

from **Oregon**

to **Gloucester,**

**Maximus**

~~~ **An Enquiry for Charles Olson** ~~~

**Douglas Spangle**

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*Summer, 1986*

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**T**he ideogram is:

- 1.) a tin man, shambling onward, an artifice of net and node, Maximus himself seen as a portent fragment of sheetmetal ceiling found on a bar-room floor in an Arizona ghost town:
- 2.) a pool and channel, the linkage of substantives as when tides deliver reservoirs of raw drift along rocky shores; rivulets feed each other, trickling discourse.

Above is the mountain, the loom and bulk of headland,  
below is the water's way, corroding the mass toward abysm.

What does not change/is the will to change

...

I pose your your question:  
Shall you uncover honey/where maggots are?  
I hunt among stones

Seaweed draping his hair, Oannes rises from the waters  
a New Man, with scales that flash, webbed dactyls proffering  
codices, our tablets of knowledge  
to plumb what is known,  
all that is gone.

The fish is speech. Or see  
what, cut  
in stone  
starts. For

When the sea breaks, watch  
watch, it is the  
tongue, and

he who introduces the words (the  
interlocutor,) he

you will find, he  
has scales, he  
gives off motion as

in the sun the wind the light, the fish  
moves

between Newton and Tatnuck Square, for instance,  
topoi twined with the significance of child's sight,  
an essential locale, Aunt Vandla,

*si muove.*

1681:

the Negress Maria burned alive,  
flame amid  
the scent of hyssop;

where the flare of needle dances  
that pulls a thread of choreography,  
stitch in time of history,  
the fish  
moves

current event, hiss and brief,

I, Maximus

a metal hot from boiling water, tell you  
what is a lance, who obeys the figures of  
the current dance

A reader may find himself thrown here  
on unsettled shores, amid wrack mad and windy,  
and prefer the breeze that bears the scent  
of his own privy.

What came fluttering out of the copy  
of *The Maximus Poems* I'd bought used  
for five bucks was a note in pencil  
on the back of an old receipt:

I hate poems that say  
"between Newton & Tatnuk  
squares"

where the hell is that?

Apr 29

BASIC:qstn  
what kind of fool brings  
Charles Olsen to a park while  
watching 5 kids?  
whose names are Eli, Laurin, Aaron  
Benjie TAO?  
“between Severn - - - -  
- - - Worcester . . Gloucester - - -  
Bristow -  
BAH!  
Strawberry oil on the face  
5kids  
Fried Noodles for Breakfast  
Blood on the sheets  
Divine Mother ---- Irritable Break  
Toilet paper in the park Fast  
Some fool knocked over the Frau  
temporary john & shitty paper is  
all over Col. Summers Park.  
who needs Newton &  
Tatnuk Squares?

Anon ca. 1977

Between Newton & Tatnuck Square and  
the overturned toilets of Col. Summers Park,

Portland, Oregon,  
3000 miles more or less. The overturn

is constant, distances run  
together before the wind;  
the sheets drum.

Is blood  
the obstacle,

all the latrines  
and thrones

kicked over?

Happendance  
is multiplex,  
searing through places through times;

what separates these topoi,

open arc  
from the flake racks of Gloucester  
to the tips of my own fingers?

Captains Lovejoy and Overton,

as the story goes,  
decided with a coin's flip  
the name of whose native port  
this infant city should bear:  
Portland/Boston?

So sailing along the margin of air  
went the interval of simultaneous identity:  
we dedicate to Schrödinger  
the token of chancy ceremony,  
e pluribus plus.

Just down the road are Springfield and Salem, Newport facing Japan, the jags  
of rotten jetty and icehouses of Astoria creaking in their memories  
ninety some-odd miles away.

No matter, maybe,

which name the shore calls the sea,  
the fisher will know  
the flow of his own field

and watch the taut lines quiver,  
sweating the drench of each wave;  
early mornings  
the crabbers' crews complain  
back and forth on the VHF waves  
where the bar is coda to the river.  
He sets the measure with net and staves.

