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Introduction

The world is a medium to be transformed, one which artists have always honed their metaphrastic abilities against. Poets translate landscapes, communities, and histories through creative expressions and relationships between media, with no relationship as important as the one between individual and land. Charles Olson's monumental work, *The Maximus Poems,* exemplifies this transformation, where Gloucester, Massachusetts becomes not merely represented subject matter, but an active participant in creation, a world generator, a land extender. To encounter this epic is to discover that poetry does more than describe place; it engages directly with it, learns from it, and produces new understandings of our relationship with environments we inhabit.

Standing on the shores of America's oldest fishing port, Olson engaged with the landscape through a poetic practice that transformed our understanding of place. When he writes in "Letter 6" that "polis is / eyes,"[1] he reveals a profound embodied technology of vision. The poems demonstrate how communities form through collective attention to shared environment: "There are no hierarchies, no infinite, no such many as mass, there are only / eyes in all heads, / to be looked out of."[2] The polis becomes an entity through gathered perceptions of its inhabitants. Vision discerns the forms in the field, allowing Olson to observe the landscape in all its geological and anthropological history; not as dormant information, but as an active projection of mind and experience.

The inherent limitation of static representation challenges poets and citizens attempting to capture landscape. How can fixed words embody a place's breathing reality with its historical layers, geographical features, and community relationships? Conventional landscape poetry positions nature as something to be described from a distance, while history remains confined to textbooks: dates and names to be memorized and forgotten. The poet stands apart, using lyrical language that Olson would describe as that of a 'honey-head'[3], maintaining separation between observer

and observed, and from immediate bodily experience. This approach compartmentalizes media, structuring knowledge into abstract categories where poetry, history books, and geology each maintain distinct expectations for describing land.

What if poetry could become a negotiating field where all media interact? What if it could actively engage with place rather than merely describe it? Olson's solution emerges through what I term an "intermedial poetics," an approach integrating various forms of communication, representation, and knowledge systems into a dynamic practice. Intermediality examines relationships between different media forms and how content moves between them. In Olson's work, this becomes a powerful method for learning from land as he transforms diverse media into a unified poetic experience. Maps become poems, historical documents transform into verses, and geological features arise as promontory characters in an ongoing epic narrative, a poetics that produces cosmologies of time and space.

The Maximus Poems, which begun in 1950 and was completed shortly before Olson's death in 1970, gives form to Gloucester through the language, semiotics, and functions of historical, geographical, and textual media transmediated into poetic verse. Through this intermedial approach, Olson enables readers to become active world-generators. To see the polis is to project our own field into the world, populate it with objects, and witness movement between them. Individual historical events contain universal narratives, with meaning emerging through interaction rather than fixed transmission. Each present moment contains potential for reconfiguration; the poems function as an information exchange system demonstrating language's ability to process, transform, and generate the land of Gloucester.

This paper argues that Olson's intermedial approach creates a poetics that actively engages with land, demonstrating how communities learn through connection to place. Rather than treating poetry as a mirror reflecting landscape, Olson transforms it into a living system generating place through the interaction of language, history, and geography. What he replicates is the world's movement and the human communities shaping it. Through analyzing the poems' intermedial dimensions (including Olson's transmediation of historical documents, his use of material, sensorial, spatiotemporal, and semiotic modalities, and the titular Maximus as an intermedial figure), I will

demonstrate how Olson offers a revolutionary understanding of the relationship between poetry and place that resonates with contemporary ecological concerns.

Theoretical Foundations: Intermedial Poetics

To understand Olson's approach to poetry and place, we must establish the theoretical framework underlying this analysis. This paper employs intermedial studies as its primary analytical lens, supplemented by Olson's own theoretical writings, particularly his seminal essays "Projective Verse" and "Human Universe," which together provide the foundation for understanding how his poetics function as an intermedial practice.

Olson's Poetics

In "Projective Verse," Olson outlines a poetic theory that transforms conventional relationships between poet and poem, poem and reader, human and environment. He opposes closed, traditional verse forms in favor of "COMPOSITION BY FIELD,"[4] where the poem emerges as an energy field rather than a predetermined structure, an approach with profound implications for how he engages with landscape.

Central to projective verse is energy transfer: "A poem is energy transferred from where the poet got it (he will have some several causations), by way of the poem itself to, all the way over to, the reader." This energy-based understanding transforms poetry from static description into dynamic process, projecting landscapes' living, changing nature. Poetry becomes a field of physics, energetics, thermodynamics; a study of movement and transference. Energy is both communicated and media, transference itself. Olson insists "ONE PERCEPTION MUST IMMEDIATELY AND DIRECTLY LEAD TO A FURTHER PERCEPTION," creating a chain of awareness that follows place's actual contours rather than imposing narrative or metrical structure. This chain of perception produces the poet's field.

The poet's breath becomes a crucial medium connecting bodily experience to poetic expression: "the HEAD, by way of the EAR, to the SYLLABLE the HEART, by way of the BREATH, to the LINE."[5] This proprioceptive approach aligns with the material and sensorial modalities of intermedial analysis, emphasizing physical dimensions of poetic production and reception. The capitalized words emphasize stations in a kinetic

path: HEAD and EAR to the basic medium of the SYLLABLE; HEART and BREATH to the LINE. Even within poetry's qualified medium, we find these basic building blocks. Syllable and line become sensorial, physiological processes: the syllable through audible perception becomes semiotics' building block. The heart provides rhythm through a line of breath.

Perhaps most significant for understanding Olson's relationship with place is his concept of "objectism" defined as "the getting rid of the lyrical interference of the individual as ego."[6] The poet should recognize oneself as an object among objects within a field. This positions the poet not as privileged observer outside nature but as participant within a field of relationships, fundamentally transforming how poetry engages with landscape. This is key to understanding Olson's intermedial poetics: placing the poet between objects makes the role relational, translative, transformative. When the poet understands oneself as an object within a force, projection becomes possible. As Olson writes:

> …if he is contained within his nature as he is participant in the larger force, he will be able to listen, and his hearing through himself will give him secrets objects share. And by an inverse law his shapes will make their own way. It is in this sense that the projective act, which is the artist's act in the larger field of objects, leads to dimensions larger than man.[7]

Here lies the key to how the particular becomes universal through projection.

Olson's conception of the poet as an object among objects aligns with intermedial theory's understanding that media forms exist in dynamic relation rather than isolation. When Olson discusses how "breath is man's special qualification as animal," "sound is a dimension he has extended," and "language is one of his proudest acts" he describes a chain of media transformations: from physiological process (breath) to acoustic phenomenon (sound) to symbolic system (language). This parallels how intermedial studies examines content movement across media boundaries. His emphasis on the typewriter as a scoring device that can "indicate exactly the breath, the pauses, the suspensions" connects to intermedial studies concern with the technical medium of display, how material interface shapes communication delivery.[8] The

projective act becomes an intermedial practice; the poet operates at the intersection of multiple modalities rather than within a single, isolated medium. This approach creates poetry as a dynamic field of relationships rather than a static form, much as intermedial studies examines fluid boundaries between media forms. Imagining a field of objects with ourselves as one object inside it, we experience orbital relationships. This conceptual plane gives rise to the form of Gloucester, pushed and pulled by historical events, geological shifts, and human figures. All of these contribute to its gravity and form in the field.

In "Human Universe," Olson further develops his understanding of human-environment relationships, articulating a philosophy favoring immediate, participatory engagement with reality over abstract categorization. He challenges the "generalizing time" since 450 BCE that has resulted in systems of logic and classification which "interfere with" direct action and perception.[9] This immediacy becomes clear in poems featuring numerical text like "1646." Through repetition, these numbers take on the symbolism and indexicality of dates, alluding to history. Yet Olson doesn't use these as mere historical classification; readers must interpret these numerical lines as verse, placing them in poetic context, allowing them to become active, perceived elements. This approach makes readers question what the numbers represent. They function simultaneously as specific years and, when removed from direct historical context, universal characteristics of numbers. The particular time points to time itself.

Olson argues for reconnection with immediate experience: "man at his peril breaks the full circuit of object, image, action at any point."[10] This circuit connects external reality through the person and back into the world in unbroken flow. True perception requires maintaining this connection; learning from place means refusing abstractions that separate us from direct experience.

The essay emphasizes embodied knowledge: "the skin itself, the meeting edge of man and external reality, is where all that matters does happen."[11] This understanding of body as environmental interface, a medium, becomes central to Olson's poetics, informing how his poetry engages with landscape through multiple sensory channels rather than abstract description.

Intermedial Framework

Intermediality examines relationships between different media forms and how content moves across media boundaries. As Lars Elleström states, "intermediality must be understood as a bridge between media differences that is founded in media similarities."[12] This framework helps us examine how Olson integrates and transforms various media types into his poetry: historical documents, maps, letters, and oral histories.

The technical medium of display (the printed page and typography) becomes crucial to understanding Olson's poetics. In "Projective Verse," he argues that the typewriter allows the poet to score the page for the voice "due precisely to its rigidity and its space precisions."8 This attention to material presentation transforms the page into cartographic space where typographical arrangements reflect geographical formations, as in "Astride / the Cabot / fault", where text appears at an angle reproducing an actual geological formation's directional line.[13] In *The Maximus Poems*, land becomes a basic medium that the page translates, displaying text and land through the qualified medium of poetry.

Basic media types in Olson's work include text (both his own and from historical sources), visual elements (spatial arrangements), and sound representations (rhythmic patterns evoking breath and speech). These elements combine to create qualified media, which are complex forms that emerge from the mixture of basic media elements.

