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Guide to the James S. Jaffe Collection of Jonathan Williams and The Jargon Society

YCAL MSS 332



by Matthew D. Mason

July 2009

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Table of Contents

Collection Overview	3
Requesting Instructions	3
Administrative Information	4
Immediate Source of Acquisition	4
Conditions Governing Access	4
Conditions Governing Use	4
Preferred Citation	4
Processing Information	4
James S. Jaffe	4
Jonathan Williams (1929-2008) and The Jargon Society	4
Scope and Contents	5
Arrangement	5
Collection Contents	6
Series I: Correspondence, 1960-1990	6
Series II: Manuscripts and Galley Proofs, 1949-1970	8
Series III: Artwork, 1950-1977	9
Selected Search Terms	11

Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
P. O. Box 208330
New Haven, CT 06520-8330
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<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

CALL NUMBER: YCAL MSS 332

CREATOR: Jaffe, James S.

TITLE: James S. Jaffe collection of Jonathan Williams and The Jargon Society

DATES: 1949–1990

BULK DATES: 1968–1980

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 3.42 linear feet (4 boxes) + 1 broadside folder

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: This collection consists of correspondence, manuscripts, galley proofs, and artwork that documents a varied sample of projects undertaken by Jonathan Williams and The Jargon Society, 1949-1990. Correspondence documents associations Williams had with collaborators for projects for The Jargon Society and with other publishers. Correspondents include Dana Winslow Atchley, Thomas A. Clark, Ian Gardner, Michael Loeb, Tom Phillips, U. Grant Roman, David Ruff, Henry Holmes Smith, Jon Edgar Webb, and Henry Weaning. Manuscripts and galley proofs document projects related to Williams. This includes a description of the ceramic art of Arnold Ward written by Williams in 1949, and the graphic design work of Dana Winslow Atchley for Jonathan Williams and Nicholas Dean, *Blues & Roots*, *Rue & Bluets* (1971) and a manuscript by Michael McClure for *Passage* (1957) published by The Jargon Society. Artwork documents illustration material created, used, or considered by Williams in his personal projects or works published by The Jargon Society, as well as works by artists associated with him and the press. Artists include Fielding Dawson, Thomas Reuben George, Barbara Mildred Jones, David Ruff, and Paul Sinodhinos.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.jaffe>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.jaffe>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to beinecke.images@yale.edu.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

- b. box
- f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Purchased from James S. Jaffe Rare Books on the Ezra Pound Archive Fund, 2009.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

The James S. Jaffe Collection of Jonathan Williams and The Jargon Society is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

Preferred Citation

James S. Jaffe Collection of Jonathan Williams and The Jargon Society. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Processing Information

The description of material in this collection were chiefly repurposed from identifications provided by the collector, James S. Jaffe.

James S. Jaffe

James S. Jaffe is a bookseller and a bibliographer of works by Jonathan Williams and material published by The Jargon Society. He wrote and published *Jonathan Williams: A Bibliographical Checklist of His Writings, 1950-1988* (Haverford, Pennsylvania: J. S. Jaffe Rare Books, 1989).

Jonathan Williams (1929-2008) and The Jargon Society

Jonathan Chamberlain Williams was a poet, essayist, and photographer, as well as the founder and publisher of The Jargon Society.

Educated at St. Albans School, Princeton University, and Black Mountain College, Williams also studied art and design at the Institute of Design in Chicago. His published books of poetry include *An Ear in Bartram's Tree: Selected Poems, 1957-1967* (1969), *Blues & Roots, Rue & Bluets: A Garland for the Appalachians* (with photography by Nicholas Dean, 1971), *The Loco Logodaedalist in Situ: Selected Poems, 1968-70* (1972), and *Elite/Elate Poems: Selected Poems, 1971-75* (with photography by Guy Mendes, 1979). His published books of photography include *Portrait Photographs* (1979) and *A Palpable Elysium: Photographs* (1997). Williams also served as a contributing editor to the photography journal *Aperture*.

Since 1951, the same year Williams became a student at Black Mountain College, The Jargon Society has published works of poetry, experimental fiction, photography, and art by innovative authors of

the twentieth century. Prominent authors and artists published by The Jargon Society include James Broughton, Basil Bunting, Robert Creeley, Robert Duncan, Lou Harrison, Ronald Johnson, Denise Levertov, Paul Metcalf, Henry Miller, Lorine Niedecker, Charles Olson, Joel Oppenheimer, Kenneth Patchen, and Louis Zukofsky. In his poetry and publishing with The Jargon Society, Williams maintained an association with the Black Mountain Poets.

Thomas Meyer (born 1947), a poet and translator whose works include *Uranian Roses* (1977), *Staves Calends Legends* (1979), and *Sappho's Raft* (1982), was Williams' partner and collaborator with The Jargon Society.

Scope and Contents

This collection consists of correspondence, manuscripts, galley proofs, and artwork collected independently by James S. Jaffe, which documents a varied sample of projects undertaken by Jonathan Williams and The Jargon Society. Overall, the collection provides glimpses into the working habits of Williams and underscores his associations with collaborators, including their conflicts and camaraderie. The collection includes especially rich documentation of William's professional and personal relationship with Thomas A. Clark, a poet and publisher, as demonstrated by his correspondence to Clark.

Correspondence in the collection documents the associations Williams had with collaborators for projects for The Jargon Society, as well as with other publishers. Correspondents include Dana Winslow Atchley, Thomas A. Clark, Ian Gardner, Michael Loeb, Tom Phillips, U. Grant Roman, David Ruff, Henry Holmes Smith, Jon Edgar Webb, and Henry Weaning. The correspondence also includes related printed material collected by Williams' collaborators.

Manuscripts and galley proofs in the collection document projects related to Williams. This includes a description of the ceramic art of Arnold Ward written by Williams in 1949, and the graphic design work of Dana Winslow Atchley for Jonathan Williams and Nicholas Dean, *Blues & Roots, Rue & Bluets: A Garland for the Appalachians* (1971). It also includes a manuscript by Michael McClure for his *Passage*, which The Jargon Society published in 1957.

Artwork in the collection includes illustrations created, used, or considered by Williams in his personal projects or works published by The Jargon Society, as well as other works by artists associated with him and the press. Artists include Fielding Dawson, Thomas Reuben George, Barbara Mildred Jones, David Ruff, and Paul Sinodinos.

Arrangement

Organized into three series: I. Correspondence, 1960-1990. II. