

“Against the Source”: Daphne Marlatt’s Revision of Charles Olson

Sabrina Reed

Volume 26, Number 1, Spring 2001

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/scl26_1art08

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

The University of New Brunswick

ISSN

0380-6995 (print)

1718-7850 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Reed, S. (2001). “Against the Source”:: Daphne Marlatt’s Revision of Charles Olson. *Studies in Canadian Literature / Études en littérature canadienne*, 26(1), 132–144.

Article abstract

In order to examine the influence of Charles Olson on Daphne Marlatt it is useful to compare Marlatt’s Steveston with Olson’s *The Maximus Poems*. Although Marlatt identifies Olson as one of her mentors, she is also uneasy with his masculine-centred approach. This uneasiness emerges largely from Olson’s confidence in the physical body and its ability to claim a space for its poetry and its possessor. Alternately, Marlatt’s poems in Steveston often figure the female body and its experiences in problematic terms. Although Steveston and *The Maximus Poems* are similar in content and style, Marlatt begins a process of questioning just how, in the face of Olson’s universal male pronouncements on the body, her own female experience should be presented. Later in her career, particularly in *Touch to My Tongue*, Marlatt’s poetry becomes more grounded in the theories of feminist critics such as Irigaray and Cixous who emphasize the more celebratory aspects of the female body.

***“Against the Source”:* Daphne Marlatt’s Revision of Charles Olson**

SABRINA REED

WRITING IN HER ESSAY “Difference (em)bracing,” Daphne Marlatt lists Charles Olson as one of her “‘masters’ (in that sense of mentors)” (“Difference” 191), a statement that reflects her long history of contact with the man and his poetics. Marlatt, for instance, describes how she and others “hashed out Olson’s essay on projective verse” in 1961 (“There’s” 29). Two years later, she attended the Vancouver Poetry Conference, where Olson was one of the key speakers, and she afterwards published her lecture notes on the classes Olson gave that summer as “Excerpts from Journal Kept During the Summer of ’63 Conference, Vancouver.” Yet while Marlatt identifies Olson as one of her mentors, she also qualifies her position:

Somehow reading “the poet, he” to include me, i trained myself in that poetic, the injunctions to get rid of the lyric ego, not to “sprawl,” in loose description or emotion ungrounded in image, to pay strict attention to the conjoined movement of body (breath) and mind in the movement of the line, though it didn’t occur to me then to wonder whether my somewhat battered female ego was anything like a man’s, or whether my woman’s body had different rhythms from his, or whether my female experience might not give me an alternate “stance” in the world (one that wasn’t so much “in” as both in & outside of a male-dominated politic & economy. (“Difference” 191)

With its reiteration of such key Olsonian ideas as “the lyrical interference of the individual as ego,” “sprawl,” and the primacy of the breath as a measure of the poet’s line (“Projective” 24-25), this passage underlines Marlatt’s ties to Olson; yet it also shows her unease with his masculine-centred approach. By 1990, when she wrote “Difference (em)bracing,” Marlatt had studied the theories of Hélène Cixous, who writes in “The Laugh of the Medusa” that woman “must write her self” (250):

By writing her self, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display — the ailing or dead figure, which so often turns out to be the nasty companion, the cause and location of inhibitions. Censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time. (250)

Thus, Marlatt's questioning of Olson in her 1990 essay can be situated as Marlatt's rethinking of Olson and his dictates on "the conjoined movement of body (breath) and mind" ("Difference" 191) in light of Cixous's theories of a distinctly feminine bodily aesthetic.

