

# THE JARGON SOCIETY COLLECTION

Granary Books, 2021

Founded in 1951 by poet and publisher Jonathan Williams (1929–2008), the Jargon Society sprang forth from Williams’s devotion to poetry, skill in visual arts, and desire to create community through the possibilities of small press publishing. Hugh Kenner has described Jargon as a “custodian of snowflakes,” referring to the unique and ephemeral nature of American culture and Williams’s ability to crystallize it into tangible artifacts as printed books. For Williams, who spent much of his life in the Appalachian Mountains of North Carolina, the character of American poetry was a fragile ecosystem—comprised of symbiotic organisms in community, and deserving of proper conservation and care for its survival.



The Jargon Society was a product of surprising confluences, such as Williams’s attendance at Black Mountain College in the early 1950s, where he encountered Charles Olson as a teacher. Through his time at the College, and in his subsequent efforts that kept the communal energies of Black Mountain alive after the dissolution of the school, Williams was at the epicenter of an important and influential artistic community in the 1950s. This included many of the most experimental poets, painters, composers, dancers, and thinkers of the era that he would soon publish, such as Robert Creeley and Charles Olson, long before anyone heard mention of the New American Poetry.

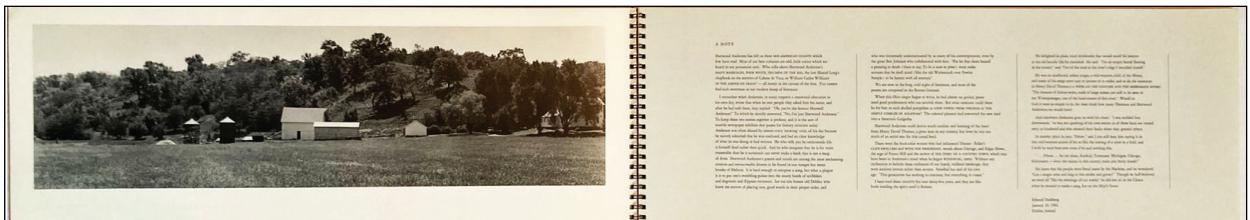
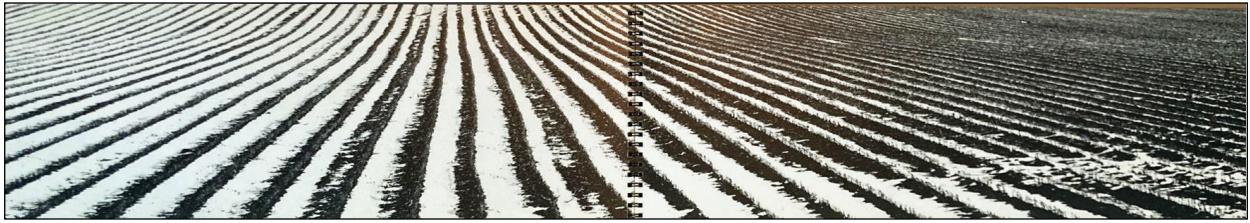
After having been drafted away from the college, Williams published some of the first Jargon books while in Stuttgart on military service. He was not a printer himself, but he soon learned that New Directions used printers in Stuttgart and began to secure collaborators for projects like Charles Olson’s *Maximus Poems*. Yet Jargon was utterly different from New Directions, City Lights, and other contemporaneous avant-garde publishers. There was no house style, and each publication dictated its own terms of presentation. Such a practice demanded access to a range of possible formats and design considerations including trade books, artists’ books, pamphlets, prints, postcards, catalogs, calendars, and ephemera. Building on his design background, and studies of photography at Black Mountain College with Harry Callahan and Aaron Siskind, Williams engaged an array of visual and verbal tools to create book objects that animated excitement in his readers, and spoke to the spirit of the work within.

While Williams’s statements about his work with Jargon are at times drily humorous—he has described his publishing mission as the attempt “to keep afloat the Ark of Culture in these dark and tacky times”—his work is suffused with bibliographic reverence. When asked why he published, Williams replied, “For *pleasure* surely. I am a stubborn, mountaineer Celt with an orphic, priapic, sybaritic streak that must have come to me, along with H. P. Lovecraft, from Outer Cosmic Infinity. Or maybe Flash Gordon brought it from Mongo? Jargon has allowed me to fill my shelves with books I cared for as passionately as I cared for the beloved books of childhood.” While Williams was well-educated in his youth, at St. Albans preparatory school and Princeton, the bookishness that would define his life was far from academic. Rather, it was attuned to the idea of books as portals, vectors of discovery and difference.

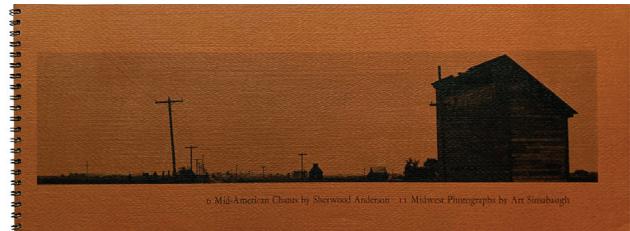
Through publications like the surprise best-seller, *White Trash Cooking*, as well as his collecting and friendships, Williams prioritized Outsider forms of art, knowing, and making in postwar American culture. His knowledge and influences were immense, and CA Conrad has remarked that his death is comparable to the burning of a library. As a gay man in the American South, an unabashedly small publisher, and a poet devoted to the form as a long arc of history, Williams identity embodies a striking aspect of self-making as part of avant-garde poetics in the twentieth century. The varied texture in the landscape of small and micro press publishers today, with their visual variety of poetry books and verbal/visual collaborations, show how fully we have digested and internalized the contributions of Williams, but also underscore the necessity of further research and inquiry into his work.

To that end, the Jargon Society Collection comprises over 150 items and provides a comprehensive, representative overview of the Press’s output. The collection includes many landmark Jargon publications, including *Some Time* by Louis Zukofsky, *Lunar Baedeker & Time-Tables* by Mina Loy, *Poemscapes* by Kenneth Patchen, *Letters* by Robert Duncan, *Will West* by Paul Metcalf (his first book), *Overland to the Islands* by Denise Levertov, and *All That is Lovely in Men* by Robert Creeley with drawings by Dan Rice, to name a few. As a teaching collection, these materials gesture to multiple modalities of collaborative bookmaking and are visually striking invitations into the world of the poem—as a two-foot-wide book with photographs of landscapes, small pamphlets, torso-sized concrete poetry, and perfect-bound books with just-so typography. The collection will be of particular research value to scholars of twentieth-century poetry, design, and publishing, and especially useful to poets as they conceptualize publishing’s role in their practice.

# SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS

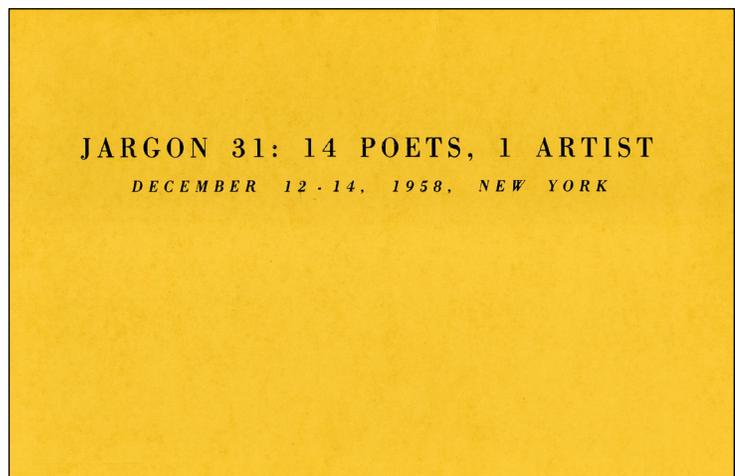
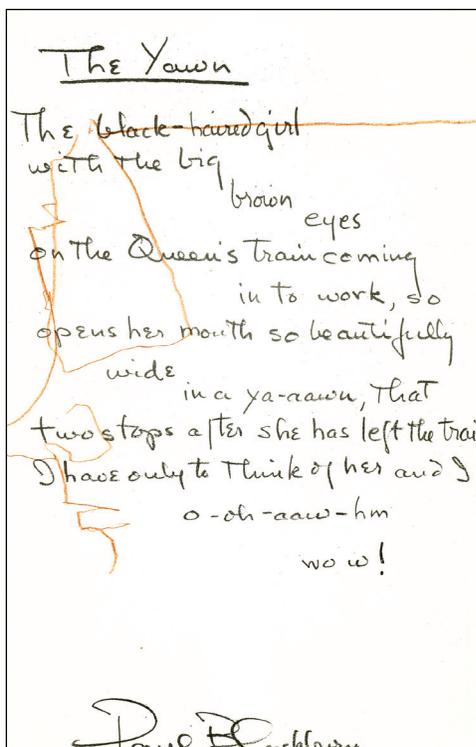


