Much like a map, William Oxley’s poetry functions as a guide helping us find our way in today’s complicated world of time and place. The narrative aspects of his poetry engage our sense of the outer world we inhabit while his philosophical insights touch our inner being. Because of this engaging dualistic quality, one also occasionally found in maps, Oxley’s poem *A Map of Time* has been selected for the textural element of this year’s broadsheet.

Born and raised in Manchester, England, Oxley lived in and near London for many years working as a chartered accountant and developing his poetic talent. In 1976, he and his family moved to Brixham, Devon, where he began concentrating full-time on his poetry. His publications include over a dozen books, and he has a strong interest in the “long poem”—an involved poetic form that interleaves several simultaneous themes for hundreds and sometimes thousands of lines. Today, at age 64, he continues writing as well as coediting *The Long Poem Newsletter*, which he helped establish in 1995.

Oxley’s autobiographical poem, *A Map of Time*, follows his passage through life and brings out his views and observations through the course of five poetic phases plus an epilogue. Events, people, and comments divulge a landscape lived, places visited, and times remembered. In this long poem of 3,103 lines, his ambition is to “take the poet’s wordy pen and try to compass out a map of time for men: show them first the stunted world they’ve made...,” and to state “that maps are of time, not place.” Oxley’s poem succeeds because only a “long poem can tell a complex tale” like this and, for that reason, it becomes “the best vehicle for an integrated vision of life.”

To this end, Oxley’s long poem, much like a map, integrates different aspects of his life (and our world) and renders the result in a passionate form.

Joining Oxley’s poem on this year’s broadsheet is a map by seventeenth-century German mathematician Franz Ritter. What at first appears to be a confused map of the western hemisphere turns out to be a highly mathematical map that uses a projection design linked to time as well as place. Ritter’s 1610 gnomonic projection map displays a strong relationship to sundials with the ability to show time using a gnomon. It is an intriguing map form. Meridians and the Equator are shown as straight lines while the other parallels are drawn as conic sections. The center point of the map, i.e., where the gnomon would be placed so the map could be used to tell time, is 45°N 10°E, and a shadow point would be cast onto a meridian that then indicates the local sun time. The prime meridian on this map runs through the Fortunate Islands. Engraved by P. Troeschel, a Nuremberg engraver, this map will be featured in Volume Three of the *History of Cartography*.

In uniting the artistic works of Oxley and Ritter, time’s subtle aspects appear in interesting ways. For Oxley, the words from *A Map of Time* mark out a map based on a life lived and places visited, a translation of place into time. Ritter’s map converts time into place because the gnomonic projection uses shadow touching place to tell time. This intermingling of time and place suggests that, while time may be a single entity, we see it emphasized in various ways depending on the form of map used.


This broadsheet was printed on Arches Cover Buff paper using a Vandercook No. 4 Press at the Juniper Press, Madison, Wisconsin. The type is Walbaum and was set by Michael and Winifred Bixler, Skaneateles, New York. Block by Royal Graphix, La Crosse, Wisconsin. Two hundred and sixty-five copies have been initialed and numbered.

Commentary by Dana A. Freiburger.

Published 2003 by the History of Cartography Project, Department of Geography, University of Wisconsin, 550 North Park Street, Madison, WI 53706-1491 U.S.A. Telephone: (608) 263-3992 Fax: (608) 263-0762 E-mail: hcart@geography.wisc.edu

Web site URL: http://www.geography.wisc.edu/histcart