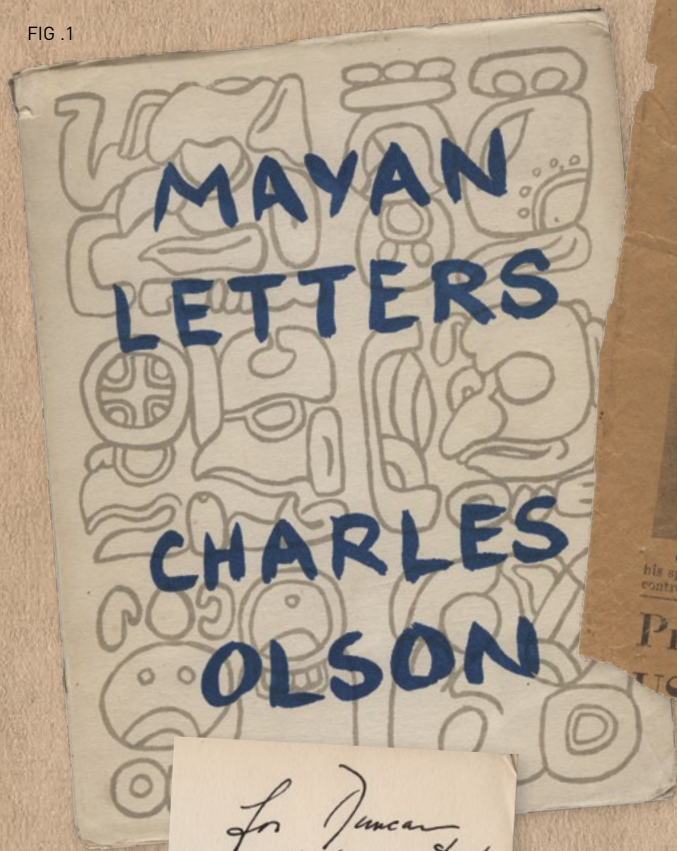


OLSON IN/AND BUFFALO  
OCT. 15, 2010 - JAN. 31, 2011

# The Age of Olson

For many American poets living at mid-century and after, Charles Olson (1910 – 1970) was a defining poet of the era, and Robert Duncan, for one, often referred to the 1950s and 1960s as “the Age of Olson.” Within the wider circle of innovative poetries, Olson is most closely identified with a group of writers known as the Black Mountain poets on account of their association with *The Black Mountain Review*, a literary magazine published by the experimental liberal arts college of the same name. Olson’s 1950 essay “Projective Verse” was a central statement of the group’s poetics, and he both taught at Black Mountain College and served as its rector leading up to its closing in the fall of 1956. Seven years later, Olson joined the UB English Department where he taught such courses as Modern Poetry and Myth and Literature. Although he shortly left the department in the fall of 1965 to return to Gloucester, Massachusetts, Olson made a lasting mark on the history of poetry in Buffalo as his students edited magazines such as *Niagara Frontier Review* and *The Magazine of Further Studies* before having their own careers as poets and teachers, and to this day Olson still exists as a tutelary spirit. In addition to “Projective Verse,” Olson is best known for *Call Me Ishmael* (1947), a study of Melville, and especially *The Maximus Poems* (1953-1968), a wide-ranging long poem that investigates the history and geography of Gloucester.

FIG. 1



For Duncan  
with the sense that he  
might say it is  
particularly  
C

FIG. 2

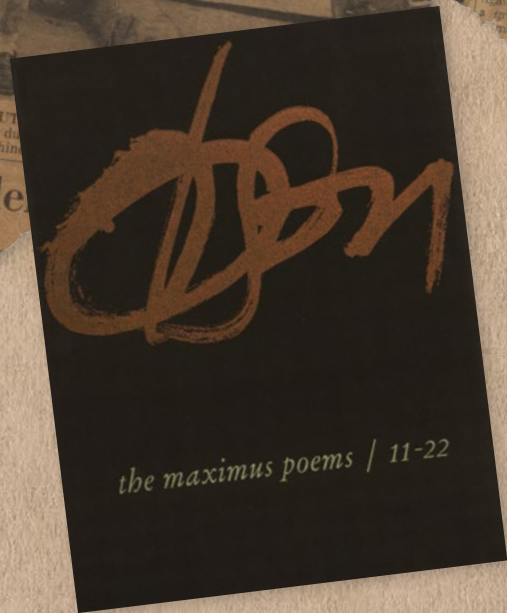


FIG. 3

Fig. 1: Divers Press edition of *Mayan Letters* (1953), inscribed to Robert Duncan. From Duncan’s personal library. Fig. 2: Unidentified news story featuring a photograph of Charles Olson. From the George Butterick Collection. Fig. 3: Robert Duncan’s patron edition of *The Maximus Poems / 11-22* (1956), one of 25 copies. From Duncan’s personal library.