**Sherwood Anderson and Art Sinsabaugh.**  
*Six Mid-American Chants : 11 Midwest Photographs.*  
**Jonathan Williams, 1964.**



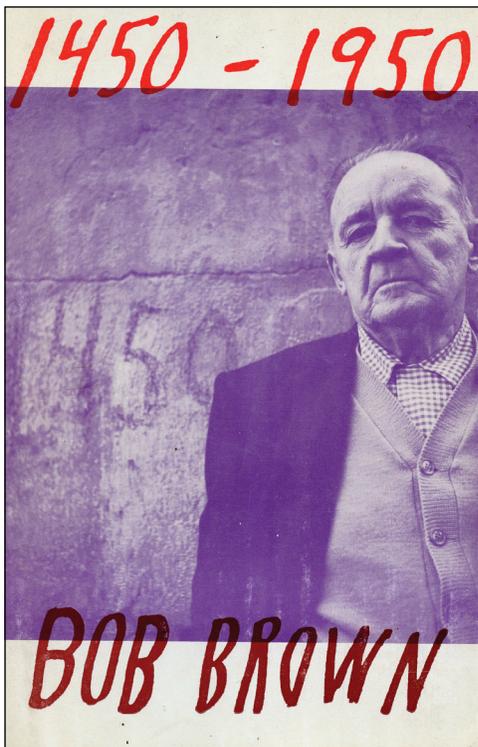
Spiral wire binding, 21 1/2 x 7 1/4 in. Jargon 45.  
 A note on Anderson's poetry by Edward Dahlberg

and a poem "To Sherwood Anderson in Heaven" by Frederick Eckman. Poems by Sherwood Anderson and black and white photographs by Art Sinsabaugh. This is from an edition of 1550 copies. Near fine to fine with a tiny bump to upper right corner.



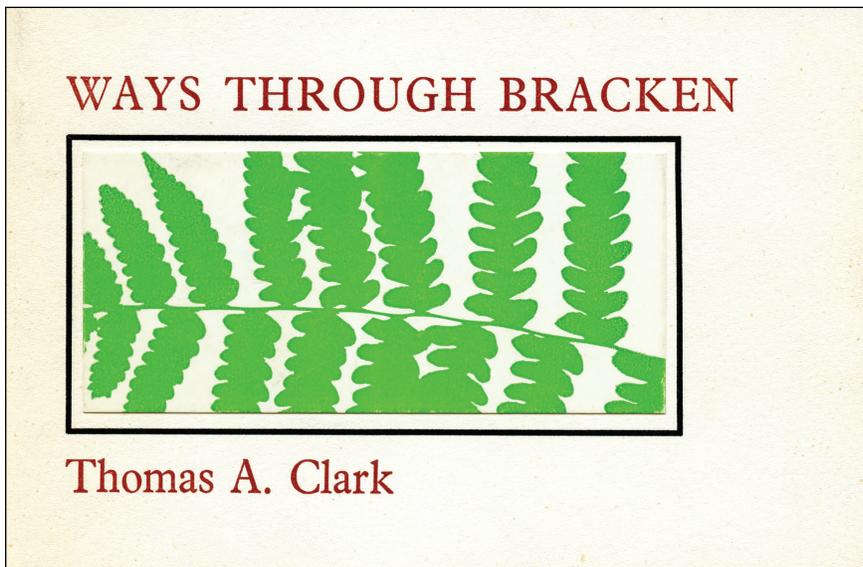
**Paul Blackburn, Bob Brown, Edward Dahlberg, Max Finstein, Allen Ginsberg, Paul Goodman, Denise Levertov, Walter Lowenfels, Edward Marshall, E. A. Navaretta, Joel Oppenheimer, Gilbert Sorrentino, Jonathan Williams, and Louis Zukofsky. Drawings by Fielding Dawson.**  
*14 Poets, 1 Artist.*  
**The Jargon Society, 1958.**

14 loose sheets in a folder within a printed envelope. Jargon 31. Drawings of the poets by Fielding Dawson. December 12–14, 1958, New York. Dedicated to William Carlos Williams. This is from an edition of 1000 copies. Inscribed on envelope by Jonathan Williams to Steve Clay and signed by Fielding Dawson. Near fine.



**Bob Brown.**  
*1450-1950.*  
**Jargon Books in association with Corinth Books, 1959.**

Smyth-sewn in stiff wrappers. Jargon 29. Cover photograph by Jonathan Williams. First published in 1929 by Black Sun Press, this new edition includes “a few additions.” Mild shelf wear, sharp corners, strong spine.



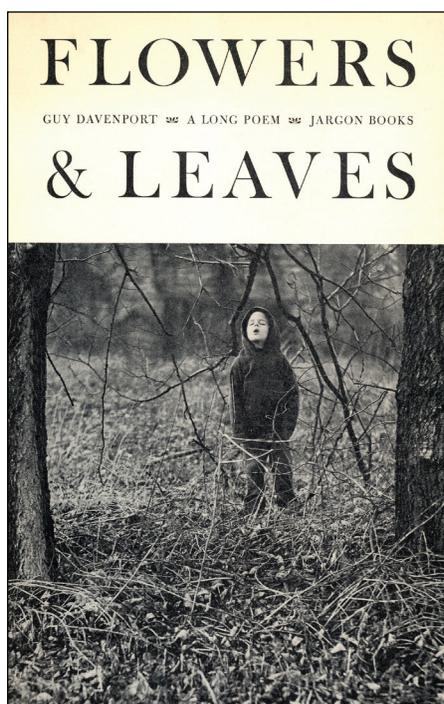
**Thomas A. Clark.**  
*Ways Through Bracken.*  
**The Jargon Society, 1980.**

Smyth-sewn in integral wrappers. Jargon 93. Jacket note and design by Jonathan Williams, “Fronde Landscape” by Thomas Meyer. Very good with light shelf wear.



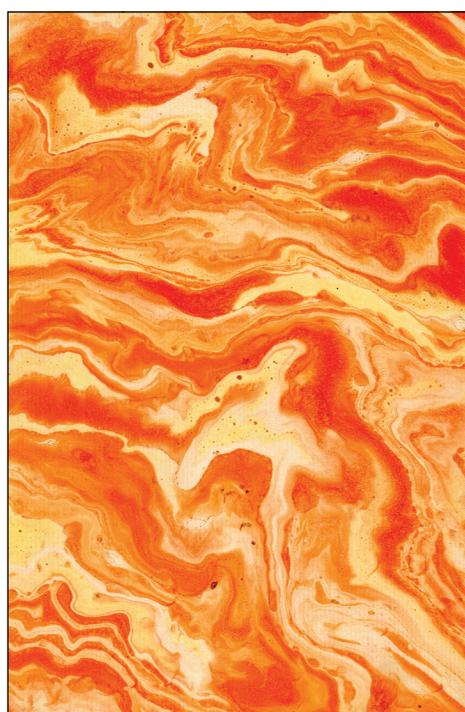
**Simon Cutts.**  
*Pianostool Footnotes.*  
**The Jargon Society, 1982.**

Bound in printed paper over boards with mylar jacket. Jargon 94. This is from an edition of 1000 copies of which 950 are in wrappers and 50 bound in boards, numbered and signed by the poet of which this is no. 15. Fine.