Media transformation is central to Olson's practice. In poems like "The Record" and "The Picture", he transforms entries from the Weymouth Port Book and historical narratives into poetic form. This transmediation doesn't simply quote sources but reimagines them through spatial arrangement, creating rhythm and emphasis through line breaks and spacing. On the page, these quotes function differently than mere documentation. They provide a different quality of history. The poem as qualified medium affords the content a communication that activates rather than staticizes these records. Movement is key: history passes from generation to generation, and Olson captures this movement of people and community as he transforms historical content.

Elleström's framework identifies four modalities of media: material, sensorial, spatiotemporal, and semiotic.[14] The material modality concerns the physical interface:

pages, typographical arrangements, and book dimensions. The sensorial modality involves perceiving the material interface through our senses, primarily visual and auditory for poetry, though Olson frequently evokes other senses through cross-modal translations. The spatiotemporal modality concerns how time and space are structured within the medium, which is significant in how Olson collapses historical and geographical dimensions. The semiotic modality involves meaning-making through different signs (which Elleström utilizes Charles Sanders Peirce's sign trichotomy): iconic (similarity-based), indexical (contiguity-based), and symbolic (convention-based).[15] Olson employs all of these to connect language to landscape.

Synthesizing Frameworks

Viewed through intermediality, Olson's theoretical writings reveal a profound understanding of poetry as intermedial practice. His composition by field aligns with understanding media as fields of interaction between different modalities. His energy transfer parallels the intermedial focus on transmediation, the content movement across media boundaries. His objectism resonates with the intermedial understanding that all media are mixed rather than pure.

Together, these theories provide the foundation for understanding Olson's approach to place. They reveal poetry not as secondary representation of landscape but as active technology for engaging with and learning from place. The poem becomes what I call a "pocket world": a microcosmic representation demonstrating how deep attention to specific locality generates universal understanding. Through intermedial poetics, Olson creates a field where Gloucester becomes an active participant in meaning creation.

In the following sections, I will analyze specific dimensions of this intermedial poetics, examining how Olson transmediates historical documents, engages with the four modalities, and positions Maximus as an intermedial figure bridging individual and collective place experience. As George F. Butterick notes, Olson wrote on a note pad in 1961 that "the purpose of Maximus, the person who addresses himself to the City, is to measure: *the advantage of a single human figure,*"[16] the intermedial figure providing fluctuating perception of scale to place.

Land as Teacher: Intermedial Transformations

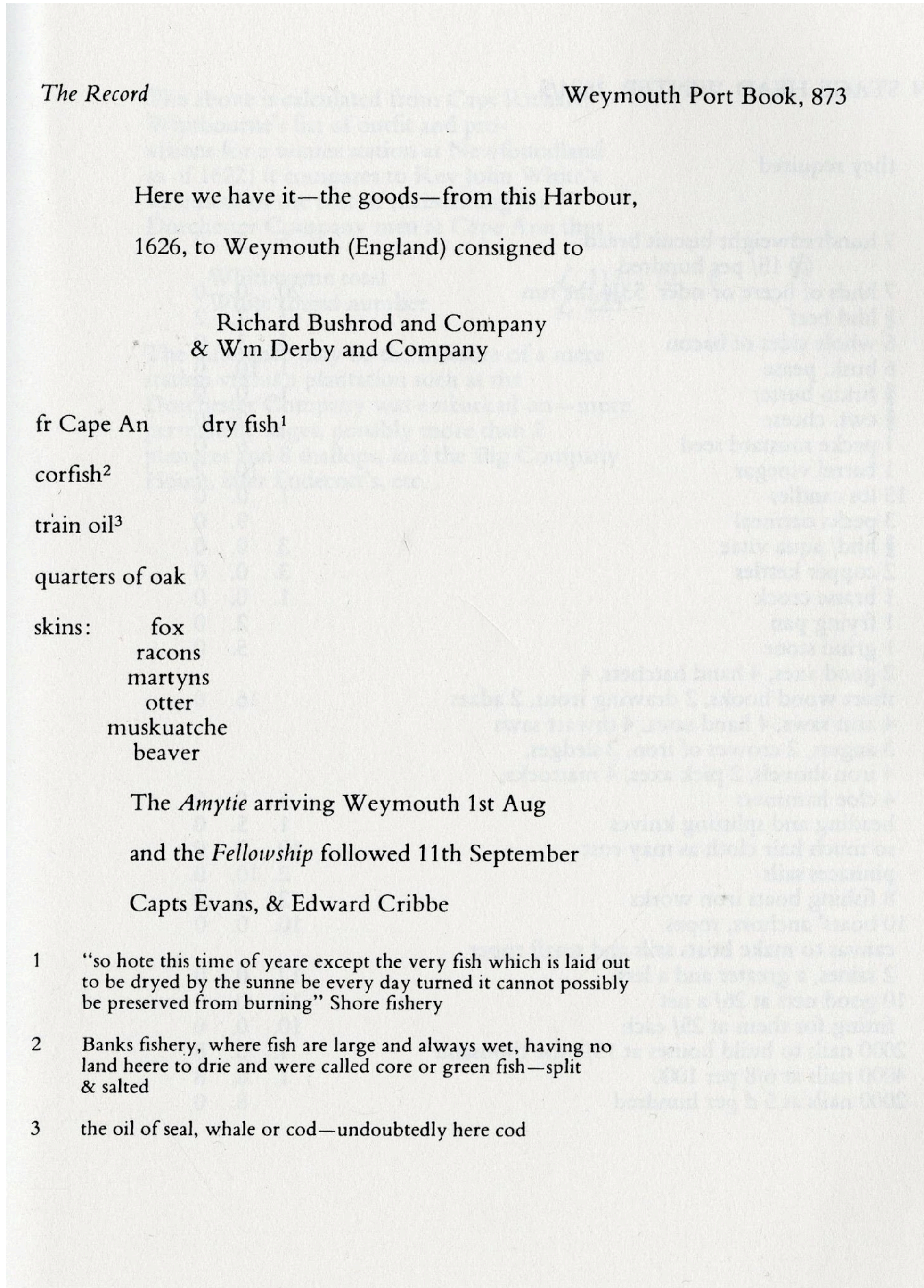
The intermedial dimensions of *The Maximus Poems* are perhaps most evident in Olson's process of transmediation: his transformation of various media sources into poetic form. As Jørgen Bruhn and Beate Schirrmacher define it, transmediation occurs when "the form or content of one media type is reconstructed and thus transformed by another media type."[17] In Olson's case, historical documents, maps, geological surveys, and oral histories are transmediated into poetry, creating what he calls in "Projective Verse" a "high energy-construct" that transfers energy from source to reader.

In "Maximus, to himself," Olson ruminates: "I have had to learn the simplest things / last." He continues: "I have made dialogues, / have discussed ancient texts, / have thrown what light I could, offered / what pleasures / doceat allows // but the known? / This, I have had to be given, / a life, love, and from one man / the world."[18] Here, Maximus addresses his struggle between knowledge attained from texts and inheritance, versus direct experience, ultimately stressing the importance of learning from the land itself.

This process transcends mere quotation or reference. As Olson writes in "Mayan Letters," "The trouble is, it is very difficult, to be both a poet and, an historian."[19] This difficulty stems from these practices' different aims and methods, yet Olson's achievement in *The Maximus Poems* is precisely this fusion, creating a poetics that engages with historical and geographical materials while transforming them into something new.

Transmediation of Historical Documents

Two poems from *Maximus* exemplify how Olson transmediates historical documents: "The Record" and "The Picture." Both transfer facts from historian Frances Rose-Troup's book *John White, the Patriarch of Dorchester [Dorset] and Founder of Massachusetts, 1575-1648…* concerning "determining the possibility of a permanent fishing plantation at Cape Ann."[20] "The Record" draws from Weymouth Port Book entries preserved in the Public Record Office. As figure 1 shows, in "The Record," Olson transmediates these entries into poetic form:



The Record Weymouth Port Book, 873

Here we have it—the goods—from this Harbour,

1626, to Weymouth (England) consigned to

Richard Bushrod and Company
& Wm Derby and Company

fr Cape An dry fish[1]

corfish[2]

train oil[3]

quarters of oak

skins: fox
racons
martyns
otter
muskuatche
beaver

The *Amytie* arriving Weymouth 1st Aug

and the *Fellowship* followed 11th September

Capts Evans, & Edward Cribbe

1 "so hote this time of yeare except the very fish which is laid out to be dryed by the sunne be every day turned it cannot possibly be preserved from burning" Shore fishery

2 Banks fishery, where fish are large and always wet, having no land heere to drie and were called core or green fish—split & salted