Even in 1974, however, before Marlatt had much contact with feminist theory, she had begun to see that in order to "write her self" (Cixous 250) she needed to put some distance between Olson's theories of the body and the poetics of proprioception (poetry centred in the unique bodily experience of the individual poet) and her own. Olson's poetics, she seems to imply, are a result of his equation of the body with freedom, openness, and insight. But as she illustrates in *Steveston*, a woman's experience of her body is not always as optimistic or as open as Olson's. Iris Marion Young notes in *Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays in Feminist Philosophy and Social Theory* that "the woman lives her body as *object* as well as subject. [...] An essential part of the situation of being a woman is that of living the ever-present possibility that one will be gazed upon as a mere body, as shape and flesh that presents itself as the potential object of another subject's intentions and manipulations, rather than as a living manifestation of action and intention" (155). While Marlatt in *Steveston* clearly shows her allegiance to Olson and his poetics, she also challenges his confidence in the physical body and its ability to claim a space for its poetry and its possessor.

More than any other work by Marlatt, *Steveston* bears striking resemblances, both in style and content, to Charles Olson's *Maximus* sequence. Olson and Marlatt establish themselves as centres of consciousness whose movements through their respective locales allow them to comment on the lives and histories they encounter. Both *Steveston* and *The Maximus Poems* focus on the history of fishing communities and the tensions between individual and corporate interests. *Maximus* and *Steveston* condemn the outside corporate and cultural forces that attack the independence and self-reliance of the old-style fishermen and women. Marlatt, for instance, writes of "This corporate growth that monopolizes / the sun. moon & tide, fish-run" (*Steveston* 89), while Olson describes "the wondership stolen by,

/ ownership" (*Maximus* 9). As Olson puts it, there are "No eyes or ears left / to do their own doings (all / invaded, appropriated, outraged)" (13). The homogenizing forces of mass industry and culture attack people at the source of their strength: their ability to live as discrete, self-reliant individuals. In her poem "Ghosts," for example, Marlatt combines her description of an alienated Japanese fisherman with the demise of another form of "ghost," the "marsh gas" (105) whose flickers were once mistaken for the souls of the dead. Now, however, "We only know the extinction / of open marsh by concrete; the burial of burial ground by corporate / property" (117). And so the fisherman returns to "a decomposed ground choked by refuse, profit, & the / concrete of private property; to find [him]self disinherited from / [his] claim to the earth" (118). The issue of disinheritance or estrangement from what Olson, quoting Heraclitus, calls "that with which he is most familiar" (*Special* 14) is central to both *Steveston* and *The Maximus Poems*, but the authors' responses on this crucial issue are quite different.

As his poetic theory suggests, Olson counters the dehumanizing and disinheriting effects of homogeneity with a celebration of the individual as "he" dwells in the physical body. Olson's is a historical perspective, as he situates the beginning of "man's" estrangement from "himself" in the fifth century B.C., with the rise of Socrates and Plato. In Olson's opinion, these men imposed a split on the human species, causing us to value the mental (especially the mind's ability to classify, dissect, and analyze) over the physical. Olson, however, insists that "we are ourselves both the instrument of discovery and the instrument of definition" ("Human" 53). In other words, it is through residing in one's own body, in one's own sense of self, that one discovers the universe.

Olson's concern with what he calls "Proprioception"¹ can be tied to his belief that "one's life is informed from and by one's own literal body" ("Proprioception" 18). A term from physiology, proprioception describes the sixth sense that allows an organism to maintain balance and bodily awareness. We do not "lose" an arm or a leg just because we can't see it, nor do we collapse when we stop paying attention to the fact that we are standing. Olson extends this idea of the body's innate sense of itself to include an individual's response to his or her environment and the poet's response to his or her subject. Thus, Olson's famous dictum that the arbiter of the poetic line is the breath comes from his understanding that insight begins with an individual centred in the physical body. Olson's ideal poetic protagonist centres "himself" in the moment, without the intervention of what Olson, quoting Keats, calls "*the Egotistical Sublime*"

("Projective" 15), the assertion of the analytical function into the world of pure perception and understanding.