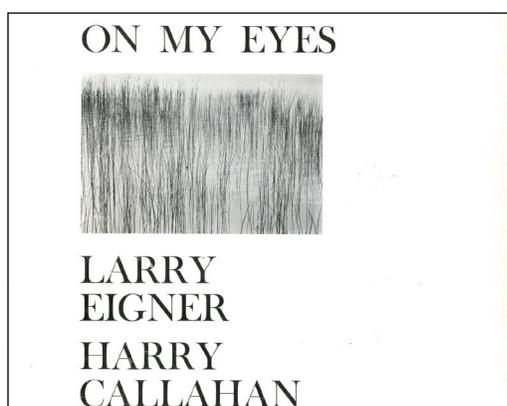
**Guy Davenport.**  
*Flowers & Leaves: A Long Poem.*  
**Jonathan Williams, 1966.**

Smyth-sewn in wrappers with integral dust jacket. Jargon 46. Front and back cover photographs by Ralph Eugene Meatyard. Designed and printed by Andrew Hoyem. A note on the work by Davenport is quoted from a letter to Jonathan Williams. Book is fine (appears unopened) and jacket near fine with a hint of age toning and shelf wear.



**Robert Duncan.**  
*Letters: Poems 1953–1956.*  
**Jonathan Williams, 1958.**

Hand sewn in plain wrappers with marbled paper dust jacket. Jargon 14. Includes five drawings by the poet printed on Japanese paper. Handset, designed, and printed by Claude Fredericks at the Banyon Press. This is no. 166 from an edition of 450 copies printed on Arches paper. There are 60 copies on Shogun and special binding and endpapers. Shallow bend to upper right corner, near fine. (Bertholf A9a.)



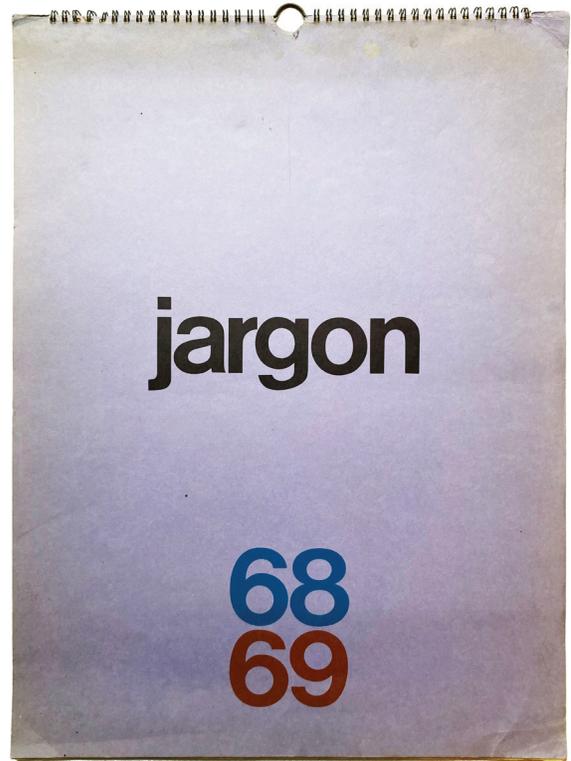
**Larry Eigner.**  
*On My Eyes.*  
**Jonathan Williams, 1960.**

Smyth-sewn in wrappers. Jargon 36. Introduction by Denise Levertov. Photographs by Harry Callahan. Design by Jonathan Williams. First edition of 500 copies. Significant bumps to upper right and lower left corners, moderate shelf wear. Binding is tight and interior clean.

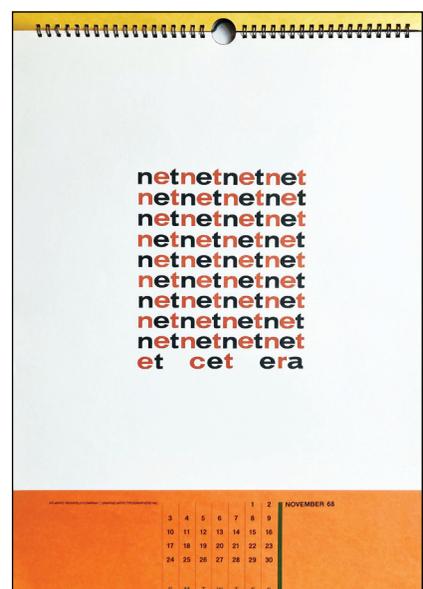
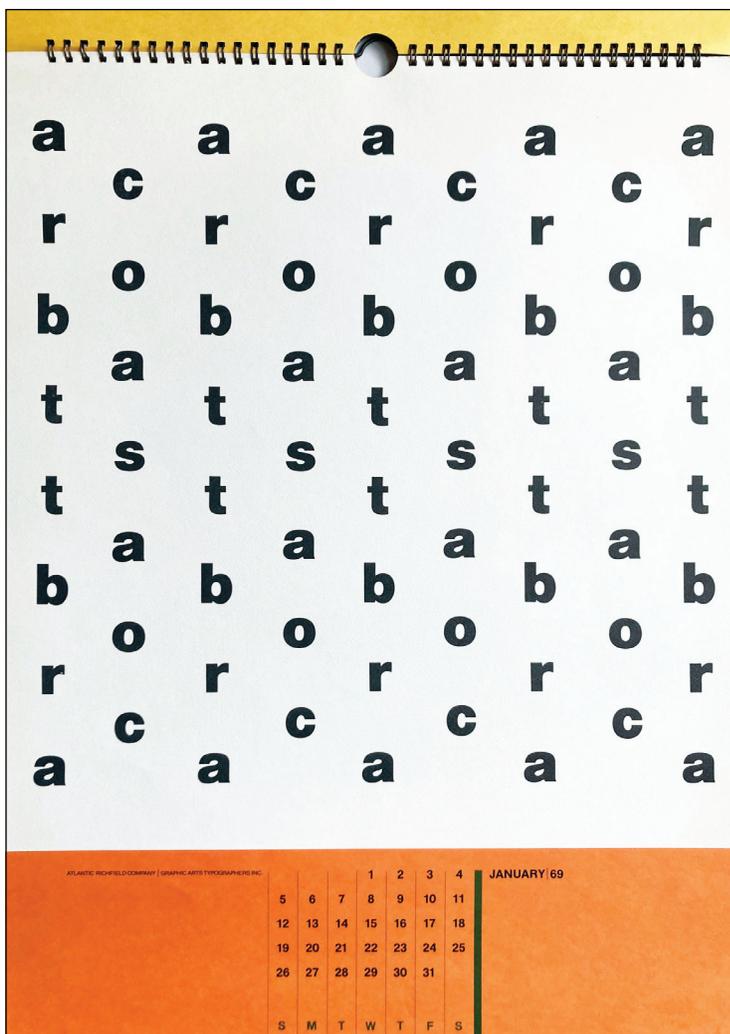