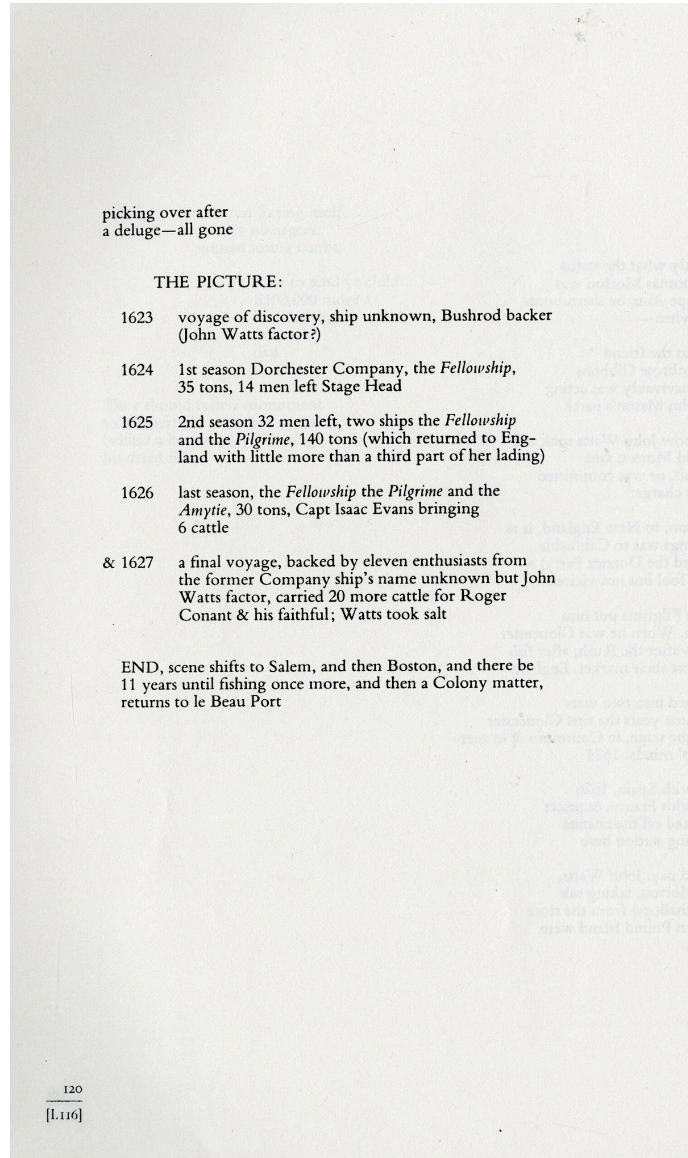
3 the oil of seal, whale or cod—undoubtedly here cod

Figure 1: "The Record" in The Maximus Poems

This is not pure quotation. Olson transforms these entries into spatial arrangement and varying textual alignments, creating rhythm and emphasis through line breaks and spacing. The historical record becomes poetry through selection and arrangement: what to include, omit, and how to organize material on the page. The

commercial commodities “dry fish // corfish // train oil // quarters of oak // skins: // fox / racons / martyns / otter / muskuatche / beaver”[21] become a litany, gaining rhythmic and sonic qualities absent in the original document.

Similarly, in the “The Picture,” (figure 2) Olson transmediates a chart by Rose-Troup detailing the historical record and account of ships used by the Dorchester Company:



picking over after
a deluge—all gone

THE PICTURE:

1623 voyage of discovery, ship unknown, Bushrod backer
(John Watts factor?)

1624 1st season Dorchester Company, the *Fellowship*,
35 tons, 14 men left Stage Head

1625 2nd season 32 men left, two ships the *Fellowship*
and the *Pilgrime*, 140 tons (which returned to Eng-
land with little more than a third part of her lading)

1626 last season, the *Fellowship* the *Pilgrime* and the
Amytie, 30 tons, Capt Isaac Evans bringing
6 cattle

& 1627 a final voyage, backed by eleven enthusiasts from
the former Company ship's name unknown but John
Watts factor, carried 20 more cattle for Roger
Conant & his faithful; Watts took salt

END, scene shifts to Salem, and then Boston, and there be
11 years until fishing once more, and then a Colony matter,
returns to le Beau Port

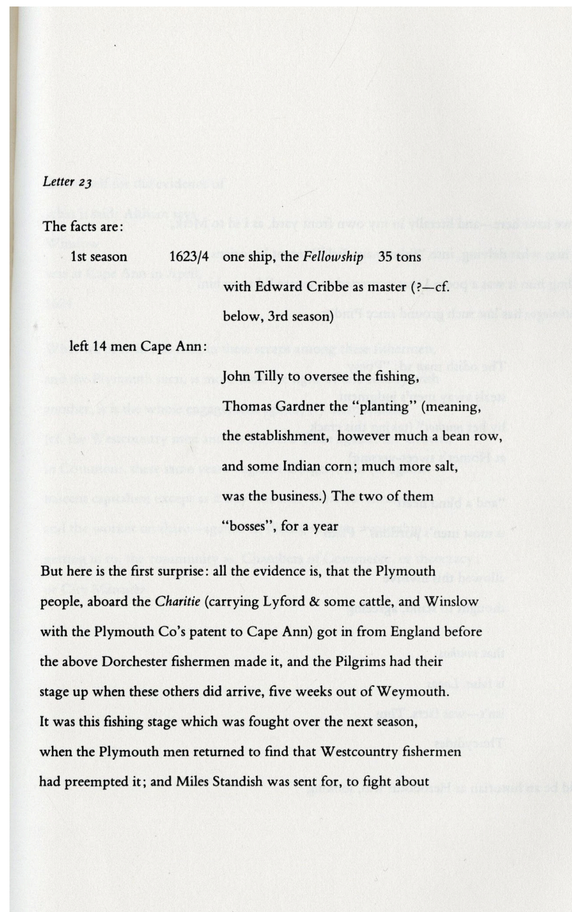
120
[I.116]

Figure 2: “The Picture” in The Maximus Poems

The indentations of chronological listings and the page’s typographical arrangement creates a visual rhythm not afforded to the content of the original source

material. Olson's selection and arrangement of details (the precise numbers: 14 men, 32 men, 6 cattle) creates a poetic condensation of history. This transforms numerical record keeping from historical narrative into historical imagism, concrete particulars conveying the colonial venture's expansion and eventual failure.

Olson employs this approach throughout *Maximus.* In "History is the Memory of Time,"[22] the title is directly borrowed from prose written by explorer John Smith in his *Advertisements for the Unexperienced Planters,* while interfacing content from Rose-Troup's *John White* about settler conflicts over fishing stage usage. "Letter 23" (figure 3) transmediates content about the Dorchester Company sending their vessel "Fellowship" to establish a Cape Ann fishing settlement in 1623.



Letter 23

The facts are:

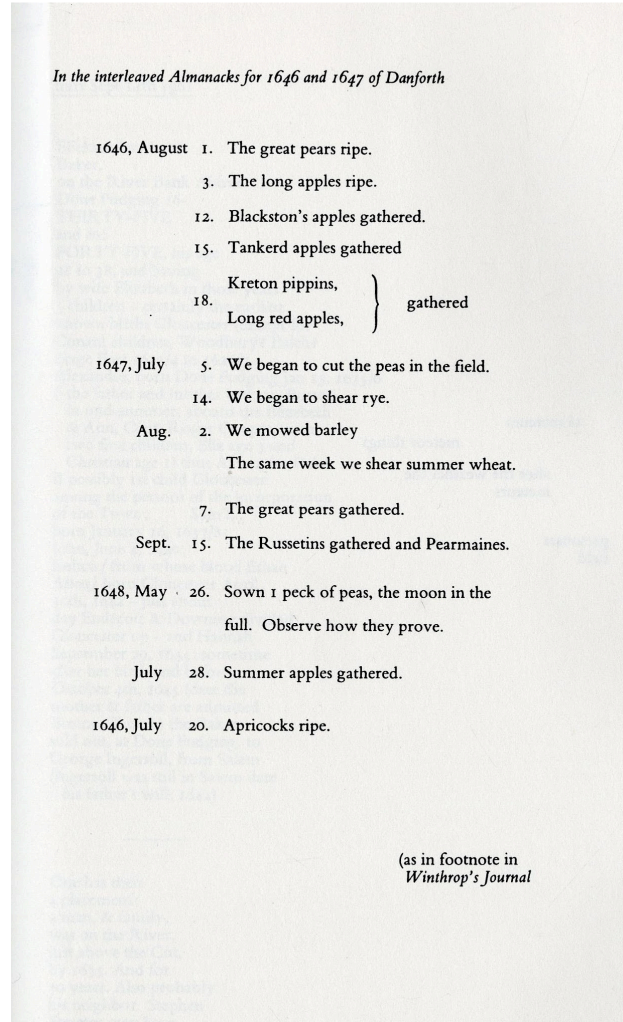
1st season 1623/4 one ship, the *Fellowship* 35 tons
with Edward Cribbe as master (?—cf.
below, 3rd season)

left 14 men Cape Ann:
John Tilly to oversee the fishing,
Thomas Gardner the "planting" (meaning,
the establishment, however much a bean row,
and some Indian corn; much more salt,
was the business.) The two of them
"bosses", for a year

But here is the first surprise: all the evidence is, that the Plymouth
people, aboard the *Charitie* (carrying Lyford & some cattle, and Winslow
with the Plymouth Co's patent to Cape Ann) got in from England before
the above Dorchester fishermen made it, and the Pilgrims had their
stage up when these others did arrive, five weeks out of Weymouth.
It was this fishing stage which was fought over the next season,
when the Plymouth men returned to find that Westcountry fishermen
had preempted it; and Miles Standish was sent for, to fight about

Figure 3: "Letter 23" in The Maximus Poems

The poem "In the interleaved Almanacks for 1646 and 1647 of Danforth" draws from the leading figure in founding Massachusetts Bay Colony, English Puritan John Winthrop's *History of New England* (figure 4).



In the interleaved Almanacks for 1646 and 1647 of Danforth

1646, August 1. The great pears ripe.
3. The long apples ripe.
12. Blackston's apples gathered.
15. Tankerd apples gathered
18. Kreton pippins, Long red apples, } gathered
1647, July 5. We began to cut the peas in the field.
14. We began to shear rye.
Aug. 2. We mowed barley
The same week we shear summer wheat.
7. The great pears gathered.
Sept. 15. The Russetins gathered and Pearmaines.
1648, May 26. Sown 1 peck of peas, the moon in the full. Observe how they prove.
July 28. Summer apples gathered.
1646, July 20. Apricocks ripe.