Marlatt's critical writings, her interviews, and her poetic style all show a poet drawn to the poetics of proprioception as outlined by Charles Olson. She has been called "one of [the] most disciplined proponents" (Wah 15) of proprioceptive writing, someone who, to quote George Bowering's significantly titled interview, has been "Given this Body" and understands how "the connection is a connection with the body" (33). In her poem, "Steveston as you find it:" for example, Marlatt mirrors Olson's concern with eradicating the analytical, generalizing voice. After the initial colon of "Steveston as you find it:" she provides a definition of sorts: "multiplicity simply there: the physical matter of / the place (what matters) meaning, don't get theoretical now, the cannery" (90). Marlatt's style often works through accretion of detail, as she defines, refines, and redefines her experience in the light of new sensory data. Thus, her initial definition of "multiplicity simply there" can't stand on its own. Yes, it is apt, and sums up Marlatt's varied experience of Steveston quite well. Yet Steveston, as she is about to show, is never "simply there." Each bit of "what matters," when looked at with attention, opens up into a startling range of revisions. At the same time, Marlatt's speaker reminds herself, "don't get theoretical now." For a theory at this point would suggest closure: one "egotistical sublime" moment instead of the multiplicity she favours.

In the next verse paragraph, Marlatt illustrates the "perception to perception" style made famous by Olson and his contemporaries. As Douglas Barbour points out, "the poem moves continually, through its language, to new perceptions, new statements" (184). "Again and again, here as elsewhere in *Steveston*, the punning structure of language leads the poet further into the net of perceptions she seeks to speak" (185). Thus, Marlatt writes,

It's been raining, or it's wet. Shines everywhere a slick on the surface of things wet gumboots walk over, fish heads & other remnants of sub/ or marine life, brought up from under. (90)

Marlatt begins by showing her uncertainty. She's not sure, at first, if the "wet" she sees is caused by rain or something else. Soon, however, she recognizes the slick of wet "fish heads & other remnants." She redefines "wet" to mean blood, while at the same time reminding us of the sea from which these "bodies reduced to non-bodies" (90) have come. Now her perception moves once more as she shifts from "things wet gumboots walk over" to the more precise

Reduced to the status of things hands
 lop the fins off, behead, tail, tossed, this matter that doesn't matter,
 into a vat or more correctly box the forklifts will move, where they swim,
 flat of eye — deathless that meaningless stare, "fisheye" (is it only
dead we recognize them?) in a crimson sauce of their own blood. (90)

Steveston, "the place (what matters)," is juxtaposed with "this matter that doesn't matter" as Marlatt's speaker strives to come to terms with the carnage she moves through. The whole passage, in fact, works through a kind of juxtapositional elision, as Marlatt shows how, in Olson's famous dictum, "ONE PERCEPTION MUST IMMEDIATELY AND DIRECTLY LEAD TO A FURTHER PERCEPTION" ("Projective" 17). Thus, "what matters" gains new meaning when redefined by "matter that doesn't matter." "Meaning, don't get theoretical now" looks different when it later resurfaces as "deathless that meaningless stare." Like Olson before her, Marlatt pushes open the linear progression of the sentence, substituting the logic of association for the dictates of traditional grammar.

Marlatt's verse is proprioceptive because it relies on one centre of consciousness, Marlatt's own, experiencing her world viscerally, without the compulsion to theorize unity or completion. She exists in the moment as a perceiving presence, her openness signalled by her uncertainty, her redefining of what she sees. In "Steveston as you find it:" Marlatt doesn't tell what she found so much as illustrate the process of finding itself.

Marlatt's espousal of proprioceptive techniques in *Steveston* can be summarized in her statement "but it isn't self, it's everything *beyond* self, as it is transmitted by or *through* self (Olson & Gloucester again)" ("Correspondences" 16). Yet even though Marlatt's techniques are proprioceptive, Marlatt subtly challenges Olson's notion of the rightness of proprioception, with its insistence on the body's ability to interpret the outside world "correctly," by countering it with the difficulties of "placing" oneself in a world which both defines women and resists their self-definition. Marlatt uses her poem *Steveston* to imply a question: "If the body is the key arbiter of perception, what happens when a woman is not 'given this body' so much as she is estranged from it?" Heraclitus's statement that "Man is estranged from that with which he is most familiar" (qtd. in Olson, *Special* 14) applies doubly to woman, since, as Marlatt shows, she, like the salmon on which the economy of Steveston is based, is commodified, controlled, and reduced to non-body.