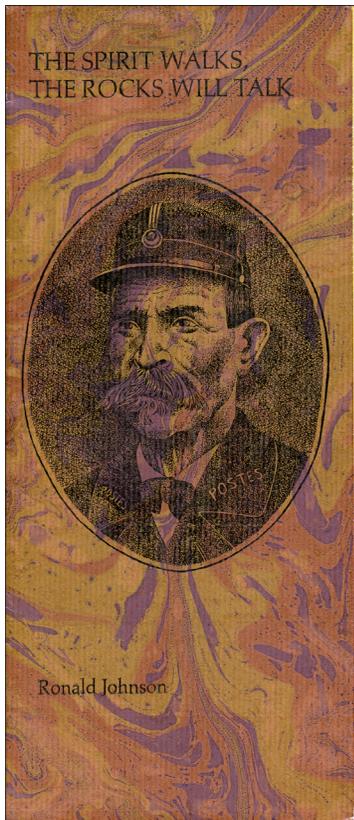
**Ian Hamilton Finlay.**  
***The Blue and the Brown Poems.***  
**Atlantic Richfield Company and Graphic Arts Typographers, Inc. / Jargon Society, 1968.**

Calendar (Sept. 1968–Aug. 1969) with spiral wire binding at top edge designed for hanging. Twelve poem prints with commentaries by Stephen Bann, introduction by Jonathan Williams, and foreword by Mike Weaver. There is a silkscreen portrait of the poet inside the back cover. Calendar design by Herbert M. Rosenthal, 15 x 20 in.; the poem prints are 15 x 16 in. Jargon 68, Murray 3.28. Produced in an edition of 5000 copies with 500 distributed by The Jargon Society. The title references Ludwig Wittgenstein’s *The Blue and Brown Books*, and his ideas about the meaning of a word and its use in language. The poems are from 1963–1965 and include: “ho | horizon | on,” “ajar,” “net | net,”



“cork | net,” “acrobats,” “wave | rock,” “green waters,” “you | me,” “broken | heart broken,” “wind | wind,” “ring of waves,” and “le circus.” The poem prints are beautifully printed in several colors on white stock. The outer covers are very good, clean with bumps to all four corners. There is some light discoloration at the top of the front cover. The poem prints are fine with relatively minor bumps to the upper right corners lessening as one progresses through the series. The prints are very well preserved, clean, sharp, and bright. This work is quite scarce in any condition; the prints are often removed from the calendar and sold separately.

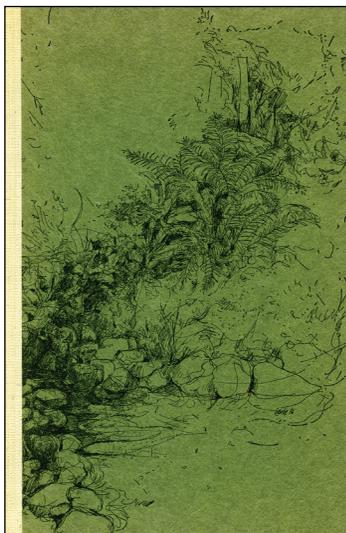




**Ronald Johnson.**  
*The Spirit Walks, The Rocks Will Talk.*  
**The Jargon Society, 1969.**

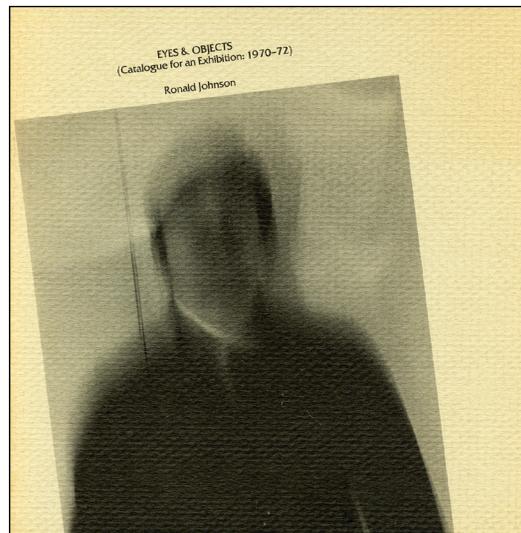


Hand-sewn in wrappers. Jargon 72. Drawings by Guy Davenport. Design by Jonathan Williams. Interesting visual works printed in two colors with center spread of French marbled paper. This is no. 393 from an edition of 500 copies and is signed by both Johnson and Davenport. Near fine with light wear along top edge.



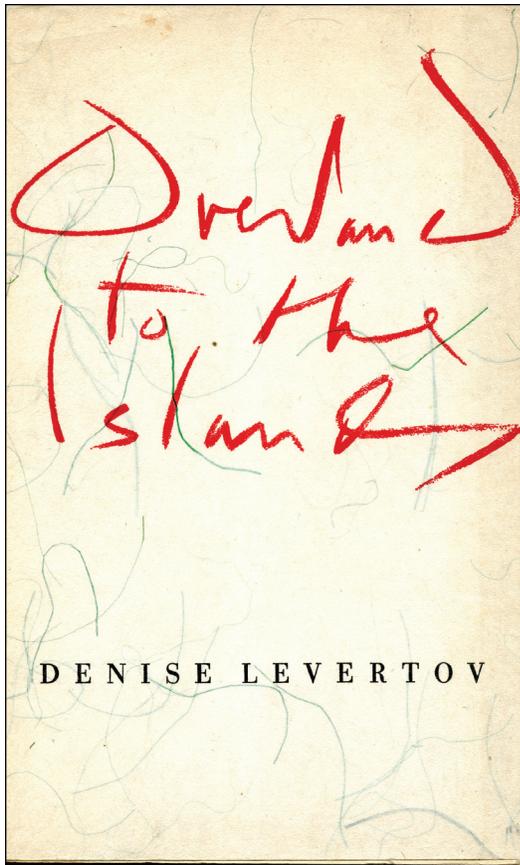
**Ronald Johnson.**  
*A Line of Poetry, A Row of Trees.*  
**Jonathan Williams, 1964.**

Smyth-sewn in quarter-cloth and printed paper over boards with plain paper dust jacket. Jargon 42. Drawings by Thomas George. Printed at The Auerhahn Press and bound by the Schubert Bookbindery. There are 500 copies in the regular edition, this is no. 30 from the "Author's Edition" of 50 copies signed by Ronald Johnson and Thomas George. This is the poet's first book. The book is fine, the purely protective jacket is somewhat toned and has a few minor chips.



**Ronald Johnson.**  
*Eyes & Objects (Catalogue for an Exhibition: 1970-72).*  
**The Jargon Society, 1976.**

Saddle-stitched in wrappers. Jargon 84. Forward by John Russell, cover photograph by Ralph Eugene Meatyard. Design by Alvin Doyle Moore, note by Jonathan Williams. This book of poetry is from an edition of 1000 copies, printed in two colors. Lightly toned at extremities, near fine.



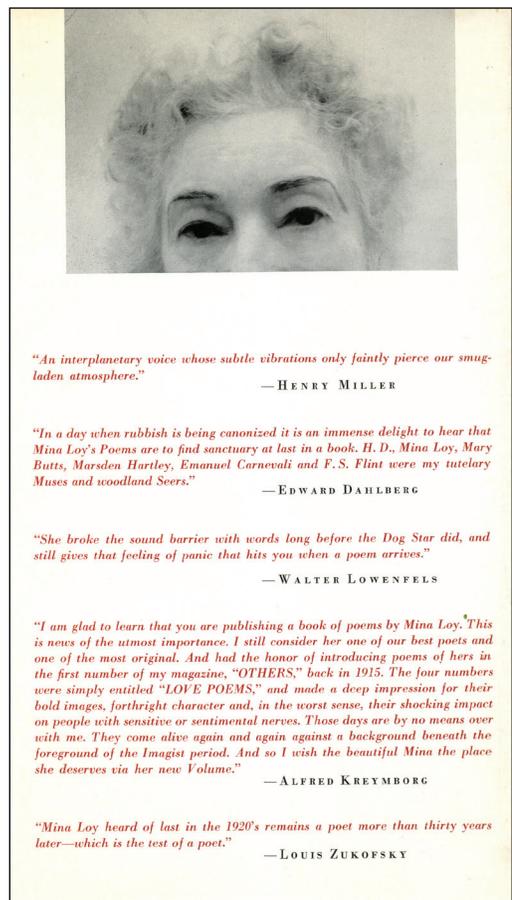
**Denise Levertov.**  
***Overland to the Islands.***  
**Jonathan Williams, 1958.**

