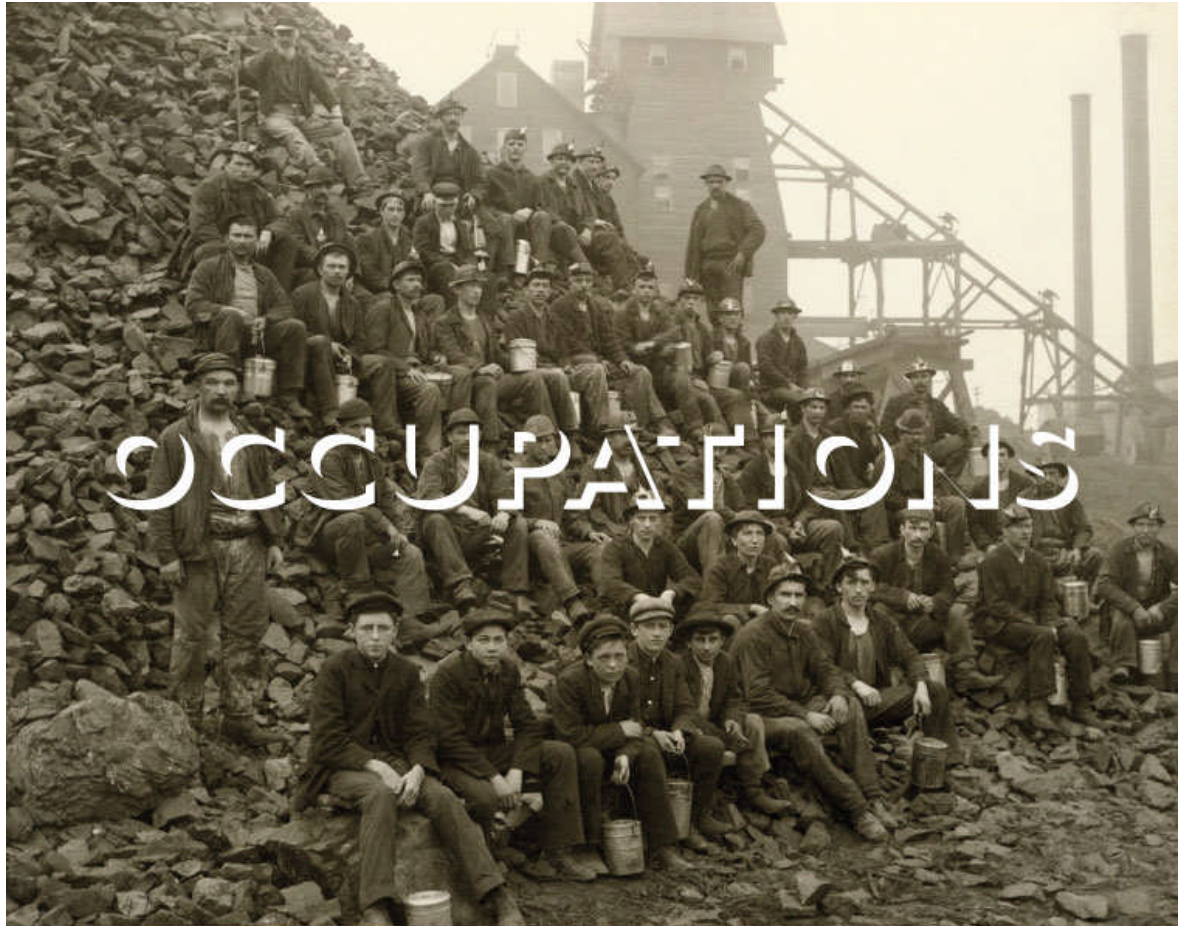


# Excursions

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Brendan Gillott, 'T.S.Eliot, Charles Olson and the Occupation of Gloucester'

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## T.S. Eliot, Charles Olson and the Occupation of Gloucester

A little over a month ago, news emerged of a significant purchase made by the Eliot estate. The Anglo-American poet's family summer house in Gloucester, Massachusetts, where Eliot spent the vacations of his childhood, has been bought up and is to be turned into a museum. In an article on the purchase for the *Observer*, the novelist and literary journalist Robert praised the development, which he cast as finally providing accommodation for the previously 'homeless' poet McCrum ('TS Eliot's restless ghost finds home in seaside idyll', 15 February 2015). Comment from the great and the good of the literary scene (notably former poet-laureate Andrew Motion) echoed the sentiment. The acquisition of the house and the concomitant consecration of

Gloucester to T.S. Eliot has been approved by the high church of English-language letters.

