The Opening of the Field*, p. 17.

Duncan, p. 17.

Duncan, "The Structure of Rime VIII," in *The Opening of the Field*, p. 70.

Duncan, p. 70.

Duncan, p. 70.


107 Duncan, epigraph to "Passages 1," in Bending the Bow, p. 9.

108 Duncan, "At the Loom," "Passages 2," in Bending the Bow, p. 11.

109 See Robert Creeley (with collages by Bobbie Creeley), Pieces (Los Angeles, Black Sparrow Press, 1963). This is a difficult work to categorize. Longer than most of Creeley's poems, it is the result of compilation of day-to-day writing, almost in the manner of a journal. The work coheres in terms of juxtaposition rather than formal connection of sections.


Creeley, "The Pattern," in Poems 1950-1965, p. 188.

Creeley, "The Pattern," p. 188.

Creeley, p. 188.


Creeley, p. 190.

Creeley, "The Immoral Proposition," in For Love, p. 31.

Creeley, "The Dishonest Mailman," in For Love, p. 29.

Robert Creeley, "I'm Given To Write Poems," in A Quick Graph, ed. Donald Allen (San Francisco: Four Seasons Foundation, 1970), p. 64.

See in particular Robert Creeley's commentaries on Olson's poetics in A Quick Graph, pp. 151-179.

Creeley, "I'm Given To Write Poems," p. 61.

Robert Creeley, Contemporary American Poets Read Their Works: Robert Creeley, Cassette Curriculum LCCCN 76-765157 (Everett / Edwards, 1971).


Creeley, p. 24.


Creeley, "Distance," p. 203.


Creeley, "Morning," in Later (New York: New Directions,

137 Creeley, Contemporary American Poets Read Their Works: Robert Creeley, Cassette Curriculum LC6ON 76-765157.


140 Creeley, "I Know a Man," in For Love, p. 38.


142 Charles Tomlinson, whilst interviewing Robert Creeley, Kulchur, Vol. 4, No. 16, p. 15.

CHAPTER IV
Conclusion

The poetry and poetics of Black Mountain can be understood firstly as a development from an American poetry of organic form as evidenced in the poetics of Emerson and Walt Whitman. Here, the essential concept is of the interrelationship of a poem's parts, such that content arises naturally into its most appropriate formal possibility at every level of the poem's structure. It becomes immediately apparent, with Whitman, that such poetry partakes of process. With Whitman, the processes are firstly ones of enactment, as he seeks to imbue his poetry with the energies of sexual and mystical union and joy, and the dynamics of a newly evolving nation. Secondly, enactment requires a process of cataloguing, whereby Whitman attempts to create an inclusive celebration of America; a celebration in terms of both geographic location and the democratic relations between persons. Leaves of Grass is a clear example of how organic, open, evolving poetic form has an epistemological basis.

It is a small step from the poetry of Whitman to the corollary of such form, as given by Robert Creeley: "form is never more than an extension of content." The rigorous care and exactitude with which Creeley evolves discrete form from
minimal, unobtrusive content is one of the triumphs of Black Mountain poetry, and an illustration of how much poetics need not necessarily result in long, sequential forms. Creeley's epistemology is essentially one of contingency and doubt: "we live as we can, each day another," he says, and his poetry is built on the accidents and uncertainties of a contingent world.

Creeley's poetic, a style so distinct in its voice and its successes that it would seem to justify the term 'aesthetic,' is, however, a natural development from the technical advances achieved by Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams. Pound countered Whitmanic "looseness" and obtrusive, catalogued content with the precision and epistemological ambiguity of the Image. Williams built on this advance to achieve the Objectivist poem; a poem which enacts its own movement and meaning, and attains its own formal becoming as independent, made object. The essence of Creeley's style is prefigured in such poems of Williams as "The Red Wheelbarrow," where Objectivist form combines with the ambiguity and mystery of the presented Image. Both Williams and Creeley, via the Objectivist method, achieve the openness of organic form within relatively short poems, and, at the same time, achieve this with precision, concision, and a 'natural' diction of everyday speech. They become, in effect, the new exemplars of the Imagist virtues as defined by Pound.

Pound realised, however, that the shortcoming of Imagism
was the essentially static quality it imparted to poems. Pound's adoption of the 'ideogrammic method,' as derived from Fenollosa's research on the structures of written Chinese, was an attempt at combining Imagism with a concept of dynamic form, where parts of a poem interrelate in terms of a constant interplay of juxtaposition and variant correlation. Pound's achievement was the discovery that the short, relatively enclosed forms of Imagist poetry could, via the ideogram, partake of kinetic process.

Olson was to adopt the ideogram as a formal strategy in, for example, 'The Kingfishers.' But Olson's attempt at dynamic, kinetic form was also a corollary of his view of nature, the universe, and the historic development of language. Olson regarded modern epistemology and logic as a reification of the universe, and a result of inherited Socratic discourse. He wished for a poetry where form and language are restored to the "projective" immediacy of pre-Socratic speech-acts. In short, poetry was to be the "act of the instant," was to achieve "shout (tongue)," and mesh the poet with the ongoing processes of the universe. The poet was thus to become a participant in the larger "field" of environment and perceived reality, was to incorporate the unanalyzable instants of perception in terms of proprioception, when physiological process might eventually terminate in the moment of the creative act. This process of "open" or "field composition" was intended to result in a poem which embodies the energies of the field,
and hence is "a high energy-construct."