When Olson talks about how to counter “man’s” estrangement from “his” body, he consistently uses metaphors of freedom of movement. Olson speaks of how the poet “works in OPEN,” how he employs “COMPOSITION BY FIELD,” and about “the *kinetics* of the thing” (“Projective” 16). It could be said, in fact, that in Olson’s poetics the physical body represents freedom from societal and poetic norms, whether capitalism or closed verse systems. But perhaps it is precisely because Olson’s body and breath are male (and Caucasian) that this freedom is possible. Using Simone de Beauvoir’s work as a starting point, Iris Marion Young theorizes possible reasons for differences in “body comportment, motility and spatiality” (141) between males and females. Keeping in mind, as she does, that her account applies only to “women situated in contemporary advanced industrial, urban, and commercial society” (143) and that her analysis puts too much emphasis on the “liability” (15) rather than the potentiality of being female, Young’s work can help shed light on how Olson and Marlatt differ in their experience of the body.

To begin, Young reiterates Beauvoir’s analysis of woman’s role as both subject and object. Because “the culture and society in which the female person dwells defines woman as Other” (144), it is difficult for woman to see herself as an autonomous subject:

At the same time, however, because she is a human existence, the female person necessarily is a subjectivity and transcendence, and she knows herself to be. The female person who enacts the existence of women in patriarchal society must therefore live a contradiction: as human she is a free subject who participates in transcendence, but her situation as a woman denies her that subjectivity and transcendence. (144)

Young then applies Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s theories of the “lived body” that comprises not only an objective, scientific definition but all the cultural and societal relations which that body negotiates:

The body is the first locus of intentionality, as pure presence to the world and openness upon its possibilities. The most primordial intentional act is the motion of the body orienting itself with respect to and moving within its surroundings. There is a world for a subject just insofar as the body has capacities by which it can approach, grasp, and appropriate its surroundings in the direction of its intentions. (148)

For Young, however, Merleau-Ponty’s belief in the body’s potential as a

locus of perception is curtailed by Beauvoir's acknowledgement of woman's difficult subjectivity. Yes, women experience the world through and in their bodies, but they also experience themselves as objects, as the other apart from themselves. It is on these grounds that I would question Barbour's categorization of Marlatt as a "Phenomenological I." While I agree with his assertion that Olson, although not having "read phenomenology" (177) is in many ways a phenomenological thinker, Barbour's claim for Marlatt's "Phenomenological I" that "tends to look outward, to a place which will emerge into the energy of language through her immediate articulation of her perceptive engagement with it as it occurs" (179), is tempered for me by Marlatt's situating herself as both subject and object, experiencing, in Young's terms, "her body as a *thing* at the same time that she experiences it as a capacity" (147).

Diana Relke has written that *Steveston* "return[s] again and again to the idea that human culture invites its own disinheritance from the earth by treating nature the way it treats women" (44), and she quotes Marlatt's conflation of "white women, white bellies of salmon thieved by powerful boats" (118) to make her point. In fact, *Steveston* begins with a strong equation of the bodies of women with the bodies of the salmon. In the second poem in the series, "Imperial Cannery, 1913," Marlatt envisions a young girl beginning a life of work at the cannery. The lines

Now she is old enough to be her
mother inside, working, with the smallest one standing by her skirt
in grubby dress, & the blood streams down the wooden cutting board
as the 'iron chink' (that's what they call it) beheads each fish (84)

convey a double meaning. To be working "inside" means "to be her / mother inside," to have inherited the signs of female maturity: menstruation and childbearing. Marlatt links the turn of the wheel in the factory with the salmon's cyclical return and the turn of the wheel of chance: "Now she is old enough for the wheel's turn, she is feeling her / body in its light dress wind blows thru" (84). The female body links to the body of the salmon as an entity to be used and assessed. It is at once at home in the world and disinherited from true ownership.