McCrum's article makes passing reference to a community of writers and artists who had grown up in Gloucester during the twentieth century, but save for a brief namecheck to Rudyard Kipling (who only spent a couple of seasons in the seaport) Eliot's reputation and writing overwhelms. That Gloucester has been the subject of other and more sustained literary attention is not remarked upon. This is particularly strange, since by McCrum's own admission, Eliot is at best a 'spectral' presence in Gloucester; he spent holidays in the city during his childhood but had little adult connection to the place, and the writings that do return to it are characterised by (often hazy) remembrance rather than actual presence. In marked contrast, I want here to consider the work of Charles Olson, the New England native and Gloucester-based poet whose *Maximus Poems* constitute, in part, an extended and deeply attentive account of Gloucester and its history. A comparison of Eliot's and Olson's writings on Gloucester demonstrates revealing differences in attitude to what 'place' consists of, which carry within them otherwise submerged dynamics insisting on differing relations to politics. Particularly I want to investigate how what Olson reads as the hostile or domineering *occupation* of Gloucester by Eliot's *Four Quartets* is transformed by the younger poet into a very different kind of occupational poetics, one founded upon the validation of labour over leisure.

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The story of Olson and Eliot is usually told as follows. By the time Olson started writing poetry in the early 1940s, Eliot was already an established figure. *The Waste Land* had been produced in 1922 and was subsequently hailed as a masterpiece. His mature work was well underway, with the first of the *Quartets*, 'Burnt Norton' appearing in 1936 and the last, 'Little Gidding', published in 1942 (the complete set appeared together as *Four Quartets* a year later). In 1948 Eliot won both the Nobel Prize for Literature and was awarded the Order of Merit. Throughout this time he had been an employee of Faber and Faber, where he was influential in publishing the work of Auden, Spender and so on. When, then, Olson produced his breakthrough poem, 'The Kingfishers' (1950), Eliot's work was at the very heart of official verse culture, and so the obvious target for the ire of a putative new poetics. As Paul Christensen has put it, 'Eliot's domination of

the literary scene was so broad that to launch a new movement required, almost of necessity, the rejection of all that Eliot stood for' (1979, p.162). In this context it is unsurprising that 'The Kingfishers' is regularly read as an anti-*Waste Land* poem, an attempt to reclaim an optimistic 'hunt among stones' (Olson, 1997a, p.93) from Eliot's 'stony rubbish', his 'fragments [...] shored against [...] ruins' (Eliot, 2002, p.38; p.51). Whatever the truth of this claim—for example, Thomas Merrill (1982, p.65) seems to think that 'Kingfishers' interaction with Eliot is overstated—there is plenty of critical speculation on the supposed influence of *The Waste Land* on Olson's work.

Here the story of Olson and Eliot is commonly said to end. In 1950 Olson began writing *The Maximus Poems*, the great poetical project to which he was to devote the majority of his time and energy up until his death. In *Maximus*, criticism has tended to find the influence of Ezra Pound, specifically of *The Cantos*, whose interest in the ideogram and telescoping-together of otherwise-distant historical periods certainly provided the prime positive model on which Olson based his own long poem. This focus on Olson's Poundian inheritance, correct and crucial though it is, has obscured how Eliot's poetry provided the express *negative* model against which Olson sprung into action from the very first *Maximus* poem. In a letter to his friend, the poet Robert Creeley, of 16 May 1950, Olson opined:

As one particularist to another, that's what prose must be: particle by particle, clean prose, in contrast to verse, is a social instrument, and has shown, up to now, altogether too much of that sort of slavery: in- and de- duction. I get so sick of mags like PR, with piece after piece trying to finish themselves off, to fit an arbitrary form, never growing from the nerves of the man, always  
– like the 4 Quartets –  
adjusting themselves. And thus frauds: (I am thinking of T.S. (GI sense) Omeliot, and his use of my, *my* Madonna, buono viaggi, Gloucester, and how he misuses it, is riding, is generalizer) (Butterick, 1980, p.28)

Olson's dismissive entitling of Eliot as 'Omeliot' in reference to his Order of Merit points to the way in which Eliot's position within a literary establishment is part of the sticking-point for the younger poet; it also feeds into his more serious and more properly literary critique, that work like Eliot's is 'trying to finish [itself] off', i.e. it kills off any vitality it might have in its attempt to be a closed and complete form, rather than an open and processual one in the manner Olson proposed in his poetic manifesto 'Projective Verse' (1997b, pp.239-249), published in the same year as this letter.