(as in footnote in
Winthrop's Journal

Figure 4: "In the interleaved Almanacks for 1646 and 1647 of Danforth" in The Maximus Poems

Perhaps most directly, "The Account Book of B Ellery" reduces historical records to their essential categories: "vessels / goods / voyages / persons / salaries / conveyances."[23]

What distinguishes these transmediations is their epistemological effect. As Olson writes in "Human Universe," he seeks "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."[24] By

transmediating historical documents rather than simply referencing them, Olson creates poetry that "bears in" to history rather than standing apart from it.

Maps and Navigation as Knowledge

In "On first Looking out through Juan de la Cosa's Eyes," Olson transforms cartographic knowledge into poetic experience. Juan de la Cosa, a cartographer who sailed with Columbus in 1493, created one of the earliest maps showing the Americas. The poem explores how we come to know the world through navigation and mapping: "But before La Cosa, nobody / could have / a mappemunde."[25] This stanza carries profound implications about how human knowledge is structured through media. Before La Cosa's map, a certain kind of global understanding was impossible. By writing "through Juan de la Cosa's Eyes," Olson adopts a perspective that transforms our understanding of spatial relationships. The map functions as an intermedial object through which humans share visions of the world. We see through Cosa's eyes via his map. The historical figure has transmediated his presence and projection into the field through the technical display of the map, which Olson's poem now relates while combining his own projective act. The poem continues with references to navigational nodes: St. Malo, Bristol, Biscay, Cap Raz, Cipangu, Sable Island. These place-names function not just as geographical markers but as nodes in a navigation network in which "Fishermen, had, / for how long, / talked:", that created a new understanding of global space. In many of the poems throughout *Maximus,* Olson's arrangement mimics the dispersed points on a map, creating a visual parallel to cartographic representation. The stanza organization provides condensed space and movements between locations, offering a new perception about maps: they condense, they ellipse, similar to these verses. Though these locations are geographically distant, harbors separated by oceans, a map contains them all simultaneously. It doesn't just mediate locations but provides the entire world at once, the revelation of seeing a globe for the first time.

In "'View': fr the Orontes," Olson explores how navigation creates knowledges of coastlines: "the 1st to navigate / those waters / thus to define / the limits / of the land: Helen, / said Herodotus,".[26] These lines reveal how perception creates rather than merely documents geographical boundaries. Navigations "define[s] the limits of the

land," suggesting geographical knowledge emerges through movement and exploration rather than static observation. By attributing this understanding to Herodotus's account of Helen of Troy, Olson connects geographical exploration to what Herodotus considered religious-historical narrative, demonstrating how different knowledge and belief systems contribute to place understanding.

Navigation extends beyond sea to land in Olson's work. In "The Twist," Massachusetts cities, streets, and people become plot points producing one of Olson's key kinetic motifs in *The Maximus Poems*: the act of twisting, embodied by "nasturtium," the plant and its flower. It's one of the most important movements in *Maximus*, as demonstrated by "The Twist," the poem uses points and movements between local place-names such as "Between Newtown and Tatnuck Square", and "goes from Worcester and Gloucester to / :Bristow" and moves from the particular window of a candy shop to the universal sea: "out the window of Johnny's Candy Kitchen, / through that glass and rain through which I looked / the first time I saw / the sea."[27] The poem culminates: "the whole of it / coming, / to this pin-point / to turn // in this day's sun."[28] These movements between locations create a turning parallel to Earth's rotation, tides, and particular moments like that first glimpse of the sea through a candy shop window. The navigation from one's own particular life moments to the universal human experience is a map of knowledge. The twists and loops that fold back into oneself create the form of a flower in the sun.

Geological Narrative

Olson's transmediation extends to geological features themselves. In "The River – I," he writes: "In the fiord the diorite man obtrudes Obadiah Bruen's / island on his nose."[29] This remarkable line reveals how geological features influence human habitation the "diorite man," an igneous rock formation anthropomorphized, "obtrudes" the island named after settler Obadiah Bruen, demonstrating how geological processes shape both physical landscape and human naming practices, teaching us about the relationship between natural formations and social organization.

The geological reference isn't decorative but essential to understanding place. Diorite represents the fundamental processes that created Gloucester's landscape. By

connecting this geological feature to human settlement, Olson reveals landscape's role in teaching about natural and human histories' interdependence. Using geological terminology produces a poetics of place similar to his transmediation of historical texts, capturing qualities that informative text cannot. Olson uses tectonic movements to create an epic about the kinetics of land and people, linking landforms and human bodies, both gathering layers over time. Just as sedimentary layers accumulate, person-names represent human layering in time. Through verse, the human as rock form becomes a metaphoric line cross-cutting through the epic.

In "ta meteura," Olson explores the relationship between geological formations and human perception: "ta meteura // meteor things // after the weather the / meteors // parsonses / field."[30] The title refers to 'heavenly bodies,' 'things in the air' or meteorological phenomena. By connecting celestial objects to "parsonses field," Olson demonstrates how cosmic phenomena integrate into local understanding, a crashing of meteors into a settler's name-field, or meteor showers in the field of the night sky. The poem shows how geological and astronomical knowledge are embedded in place-based understanding, teaching communities about their relationship to natural systems. Meteors, as objects falling to Earth or racing across the sky, allow Olson to extend his poetics from navigational coordinates to celestial mapping, linking Gloucester to the heavens. With the inclusion of the name 'parsonses' we create the link from names and humans to these celestial objects. Humans and their names are populating a field like fallen meteors or glowing bright burning across the sky as heavenly bodies. The night sky becomes a local field in town, the names of which are our constellations.

Through these various transmediations, Olson demonstrates how landscapes teach communities through different media interfaces. When Maximus declares "I live underneath / the light of day // I am a stone, / or the ground beneath,"[31] he indicates his literal identification with the land. Historical documents become living poetry, maps become ways of knowing, and geological features become characters in an ongoing narrative. By transforming these media into poetic form, Olson creates an intermedial poetics that actively engages with place, allowing readers to learn from land through dynamic participation rather than passive observation.

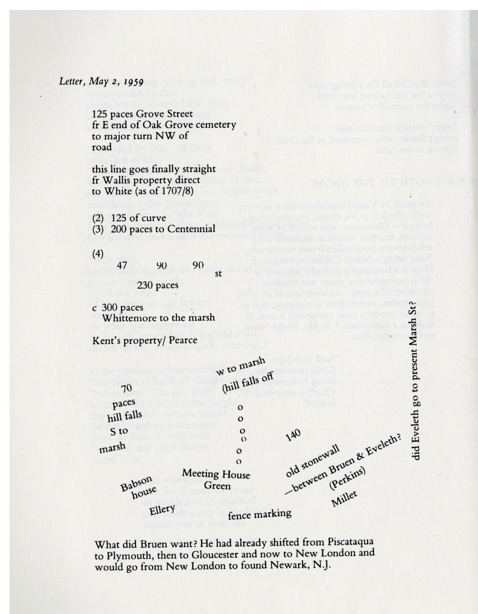
Modalities of Engagement: Being in the Field

To fully understand the intermedial dimensions of Olson's poetics, we must examine how his work engages with the four modalities that Lars Elleström identifies as fundamental to all media: material, sensorial, spatiotemporal, and semiotic.14 These modalities are not separate layers but interconnected dimensions that together constitute the complex intermedial nature of *The Maximus Poems*. Through close readings, we can see how Olson's innovative practice operates across all four modalities to create a dynamic engagement with place.

Material Experience

The material modality concerns the latent corporeal interface of the medium: the physical dimensions that make communication possible. In *The Maximus Poems,* Olson exploits the page and typography's material potential to create poetry that doesn't merely describe geographical features but embodies them through physical form.

In "Letter, May 2, 1959," Olson transforms the page's material space into a representation of Gloucester Harbor. The poem begins with a typographical arrangement of land development (figure 5) and culminates in a visual arrangement where words become the harbor's physical contours (figure 6).



Letter, May 2, 1959

125 paces Grove Street
fr E end of Oak Grove cemetery
to major turn NW of
road

this line goes finally straight
fr Wallis property direct
to White (as of 1707/8)

(2) 125 of curve
(3) 200 paces to Centennial

(4)
47 90 90 st
230 paces

c 300 paces
Whittemore to the marsh

Kent's property/ Pearce

w to marsh
(hill falls off

70
paces
hill falls
S to
marsh

o
o
o
o
o
o

140

old stonewall
—between Bruen & Eveleth?
(Perkins)
Millet

did Eveleth go to present Marsh St?