The kinetic of Olson's projective verse, its field, is thus an equivalent, from one point of view, of the quality of enactment found in the poetries of Whitman and William Carlos Williams and the Objectivists. Olson's projective strategy is made available by their contributions to the development of poetic form. A poetry of enactment is a poetry which finds it can keep metaphor, simile, symbolism, and description at a minimum. The poem evolves in terms of the direct presentation of "things" (Williams states "no ideas but in things"), and flexible, naturally arising free verse rhythms and measure -- in terms of, for example, Williams' "variable foot." Above all, a poem which enacts, which has a projective form, evolves via a series of perceptions, and Olson saw such a perceptual flow, one perception following immediately on another, as the key to achieving an "energy-construct" and the kinetic of the ideogrammic collage.

Pound used the newly achieved ideogrammic method to work, in The Cantos, poetry against the epistemological limits of culture and history. The Cantos are, essentially, one huge, fused ideogram, where parts interrelate variantly across the barriers of geography, nationality, language, and historic cultural development. The Cantos constitute a paideuma, and they work at the intersection of place, person, and time, to enact both revolutionary cultural growth and historic cultural decay. William Carlos Williams creates a
locality, the city of Paterson, New Jersey (although the local is implicitly representative of a larger American totality). Paterson reflects Williams' concern with the immediate American environment and with the "American idiom" as a mode of poetic diction. As such it is a celebration of America which echoes Whitman's Leaves of Grass. Olson inherits both Pound's and Williams' models of paideuma, and also Williams' concern with American locality, to create his own long, sequential work of American place, The Maximus Poems. Olson also might be said to inherit from Pound the flexible and ironic use of persona (for example, Pound's use of persona in Hugh Selwyn Mauberley). Olson invokes, as persona, Maximus of Tyre, a philosopher of the second century A.D. who was concerned with, as Olson, the cultural terms and qualities of civilized life. And Maximus being "off-shore," he also enacts the Poundian notion of periplum, the mind voyaging through unfolding perception as though watching a coastline from a ship.

Robert Duncan inherits from Pound the use of "subject-rhyme" (Kenner's term), which Duncan terms "rime." Rime is a general structural equivalent of rhyme in sound, and can apply to; and work in terms of, virtually any element of a poem's form and content when correspondence is established. Correspondence might be in terms of either resemblance or disresemblance, and this establishes a "scale" or "measure" which
Duncan uses as a flexible means of attaining formal coherence in the midst of a constant verbal play of linked ironies and imagistic progression. Duncan's "Often I Am Permitted To Return to a Meadow" is a key poem which establishes Duncan's affinity, albeit in a mystical context, with Olson's field poetics, and confirms the dance as a key symbol in Duncan's poetry (it is a symbol of the relation between life and art, and here Duncan aligns himself with literary tradition.) In the 'Meadow' poem, Duncan's field has "bounds" and is "folded," but in Duncan's Passages, he achieves a fully open method of working equivalent to Olson's Maximus Poems, Williams' Paterson, and Pound's Cantos.

Poetry, for Duncan, is a "permission," and one must be obedient to its demands and evolving processes. A very similar humility is present in the poetry of Robert Creeley, where there is a constant sense of abnegation of ego in the face of the given complexities and possibilities of the field. This is indicative of that aspect of Black Mountain poetics which is probably the most difficult for the conventionally-minded poet to observe, if not to understand: that, in Olson's words, the poet must not allow the "lyrical interference" of ego to dominate the 'given' possibilities of the field. In this respect, for both Duncan and Creeley, to revise a poem is to create a new work. The field must be listened to, the ego must not impose its own designs except with great care and attention to field; and to revise is possibly to destroy the
evidence of what the field has shown forth. Duncan is a mystic in this regard, and it is to Olson's credit that he was able to unite in cooperation and friendship with a poet who held a view of the universe uniquely distinct from that of other Black Mountain poets.

This degree of shared concerns, open exchange of idea and opinion, and, finally, of personal friendship, is, perhaps, the most impressive aspect of Black Mountain -- quite in addition to, and perhaps beyond the fact that their work may be regarded as the key element in the formation of a new American poetics. Black Mountain poets were often very different from each other in personality, and they wrote poetries which remain individually distinct, whatever conceptual and methodological bases they may have happened to share. Yet they were never mean, insular, or narrowly competitive. They confronted contemporary reality, and shared in the formation of postmodern art and culture, with a spirit of generosity, a shared intelligence and mutual respect which are rare indeed. Whatever criticism we may have of their poetry and poetics, they remain, as Olson might have termed it, a poetic "polis," an ideal community.
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VITA AUCTORIS


1968-74 Work in fringe theatre, London, England, notably with the Group of Six and the Royal College of Art Experimental Unit.


1979 Published first collection of poetry: Long Time Sun Shining Down (Galloping Dog Press, U.K.). By this time work had also been published in little magazines and anthologies, including New Poetry 1977 (Arts Council of Great Britain) and Poetry South East 3 and Poetry South East 5 (South East Arts Association, England).

1980 Contributing writer to Poetry Poster project, South East Arts Association, England.

1982 Thesis M.A., Department of English, University of Windsor, Ontario, Canada.

Awarded Elliston Poetry Fellowship, University of Cincinnati, 1982-83.