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Eliot, then, is a proponent of ‘closed’ rather than ‘open’ verse, but he is also a ‘fraud’, and it is here that we get to Olson’s major objection to *Four Quartets*, which founds and informs his other protestations. The ‘Madonna’ referred to is the statue of the Virgin Mary sitting on top of the Church of Our Lady of Good Voyage (‘buono viaggi’) in Gloucester. Olson claims that Eliot ‘misuses’ it, as a form of convenience or platform rather than a thing in itself; ‘riding’ is an act of occupation, an egocentric putting of oneself over place in a manner which Olson conceives of as fundamentally appropriative. The statue is Olson’s (‘*my* Madonna’), and Eliot has stolen it. The objection is not, then, that Eliot has sullied a purely objective account of the city through the interpolation of subjectivity, but that the manner of his interaction with the place is illegitimate. Discussing Olson’s 1951 essay ‘Human Universe’, Merrill has suggested that

what is so different about Olson’s attitude to [personality] is that he locates it not, as Eliot does, in the mind, or even in the soul, but in the *physical body* where its proprioceptive energies pick up ‘knowledge’ of a different nature than that picked up by the conscious ego through the five senses (1982, p.23).

In his account of proprioceptive knowledge, delineated in the essay ‘Proprioception’ and elsewhere, Olson contends that by understanding the process of knowledge creation as occurring within and through the interactions and collaborations of the senses in the body as it moves through the world, one can de-essentialise the mediating conceptions of mind, unconscious or soul, and thereby have access to a world of sensate immediacy which is neither abstract nor impersonal (1974, pp.17-19). In the remainder of this piece I want to suggest that, whilst Merrill is right to identify a differing view of poetic personality operating in the works of Eliot and Olson, he is wrong to denigrate the importance of the five senses in Olson’s poetry. In fact, the distinction between Eliotic and Olsonian poetics is best understood as the question of what the proper manner of ‘occupation’—of relation to place—is for a poet. The production of ‘knowledge’ is indeed at the centre of this question for Olson, who had written in a previous letter to Creeley (on the 9<sup>th</sup> May) that ‘[p]oets are the only pedagogues’ (Butterick, 1980, p.23), and for whom the production and dispersion of that knowledge in poetry is *of the body*, physical labour. In *The Maximus Poems*, Olson reinterprets the question of ‘occupation’ to mean: what is the poet’s proper work? The sharp end of this reinterpretation finds its text in the third of the four *Quartets*, ‘The Dry Salvages’.

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It is necessary at this point briefly to sketch out what poetic knowledge consists in for Olson, and how it is made. When he identifies himself to Creeley as a fellow ‘particularist’, he is describing an epistemology that is founded on details; it has an informational base rather than a philosophical base. What this means is that his poetics spurns discourse in favour of facts. The term ‘FACT’ (almost always capitalised) holds an important place in Olson’s work from its inception: his first book, *Call Me Ishmael* (1947), is an eccentric study of *Moby Dick* in which the critical argument is interspersed with three brief chapters described as ‘FACTS’; these are anecdotes about actual whaling expeditions and a brief note on one of Melville’s notebooks (Olson, 1997b, pp.11-14; p.69; p.95). These ‘FACTS’ are grist, small bits of matter that are not part of Olson’s critical discourse as such but which have some illustrative relevance to the work at hand. They break the argumentative logic, and link the book into actual practices of husbandry, seamanship and economics that were the material substrate for Melville’s work. ‘Particularism’ then means an insistence on knowledge made through an attention to and enumeration of economic and social productions, as a form of materialism, but it also suggests an archaeological methodology which Olson practiced in his own writing and affirmed in his teaching, as perhaps most famously in his ‘A Bibliography on America For Ed Dorn’, which he wrote for the younger poet whilst teaching at Black Mountain College, the experimental arts institution in North Carolina. Encouraging Dorn to recognise the importance of ‘FACTS’, Olson prescribes

PRIMARY DOCUMENTS. And to hook on here is a lifetime of assiduity. Best thing to do is *to dig one thing or place or man* until you yourself know more abt [sic] that than is possible to any other man. It doesn’t matter whether it’s Barbed Wire or Pemmican or Paterson or Iowa. But *exhaust* it. Saturate it. Beat it.