Where Olson's formulations of the body stress expansion and inclusion, Marlatt's formulations stress containment. She speaks, for instance, of "being inescapably lockt into menstrual cycles, into pregnancy, childbirth, & so on" ("Given" 73), a fact she picks up on in *Steveston* when she describes the cyclic nature of the salmon's, and by extension women's, lives. Even her take on "Projective Verse," with its notion of the poet as the per-

ceiving centre of the poem, stresses how the poem is *limited* to that one perceiving centre. She comments, for instance, "All the reader has of Steveston is how I see it. I mean you've got to get familiar with the grid of my consciousness, because that's what's transmitting it. There's nothing outside of that" ("Given" 78).

Olson, on the other hand, insists that when the perceiving self truly becomes active, the larger *Self* takes over. As his essay "Apollonius of Tyana" indicates, Olson's sense of self is coloured by Indian philosophy. It is in India that Apollonius dances his "*dance of recognition*" (150) as he celebrates "the restoration to him of the sense that everything belongs to him to the degree that he makes himself responsible for it as well as for himself" (147). Thus, Olson's sense of the ideal self, at once *in* the body and attached to all living things, allows him to construct his larger-than-life Maximus persona. Olson takes the Eastern idea of Self and turns it into a kind of "manifest destiny" that allows him, paradoxically, to speak as an authority even while "he wars against Caesarism (and the 'universals' which lead to it and which it promotes)" ("Apollonius" 151). Where Marlatt contracts her poetry to the perceptions of one persona, limited to the size of herself, Olson expands his Maximus poems to embrace a larger-than-life perspective.

An analysis of the opening poems of *Maximus* and *Steveston* highlights this striking difference. Olson's poem, titled "I, Maximus of Gloucester, to You," introduces Olson's poetic persona and his right to speak for *his* place. He is Maximus of Gloucester, speaking to *you*: his friend Vincent Ferrini and then, by extension, other individuated entities who can still hear his message. Olson's speaker insists on "my city" (1), "my roofs" (2), "my people" (2), for he is, as a later poem suggests, "Root person in root place" (12).

Marlatt, however, avoids speaking as "I" until the ninth poem in the collection, choosing instead to recount the stories of others through her own focussed but unobtrusive gaze. Instead of pronouncing on Steveston as its "root person," she asks the reader to "Imagine: a town," thus including the reader in the act of perceiving her vision of Steveston. In addition, she launches almost immediately into "He said" (83) as she recounts differing explanations for a fire which destroyed much of the town. For all she says of her consciousness controlling the poem, her presence as persona is minimal, especially when compared to Olson's. For Olson is physically at ease with his subject. He is an American, he grew up in and around Gloucester, and he is at home with his place. As Marlatt reminds us in her essay "Entering In," she is an immigrant, an outsider to Steveston, and a

naturalized Canadian (22). In fact, in *Steveston* she tends to write from the immigrant perspective, for she consistently shows how she does not fit in with the people around her. Chris Hall, for instance, states that “Marlatt is confronting a form of work she is not familiar with — she is not quite sure whether it will be soup or coffee a woman is most likely to pour from a thermos during her break” (150); and she qualifies her discussion of *Steveston* in one poem with the repeated “No, that’s not it” (90).

While Charles Olson, and before him, William Carlos Williams,³ identify their respective cities with a dominant, larger-than-life figure who personifies an ideal individuated response to the environment, Marlatt shows no such self-confidence in her stance as poetic “centre” in *Steveston*. As she puts it, “To begin with, to write I, to assume our own centrality as ground, goes against all our gender-conditioning and is a frightening first step in autobiography and journal-writing” (“Difference” 192). Given the ways *Steveston* reflects *The Maximus Poems* and the tradition of the long poem going from Whitman, to Williams, to Olson, it seems significant that Marlatt should eschew the “Song of Myself” present in her male predecessors. Laurie Ricou, for instance, writes of the absence of the narrator as subject in *Steveston*:

The elided Daphne, the silent interviewer, emerges in her absence: she is slightly different from all *Steveston*, as she, through language, finds it. The key technique in the poem is the labyrinth of unclosed parentheses. Daphne Marlatt is the absent woman recording, who would be in the poem if the parenthesis ever closed and the text returned to its main subject. (207)

To use Ricou’s phrase, Marlatt’s stance as “the absent woman recording” creates a missing link in the text, particularly when the reader compares it to the voices in Olson and Williams. In the poem, “Low Tide. A beached vessel,” for example, Marlatt describes how three boys vandalize a beached boat: “high & dry on rocks, angularly / beached, bleached, like some dying fish,” the boat is “silent” (95); her only defense is passive resistance. “Inscrutably closed, she allows no keys to hold, nothing so easy” (95), but the boys continue “the joyous act of ‘making’ her, their secret catch” (96). In contrast to the boat’s silence, “An older man [...] anonymously watching” (95) attempts to stop the vandalism. While he doesn’t succeed in stopping the boys, his “voice of authority” (95), however muted, draws attention to Marlatt’s lack of voice here. If Marlatt is watching the boys’

actions, as the premise of the poem suggests that she is, where is *her* intervening voice? Diana Relke writes that “in acting out their erotic fantasies *vis-à-vis* the gillnetter, these boys make it possible to survive their oppressive containment at the lowest rung of the male hierarchy” (41), but Marlatt shows herself to be either absent from or outside of that hierarchy.

The poems “End of Cannery Channel” and “Work” show Marlatt’s distance from her subject most clearly. In the first of these poems, Marlatt stands on the dock with her notebook while some Japanese fishermen work to raise the mast of their boat. When Marlatt asks if she can help raise the mast, the men respond with sexual innuendo. They see her as “a woman on their float. Too weak to lift the pole” (98), isolated by “the rift of language, race, & sex” (98). Similarly, when Marlatt meets one of the same fishermen in the poem “Work,” he responds to her sexually as “the young woman from *out there*” (102). Marlatt implies that the fisherman does not see her so much as he sees “an old / dream my hair, my body happen to fit: the incarnate goal of all / that’s *out there*” (102). Just as the fisherman “Dream[s] of seizing silver wealth that / swims” (100)⁴ in order to achieve financial success, he also wants to achieve status through an imagined physical conquest. While Marlatt admits that the distortion is mutual, she “persist[s], also, in seeing *them*, these men” (102), she focuses on her body as the site of projected fantasy.

As Brenda Carr notes, in *Steveston* “the quest for the outlawed woman, the elusive female subject, spirals through the text, beckoning the woman writer and reader alike” (85). It is Carr’s assertion that in *Steveston* Marlatt “writes with that subversive Penelopean double gesture of unweaving her relationship to the long poem tradition that she is writing out of, and weaving a new relationship to the emerging feminist long poem counter-tradition” (90). Carr argues that Marlatt comments back on *Steveston* in her later book *Savage* (1991), and she makes a valuable point when she shows how Marlatt’s feminism emerges and deepens from 1974 to 1991. Certainly, *Steveston* shows Marlatt’s emergent feminism in its foregrounding of female experiences, and Marlatt’s central description of Inez Houvinen, a Finnish fisherwoman, creates, as Carr suggests, “a lyrical image of a woman’s life running free, free from company exploitation, free to work out her own destiny” (89). It is also true, however, that in *Steveston* Marlatt often figures the female body and its experiences in problematic terms, an attempt, I argue, to distance herself from the masculinist affirmation of the body in Olson’s work.