Babson
house

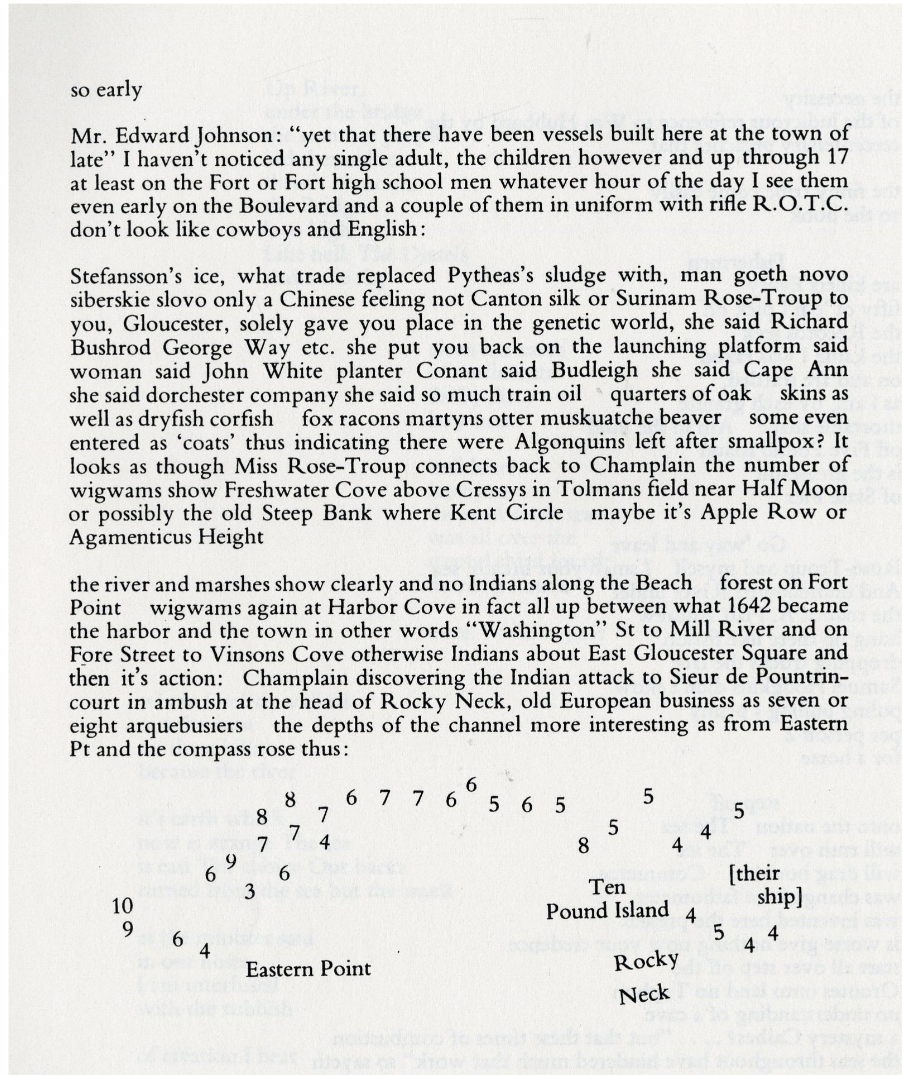
Meeting House
Green

Ellery

fence marking

What did Bruen want? He had already shifted from Piscataqua
to Plymouth, then to Gloucester and now to New London and
would go from New London to found Newark, N.J.

Figure 5: "Letter, May 2, 1959" in The Maximus Poems



so early

Mr. Edward Johnson: "yet that there have been vessels built here at the town of late" I haven't noticed any single adult, the children however and up through 17 at least on the Fort or Fort high school men whatever hour of the day I see them even early on the Boulevard and a couple of them in uniform with rifle R.O.T.C. don't look like cowboys and English:

Stefansson's ice, what trade replaced Pytheas's sludge with, man goeth novo siberskie slovo only a Chinese feeling not Canton silk or Surinam Rose-Troup to you, Gloucester, solely gave you place in the genetic world, she said Richard Bushrod George Way etc. she put you back on the launching platform said woman said John White planter Conant said Budleigh she said Cape Ann she said dorchester company she said so much train oil quarters of oak skins as well as dryfish corfish fox racons martyns otter muskuatche beaver some even entered as 'coats' thus indicating there were Algonquins left after smallpox? It looks as though Miss Rose-Troup connects back to Champlain the number of wigwams show Freshwater Cove above Cressys in Tolmans field near Half Moon or possibly the old Steep Bank where Kent Circle maybe it's Apple Row or Agamenticus Height

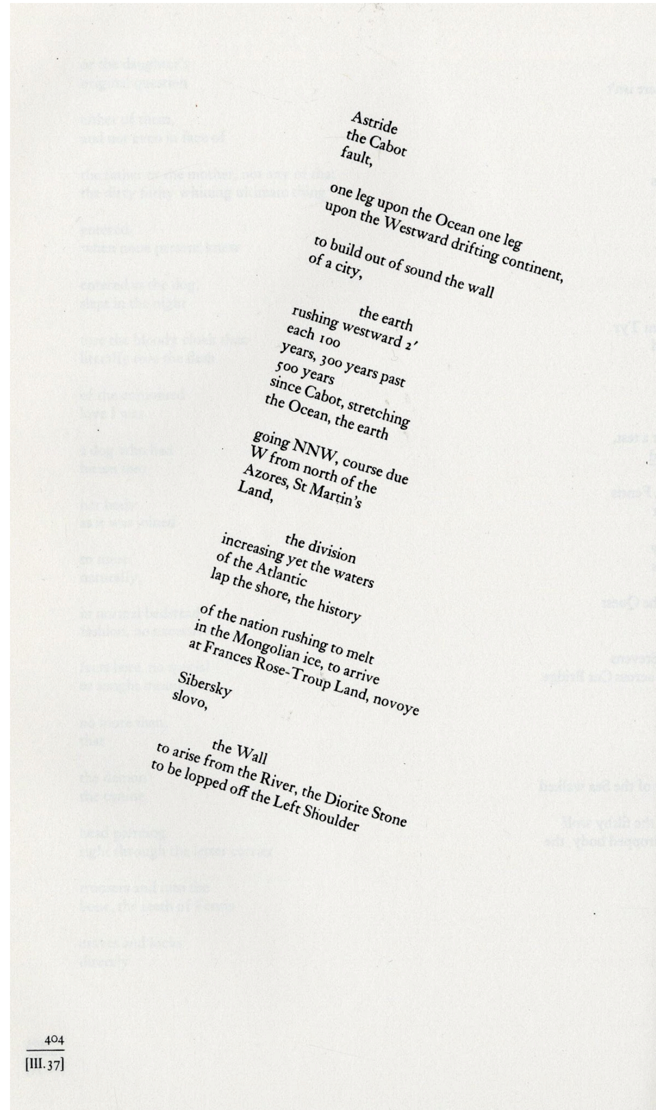
the river and marshes show clearly and no Indians along the Beach forest on Fort Point wigwams again at Harbor Cove in fact all up between what 1642 became the harbor and the town in other words "Washington" St to Mill River and on Fore Street to Vinsons Cove otherwise Indians about East Gloucester Square and then it's action: Champlain discovering the Indian attack to Sieur de Pountrincourt in ambush at the head of Rocky Neck, old European business as seven or eight arquebusiers the depths of the channel more interesting as from Eastern Pt and the compass rose thus:

Figure 6: "Letter, May 2, 1959" in The Maximus Poems

This isn't mere visual mimicry but transforms the page into geographical space. The reader's eye navigating the layout follows pathways similar to how a boat captain monitors a nautical map through the harbor, creating an embodied experience of place through the poem's material form. White space becomes water; typographical marks become landforms.

Even more dramatically, in "Astride / the Cabot / fault" (figure 7), Olson presents the entire poem at a canted angle reproducing the directional line of the Cabot Fault, a major geological rift extending from northern Newfoundland. This typographical choice doesn't just symbolize the fault; it creates a physical experience where reading requires

adjusting one's relationship to the page, much as understanding geological formations requires adjusting conventional perspectives on landscape. The poem's physical arrangement embodies the fault. This intermedial transformation teaches us about geological formations by making us experience rather than merely read about their disruptive nature.



Astride
the Cabot
fault,

one leg upon the Ocean one leg
upon the Westward drifting continent,

to build out of sound the wall
of a city,

the earth
rushing westward 2'
each 100
years, 300 years past
500 years
since Cabot, stretching
the Ocean, the earth

going NNW, course due
W from north of the
Azores, St Martin's
Land,

the division
increasing yet the waters
of the Atlantic
lap the shore, the history

of the nation rushing to melt
in the Mongolian ice, to arrive
at Frances Rose-Troup Land, novoye

Sibersky
slovo,

the Wall
to arise from the River, the Diorite Stone
to be lopped off the Left Shoulder

404
[III.37]

Figure 7: "Astride / the Cabot / fault… " in The Maximus Poems

Sensorial Learning

The sensorial modality involves physically and mentally perceiving the material interface through our senses. Though poetry is primarily perceived as textual verbal representation through audible oral recitation or silent reading, Olson's work frequently

evokes other senses through cross-modal translations, creating a synesthetic experience of place.

This is most explicit in "while on / Obadiah Bruen's Island," where Olson writes the extraordinary phrase "to drink to see."[32] This collapse of sensory boundaries suggests that understanding place requires synesthetic engagement; drinking (taste and digestion) becomes a way of seeing (vision). Olson connects this sensory merger to indigenous practices involving the fly agaric mushroom mixed with whortleberry juice, suggesting that expanded sensory awareness has historical precedents in human-landscape relationships.

Sound becomes a particularly important sensory dimension in Olson's representation of Gloucester. In "Shag Rock," he writes "Shag Rock, / bull's eye // & gulls / making such a pother / on the water in the sun,"[33] creating an auditory landscape where natural sounds (gulls' calls, water splashing) become essential components of place-knowledge. Rather than privileging visual description, Olson creates a soundscape revealing how landscape emerges through multiple sensory dimensions.

Tactile sensation also figures prominently in poems like "Maximus, March 1961-I," where Olson writes: "I shaped her out of / the watery mass."[34] The imagery of this language produces a representation that suggests physical contact with landscape, representing Gloucester not as something seen from a distance but felt with the body. The reference to shaping evokes the geological processes forming the region while simultaneously suggesting human participation in landscape formation through settlement, building, and cultivation.

In "The View – July 29, 1961" Olson employs a corporeal metaphor to describe geographical features: "the arms / of Half Moon Beach, / the legs / of the Cut."[35] This metaphorical mapping transforms landscape features into body parts, creating a sensorial understanding where geography is experienced through bodily correspondence. Similarly, the poem "My shore, my sounds, my earth…"[36] creates with typographical layout, two intersecting lines, producing a visual cross on the page while linking sensory experiences (sounds) with physical elements (shore, earth) through possessive pronouns, emphasizing the intimate sensorial relationship between person and place.

