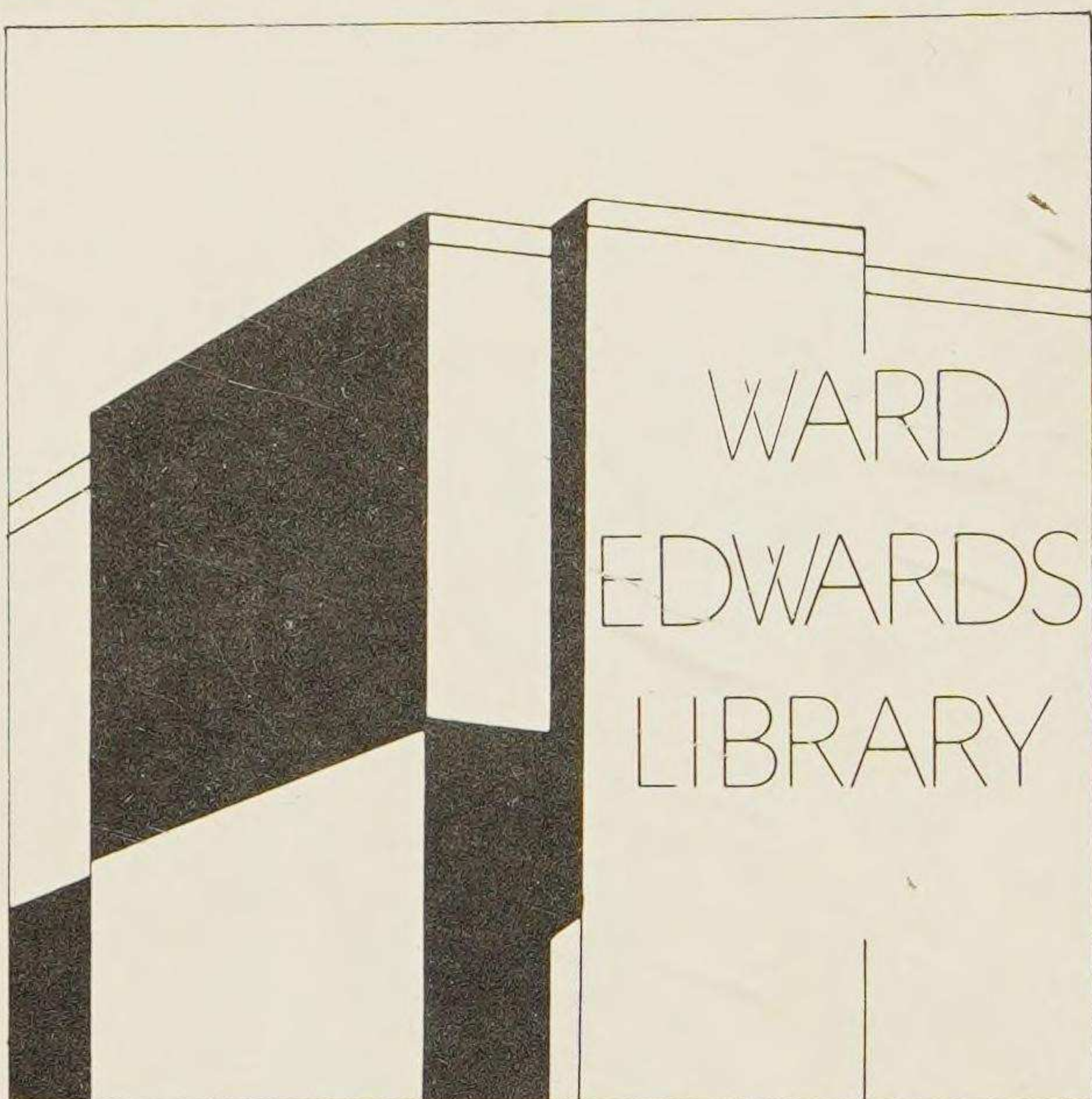


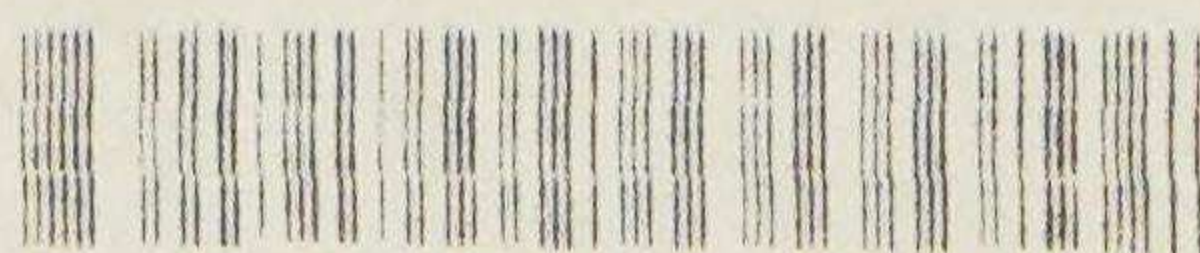
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THE HORSES OF THE SEA

Olson



CMSU
WARRENSBURG, MISSOURI



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T H E P S H O R S E S O F T H E S E A

O L S O N C H A R L E S

SPARROW 43



"LIVING, I WANT TO DEPART TO WHERE I AM."—D. H. LAWRENCE

The Horses of the Sea

by

Charles Olson

SPARROW appears monthly. It prints poetry, fiction, essays, criticism, commentaries & reviews. Each issue presents the work of a single author. The poet is prophet.