After all, Charles Olson writes in “Maximus to Gloucester, Letter 14,”

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

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

Although the “any of us” Olson describes here might be said to include women, the overwhelming image is of the male Adam, straddling “the world’s directions” at “the center of a circle.” Thus, although Olson consistently writes against the enforcement of universals in his work, there is one universal, the universal male, which he does not challenge. It could be argued, in fact, that Olson indulges in the very practice of sameness which Luce Irigaray challenges in her work: “If we keep on speaking the same language together, we’re going to reproduce the same history. Begin the same old stories all over again. [...] If we keep on speaking sameness, if we speak to each other as men have been doing for centuries, as we have been taught to speak, we’ll miss each other, fail ourselves” (82). Marlatt, then, in *Steveston* begins a process of questioning just how, in the face of Olson’s universal male pronouncements on the body, her own female experience should be presented. Later in her career, notably in *Touch to My Tongue*, Marlatt would ground her work in the more celebratory stance toward the body found in the works of Irigaray and Cixous. Her first step, as she presents it in *Steveston*, is to show herself as “not the same,” to write, in a sense, “*against* the source” (*Steveston* 122). While her style and general subject matter in *Steveston* put her in debt to Olson, she maintains her distance from his poetics by creating an internal critique of at least part of his position. By identifying with the salmon, “these bodies reduced to non-bodies” (90), Marlatt undermines any self-confidence she may project in the physical body, and, by extension, in the poetics she admittedly supports. In a 1991 interview with Brenda Carr, Marlatt comments: “When Cixous talks about the way a woman speaks in public, how she launches all of her body into the act of speaking, that resonated for me with Olson’s sense of the body’s rhythms in passionately engaged thought moving the breath line.” But she also goes on to say, “But you can’t make a simple transference. Woman’s body has been so repressed in our culture — fetishized on the surface but repressed deeply in terms of our actual sexuality and the force of our desire. It has been a

long journey for me to come into my body, to be centred in, the *subject* of, my desire and not the object of someone else's" (99). Her final words in *Steveston*, after all, celebrate

sometime creatures of
motive that swim, *against* the source, but always continuing to return, always
these lovely & perilous bodies drifting in spawn, swarm on out to sea. (122)

NOTES

¹ Oliver Sacks provides an excellent definition of proprioception in his essay "The Disembodied Lady":

what Sherrington once called "our secret sense, our sixth sense" — that continuous but unconscious sensory flow from the movable parts of our body (muscles, tendons, joints), by which their positions and tone and motion are continually monitored and adjusted, but in a way which is hidden from us because it is automatic and unconscious. (43)

² George F. Butterick points out that Olson saw Gloucester as the final end of the migratory movement of a people. Olson writes: "I regard Gloucester as the final movement of the earth's people, the great migratory thing ... migration ended in Gloucester. The migratory act of man ended in Gloucester ... the motion of man upon the earth has a line, an oblique, northwest-tending line, and Gloucester was the last shore in that sense" (7). Olson, in other words, views the history of migration from the perspective of the Greco-Roman/European tradition, and thus the term "manifest destiny" does not seem out of place. Olson's celebration of the colonization of Gloucester largely ignores the displacement of Native peoples or even the slaves who made a slightly later forced migration to the "New" World. Jeffrey Walker writes of Olson's mythos: "In making America the inheritor of a cultural event that begins perhaps at El-Amarna and that includes the entire sweep of Western history *and* pre-history, Olson achieves a grand enlargement of the major nineteenth-century topos in the rhetoric of American destiny — namely, the westward course of empire" (212).

³ Chris Hall writes of the similarities between *Steveston* and *Paterson* in his article "Two Poems of Place."

⁴ Marlatt echoes, either deliberately or by accident, a phrase from Charles Olson's *Maximus Poems IV, V, VI*. The poem, "*for Robt Duncan, / who understands / what's going on / — written because of him / March 17, 1961*" contains the lines: "green fields / to dry the silver wealth in steady / sweetening sun" (n. pag.).

WORKS CITED

- Barbour, Douglas. "The Phenomenological I: Daphne Marlatt's *Steveston*." *Figures in a Ground: Canadian Essays on Modern Literature Collected in Honor of Sheila Watson*. Ed. Diane Bessai and David Jackel. Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie, 1978. 174-88.
- Butterick, George F. *A Guide to the Maximus Poems of Charles Olson*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1978.
- Carr, Brenda. "Re-casting the Steveston Net: Recalling the Invisible Women from the Margins." *Line* 13 (1989): 83-95.

