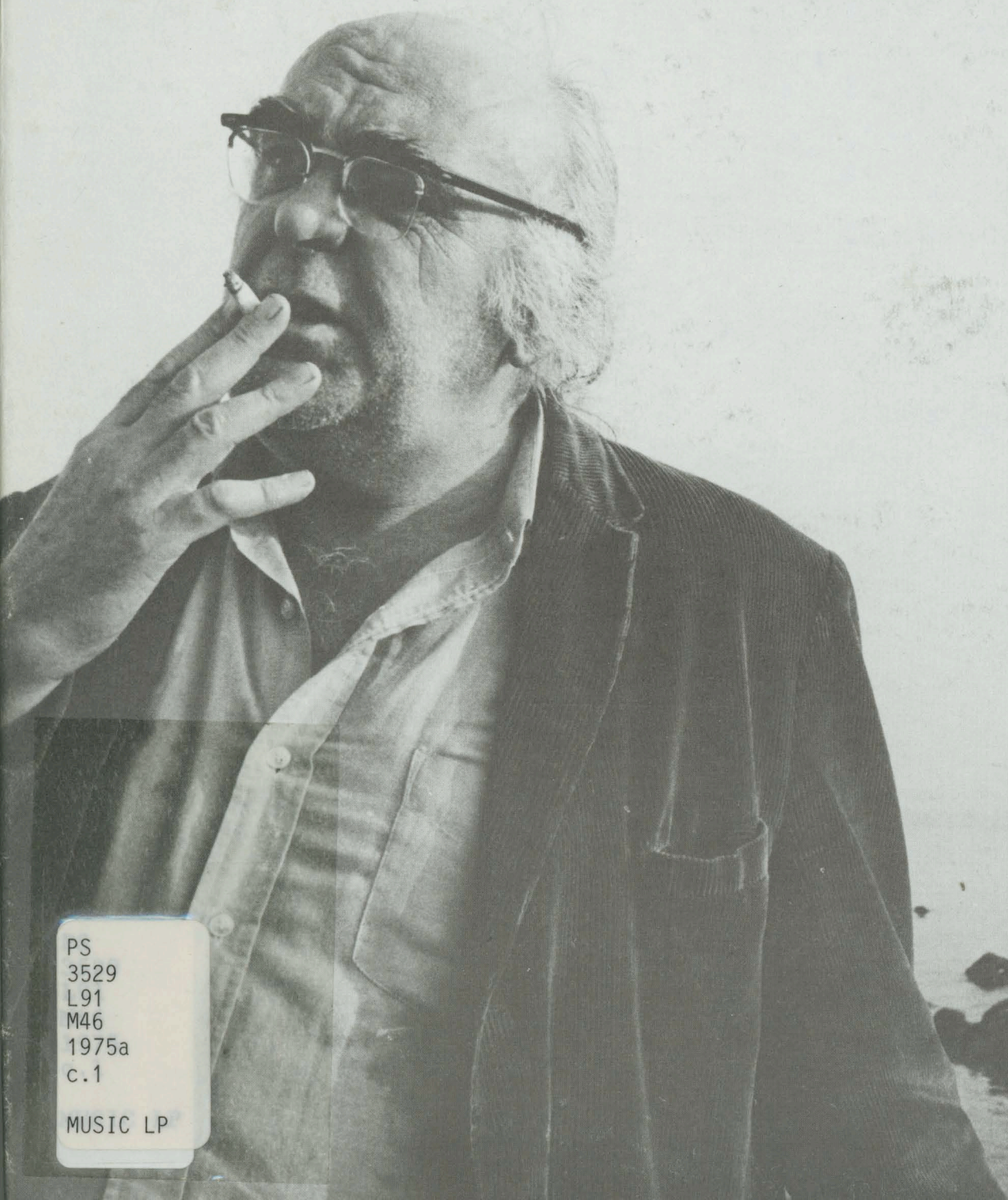


PRODUCED, EDITED AND RECORDED BY BARRY MILES

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FL 9738

CHARLES
OLSON

READS FROM MAXIMUS POEMS IV, V, VI



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MUSIC LP

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**CHARLES OLSON READS FROM
MAXIMUS POEMS IV, V, VI**

Band 1. I Am the Gold Machine (w/Intro.)
Band 2. All My Life I've Heard About Many, Piggy-Back Poem
Band 3. Maximus, from Dogtown II (w/Intro.)
Band 4. Sequentior

