

Projective

In this issue of *Printer's Devil Review*, we are proud to present two critical works on poet Charles Olson's 1950 manifesto "Projective Verse" – a seminal modernist essay that champions the primacy of speech in poetic composition and argues that written verse should, instead of following received rhythmic, metrical, and rhyming patterns, attempt to transcribe the poet's pattern of speech.

The first essay, poet Sam Cha's "Projective Verse' and the 'Open Text' Considered as Practices of Body," is a celebration of and personal reflection on Olson's ideas, as well as those of language poet Lyn Hejinian. The second essay, by *PDR* editor Thomas Dodson, mounts a compelling postmodernist critique of Olson's suggestion that written and spoken language are in contention.

Olson deserves recognition and consideration for the influence he has had on modern poetry and, for us at *PDR*, he is also something of a local hero. Born in 1910, Olson was raised in Worcester, Massachusetts and summered in Gloucester – a locale that would later become a major focus of his poetic work.

Following stints in academia as a Herman Melville scholar, in the military during WWII, and in politics as a Democratic Party operative, Olson

turned his attention to poetry when he was in his mid-thirties.

He wrote "Projective Verse" in the midst of an eight-year period as an off-and-on professor at Black Mountain College in North Carolina that lasted from 1948 until the school closed in 1956.

"Projective Verse" exerted a major influence on Olson's contemporaries at Black Mountain, who included Robert Creeley, Robert Duncan, Ed Dorn, Denise Levertov, and Jonathan Williams. His work is also recognized as having provided a link between early modernist poets like William Carlos Williams and Ezra Pound and later poetic movements such as the Beat Generation and the New York School. As Cha points out in his essay, Olson's influence has also been cited by postmodern groups like the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Poets.

We hope these two essays will provide new insights for those already familiar with Olson's work and an intriguing introduction for those new to his thought and poetic practice.

Read the full text of "Projective Verse" at the Poetry Foundation website: <http://bit.ly/GZhpvL>

Verse