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"The Horses of the Sea" was found in a notepad from March 1963 among Charles Olson's papers now at the University of Connecticut Library, the first of four such poems of mythological or cosmological significance in that notepad, culminating in the poem published as "[MAXIMUS, FROM DOGTOWN—IV]" in *Maximus IV, V, VI*. It was written in black ballpoint ink, with occasional revisions made throughout in the course of composition, and concerns Our Lady of Good Voyage (the muse of the Maximus poems) as a form of Athena Polais, protectress of the city.

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The Horses of the Sea

as a civic goddess Our Lady shall
stand over the
Portuguese
Hill. There was a
good-harbour-
woman
Youleemeeny
if my sense of how Greeks
pronounced their words
has any connection to
the look of them;
and there was an 'island-
girl,'
Neso
and they were
Doris's
daughters.
And who might
Doris
be?

Anyway she and Nereus,
her husband, had daughters, they didn't have

CENTRAL MISSOURI
STATE UNIVERSITY
Warrensburg.
412399

sons. Which is all
I suppose
to some point—like, did Athena,
the civic goddess par excellence
have children at all? Kore
was barren, but had a husband. Artemis,
we know, was supposed to be
a virgin. But Our Lady,
with her schooner
in her arm—she too
like Athena standeth out
with concerns which are general
as against those which a mother
(Doris or any other mother of
daughters or sons) is presented with,
Willy or Nelly and thereby hangeth
a difference: the public,
the civic

the affairs
which are proper to
those things which go on
on another 'ground' than
that which creates the
family, has also a
proper
goddess, the Lady
Athena, she was called as ancient
as the earliest, Helladic
evidences

give reason
to hear of her: the Lady
of Bon Cité. Hardly.
She was born of her father's
head, right out of the top while
Hera the wife, and the mid-
wife, are wringing
their hands (at this miracle that
a man, even though he be Zeus,
is 'giving birth' at this moment
seated in his throne with two
horses forming the feet, heads turned
each away in opposite directions,
is giving birth to
the goddess
whom Athens claimed later
to be their city
protectress. Is Our Lady
of the Portuguese Church
a sea-
goddess? I believe
she is; and that the sea
is an example,
which comes right to Gloucester's
doors, of how purposeful
the intention that you be guided
to live, is; and that if
fishing persons who had reason
to be saved at sea had reason

to institute
a church,
in Gloucester,
Massachusetts,
on this side
of the Atlantic, brought over
from the Azores or Lisbon
a goddess who has a city in her hair
(Barcelona, is true, Duncan
told me, the Kathydrall
has a Virgin
with literally the walls
of a city forming the
crown which sits on
her head (as the Mother of Christ)
one can examine
this Gloucester statue
(with the long wooden hands as
large as the dimension
of the sea when a boat is
out beyond the breakwater)
as a city
figure, that the venture
to do with any one else
beside your own child or wife
or step out on to the porch
is to pass into the world. And that protection
or strengthening, support and nursing
of the ability to do it at all, citizen

or political leader, of the city or
the world, mind or otherwise (war
and all that ploy
of making a living . . . but
take it even that,

 like the cows
in the pasture by
Babson's milk farm and dog
hospital,

 even if a bobolink
shoots suddenly on to an alder
bush in a meadow you frequent
or a cedar wax wing
occurs, in your sight,

 the world
 is known

in a way that Lady
holds the schooner
as though it gains
from being placed
in her
hands—the size
of that figure, and that it is the head sign
of that church (that church itself
ought to protect any one of us,
if we got caught out but could make it
inside its doors, I don't care
what we might have done, legitimately,
in the world—there is reason,

in the world, to do almost
any thing: the civic
is the only measure
existent at all
for the prevailing fact
that we do, each of us,
have reason to be out
on the streets
—we can hardly avoid
the world
being born into it,
and the Lady
(in this instance, of the Good Voyage)
is a stamp
on the face of the world
 she has her foot on the Satan
 of the world
that the publicity of event,
the moment that you leave your house,
or in it, if your concerns are
and they can hardly not be, somewhere
public, if you are a man at least,
and have to go out and make a living,
somewhere hiding in each of the world's
literal and impressionable
events—judgment here
(as against the prevention), without the goddess,
who is
Athena, the