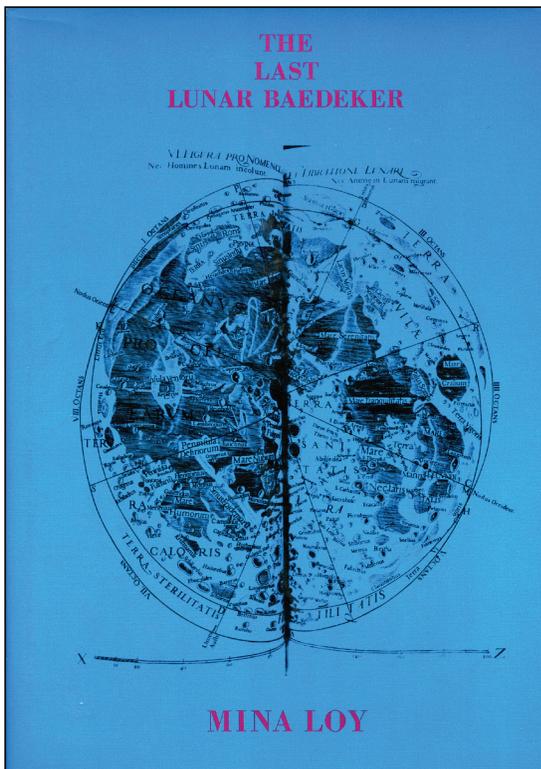
Smyth-sewn in stiff wrappers with fragile printed jacket. Jargon 19. Designed by Jonathan Williams, printed at Heritage Printers, spring 1958 in a regular edition of 450 copies. Frontispiece by Albert Kresch. Jacket note by Robert Duncan. Previous owner, poet Ken Irby, has written his name, date, and place of purchase (February 1959, Cambridge, Mass.) on f.f.c. The book is a bit dusty and jacket shows mild shelf wear. One of the most beautiful of the early Jargon books.



**Mina Loy.**  
***Lunar Baedeker and Time-Tables.***  
**Jonathan Williams, 1958.**

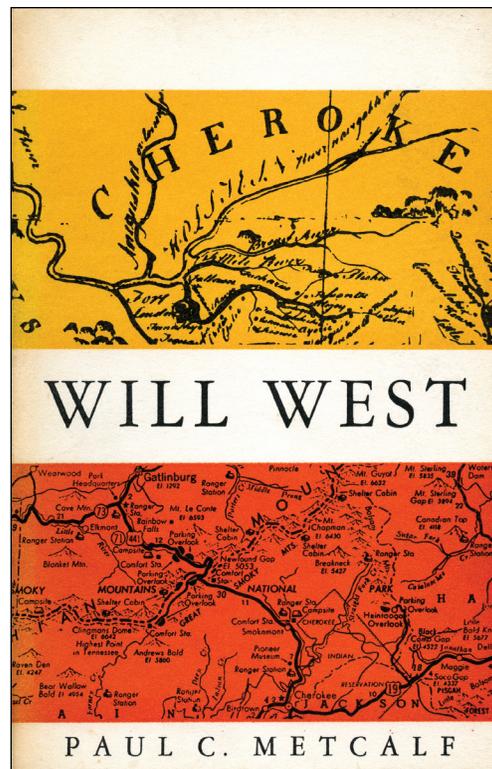
Wrappers. Jargon 23. Introductions by William Carlos Williams, Kenneth Rexroth and Denise Levertov. Jacket note and design by Jonathan Williams. Drawings by Emerson Woelffer. This is from the regular edition of 450 copies. Inscribed "To Joan Lane from Mina Loy Best wishes." Joan Lane knew Mina Loy during the period she lived in Aspen, Colorado (1953–1966). Lane was one of the founders of the Aspen Historical Society and wrote an obituary on Mina Loy for the *Aspen Times*. A page of her notes accompany the book together with a photocopy of the obit. A near fine copy with a 3/8 in. closed tear to bottom of front cover and mild shelf wear. This title is quite uncommon inscribed.





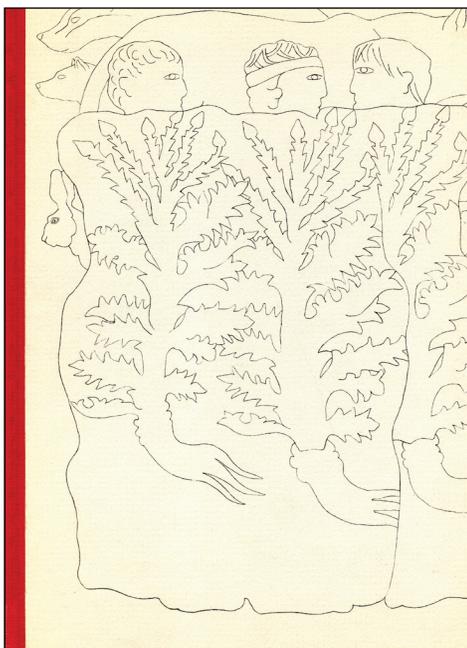
**Mina Loy.**  
*The Last Lunar Baedeker.*  
 The Jargon Society, 1982.

Cloth over boards with dust jacket. Jargon 53. Edited and introduced by Roger Conover with a note by Jonathan Williams. Frontispiece by John Furnival, design by Williams and Thomas Meyer. Fine in near fine jacket.



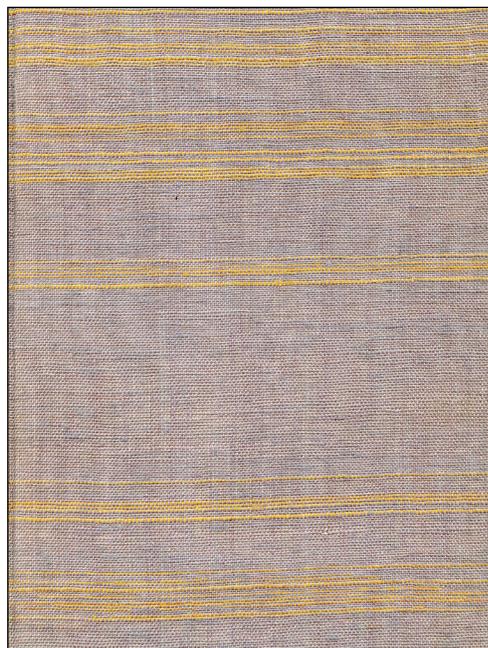
**Paul C. Metcalf.**  
*Will West.*  
 Jonathan Williams, 1956.