SIDE 1

Band 5. Now Called Gravel Hill
Band 6. Between Cruiser and Plato
Band 7. Going Right Out of the Centuary
Band 8. After the Storm Was Over
Band 9. To Travel Typhon, Up the Steps, People Want Delivery,
The Coast, Tesseræ Commissure, Older That Byblos,
Chronicles I, Chronicles II.
Band 10. Untitled Maximus Poem,
Vida Upanishad Edda Than, Kent Circle (Wrote My First
Poems), Further Completion of Plat, Maximus Poem -
Band 11. Into the Stream, Gloucester; The Frontlet, To enter, etc.
Band 12. Her Stern Like a Box, Anacoluthic and Drag
Band 13. The Difference . . . Cormant . . . Absoluteness
Band 14. Harbour, Kent Circle, Swung, J.W.
Band 15. Not the Intaglio Method
Produced, Edited & Recorded by Miles

**CHARLES OLSON READS FROM
MAXIMUS POEMS IV, V, VI**

SIDE 2

Band 1. Mayan Letter No. 13 (w/Intro.)*
Band 2. Mayan Letter No. 7 (w/Intro.)*
Band 3. Mayan Letter No. 5 (w/Intro.)*
Band 4. Chockablock (Maximus Letter
No. Whatever)

Band 5. Caches
Band 6. Bohlan I, Bohlan II
Band 7. John Watts; 3rd Letter on Georges,
Unwritten; The Gulf of Maine

*From: "Mayan Letters"

Produced, Edited & Recorded by Miles, for
Miles Associates, London

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CHARLES
OLSON
READS FROM
MAXIMUS POEMS
IV, V, VI

PRODUCED, EDITED AND RECORDED BY
BARRY MILES

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

COVER PHOTO BY GERARD MALANGA

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FL 9738

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FOLKWAYS RECORDS Album No. FL 9738
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CHARLES OLSON Reads From MAXIMUS Poems IV, V, VI,

SIDE ONE

(1) I Am The Gold Machine [w/intro]	1:53	(18) Untitled Maximus Poem [from mss]	2:04
(2) All My Life	0:25	(19) Vida Upanishad Eda Then	0:09
(3) Piggy-Back Poem	0:21 0:48	(20) Kent Circle (Wrote My First Poems)	1:22
(4) Maximus From Dogtown II [w/intro]	4:17	(21) Further Completion Of Plot	1:59
(5) Sequentio	0:36	(22) Maximus Poem - July 24, 1968	3:21 8:55
(6) Gravely Hill	5:46	(23) Into The Stream, Gloucester	0:20
(7) Between Cruiser And Plato	0:22	(24) The Frontlet	1:02
(8) I, John Watts	0:33	(25) To Enter Into Their Bodies	0:48 2:10
(9) After The Storm Was Over	0:35	(26) Her Stern Like A Box	0:14
(10) To Travel Typhon	0:20	(27) Anacoluthic And Drag	0:08 0:28
(11) Up The Steps	0:15	(28) The Difference Of A Wild Thing	0:11
(12) People Want Delivery	0:18	(29) The Cormorant And Spindle	0:04
(13) The Coast	0:19	(30) Absoluteness	0:02 0:23
(14) Tesseract Commisure	0:16	(31) In The Harbour	0:06
(15) Older Than Biblus	0:25	(32) Kent Circle Song	0:19
(16) Chronicles I	1:05	(33) I Swang Out At Eight Or Ten	0:12
(17) Chronicles II	0:34 3:32	(34) J.W.	0:49 1:37
		(35) Not The Italian Method	0:14