- Cixous, Hélène. "The Laugh of the Medusa." Trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen. *New French Feminisms: An Anthology*. Ed. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1980. 245-64.
- Hall, Chris. "Two Poems of Place: Williams' *Paterson* and Marlatt's *Steveston*." *Canadian Review of American Studies* 15.2 (1984): 141-57.
- Irigaray, Luce. "When Our Lips Speak Together." Trans. Carolyn Burke. *Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader*. Ed. Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick. New York: Routledge, 1999. 82-90.
- Marlatt, Daphne. "Between Continuity and Difference: An Interview with Daphne Marlatt." Interview with Brenda Carr. *West Coast Line* 25.1 (1991): 99-107.
- . "Correspondences: Selected Letters." *Line* 13 (1989): 5-31.
- . "Difference (em)bracing." *Language in Her Eye: Views on Writing and Gender by Canadian Women Writing in English*. Ed. Libby Scheier, Sarah Sheard, and Eleanor Wachtel. Toronto: Coach House, 1990. 188-93.
- . "Entering In: The Immigrant Imagination." *Readings From the Labyrinth*. Ed. Smaro Kamboureli. Edmonton: NeWest, 1998. 17-24.
- . "Excerpts from Journal Kept During the Summer of '63 Conference, Vancouver." *Olson* 4 (1975): 76-85.
- . "Given This Body: An Interview with Daphne Marlatt." Interview with George Bowering. *Open Letter* 4.3 (1979): 32-88.
- . "Long as in Time? *Steveston*." *The Long Poem Anthology*. Ed. Michael Ondaatje. Toronto: Coach House, 1979. 316-18.
- . *Steveston*. *The Long Poem Anthology*. Ed. Michael Ondaatje. Toronto: Coach House, 1979. 83-123.
- . "There's This and This Connexion." Interview with David Arnason, Dennis Cooley, and Robert Enright. *CV/II* 3.1 (1977): 28-33.
- Olson, Charles. "Apollonius of Tyana." *Selected* 133-56.
- . "Human Universe." *Selected* 53-66.
- . *The Maximus Poems*. New York: Jargon/Corinth, 1960.
- . *Maximus Poems IV, V, VI*. London: Cape Goliard, 1968.
- . "Projective Verse." *Selected* 15-26.
- . "Proprioception." *Additional Prose: A Bibliography on America, Proprioception, & Other Notes & Essays*. Ed. George F. Butterick. Bolinas: Four Seasons, 1974. 17-19.
- . *Selected Writings of Charles Olson*. Ed. Robert Creeley. New York: New Directions, 1966.
- . *The Special View of History*. Ed. Ann Charters. Berkeley: Oyez, 1970.
- Relke, Diana M.A. "'time is, the delta': *Steveston* in Historical and Ecological Context." *Canadian Poetry* 38 (1996): 29-48.
- Ricou, Laurie. "Phyllis Webb, Daphne Marlatt and Simultitude: Journal Entries from a Capitalist Bourgeois Patriarchal Anglo-Saxon Mainstream Critic." *A Mazing Space: Writing Canadian Women Writing*. Ed. Shirley C. Newman and Smaro Kamboureli. Edmonton: Longspoon/NeWest, 1986. 205-15.
- Sacks, Oliver. "The Disembodied Lady." *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat and Other Clinical Tales*. New York: Harper Collins, 1985. 43-54.
- Wah, Fred. Introduction. *Net Work: Selected Writing*. By Daphne Marlatt. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1980. 7-21.
- Walker, Jeffrey. "The Maximus Poems." *Bardic Ethos and the American Epic Poem: Whitman, Pound, Crane, Williams, Olson*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1989. 203-35.
- Young, Iris Marion. *Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays in Feminist Philosophy and Social Theory*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1990.