And after he came to the shore, he dug in  
the drift,

among stones

. . . and his meat was locusts/and wild honey

He taught them to join stones there,

bake bricks,

until like the waves of the sea,  
great dwellings rose  
between rivers;

so onward to the poet's city. She goes,  
Tyche all gleaming,  
her highrise tiara:  
Maximus, music moves in her!

Athena Polais  
dances the mode of omega,  
the channel of night  
plucks at the blood.

So, the poet: should he fashion  
his words to the polis,  
to the topos,  
for such demos  
of good ear  
as might come?

Should they not have worshipped Dagon, old Oannes,  
who climbed from the waters on a sprinkle of silver;  
should they not have revered Enkidu,  
the Lord of Wild Creatures, who trapped and hunted?  
When they arrived on the Second Voyage,  
“they brought not so much as biscuitcake.”

(Plymouth Bay, 10/18/1631)  
“By Mr. Pierce 400 lbs. beaver; otter 20 skins”  
( O Abraham,  
was this the Pierce whose blood I still bear?)

(1633)  
“By Mr. Graves 3366 lbs of beaver, otter 346 skins”

“Our friends that venture with us do not look to their own profit, as did the old adventurers. Then they are better than we, who for a little matter of profit are ready to draw back. Look to it, brethren, you that make profit your main end; repent of this, or go not, lest you be like Jonas to Tarsis.”  
Robert Cushman 6/10/1620, to Leyden

The TV in the background hawks cars and drinks and candy bars  
flogging the Gospel of the Profits, and the flag for nothing down.

Younger sons,

debtors,  
remittance men,

all the malcontents,  
all the loiterers  
from the Square

they all assume arms and march off  
to be lost in Libyan sands  
or drown in the Lake of Dorado,

until the false thrust betrays  
to make an orchid of smoke and flame  
going down into the ocean.

Sea Peoples:  
Ekwesh, Turshu, Lukku, Shardana, Shekelesh,  
and around 1183 BP;  
Peleset, Tjekker, Denyen, Weshesh,  
raiders of land and sea,  
bearing the figure of outward.

Was it Gyges of Lydia who was Gog of Magog, and sent  
to Pharaoh Psammetichos those bronze men, mercenary  
hoplites, Hellenes and Anatolians like great insects;

was it Midas, sovereign of the Halys flowage,  
back of the Northwind from Judah and Israel  
the menace of Tubal and Meshech in windy Phrygia?

From Newton to Tatnuck Square, how far  
to the overturned privies of Col. Summers Park?  
From Dogtown how far to the scoured plain of Sardis?

History, sir, this projective, is the asking inward,  
lance-probe,  
mast for sail,  
bulwark for tissue,  
loom for wool,  
coastwise commerce,  
the fleet out for fish,  
Increase Mather's singing school:  
should it swim in a shoal,

perne in its own magnificence,  
or plunder privateering,  
harbor emigrants'  
Einwanderung?

They should raise a monument  
to a fisherman crouched down  
behind a hogshead, protecting  
his dried fish.

Fastened to the mainmast  
is a golden ounce,  
they tell me,  
though I do not know  
myself  
whether to believe it  
or not.

Page 3, Lines 60-86:

Page 5, Line 124:

Page 6, Lines 149-160:

Page 7, Lines 175-189:

Page 8, Lines 203-206

Page 8, Lines 207-208:

Page 8, Lines 209-213:

You”

Anonymous note found in a copy of  
*The Maximus Poems*

Matthew 3:5

Bradford, *History of the Plymouth Colony*

Hopper, *The Early Greeks*

Culican, *The First Merchant Adventurers*

A.R. Anderson, *Alexander's Gate, Gog,  
Magog, and the Inclosed Nations*

Olson, “History is the Memory of Time”

Melville, *Moby Dick*

Herodotus, *The Histories*

### FROM OREGON TO GLOUCESTER, MAXIMUS — Notes, Quotes & Sources

Page 1, Lines 1-6: Olson, *The Maximus Poems*, Superscript  
Page 1, Lines 8-9: Baynes & Wilhelm, Translators,  
*The I Ching*, : Hexagram 4:  
YouthfulFolly  
Page 1-2, Lines 10-13: Olson, “The Kingfishers”  
Page 2, Lines 19-33: Olson, Mayan Letters, No. 10  
Page 2, Line 34: Olson, “The Twist”  
Page 2, Lines 36-39: Olson, “Maximus at Tyre and at  
Boston”  
Page 2, Lines 43-44: Olson, Mayan Letters, No. 10  
Page 2, Lines 45-48: Olson, “I, Maximus of Gloucester to