SIDE TWO

(1) Mayan Letter #13 [intro 0:13]	9:20	(6) Bolan I	0:35
(2) Mayan Letter #7 [intro 1:00]	1:39	(7) Bolan II	0:38 1:16
(3) Mayan Letter #5 [intro 1:03]	8:15	(8) John Watts	0:11
(4) Chockablock	2:20	(9) Third Letter On Georges	1:58
(5) Caches	2:11	(10) Gulf Of Main	2:54 5:03

CHARLES OLSON was born December 27, 1910 in Worcester, Mass. He attended Wesleyan, Yale and Harvard. He taught at Clark, then Harvard from 1936-1939 and was an instructor and the rector at Black Mountain College from 1951-1956. It was at Black Mountain that his fame began. His first publication was an essay, "Lear and Moby Dick" in Twice-A-Year and his first poem was published in 1945. In 1952 on a grant from the Wenner-Gren Foundation he went to study Mayan hieroglyphics in Yucatan. It was here that he wrote "The Mayan Letters" to Robert Creeley, an extract from which is on this record. On return to the States he began the huge series of poems entitled "The Maximus Poems" which he completed on his death bed. Most of the poems on this record are from "Maximus IV, V, VI" a sequence which comes after "Maximus 1-22" which is perhaps Olson's best known book of poetry. His major statement on poetics was an essay entitled "Projective Verse" which is variously reprinted but most easily available as an appendix to Donald M. Allen's "The New American Poetry, 1945-1960".

SOME NOTES ON THE RECORDING

MILES

"The first time I realized that I was larger than the ordinary was once when I was running down a hill in Boston to catch a bus, and as I passed, a little black boy said, "My God, there goes Goliath!"

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And Charles roared with laughter. Friends called him 'The Big O'. In conversations the laughs used to come rumbling up from deep in his chest, round and full. The endless sentences twisted and groped and pulled in amazingly erudite facts to substantiate some theory which you hadn't a hope of contradicting anyway.

I had known him when he was staying in Regent's Park, London, with Panna Grady, so the schedule we used to record came as no surprise to me: Charles got up at about 8.00pm, ate breakfast and talked. At Regent's Park the guests were all gone by two or three and Charles had the still of the night to work in. At Black Mountain College he classes sometimes started at midnight. This recording is no exception, it was all recorded well after midnight.

Charles lived in a railroad flat, in an old white-painted clapboard house in Gloucester Mass. Outdoor stairs led into the kitchen where, propped against the huge refrigerator, Charles used to hold forth. Everything was in the most allmighty muddle, papers, books, dishes, jars and boxes, even a storage jar of dried peyote mushrooms, all mixed up together. The window-frames had pencil notes of lists of ships and cargoes, forgotten captains and first mates and the customs duties they paid, fading in the thin winter sun and a thin film of dust. The walls to had notes in Charles' slanted illegible handwriting, details of Dogtown and who built which house where. The livingroom looked like a bookshop after an anarchist's bomb! The bookcases all full the overflowing, bulging with coffee-ringed first-editions, original Ms from Ezra Pound used as bookmarks. Piles of journals and books reaching tableheight and used as one. His typewriter balanced amid all this confusion, like a little nest among the papers over by the window.

The bedroom had a strange feeling of lack of use, stale air, sun warmed dust. The air outside in late January so cold we couldn't open a window. Strange in the warm rooms to feel the windowpanes ice-cold. In the total silence, broken only by the click of the fridge thermostat and our own voices, so clear and loud without traffic noise or transistor rock to hide and dull them. There was so much to say. On the first night we did nothing but talk. The Nagra remained in its travelling case. Charles must rank along with Wilde and Strachey as a great conversationalist.

We eventually set up shop in his bedroom where the fridge couldn't get itself on the tape. Charles sat in an upright chair which creaked alarmingly but was the only possible one for him to use so he said. In the dead of night we were sometimes disturbed by the muffled roar and crunch of snow as a truck slowly passed by. The room contained a trestle table stacked two deep in maritime books, spine out. Hundreds of books, making the table sag, and to which I added a directional microphone. I arranged it as close as I dared, avoiding Charles' gesticulations as he read and the fading as he looked away or down at the page. I sat on the floor by the door with my headphones. Betsy sat in the livingroom reading.

