

Polis Is This —

“quite simply, the best film made on an American Poet, ever.”

— Bill Corbett, Program of Writing and Humanistic Studies at MIT

Maximus to Gloucester, Letter 27 (withheld) – Charles Olson

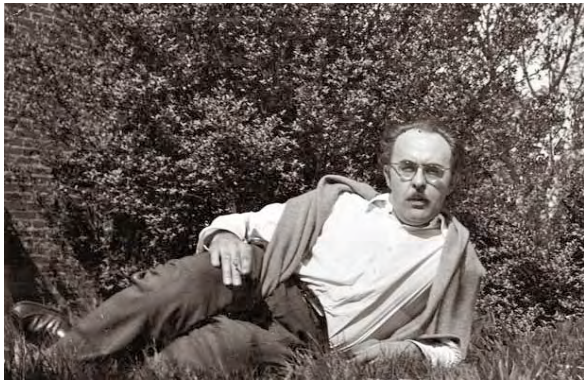
An American
is a complex of occasions,
themselves a geometry
of spatial nature.

I have this sense,
that I am one
with my skin

Plus this – plus this:
that forever the geography
which leans in
on me I compel
backwards I compel Gloucester
to yield, to

change.

Polis
is this



Archives & Special Collections at the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center,
University of Connecticut Libraries

Charles Olson saw Gloucester, Massachusetts as the perfect modern reflection of the ancient Greek city state, a *polis* — 30,000 people shaped by their own geography and pulled by their own powerful sense of history. His poetry transformed the isolated fishing town into a microcosm of America energized by extraordinary confluences that connected it to all other places. For Olson, all time was likewise contemporaneous. By taking his readers back to the beginnings of history, he returned to the present with fresh understanding of how to create things anew.

Polis Is This illuminates Olson's life and work by exploring such connections and imaginative journeys. The film traces Olson's process of self-discovery and makes it clear why Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg and many other literary figures traveled to Gloucester to sit with the father of the post-modernism — the man they called the "big fire source."



Polis Is This breaks new ground in exploring Olson's personal and literary life - from his ideas on education, politics and the moral nature of his work to his personal relations with friends and family.

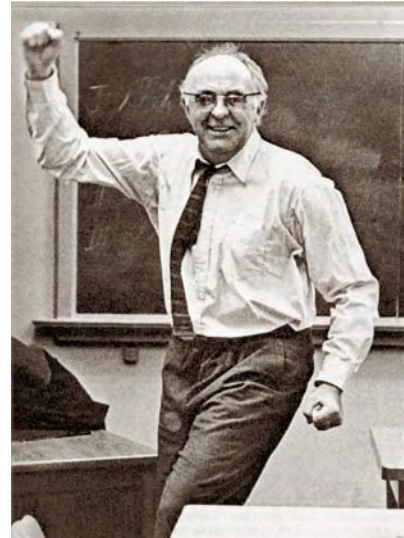


Photo: Emilio Grossi

Polis Is This combines interview, archival footage, commentary and animation into a single voice that creates a visual and auditory poetry slam for a new generation in a new century.

Set to air on WGBH, *Polis* will first screen at literary art centers and universities throughout the country during National Poetry Month (April 2007). The film allows the audience access to the subject even as it captures the zeitgeist of a formative era in literary history.

The 60-minute documentary features John Malkovich, as well as interviews with poets and scholars Robert Creeley, Ed Sanders, Diane di Prima, Gerrit Lansing, John Sinclair, Pete Seeger, Chuck Stein, Anne Waldman, Charles Boer, Susan Thackrey, Amiri Baraka, Robin Blaser, Michael Rumaker, Jonathan Williams, Ammiel Alcalay, John Stilgoe, Vincent Ferrini and the poet's son, Charles Peter Olson. An eclectic soundtrack puts together Boston's grandfather of

punk rock Willie “Loco” Alexander with Black Mountain avant-garde composer Stephan Wolpe along with a little banjo picking from Pete Seeger. The film has previewed to enthusiastic audiences in New York, Cambridge and San Francisco.



Photo: Susan Steiner

For more on *Polis Is This*, please visit:
<http://www.ferriniproductions.com>
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phone: 978-281-2355

John Malkovich and Henry Ferrini discuss a reading from Olson's letters to the Gloucester Daily Times.

Henry Ferrini has been producing award-winning films from his Cape Ann studio for close to thirty years. These films include:

- ***Lowell Blues: The Words of Jack Kerouac*** with Johnny Depp, originally broadcast on WGBH-Boston, takes viewers into the origin of the writer's greatest landscapes, his childhood. The film called “a stunning visual tour of Kerouac's hometown” by the Boston Herald. It plays to audiences around the world and daily at the National Park in Lowell.
- ***Radio Fishtown***, winner of the Bravo Best Documentary, was called “a piece of poetic silver,” by the Boston Globe. It tells the story of a stubborn, crotchety one-man radio station operator who brings classical music to a hard-scrabble town as it debunks the myth that working folks don't listen to Classical Music.
- ***Witch City*** is an uncompromising look at Salem, Massachusetts, a town that put the phrase “witch hunt” into the American vocabulary and a place where today a Disney-esque version of history serves the purposes of both commerce and religion. Bo Smith, Curator of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston said, “Very funny and very smart. Should play in Salem every day and night forever.”
- ***Poem in Action*** probes the magical space where life and literature synergistically intertwine as it explores the poet's commitment to the unity of art and life. The San Francisco Film Festival called it “a captivating look at a poet and poetry, engaging without the usual hush of stuffy reverence.”