

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
October 8, 2007

Revisioning Authors (a Working Group of the Humanities Center) and Film Studies  
present

**Polis Is This: Charles Olson and the Persistence of Place**  
**A Film by Henry Ferrini**

Winner of the Grand Documentary Award, Berkeley Film Festival, 2007

Friday, October 19, 2007, 3-5 PM

Welcome Center Auditorium, Warren and Woodward Avenues, Wayne State University,  
Detroit

Commentary and discussion with Henry Ferrini follow the screening; free and open to the  
public

“The best film about an American poet ever made.”  
—William Corbett

“Much more than a merely brilliant bio-documentary, Ferrini's film about Charles Olson  
and Gloucester is an invaluable contribution to our literature. If only we had a film like  
this for each of our major poets and writers, what a treasure that would be.”  
—Russell Banks

“This is a sublime film . . . by far the best film I've ever seen on a figure in American lit-  
erature. It is simply stunning.”  
—Jim Harrison

“Polis Is This” focuses on the life and work of Charles Olson (1910-70), originary poet of  
postmodernity and author of the epic poem The Maximus Poems. Olson's poetics of pre-  
sence and community brought together the spontaneity of experience with deep historical  
and ecological commitments to the American tradition and landscape. His widely influen-  
tial essay “Projective Verse” (1950) was a manifesto calling for “open verse” and “com-  
position by field,” in which “form is never more than an extension of content” and “one  
perception must immediately and directly lead to a further perception.” Olson practiced  
such a poetics of process in a series of key poems (“The Kingfishers”; “In Cold Hell, In  
Thicket”; “The Librarian”) that challenged the dominant tradition of verse culture after  
T.S. Eliot. His work influenced a generation of poets that would come to be known as  
“the New American Poets,” the title of the 1960 anthology, and was crucial for the devel-  
opment of the Black Arts Movement through his influence on LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka.  
His epic, The Maximus Poems, focused on a “poetics of place” centered on Cape Ann,  
Massachusetts, and united personal, public, historical, and unconscious sources. In recent  
years, there has been an upsurge of interest in Olson as poet of public/private immediacy,

whose work constructs an alternative polity of spontaneity and depth and whose focus on the American landscape anticipates the development of contemporary eco-poetics.

For more information, go to the “Polis Is This” home page:

<http://www.polisisthis.com/Polis/Home.html>

See also the review by Michael Boughn on the Olson Now web site:

<http://olsonnow.blogspot.com/2007/08/michael-boughnreview-of-polis-is-this.html>

Sponsored by: Revisioning Authors, a Working of the Humanities Center; and Film Studies, Department of English, Wayne State University

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