The first thing Charles found was that his speaking voice was not at all as he had imagined it to be. He had never listened carefully to a recording of it before and found terribly lifeless, dry and boring. For a while I thought he was going to back out of the project altogether. Fortunately he decided to work with it and took care to read at the best possible speed, with inflexions and emphasis in the right places, and with careful pronunciation of unusual words just as he took infinite care to arrange the words of his poems on the page in just the right places. Sometimes, even in the later recordings, he would catch his voice becoming dry and deep and he would laugh out loud at himself. I have left one such false start at the beginning of the poem "I A, The Gold Machine", a poem which gave us a lot of trouble and which we did over a dozen recordings of.

To help his reading we marked up the books with musical notation marks for speed-up and slow-down, underlined passages for greater emphasis and words which we found that he normally slurred when reading. I conducted him by waving my arms and pursing my lips. After a night's work his voice was gone but we had worked it out. He wanted all the tapes wiped out and so the next night we started afresh.

We recorded mostly the poems from "Maximus IV,V,VI" which until I arrived Charles had not seen as his copies were held up by the British postal strike. The passages from "Mayan Letters" were my request, though by the time he was through making asides and verbal annotations, he had certainly made them his own again. It took two nights to sail through everything on this album. Once he had the hang of it we were able to

record most things in only 2 or 3 takes.

He was not in good health. I found a note, left in case he was out when we arrived, scribbled on the back of a threatening hospital bill. Living alone led to a certain loneliness. He said that his worked had been cut in half on the death of his wife 12 years before. The four or five days we were there he received only one phonecall, that from his daughter.

Charles had been in the same house for so long that he had stopped seeing it. We talked about the various shipping channels, he talked at length about a map of Gloucester harbour which he had annotated extensively. He sat on the bed with the map pinned on the wall behind him and became a little irritable that we couldn't catch what he was saying. When he turned to look at the chart he realized it was blank. The sun had bleached it away forever, a sagging yellowing sheet, dustmarked and fly-spotted. How long was it since Charles had actually looked with interest and inquisitiveness around his own bedroom? He made a joke but I could see deep down then that he knew he was dying.

The recordings were a success. They sounded as though they were simply read straight off with no preparation, a spontaneous performance. This is the only recording 'for posterity' that Charles ever made. Other tapes exist, fortunately, but they are often marred by drink or the vicissitudes of trying to record live readings. This is Charles reading his poems as he saw them read. I was very privileged to have produced them for him.

Charles Olson: The Special View of History

Charles Olson gave THE SPECIAL VIEW OF HISTORY as a series of lectures, readings and discussions at Black Mountain College in 1956. In this seminar he redefined humanism for our own "post-modern" time with a view of history that forcefully asserts the "function of any one of us," the view that history is what man does, not only what he has done. Olson's proposal is that "if what turns out to be interesting is not the extent of the powers of human imagination but the limits of those powers, what are we to do but break the egg of history and get outside." This book sets forth most fully and explicitly the complex stance underlying Olson's writing, and his poetry and criticism is illuminated by the perspective offered in THE SPECIAL VIEW OF HISTORY.

The demand is always the active voice, that we use history, not that we be used by it. As Creeley observed, Olson offers a stance diametrically opposed to existentialism in rejecting that view of history as something "you're stuck with in some inexorable manner and it grinds you out, you're always too late because it all happened last year. It's an awfully sad way to think." Olson takes a much broader sweep in defining history as "whatever happens, and if it is significant enough to be recorded, the amount of time of the event can be *minute*." A few years ago he returned to the ideas in THE SPECIAL VIEW and expressed them in a poem, "A Later Note on Letter #15," included in MAXIMUS V. THE SPECIAL VIEW OF HISTORY is Olson's most extensive philosophical statement in recent years. In theory and in action, history has held a continuing fascination for him; he expresses always in his work his deeply personal sense of what we know went on. (from the Introduction by Ann Charters)