# Olson in/and Buffalo

*Olson in/and Buffalo* is an exhibition of first editions, little magazines, broadsides, manuscripts, correspondence, and ephemera that showcases the history of Olson's publications as well as the archival traces of his presence across the Poetry Collection's various manuscript collections. The most extensive of these can be found in Jonathan Williams's archives of the Jargon Society. Williams, a student at Black Mountain, established the eclectic Jargon Society, which, along with some of the twentieth century's most important books of poetry, published the first two installments of Olson's *The Maximus Poems* in 1953 and 1956. Featured in the exhibition are typescripts, page proofs, order forms, advertisements, and other production documents relating to the Jargon Society's publications of *The Maximus Poems / 1-10* and *The Maximus Poems / 11-22*; letters to and from Olson; books inscribed by Olson; photographs; and other materials from the Jargon Collection, Robert Duncan Collection, George Butterick Collection, Jack Clarke Collection, Frontier Press Collection, Robert Kelly Collection, *Athamor* Collection, and Contemporary Manuscripts Collection.

FIG. 4

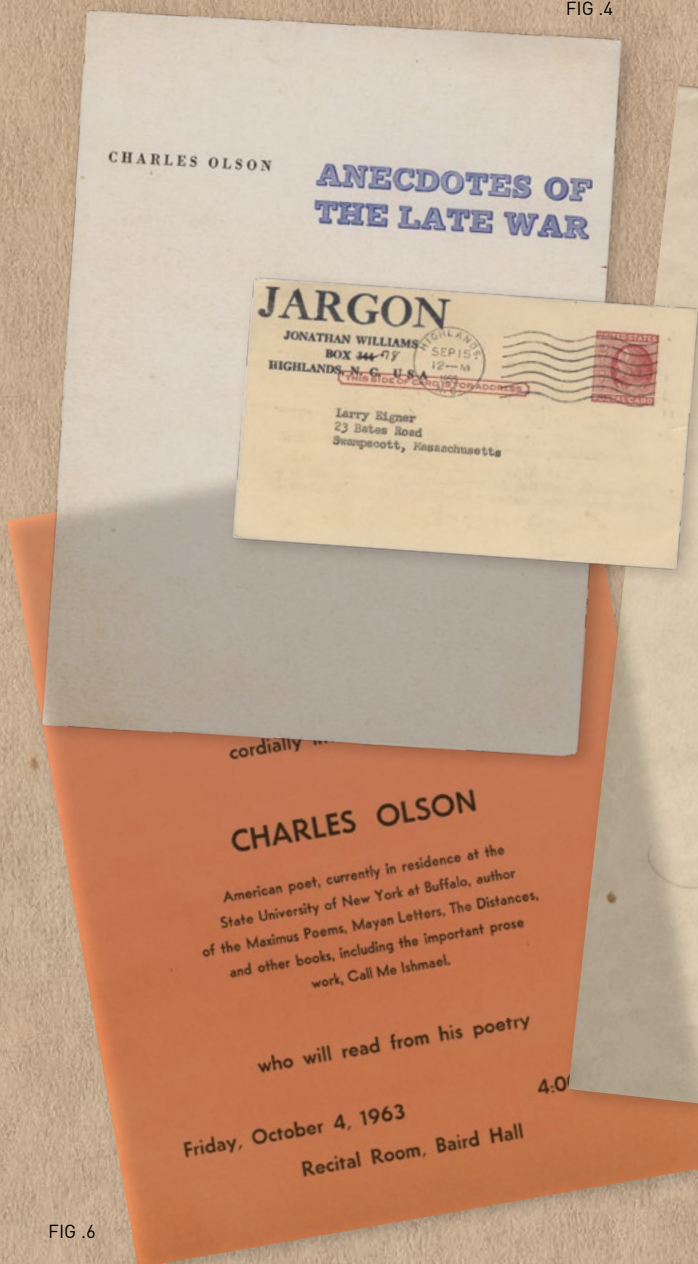


FIG. 5

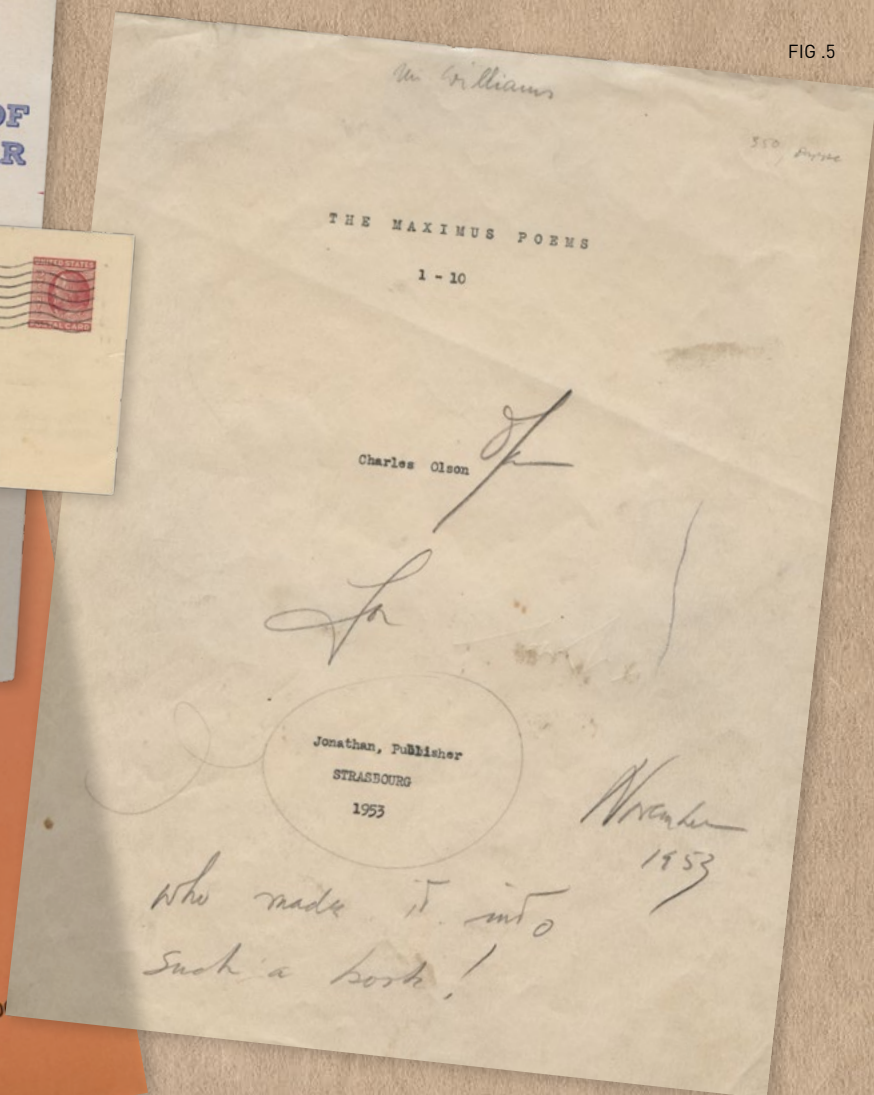


FIG. 6

CHARLES OLSON  
American poet, currently in residence at the  
State University of New York at Buffalo, author  
of the Maximus Poems, Mayan Letters, The Distances,  
and other books, including the important prose  
work, Call Me Ishmael.  
who will read from his poetry  
Friday, October 4, 1963  
Recital Room, Baird Hall

Fig. 4: *Anecdotes of the Late War* (1955), along with Larry Eigner's order form. From the Jargon Collection. Fig. 5: First typescript page of *The Maximus Poems / 1-10* (1953), inscribed to Jonathan Williams. From the Jargon Collection. Reproduced with the permission of the Estate of Charles Olson, University of Connecticut Libraries. Fig. 6: Poster for Olson's October 4, 1963, reading at UB.

Front: Jonathan Williams's calligraphy design for *The Maximus Poems*, photograph of Charles Olson by Werner Neumeister. Reproduced with the permission of both estates.  
