



Collected Prose

By Charles Olson

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The prose writings of Charles Olson (1910–1970) have had a far-reaching and continuing impact on post-World War II American poetics. Olson's theories, which made explicit the principles of his own poetics and those of the Black Mountain poets, were instrumental in defining the sense of the postmodern in poetry and form the basis of most postwar free verse.

The *Collected Prose* brings together in one volume the works published for the most part between 1946 and 1969, many of which are now out of print. A valuable companion to editions of Olson's poetry, the book backgrounds the poetics, preoccupations, and fascinations that underpin his great poems. Included are *Call Me Ishmael*, a classic of American literary criticism; the influential essays "Projective Verse" and "Human Universe"; and essays, book reviews, and Olson's notes on his studies. In these pieces one can trace the development of his new science of man, called "muthologos," a radical mix of myth and phenomenology that Olson offered in opposition to the mechanistic discourse and rationalizing policy he associated with America's recent wars in Europe and Asia.

Editors Donald Allen and Benjamin Friedlander offer helpful annotations throughout, and poet Robert Creeley, who enjoyed a long and mutually influential relationship with Olson, provides the book's introduction.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Poet and critic Olson wrote in a muscular style, one as individualistic as it is exasperating. Yet his writings changed the way literature is written and read: his essay "Projective Verse" gives a name to the poetry written by Cummings, Pound, Williams, and other Moderns, and his book *Call Me Ishmael* tells more about the composition of *Moby-Dick* than any study before or since. That work and three other Olson books, along with nine uncollected essays and five previously unpublished pieces, are brought together here by Allen, editor of the influential *New American Poetry*, 1945-1960, and Friedlander, a poet and doctoral candidate (SUNY at Buffalo). This work isn't easy reading, but for any serious student of the last 150 years of American letters, it is essential. —David Kirby, Florida State Univ., Tallahassee
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From the Inside Flap

"*Collected Prose* will introduce a new generation of readers to a central modernist and postmodernist thinker in American letters. For the energy of the avant-garde literary project at midcentury, Olson is it. No one else has the excitement or range."—Robert Hass

"At last we have between two covers some of the most compelling theorizing in postmodern poetics and American Studies ever produced, from one of the defining figures in postwar American poetry. This is that rarest of books, a must-read for poets and scholars alike."—Alan Golding

From the Back Cover

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