Parthenos, the
Armed Virgin—the
Motherless One?
Who is the
Portuguese
Goddess of the City of Gloucester
Massachusetts benamed
the Lady of Good Voyage?
It is not at all a question
which can be so easily
answered. Nor is it one
—with all the attention I
have given it that I,
as I once more invoke her
invoke the wife of the king of what is *under*
the earth—she is barren
the daughter
of the god of all which is above
the under (including the under)
who bore this daughter independently
and in this one instance
out of his own head—
invoke the goddess Athena
because she is so curiously ancient
invoke her that it was with the the third
of the three god brothers,
the god of the *sea*
that she rivaled
to open rocks so they bore

water and cities were placed
where either she or Poseidon successfully
did use their
staffs or trident—once,
when she lost (at Athens,
in fact) she planted a tree where
by the well sprang up
they say the sea
could be heard, at night tide
when the tide was in
coming all this way under the earth
the blow that Poseidon sent down through
gave the Acropolis
—Our Lady of Good Voyage
invoke her older than the mother Doris
mother of ladies of good harbor
of sea faring
of island-girls, Doris
was only herself the daughter in law
of the Sea himself, Pontos
the 'unlying' Hesiod says
this god is

the God Hades
is 'unseen' and his wife Persephone
who is barren—the Sea is called
barren, Poseidon is called
barren—and Pontos (the
Sea) is 'unlying'—
'unharvested' is the meaning of

barren, neither the sea
nor what is called hell
is agricultural

Gloucester

is built on rocks
and is unharvested

Gloucester

has a 'Lady' of the 'unlying'
sea

as a civic goddess Our Lady, stands over

Gloucester

men are thrown up out of the belly of the whale as a fish
on to the shore to Athena

Gaia turns her children, of the Earth, of everything

Gaia the most prolific of all, the way
nature is, Gaia is the world as nature

Gaia gives her children to Athena to place

at least the sons of father[s] like Kekrops

(Trophonius the cave Child)

Next only to the Wife of God

and she sits normally

pat, having that place,

is this goddess the City of Gloucester is curiously

fortunate in possessing to its leading

church (Augustine

identified Athena with the Platonic Forms or Ideas

—and Plato was divisive

in separating politics into

a unit divorced from

the condition of God
—she was terrible to behold when she was born,
Persephone as the wife of Hades the Unseen
is called Unseeable, the sight of her
is so strong
—one offers Athena *fireless* sacrifice,
her birth or origin from water is Helladic,
Our Lady of Gloucester is *Tritogeneia*
she is born as her schooner of the sea
A last matter is her Armed
nature. How the goddess of the City
(Polias), Bulaia *She of the Council*
whom Burke of all recent Councillors alone
seems to have been 'scared' of,
Ergane (Worker), Kourotrophos
(Nurturer of Youth) wore on her shield
exactly what the Lady of Bon Voyage
has her foot on—the snake of the Gorgon
Medusa, this will be a question:
what enemy or terror of man and woman
do these Virgins, who with their loving
and extending arms protect, guide, make sure
those who go to sea or have to grow up
know what it is that they are doing,
where they are going, why they are
as Paling[?]'s husband said to me one
cold morning recently going fishing, it is
of the city that this woman
has struck down something or will repress

a head or snake of lolling horror
who herself was called—the monster [?],
that is—Mighty One, or Queen.

Queen of Heaven each Catholic worshipper
going into Our Lady of Good Voyage says
it is they worship as they
do the Stations or light vestal candles
and kneel at Mass—Queen of Heaven
and like Mr Cardone who has the Virgin
set in a little fence outside my back door
she's blue and has her foot on a white
snake he paints them both each year
with pious purpose—once even
ruined the rocks of old Fort Defiance behind
the statue by going too far with what he said
was an instruction in a dream at night,
anyway, to put the statue up—he painted
the tough old granite pink and blue
but there Satan is, under the Foot of the Queen
of Heaven (I'm not sure the Portuguese Virgin
of the church isn't standing there between the two
[blue towers
with feet as naked and as long as her hands
and no Enemy, in this instance of the concept,
any more than there is a Christ Child
but a Gloucester fishing vessel
in her arms

the moral lesson
is for those who still imagine
the World is not an instant
of the Will of Each of Us,
that by the will I mean the Animus we bear
to come from Our Father as Athena
or Christ came, that His Will
be done, that He and the World
that on earth as in heaven
etc including
that private virtue
that we forgive those who trespass
against us—and that public one
that we shall be delivered from that Gorgon
that the Light-Bearer is not
fallen, that the power and the glory is
where it indeed is, that Our Father is
in Heaven

Well, the church in Gloucester
the 39th in etc the Commonwealth
from which the turmoil of the sea
Gloucester itself being
thrust out into it
a 10-mile bearing
peninsula or island
into the Atlantic
the unlyingness of Sea
of—not the sea—of the God of Water

that you be baptized, that no daughter
and no son are man and woman until
they have been born straight from their father
And that this goddess, these Lady Athirats of the Sea
the great sea which interfuses these women
standing over each city which affords
to bear their name, *monogenes*
the horses of the sea
brought into bridle
the leaping Gloucester schooners
mild and static and handsome
rearing up over the city
in the arms of a virgin with her foot
on hell itself

Tuesday
March 12th [1963]

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