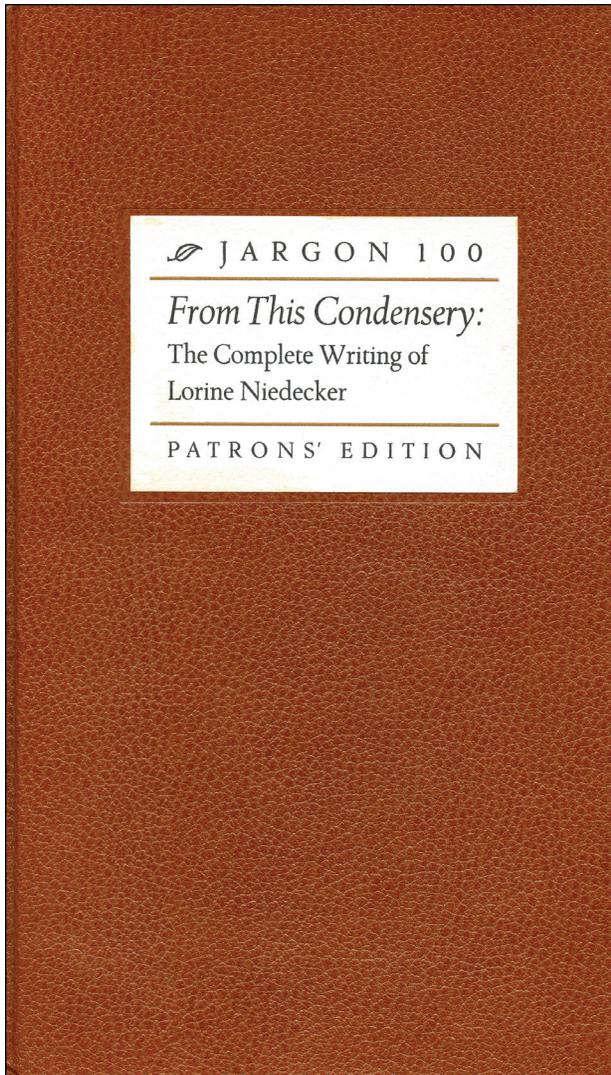
Smyth-sewn in wrappers with integral jacket. Jargon 25. Design by Jonathan Williams. This is from an edition of 500 copies. Paul Metcalf's first book. Fine in bright jacket that is age toned to spine and lower back panel.



**Thomas Meyer.**  
*The Umbrella of Aesculapius.*  
 The Jargon Society, 1975.

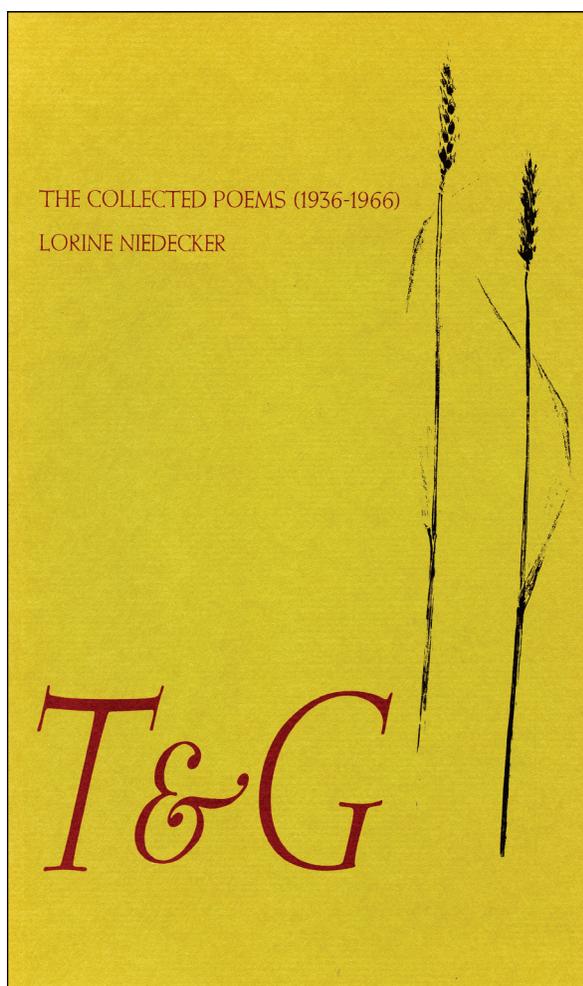
Full cloth over boards. Jargon 83. Design by Alvin Doyle Moore, drawings by Paul Sinodhinos, introduction by Robert Kelly. This is from an edition of 1000 copies: 900 in paper wrappers, not numbered; 50 copies hand bound in quarter cloth and paper over boards, numbered 1–50 signed by the poet; 50 copies hand bound in full hand-woven cloth made especially for this edition, numbered I–L. This is no. XXXVI from the special edition signed by the poet on the colophon page, also signed by the publisher, Jonathan Williams on the title page. Fine.





**Lorine Niedecker.**  
***From This Condensery: The Complete Writing of Lorine Neidecker.***  
**The Jargon Society, 1985.**

Full-leather over boards with printed labels. Jargon 100. Edited by Robert J. Bertholf, designed by Fred Thompson, Thomas Meyer, and Jonathan Williams. This is from the Patron's Edition of 100 copies signed by Robert Bertholf and Jonathan Williams. Fine.

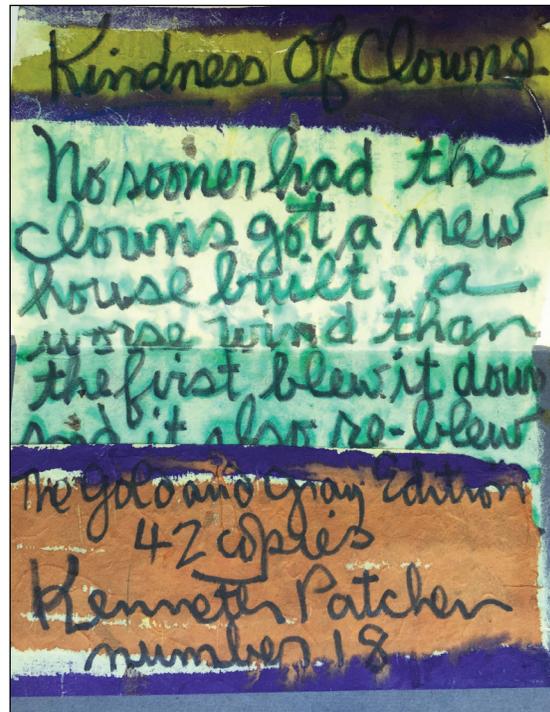
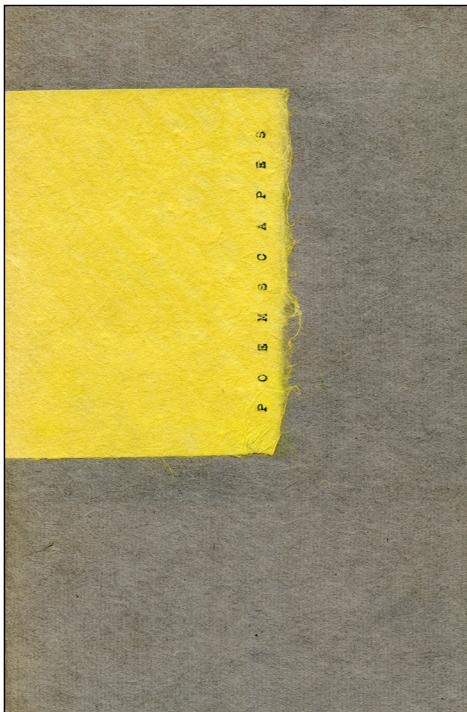
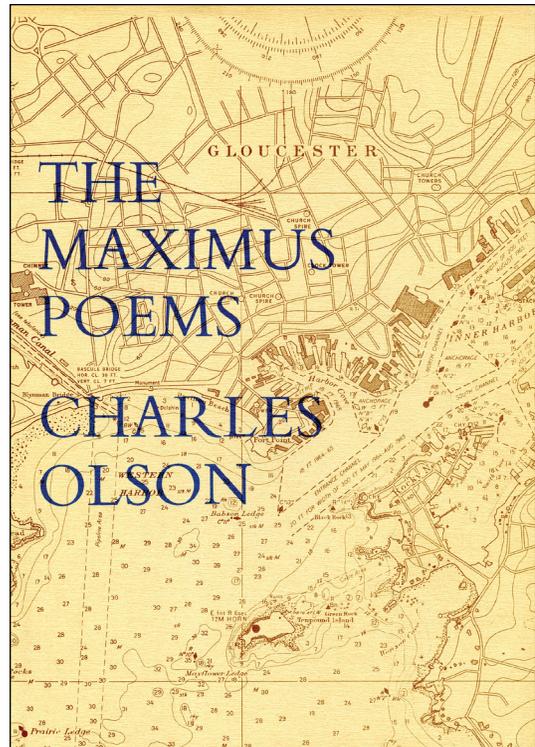


**Lorine Niedecker.**  
***T & G. The Collected Poems (1936-1966).***  
**The Jargon Society, 1968.**

Smyth-sewn in wrappers with mylar dust jacket. Jargon 48. Jacket note by Jonathan Williams, design by Bob Cato, plant prints by A. Doyle Moore. This is from an edition of 2000 copies. Fine.