And then U KNOW everything else very fast: one saturation job (it might take 14 years). And you’re in, forever (1997b, pp.306-7).

The poet must teach himself through ‘digging’ (both excavating and appreciating/knowing, in the countercultural beatnik fashion) a *particular* subject until it belongs to them entirely, until it is their territory, their locale. This

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archaeological practice, of uncovering history, is not merely accumulative but accelerative; it inaugurates a prospective knowledge, allowing Olson to describe himself to friends and admirers as an 'Archaeologist of Morning'. The poet who thus practices a particularist archaeology produces poetry which contains not discursive knowledge but a hypotactical and allusive kind composed of informational detail, of acute perceptions. It makes the poem not into a discourse on a subject but an archive, open to rearrangement, correction and addition. The poem's knowledge is fundamentally processual, and has a pedagogic function both as a methodological example and a resource for further labour.

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The pedagogical impulse of the *Maximus* seems to have been born as a *corrective* function. In his letter to Creeley of 16 May, Olson complains of Eliot's misuse of 'my' Lady of Good Voyage; in the first poem of the *Maximus*, 'I, Maximus of Gloucester, to You', Olson returns to the Lady, hoping to set the record straight. The use of the statue Olson takes offence at occurs in 'The Dry Salvages', a poem 'set' in Gloucester, and based in Eliot's memory of the family vacation-spot. The particular passage Olson picks out for his ire in the letter to Creeley is part IV, which runs as thus:

Lady, whose shrine stands on the promontory,  
Pray for all those who are in ships, those  
Whose business has to do with fish, and  
Those concerned with every lawful traffic  
And those who conduct them.

Repeat a prayer also on behalf of  
Women who have seen their sons or husbands  
Setting forth, and not returning:  
Figlia del tuo figlio,  
Queen of Heaven.

Also pray for those who were in ships, and  
Ended their voyage on the sand, in the sea's lips  
Or in the dark throat which will not reject them  
Or wherever cannot reach them the sound of the sea bell's  
Perpetual angelus. (1972, pp.42-3)

Olson's objection here is precisely that the poem is 'set' in Gloucester, as a kind of backdrop or stage-dressing, but is not really 'in' the location in any real sense. Eliot is using the place and its particularities as archetypes, and this includes the Lady. Helen Gardner (1978, p.141) notes how in a letter to William T. Levy of 1961, Eliot wrote of the church that 'you accepted it as a class of churches, and were not thinking of a particular church. And that is the right way to think of it'; Levy was reminded of a church in Marseilles. Eliot's address to the statue as 'Figlia del tuo figlio' is a (mis-)quotation from Dante, which demonstrates the poet thinking of the statue as a figure of discourse rather than a 'FACT'; whereas in Olson's understanding, Dante is irrelevant, having nothing to do with Gloucester (the Catholic fishing population of which was at any rate Portuguese rather than Italian).

Perhaps the most glaring error, however, is that the statue is not where Eliot says it is; it is not in fact on a promontory but on top of the church in the centre of town.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Olson in his first sally for *Maximus* notes that Eliot's image of the statue as depicting a mother is somewhat off as well:

(o my lady of good voyage  
in whose arm, whose left arm rests  
no boy but a carefully carved wood, a painted face, a schooner!  
a delicate mast, as bow-sprit for

forwarding (1983, p.6)

The direct contradiction here ('no boy but [...] a schooner') points again to the pedagogical and corrective stance of the poem, and to Olson's thoroughness of knowledge; it also suggests itself as a point for 'forwarding', a grounding or jumping-off place for something else. The essentially optimistic and forward-looking character of Olson's poem is as significant a marker of difference from Eliot as is its particularism; indeed the optimism is a result of Olson's archaeological, inquisitive poetics.