This multi-sensory approach aligns with Olson's belief, articulated in "Human Universe," that the edges of the human body is where the production of matter and relations begin, the furthest edges of ourselves that is other, the furthest edges of other that is ourselves. By engaging multiple senses and intermedial negotiations between bodily boundaries, Olson creates representations of Gloucester highlighting the intimate physical relationship between humans and environment, a relationship generating both knowledge and responsibility.

Spatiotemporal Navigations

The spatiotemporal modality concerns how time and space are structured and experienced within a medium. Olson's most revolutionary innovation may be his fluid movement across time scales, revealing historical layers of land use and human-environment relationships. Rather than presenting landscape as static present-tense reality, he creates temporal dynamism showing how current environments emerge from geological processes, indigenous habitation, colonial settlement, and industrial development.

In "The Savages, or Voyages of Samuel de Champlain of Brouage," Olson moves seamlessly between different time periods, juxtaposing numerical verses and dates: 1529 to 1506 to 1537 to 1498. He even interrupts these 'years' with line and stanza breaks "Gomez – 15 // 25" or shifting from numerical to alphabetical text "Nineteen // 65"[37] to show how moments separated by centuries coexist in place-experience, as well in different mediated formats. The spatial arrangement is striking— graphic lines appear at angles, pointing and connecting textual lines. Numbers and text become directly aligned through graphic marks; the number "65" is associated to "[the scene of Cabot's landfall]."[38] This typographical arrangement visually demonstrates how time moves through space, but also how historical events are connected to numerical representation, creating a dynamic representation where temporal and spatial dimensions become inseparable.

This temporal fluidity reveals how landscape carries historical memory: how past land uses continue to shape present environments through geological formations, settlement patterns, and cultural practices. The past is still active and moving, history

constantly taking shape. The poem suggests that understanding place requires navigating these temporal layers, seeing present landscapes as palimpsests where past human-environment relationships remain visible.

In three poems, "Some Good News," "The Savages," and "'View': fr Orontes," Olson speaks to westward motion and movement, a key spatiotemporal pattern in American history. This spatiotemporal exploration reaches perhaps its fullest expression in "Migration in fact (which is probably," where he explores migration as "probably / as constant in history as any one thing:"[39] Olson turns this migration into a dipole, a fluctuation between opposing or invading forces, the movement between, to, and from. This understanding of migration as creative force reveals how human movement both responds to and transforms environments; how communities adapt to landscape features even as their settlement patterns create new environmental conditions. For Olson, migration is more consistent and stable of an object than any unchanging, static location. The movement is what produces time and space, migration "is the rose is the rose is the rose // of the World." This poem is a couplet version of what is also referred to as "The Rose of the World," where in figure 8 you can see how Olson visualizes this twisting, turning motion, making temporal movement spatially evident on the page. These poems demonstrate how spatiotemporal modality in Olson's poetry becomes not just a setting for human activity but an active dimension of human-environment relationships, where "the Universe is the instance of its voice / rather than its appearance."[40] These spatiotemporal movements begin to shape the poem on the page as we see in "I have been an ability – a machine" and "Outer Darkness Inner Schoodic" (figures 9 and 10) and while we are engaging with our vision, we must understand these typographic arrangements as appearances of the voice in space and time.

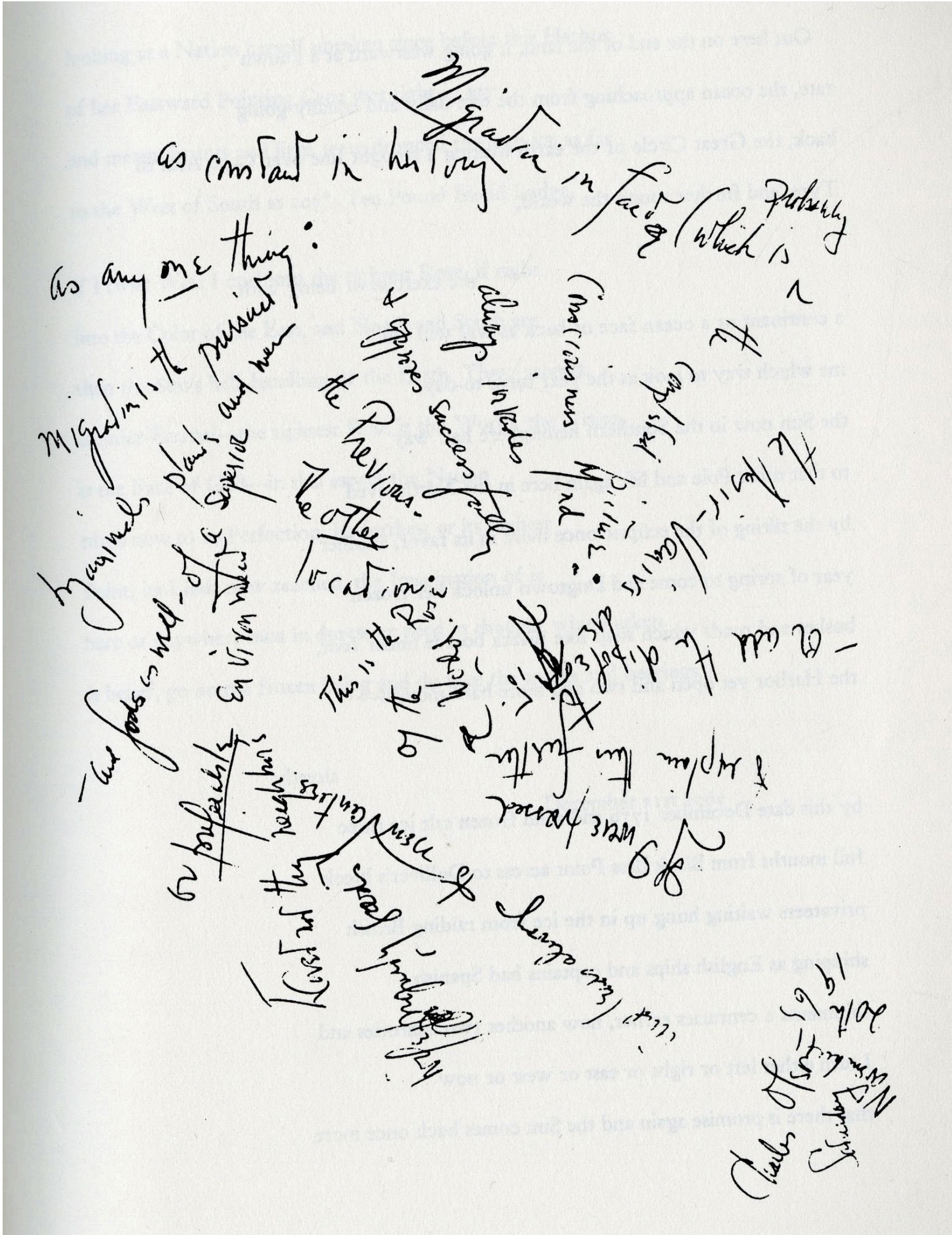


Figure 8: "Migration in fact…" also "The Rose of the World" in The Maximus Poems

that city Obadiah Bruen

1st Town Clerk of Gloucester
went on [from New London] to from after
having come to Gloucester from
Strawberry Bank? how many waves
of hell and death and
dirt and shit
meaningless waves of hurt and punished lives shall America
be nothing but the story of
not at all her successes
—I have been—Leroy has been
as we genetic failures are
successes, here
it isn't interesting,
Yankees—Europeans—Chinese