**Charles Olson.**  
*The Maximus Poems.*  
**Jargon/Corinth, 1960.**

Full cloth over boards with dust jacket. Jargon 24.  
Designed and printed by Cape Goliard Press for  
Jargon/Corinth. Glyph photograph by Frederick  
Sommer. Fine in near fine dust jacket.



**Kenneth Patchen.**  
*Poemscapes.*  
**Jonathan Williams, 1958.**

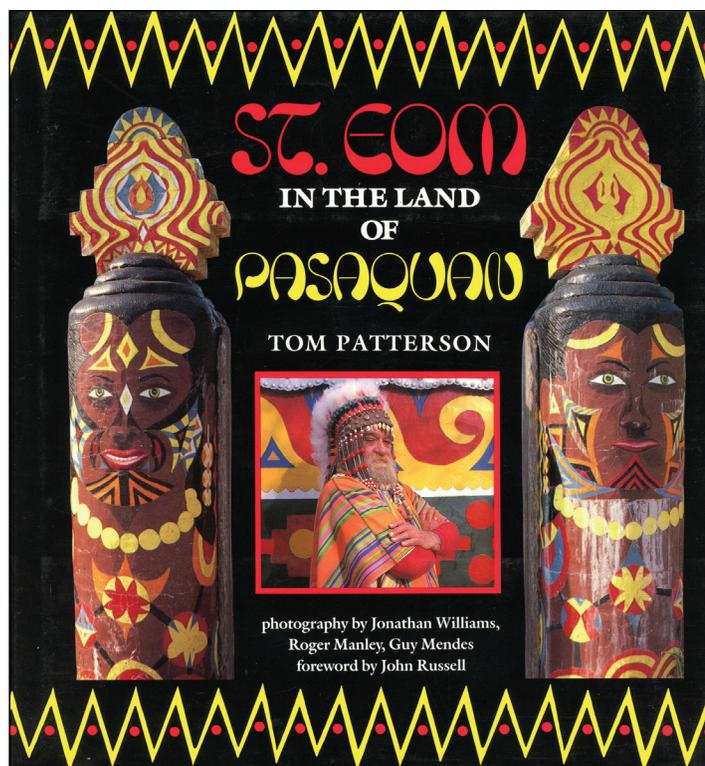
Smyth-sewn in gray Japanese paper over boards with yellow Japanese paper label. Jargon 11. Designed by Jonathan Williams. This is no. 18 of 42 copies comprising the "Gold and Grey Edition" with a gorgeous multi-color holograph painted poem, "Kindness of Clowns" by Kenneth Patchen, numbered and signed, tipped onto the rear pastedown and endpaper as issued. There is also a trade edition and a painted binding issue of this title. A very near fine copy showing only the lightest wear. The painted poem is sharp and bright.

**Tom Patterson.**

***St. Eom In the Land of Pasaquan:  
The Life and Times and Art of  
Eddie Owens Martin.***

**The Jargon Society, 1987.**

Bound in full red cloth over boards with printed dust jacket. Jargon 64. The life and times and art of Eddie Owens Martin as told to and recorded by Tom Patterson. Photography by Jonathan Williams, Roger Manley, and Guy Mendes. Foreword by John Russell. Design by Tom Patterson and Jonathan Williams who also provides a jacket note. This is from an edition of 4000 clothbound copies (there are also 100 special copies in the Patrons' Edition). Fine in very near fine jacket.

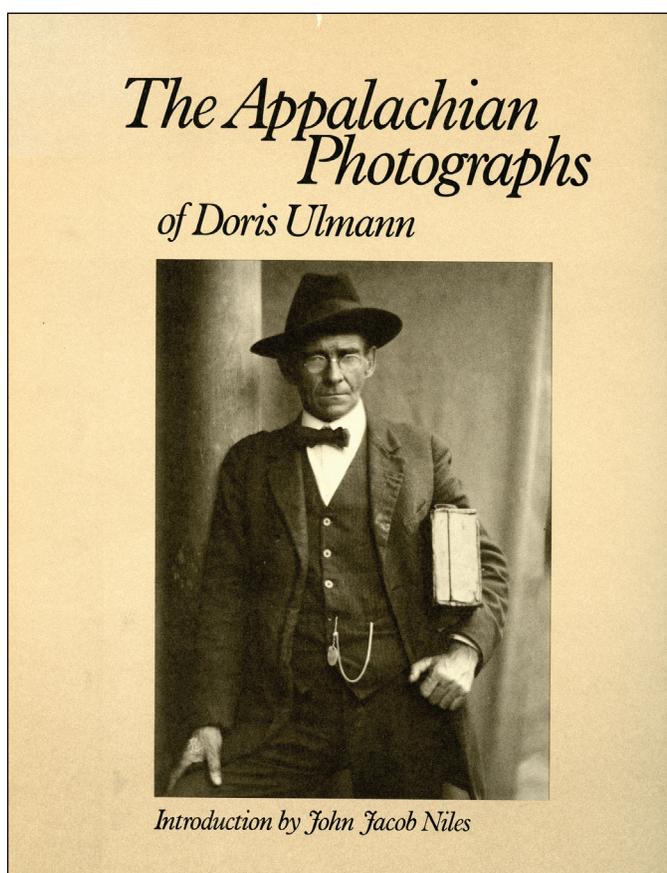


**Doris Ulmann.**

***The Appalachian Photographs of  
Doris Ulmann.***

**The Jargon Society, 1971.**

Smyth-sewn in wrappers. Jargon 50. Introduction and frontispiece photograph of Doris Ulmann by John Jacob Niles, preface by Jonathan Williams, design by Sam Maitan. 3/8 in. scratch to top of front cover else fine. Clean, sharp copy.





**Jonathan Williams, ed.**  
***Epitaphs for Lorine.***  
**The Jargon Society, 1973.**

Wrappers with printed dust jacket. Jargon 74. Thirty-two poets celebrate Lorine Niedecker (1903–1970). Introduction by Williams. Frontispiece and design by A. Doyle Moore, back cover by Ian Hamilton Finlay, photograph by Diane Tammes. This is from an edition of 1000 copies, privately distributed. Inscribed by Williams to Walter and Lillian Lowenfels, 1974. Book is fine, jacket shows light shelf wear, spine is a bit toned.

**Jonathan Williams.**  
***A Complete Listing of Jargon Books***  
**(1951/1960).**  
**[Jargon Society], [1960].**

Single sheet folded to form an 8-page leaflet, 4 x 8 in. Printed in red ink on orange paper. Includes "A Statement of Purpose" by Williams. Describes Jargon 1–40 along with a list of proposed projects and where to buy Jargon books. Near fine.