In contrast, 'The Dry Salvages' is a poem characterised by uncertainty and a degree of fatalism. If, as is commonly held, 'The Kingfishers' is a rebuttal of *The Waste Land*, a counter-vision of rebirth spoken against a diagnosis of decay, then a very similar dynamic can be seen in Eliot's and Olson's respective Gloucester-poems. The Dry Salvages themselves are a rock-formation lying off the coast of Cape Ann, but in Eliot's



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poem the idea of ‘salvaging’ itself is in the foreground, as the poet attempts to save what he can from the inferno of history. From the second section of the poem:

The backward look behind the assurance  
Of recorded history, the backward half-look  
Over the shoulder, towards the primitive terror. (1972, p.39)

Where for Eliot the deep past is a void—unrecorded or unrecordable chaos and brutality—we have seen already that for Olson this is very much opposite to the truth. The archaeologist-poet cannot endorse Eliot’s pessimism, nor the fear of ‘unrecorded history’, the ‘digging’ of which is Olson’s work, to be found not just in ‘PRIMARY DOCUMENTS’ but in previously-unrecorded experiences, details of place and landscape. Rather than Eliot’s ‘backward look’, Olson again proposes *Our Lady of Good Voyage* as the object-lesson:

Only the lady

has got it straight. She looks  
as the best of my people look  
in one direction, her direction, they know

it is elements men stand in the midst of,  
not these names supported by that false future she,  
precisely she,  
has her foot upon (1983, p.10)

‘Elements’, not ‘names’: Olson here reasserts a commitment to ‘FACT’ over discourse, as an antidote to the ‘false future’ of despair Eliot may read into the landscape. The statue is described as having ‘her foot upon’ this future, a reference to the snake or image of Satan the Virgin Mary is often depicted treading upon. What is notable about this final image, however, is that Olson discovers it to be incorrect; in a later unpublished poem, quoted in George F. Butterick’s *Guide to the Maximus Poems*, Olson writes that ‘I’m not sure the Portuguese Virgin / of the church isn’t standing between the two blue towers / with feet as naked and as long as her hands / and no Enemy’ (1978, p.18). Critics such as Robert von Hallberg (1978) have commented extensively in the past on the propensity of Olson’s work to fold back on, critique and correct itself in this way. The point I want to make here is simply to suggest that not

only do such moments confirm and conform to Olson's poetics of archival and archaeological 'digging', they also suggest an attitude to history as such which, counter to the model proposed by Eliot in 'The Dry Salvages' and elsewhere, sees history as a process and a work-in-progress where transformation and reinterpretation in the light of that transformation are the only constants: 'What does not change / is the will to change', as Olson has it in 'The Kingfishers' (1997a, p.86). History becomes a morphological discipline in Olson's hands, in which redefinition and redrafting are the occupation of history itself.

In this context the Eliotic position, which sees a quotation from Dante in a statue built on a late-nineteenth century church, is meaningless. To see reflections of an unchanging eternal in the particular is to ignore history entirely and occupy it with platitudes, as here in the first section of 'The Dry Salvages':

The river is within us, the sea is all about us;  
The sea is the land's edge also, the granite  
Into which it reaches, the beaches where it tosses  
Its hints of earlier and other creation (1972, p.36)

Again, Olson knows better here; he is more attentive than to suggest that the sea or the river can represent eternal or inner value just as such. He recognises that the landscape shifts in such a fashion that to make it any simple representative of the past or beginning is hopeless, since there is a necessary geological distance between past and present appearances:

But just there lies the thing, that "fisherman's Field"  
(Stage head, Stage Fort, and now and all my childhood  
a down-dilly park for cops and robbers, baseball, firemen's  
hose, North End Italian Sunday spreads, night-time Gloucester  
monkey-business) stays the first place Englishmen  
first felt the light and winds, the turning, from that view,  
of what is now the City—the gulls the same but otherwise the sounds  
were different for those fourteen men, probably the ocean  
ate deeper in the shore, crashed further up at Cressy's (1983, p.110)

Digging into the geology of the landscape demonstrates that the sea level has changed in the period between Cape Ann's settlement in the seventeenth century and the mid-twentieth. Olson's diligence in this consideration is so extreme that he even considers

the degree to which a higher sea-level would change the sound of the sea-shore, and the way that it might affect the sensations caused by 'light and wind'; the archaeological method is clearly a sensuous one here. He knows the historical name of the body of water that lies outside Gloucester Harbour ('fisherman's Field'), and that this was the place where settlers first landed, and is now a playground and recreation-place. Again here 'FACT' reintegrates Olson's writing into economic and human practice, into the use people make of the place, which in turn opens it up to the poet for use in his work. Olson's particularism is very much more than local pride; it is a method of knowledge accumulation and organisation that constitutes a properly historical poetic practice, in which morphological history is both the subject and the mode.