What is the heart, turning

beating itself out leftward

in hell to know heaven

in this filthy land

in this foul country where

human lives are so much trash

It is the dirty restlessness

of fear and shame—human shame which doesn't even know how right

it is to hate what ignorance

pervades

the social climbing of this

Ararat this mountain

of rubbish taken from used up anything and made a hill and home for

rats big scared rats my father and I shot

off the back porch Worcester

as the rats came closer

as they filled the Athletic Field

—and Beaver Brook Goddamn US Papers

with my 22

he gave me

and I don't have now to give

my own son

as I'd like to the bolt

was such a delicate

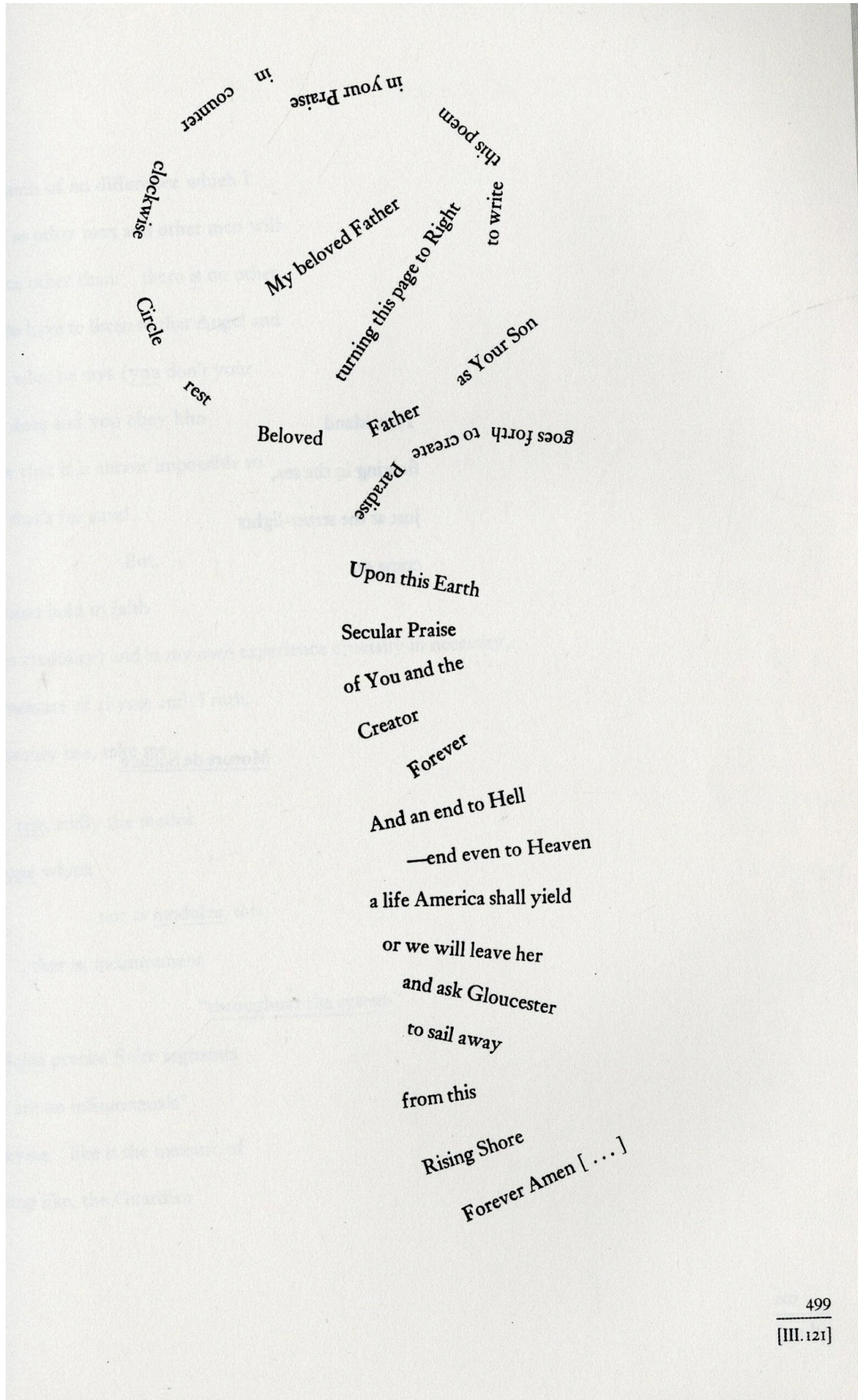
piece of machinery

to handle

and to lock to

fire

Figure 9: "I have been an ability – a machine" in The Maximus Poems


in
counter
in your Praise
this poem
clockwise
to write
My beloved Father
turning this page to Right
Circle
as Your Son
rest
Beloved
Father
goes forth to create
Paradise
Upon this Earth
Secular Praise
of You and the
Creator
Forever
And an end to Hell
—end even to Heaven
a life America shall yield
or we will leave her
and ask Gloucester
to sail away
from this
Rising Shore
Forever Amen [. . .]

499
[III.121]

Figure 10: "Outer Darkness Inner Schoodic" in The Maximus Poems

Semiotic Transformation

The semiotic modality involves meaning-making through different kinds of signs: iconic (based on similarity), indexical (based on contiguity), and symbolic (based on convention). Olson employs all three sign types in complex ways, but perhaps his most profound semiotic innovation is his treatment of names as multi-dimensional signs fluctuating between different semiotic functions.

In "Maximus, in Gloucester Sunday, LXV," the figure of Maximus is the body of every name, in every citizenship, the layers and history of those humans before and after us: "…my own unsatisfying possible identity as / denominable Charles Olson add here as 4's / on a weather shingle our names // Charles Olson / Osmund Dutch / John Gallop / Abraham Robinson, our / names."[41] This remarkable statement reveals how names function not just as labels but as vessels for collective experience. They are signs containing and expressing the shared relationship with place constituting citizenship; these names are 'our names'. Names become not just symbolic references to individuals but indexical markers of their presence in and relationship with place.

This semiotic complexity is heightened in Olson's treatment of place names. In "Thurs Sept 14th 1961," (see figure 11) the list of names operates through all sign functions at once. Indexically, it points directly to actual settlers. Symbolically, it represents patterns of migration, social stratification, and cultural transformation. Iconically, it creates visual resemblance through typography to geological layering landforms. Place-names and person-names like "Duncan's / Point" simultaneously point to actual locations (indexical function), visually resemble spatial arrangements on the page (iconic function), and symbolize social and land divisions between people (symbolic function), with the referential function constantly shifting between these modes.

specifically
[Thomas Lechford,
Notebook, page
406]

Add Wm
Southmeade
or Southmate
as possessing
Thompson fishery
stage Duncan's
Point and
therefore probably
here as early
as Dutch (and
Thomas Millward AND
you have a handfull
who are the hidden
handfull from which fell
the later life as though
they were . . .
yes:
        Elicksander
        Baker
        goodman
        Streeter
        Osmund
        Dutch
        William
        Southmate
        Thomas
        Millward
        Abraham
        Robinson
        Thomas
        Ashley
        William
        Browne

& definitely the ministerial student Thomas
Rashleigh, traveling
from the Divinity School which
Harvard college was 1639
to hold service on
Curtis Square
(where
 R R
 cuts between
 Burial Ground and
 hill) so
more persons by
Baker and
Streeter?

– and other fishermen
at head of Harbor
Cove

Figure 11: "Thurs Sept 14th 1961" in The Maximus Poems

Olson's treatment of John Smith exemplifies how historical figures function as intermedial signs. In "Maximus, to Gloucester Letter 15," Smith operates on multiple semiotic levels: as an indexical figure whose written accounts provide documentary evidence of early settlement; as an iconic representation of the explorer-cartographer whose maps helped define the region; and as a symbol of how place-knowledge is constructed through both human's development of the land and their poetic imagination projected onto it. When Olson quotes Smith's famous poetic line "I onely lie upon this shelf / to be a marke to all / which on the same might fall, / That none may perish but my selfe"[42] into his own poem, he demonstrates how transmediation has the ability to maintain original intent of the source content as well as multiply its signifying functions. The Sea Marke, Smith's original poem, becomes simultaneously an indexical marker pointing to Smith, a symbolic poetic device, and Smith as a landmark in historical knowledge. This layered treatment shows how Olson uses the page's technical medium to preserve not just Smith's historical content but the process of historical mediation itself, allowing readers to witness how place-knowledge moves between document, memory, and lived experience.

Through this semiotic complexity, local particulars (people and place names) gain universal significance. As Olson writes in "The history / of Earth," "I looked up and saw / its truth / through everything / sewn in & binding / each seam." Individual names become not just local references but threads in a larger fabric of meaning connecting particular places to universal patterns. The local achieves significance not through transcendence but through deeper understanding of its particularity.

In "A Maximus" (Figure 12), Olson produces his own maps of name-marks, where the page becomes interface. Real living bodies turn into indexical markers, landmarks on poetic maps, becoming iconic to the land; their names equated to actual iconography of the surrounding landscape, symbolizing humans' interaction with and development of land's history.

A Maximus
As of why thinking of why such questions as security, and the great white death, what did obtain at said some such point as Bowditch the Practical Navigator who did use Other People's Monies as different from his Own, isn't the Actuarial the ReaL Base of Life Since, and is different From Usury Altogether, is the Thing which made all the Vulgar Socialization (Socialism CulturiSM LiberalISM jass is gysm) why I Don't Haven't Gotten it all Further?

Pound, a person of the poem

Ferrini

Hammond

Stevens

(Griffiths)

John Smith

fish

Conants

ships

Higginsons

Bowditch

Lew Douglas
Carl Olsen
Walter Burke

fishermen

Hawkinses

John Burke

houses

John White
John Winthrop

finance

wood (ekonomikos
sculpture

marine
architecture

the plum
the flower

The Renaissance a
box

the economics & poetics
thereafter

Cosmos

the
"Savage God" – Agyasta?

primitive ("buttocks
etc

the prior

Figure 12: "A Maximus" in The Maximus Poems

Through these interconnected modalities, Olson creates an intermedial poetics enabling readers to engage with landscape not as distant observers but as active participants in a field of relationships. By working across material, sensorial, spatiotemporal, and semiotic dimensions, he transforms poetry from passive description into dynamic engagement: a practice teaching us how to learn from land through active participation rather than detached observation.

The Pocket World: From Local to Cosmic

Throughout *The Maximus Poems,* Olson creates what we might call a "pocket world," a microcosmic representation of Gloucester demonstrating how deep attention to specific place generates universal understanding. This concept reveals how intensive engagement with particular landscapes creates insights extending beyond local boundaries to illuminate broader human-environment relationships.

Maximus as Intermedial Interface

The figure of Maximus represents perhaps the most profound intermedial dimension of Olson's poetics: a persona functioning not merely as speaker or character but as an intermedial interface mediating between different spaces, times, and forms of knowledge. As Olson establishes in the opening poem, "I, Maximus of Gloucester, to You," Maximus exists at the boundary between multiple realms: "Off-shore, by islands hidden in the blood / jewels & miracles."[43] This positioning is essential to Maximus's function as what I term an intermedial metaphrast: a figure who translates across media boundaries, an object among objects translating relations and movements.

The term "medium" derives from Latin for "in between," and Maximus embodies this intermedial position, standing between city and ocean, past and present, individual and collective experience. In media theoretical terms, Maximus operates as what Marshall McLuhan might call an "extension of man,"[44] but he also functions as an "extension of land," a figure extending Gloucester's reach beyond physical boundaries while simultaneously extending human perception into the depths of place-understanding.