Back: Charles Olson letter to Jack Clarke, next to a photograph of Olson's house at 28 Fort Square, Gloucester, Massachusetts. From the Jack Clarke and George Butterick Collections. Envelope reproduced with the permission of the Estate of Charles Olson, University of Connecticut Libraries.



The Poetry Collection of the University Libraries is the library of record for 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup>-century poetry in English. Founded more than 70 years ago, the Poetry Collection now holds the world's largest collection of poetry first editions, little literary magazines, broadsides, anthologies, criticism, ephemera, and audio recordings, as well as over 150 manuscript collections from a wide range of presses, magazines, arts organizations, and writers such as James Joyce, William Carlos Williams, and Robert Graves. Also featured in the Collection are the personal libraries of poets such as Helen Adam and Robert Duncan; artworks by Salvador Dali, Constantin Brancusi, Jess (Collins), Wyndham Lewis, and E. E. Cummings; and substantial collections of mail art, visual and concrete poetry, photographs, and zines. An active research center for the study of all facets of modern and contemporary poetry, each year the Collection welcomes dozens of scholars and graduate students engaged in primary research; assists with educational activities; hosts numerous readings, lectures, and other events; and loans items to exhibitions around the world.

Gifts of books, manuscripts, and archival materials significantly contribute to the excellence of the Poetry Collection. For information about donating materials to the Poetry Collection, please contact [lpo-poetry@buffalo.edu](mailto:lpo-poetry@buffalo.edu) or call (716) 645-2917. Monetary gifts support the acquisition, organization, preservation, digitization, and exhibition of books, magazines, and literary archives. Donations to the Poetry Collection General Fund can be made online at [library.buffalo.edu/support](http://library.buffalo.edu/support).

On display from October 15, 2010 through January 31, 2011, *Olson in/and Buffalo* is curated by Alice Bailey, Jeannie Hoag, Simon Horning, Mary E. Kohler, Susan A. Sturm, James Maynard, and Michael Basinski.

Funding for the exhibition has generously been provided by Joan and Louis Slovinsky.



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