In the final analysis, from Olson's position 'The Dry Salvages' ultimately condemns itself in its own words: 'We had the experience but missed the meaning' (Eliot, 1972, p.39), where the distinction between experience and meaning is one Olson the anti-Platonist fundamentally rejects. To overlay experience in the manner Eliot does (or even to invent it where it 'ought' to be) is to fashion one's poem as an occupying force, to exploit a place or landscape for one's own ends, and to obscure the material objects out of which and only out of which one can begin one's own education. That uncovering the 'FACTS' is difficult is a given, but Olson seems to suggest that despite this the objects have a sort of impulsion or insistence of their own; they present themselves for experience:

the underpart is, though stemmed, uncertain  
is, as sex is, as moneys are, facts!  
facts, to be dealt with, as the sea is, the demand  
that they be played by, that they can only be, that they must  
be played by, said he, coldly, the  
ear! (1983, p.6)

The facts may be 'stemmed' but they cannot be destroyed or stopped; they instantiate the real's desire to be experienced and known, wherein a co-operative relationship between the human and the world, between the landscape and the sensuous experience of the human in the landscape, destroys the alienation implicit in Eliot's occupation of and in his geographical and temporal removal from Gloucester. Olson's poetry is not merely a product of memory but of daily interaction and attention, a labour entailing 'a lifetime of assiduity'. This organic relationship between the archivist and the archive is constituted by its process of change and transformation, the 'playing by ear' which

contingent and processual reality demands. This contingency makes leisurely memory or idle archetypality irrelevant and impossible.

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Olson's critique renders Eliot's Gloucester-poem a superficial and oblivious abstraction, one which can only get a handle on the place it describes by suppressing the details and specificities which make it what it is. Unwilling or unable to get its hands dirty in the archaeological labour, Eliot's poem cannot think history as a morphological continuity but only in terms of the temporally present and the temporally eternal; he can only articulate history as loss or as seizure:

But to apprehend  
The point of intersection of the timeless  
With time, is an occupation for the saint –  
No occupation either, but something given  
And taken, a life's death in love,  
Ardour and selflessness in self-surrender.  
For most of us, there is only the unattended  
Moment, the moment in and out of time,  
The distraction fit, lost in a shaft of sunlight (1972, p.44)

Here the continuity of historical time (already unhelpfully conflated in the 'time present and time past / [...] both perhaps present in time future' of 'Burnt Norton' (Eliot, 1972, p.13)) is effaced, and placed in relation to an unchanging 'timeless', the negotiation of which is said to be the 'occupation for the saint', and further 'no occupation either', but a sort of divine gift. Though unavailable to 'most of us', Eliot included, such an apprehension of the timeless is a desirable state exemplified by the saint and available to the poet, at least partially and haphazardly, in moments of distraction. The occupation of the poet, which is for Olson the work of place and of history, is framed by Eliot as labour-free, a daydream in a moment of leisure; it is at best something to 'occupy' one's empty time, and at worst, as Olson sees it, an illegitimate occupation of another's territory, an overwriting of the specific with the general.

Against Eliot's positioning of poetic occupation as essentially apolitical, then, Olson explicitly articulates the poet's occupation as *work*, a regime of daily and

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repeated attention to the shifting sights, sounds and textures of Gloucester as a working town and a site for further work; this is conceived of not simply as an act of accurate description or mapping, but as an *ethic* of place, which refuses to ‘finish itself off’ or leave the job half done, to settle for or ‘occupy’ a fixed view. To begin to know a particular place (or person, or thing) through poetry is a labour of sensuous and energetic production, as Olson suggests most clearly in the early *Maximus* poem ‘Maximus, to himself’, writing that:

I have had to learn the simplest things  
last. Which made for difficulties.  
Even at sea I was slow, to get the hand out, to cross  
a wet deck.