From the opening title, "I, Maximus of Gloucester, to You," Olson establishes Maximus as a communicative bridge connecting different entities. This addressing

function is fundamentally intermedial, creating a channel between “I” and “You,” between Maximus and his audience, between Gloucester and the wider world. The preposition “of” in “of Gloucester” is significant; Maximus is not simply in Gloucester but of it, constituted by his relationship with place.

This intermedial positioning is reinforced by Maximus’ physical location “off-shore,” neither fully of land nor sea but at the boundary between them. This liminal positioning performs media’s function, existing at thresholds between different realities. As Olson writes later in the poem, Maximus is “a metal hot from boiling water,” emphasizing transformation and transitional states: metal shaped by immersion in water, changed through elemental interaction. This metaphor illuminates how Maximus negotiates boundaries, physically embodying the intermedial position.

The intermedial nature of Maximus is further emphasized by his mythological dimensions. While rooted in Gloucester, Maximus also connects to classical figures like Maximus of Tyre, the 2nd-century Greek philosopher, creating bridges across historical and cultural divides. As Olson sees Maximus as an instrument of measurement, this function is intermedial; Maximus serves as a scale making relationships between different entities perceptible. Maximus not only is the instrument, but that which is measured: time, space, and people.

“Polis is Eyes”: Collective Perception

The concept of “polis” becomes central to understanding Maximus as an intermedial figure. As previously mentioned, in “Letter 6,” Olson offers the compressed formulation: “polis is / eyes.”[45] This statement, deceptive in its simplicity, reveals a profound understanding of how communities emerge through collective perception of shared environment.

By defining “polis” as “eyes,” Olson suggests that community isn’t primarily a political or economic structure but a perceptual one—a gathering of attention creating shared understanding of place. The community exists through collective seeing, its aggregated perception creating comprehensive knowledge no individual could achieve alone. This approach transforms citizenship from abstract legal status into active

perceptual practice, a way of attending to place creating both knowledge and responsibility: "…there are only / eyes in all heads, / to be looked out of."[46]

This radical democracy of perception suggests that community understanding emerges not through central authority but through gathering multiple perspectives, each contributing partial knowledge to collective understanding. Every community member becomes a participant in creating shared environmental knowledge through their particular acts of perception.

This enlightenment process is captured in images like "Out of the light of Heaven the flower / grows down, the air / of Heaven,"[47] where cosmic illumination manifests in downward-moving, earthly form. The imperative to "Take the earth in under a single review"[48] further emphasizes this collective perceptual process: the comprehensive vision of community through gathered sight.

This understanding connects directly to Olson's concept of "objectism" from "Projective Verse": the idea that the poet should recognize himself as an object among objects, thereby gaining access to "the secrets objects share." In community context, each citizen becomes an object among objects, a node in a perception network collectively constituting the polis. The eye becomes an active interface between individual and collective experience, inner and outer worlds.

The Personal Cosmos

The culmination of Olson's intermedial poetics is the revelation that local experience contains universal patterns—that deep attention to particular place generates cosmic understanding. This is most explicitly articulated in "That's / the combination," where Olson writes:

> Wherever I turn or look in whatever direction, / and near me, on any quarter, all possible combinations of / Creation even now early year Mars blowing / crazy lights at night and as I write in the day light snow / covering the water and crossing the air between me and / the City. Love the World — and stay inside it. / Concentrate / one's own form, holding / every automorphism.[49]

This remarkable passage reveals how individual perception contains universal experience: how a particular view from Gloucester can encompass “all possible combinations of Creation,” an intermedial mixture. The injunction to “Love the World – and stay inside it” offers profound ecological wisdom, suggesting we need not transcend the material world to find meaning but can discover the universal within the particular through deep attention to place. The reference to “automorphism,” a mathematical term for a one-to-one mapping of a point-field into itself that preserves basic relations, suggests each individual creates a personal mapping of the universe preserving essential relationships while reflecting their particular perspective. This is the essence of the “pocket world”: a personal cosmology generated through deep attention to specific place that nonetheless captures universal patterns.

In “The history / of Earth,” Olson further develops this understanding, suggesting that what we observe is the outcome of our own creation. The objective world and universe result from our active production through ‘the voice.’ In “Projective Verse,” the description of the typewriter as a tool allowing poets to “score the page for voice” provides an interesting parallel: the production of the poem through scored page for voice mirrors the production of the world’s appearance through voice. This reconceptualizes the relationship between observer and observed, suggesting perception doesn’t simply document reality but actively creates it through attention. The “pocket world” is thus not just a microcosm reflecting the macrocosm but an active creation contributing to the ongoing generation of the universe itself.

Olson establishes this cosmic-local relationship: “The moon is the measure – man is the measure / Sun & Earth burning / red & green / while we reflect.”[50] This parallel between celestial measurement and human measurement establishes the fundamental relationship between cosmic and local scales that runs throughout the work, suggesting our reflective consciousness is symmetrical to cosmic processes while remaining embedded in them.

Through these interconnected concepts (Maximus as intermedial interface, “polis is eyes” as collective perception, and the personal cosmos as universal container), Olson’s intermedial poetics ultimately teaches us how to hold the universe within individual experience while remaining connected to collective understanding. The

"pocket world" becomes both personal and universal, particular and cosmic, a way of being both in and of the world that transcends the false binary between local and global perspectives. A world for each individual and collective to hold in their pocket.

Conclusion: Active Participation in World-Creation

Throughout *The Maximus Poems*, Olson creates a "pocket world," a microcosmic representation of Gloucester demonstrating how deep attention to specific place generates universal understanding. This concept reveals how intensive engagement with particular landscapes creates insights extending beyond local boundaries to illuminate broader human-environment relationships.

Olson's intermedial approach demonstrates several crucial insights about how communities learn from land. First, understanding place requires multiple modes of knowledge: historical, geographical, sensorial, and communal. No single perspective captures the full reality of human-environment relationships; comprehensive understanding emerges through integrating diverse knowledge systems. When Olson transforms cartographic knowledge into typographical arrangements, historical documents into sensory experiences, or geological processes into community narratives, he demonstrates how intermedial translation generates more comprehensive environmental knowledge than any single approach.

Secondly, learning from land requires active participation rather than passive observation. His composition by field method reveals how knowledge emerges through engaged relationship rather than distant analysis. By physically walking Gloucester's shores, researching its history, and engaging with its community, Olson develops understanding unattainable through abstract study alone. This participatory approach transforms conventional subject-object relationships into reciprocal exchanges where land shapes human perception even as human attention reveals aspects of place. As Olson notes in one poem, "space and time the saliva / in the mouth,"[51] suggesting our most intimate bodily processes are interfaces with cosmic dimensions, dissolving barriers between interior experience and external reality.

The figure of Maximus demonstrates how individual perception contributes to collective environmental consciousness. By positioning Maximus not as exceptional

individual but as "measure" and community voice, Olson creates a model where personal relationships with place become the foundation for shared environmental understanding. This model is captured in the condensed notation "my eye-view"[52] where personal perspective becomes a hyphenated whole, simultaneously individual and collective. This approach challenges both individualistic perspectives emphasizing personal experience without community context and abstract collective approaches disconnected from particular perception.

Perhaps most significantly, Olson reveals how learning from land creates ethical responsibility. By showing how current landscapes emerge from centuries of human-environment interaction, his poetry develops historical consciousness fostering intergenerational stewardship. When readers understand how past land uses shape present environments, they recognize their own role in creating conditions future communities will inherit. This temporal perspective transforms environmental ethics from abstract principle into concrete responsibility grounded in specific place-relationships. The interconnectedness of individual identity with place appears in lines where Olson lists personal possessions alongside selfhood: "my wife / my car / my color / and / myself,"[53] a progression suggesting that identity emerges through relationships with others, objects, qualities, and place. These lines showcase the mediums of communicating love, movement, light, and the embodiment of the world.

These insights remain profoundly relevant to contemporary environmental challenges. Olson's intermedial poetics offers precisely this transformation of consciousness: a way of perceiving environment not as external resource but as constitutive element of human experience and identity.

The lasting significance of Olson's intermedial approach lies in its demonstration that our relationship with place is necessarily multidimensional: simultaneously physical and conceptual, individual and collective, present-focused and historically informed. Through his engagement with Gloucester, Olson reveals that effective environmental understanding requires integration rather than fragmentation, a willingness to cross boundaries between knowledge systems, perceptual modes, and temporal frames.

In the end, Olson shows that poetry can function not merely as description of place but as active technology for generating place through the interaction of language,

history, and geography. Through intermedial poetics, Olson transforms poetry from passive representation into active world-generation: a practice that doesn't just reflect our relationship with environment but actively creates it. This creative act is powerfully captured in the lines "the Blow is Creation / & the Twist the Nasturtium / is any one of Ourselves / And the Place of it All? / Mother / Earth / Alone,"[54] where cosmic creation, human creativity, plant life, and planetary existence are bound together in a single poetic movement.

When we read in "That's / the combination" to "Love the World – and stay inside it. / Concentrate / one's own form, holding / every automorphism," we are invited to create our own pocket world—to develop a personal relationship with place that nonetheless captures universal patterns and relationships. This is the ultimate lesson of Olson's intermedial poetics: through deep attention to particular place, we can generate understanding simultaneously local and cosmic, personal and universal, a way of being both in and of the world that transcends the false binary between individual and collective perspectives. In the age of global environmental crisis, this vision of integrated, participatory relationship with place offers a crucial alternative to both exploitative detachment and abstract environmentalism, pointing toward a truly sustainable environmental consciousness.

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[29] Olson, 186.
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[31] Olson, 633.
[32] Olson, 260.
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[34] Olson, 202.
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[52] Olson, 575.
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