**A COMPLETE LISTING OF**  
**JARGON BOOKS (1951/1960)**

- 1/ GARBAGE LITTERS THE IRON FACE OF THE SUN'S CHILD Poem by Jonathan Williams; copper engraving by David Ruff (San Francisco 1951: o.p.)
- 2/ THE DANGER Poem by Joel Oppenheimer; drawing by Robert Rauschenberg (Black Mountain 1951: o.p.)
- 3/ RED/GRAY Poems by Jonathan Williams; drawings & declaration by Paul Ellsworth (Black Mountain 1952: o.p.)
- 4/ THE DOUBLE-BACKED BEAST Poems by Victor Kalos; drawings by Dan Rice (Black Mountain 1952: o.p.)
- 5/ FOUR STOPPAGES Poems by Jonathan Williams; drawings by Charles Oscar (Stuttgart 1953: o.p.)
- 6/ FABLES & OTHER LITTLE TALES by Kenneth Patchen (Karlsruhe/Baden 1953: o.p.)  
*"There was a wild kind of purity to Patchen's earlier prose books, and a conception few men would have dared to attempt. He still is there, very much there." —Robert Creeley, Black Mountain Review*
- 7/ THE MAXIMUS POEMS/1–10 by Charles Olson (Stuttgart 1953: o.p.)  
*"The Maximus Poems are, or seem first to me, the modulation of a man's attentions, by which I mean the whole wonder of perception. They are truth because their form is that issue of what is out there, and what part of it can come into a man's own body. . ." —Robert Creeley*
- 8/ THE IMMORAL PROPOSITION Poems by Robert Creeley; ink drawings by René Laubiès (Karlsruhe/Baden 1953: o.p.)  
*There were eighteen sales, many gifts to our friends, and no reviews. Mr. Rexroth said: "Creeley is the cornfed Mallarmé."*
- 9/ THE MAXIMUS POEMS/11–22 by Charles Olson (Stuttgart 1956: o.p.)  
*"... a major poet with a sweep of understanding of the world, a feeling for other men that staggers me." —William Carlos Williams*
- 10/ ALL THAT IS LOVELY IN MEN Poems by Robert Creeley; drawings by Dan Rice (Asheville 1955: o.p.)  
*One review, by Robert Beum in Poetry. Mr. Rexroth said: "He gets better."*

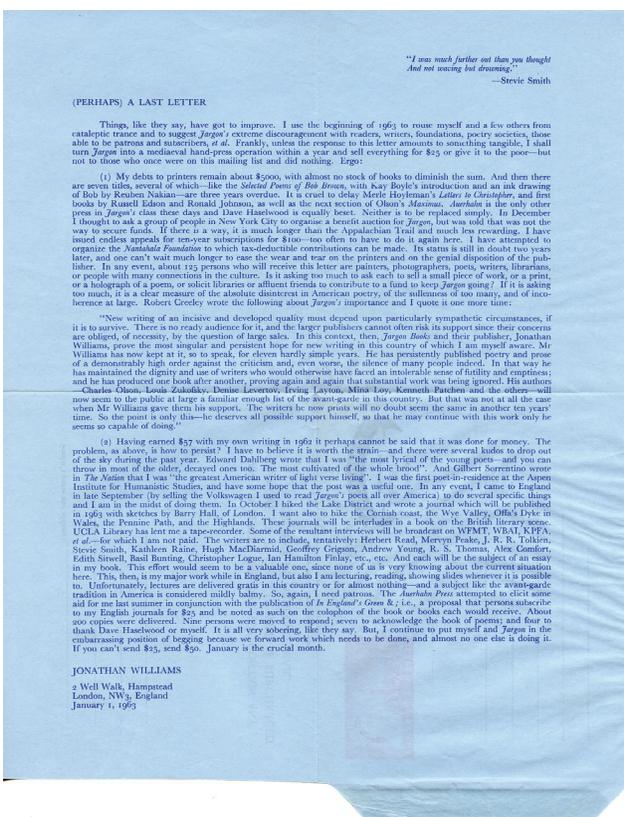


**Jonathan Williams.**  
*An Epiphany for Edward Lear, Lorine Niedecker, Gabriel Faure, Born This Day.*  
**The Jargon Society, 1985.**

Postcard. Jargon Society Card, no. 19. Text by JW. Illustration by Karl Torok. Typewritten and signed note to Steve Clay from JW on the back of the postcard, January 17, 1986. Near fine.

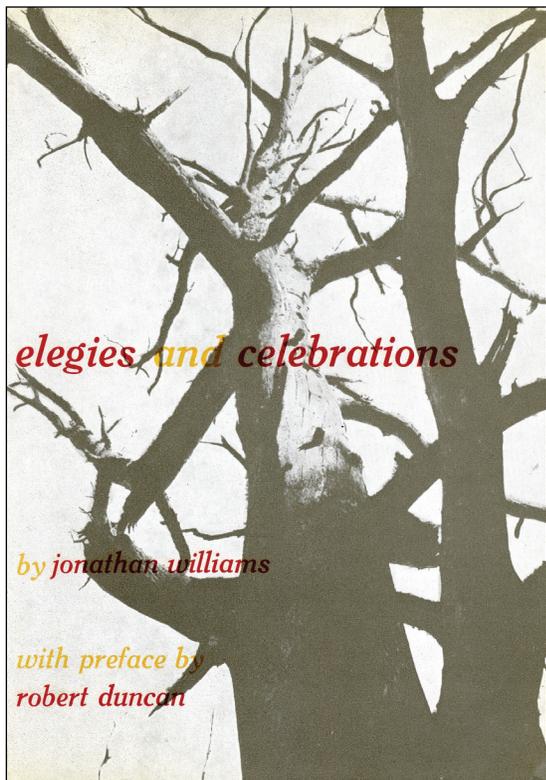
**Jonathan Williams.**  
*At Brigflatts Burial Ground.*  
**The Jargon Society, 1986.**

Postcard. Jargon Society Card, no. 20. Text by JW. Photograph by Raymond Moore. Fine.



**Jonathan Williams.**  
*(Perhaps) A Last Letter.*  
**Jonathan Williams, 1964.**

Printed in blue ink on a blue British aerogramme. An overview of publishing projects and other activities related to The Jargon Society and Jonathan Williams, written in London on New Year's Day, 1963. Folded for mailing, fine.



**Jonathan Williams.**  
***Elegies and Celebrations.***  
**Jonathan Williams, 1962.**

Smyth-sewn in wrappers with attached dust jacket unprinted mylar cover. Jargon 13 (b). Preface by Robert Duncan. Jacket note and design by Jonathan Williams. Photographs by Aaron Siskind and Williams. Inscribed to Steve Clay by the poet in 1987. This is from an edition of 750 copies. Small bumps to upper and lower right corners, very good plus to near fine.

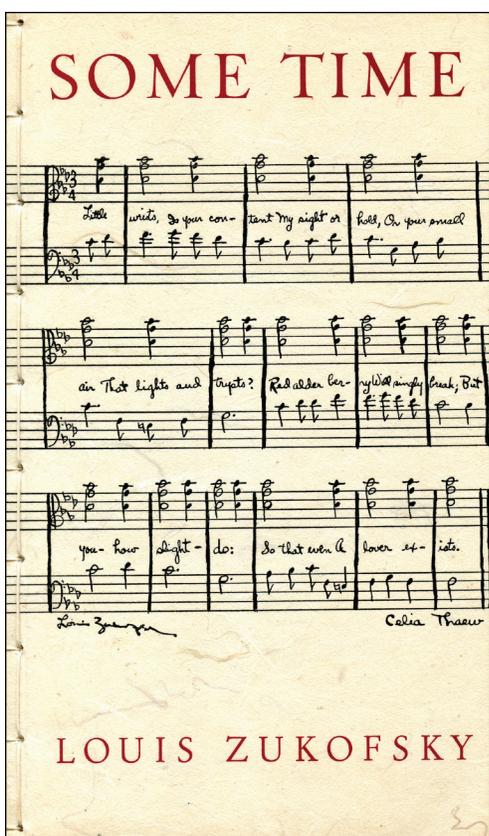
**[Jonathan Williams].**  
***Jargon.***  
**Jonathan Williams, [c. 1959].**

Single sheet, 4 x 18 1/2 in., folded once to make a 4-page pamphlet. Illustrated catalog of Jargon publications nos. 1–30 and mentioning future projects. Bit of damp stain to lower right corner, lightly handled, very good plus. Scarce.



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