The sea was not, finally, my trade.  
But even my trade, at it, I stood estranged  
from that which was most familiar. Was delayed,  
and not content with the man’s argument  
that such postponement  
is now the nature of  
obedience (1983, p.56)

To learn the simplest things last is to struggle to uncover the ‘FACTS’, sensual phenomena, to refuse to be content with ‘the man’s argument’ that such things are distant or inaccessible to us, that discourse is the closest thing to ‘nature’ or the given that we can have. Though ‘the sea’ (the fishing industry of Gloucester) is admitted not to be Olson’s true ‘trade’, his real ‘trade’ is still a practice of bodily movement and perception, ‘to get the hand out, to cross / a wet deck’. Olson’s multisensory formulation of the poet’s labour—one requiring more than simply the traditional poetical metaphor of sight and making ‘the ear’, hearing, and ‘the hand’, touching and excavating, as significant as vision—validates ‘FACT’ over discourse by emphasising the poem not as an act of privileged speech but as a crafting, as making an object. The occupation that such a poetry is, in both senses, ‘about’ produces an archive of sensuous and factual particularities which is too diverse and tendentious for a poetics of discourse to effectively occupy. *Maximus*’ Gloucester thus escapes from under Eliot’s poem, taking its foundations with it.

Olson’s deployment of an archaeological poetics against a discursive one finds some illumination in the work of Michel Foucault, who writes in 1969’s *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, in the year before Olson’s death, that ‘to show [...] a change

in the order of discourse does not presuppose ‘new ideas’, a little invention and creativity, a different mentality, but transformations in practice’ (1972, p.209). It is not enough to simply oppose a discourse of occupation with a new or corrected discourse, since this new discourse will simply replace the old as a new occupation, whilst remaining in all essentials continuous with it. It is displacement of discourse with ‘practice’, with an archaeological methodology upturning new objects of knowledge, which marks a change in discourse for Foucault and which pertains to Olson’s work. Where Olson diverges both from Eliot and from Foucault in his archaeological methodology is in the prospective potential he gives it. Foucault writes that ‘the word archaeology is not supposed to carry any suggestion of anticipation; it simply indicates a possible line of attack for the analysis of a level—that of statement and archive; the determination and illumination of a domain’ (1972, p.206). For Olson, the ‘Archaeologist of Morning’, the process of digging is always intended to lay the groundwork for an extensive projecting into the future; once the ‘lifetime of assiduity’ has been undergone, new vistas of poetic occupation open up: ‘you’re in, forever’.

The poet’s proper pedagogic role, then, is found not in the tentative or pessimistic didactics of Eliot’s poem but in the heuristic approach that informs *The Maximus Poems*, a trial-and-error writing open to the unfolding of the future. Such work is a never-ending occupation, which is of necessity never established or stable. As Gloucester changes so must the poem, and the poet. The early *Maximus* not only rebukes Eliot’s misuse of *Our Lady of Good Voyage* but militates against the world of discourse in general, of advertising and signage, ‘words, words, words / all over everything’ (1983, p.17). If the distracting discourses of capitalism currently dominate the city, leaving the poet ‘estranged / from that which was most familiar’, then Olson finds the poet’s true occupation in protest and reclamation. He finds it in exacting attention to the comings-and-goings, the workings-through of the city’s life seen up close and with extreme care. This care must be fully physical, an immersion in the sights and sounds and smells of the city.

Olson’s occupation of Gloucester is a labour of residency, a ‘lifetime of assiduity’ and a ceaseless process; in this it shares nothing with Eliot’s holiday destination. Where Eliot’s writing sanctions leisure over labour, Olson’s Gloucester is the output of a writing for which everything matters, forged in acts of attention of remarkable scrupulousness. It is not a place to retire for the summer, nor for leisurely consideration in the pages of the Sunday culture supplement. Gloucester is an

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occupation-as-employment dragged 'from the nerves of the man'; not a museum piece but a living thing.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This is easy to establish today with the aid of Google Earth etc.; it is worth noting that an Olsonian poetics of particularism becomes rather different when the researcher can employ a search-engine. The dynamics of autodidactic and archival poetry changed significantly with the advent of the internet, in ways that the poets of the past, Olson included, cannot have anticipated.



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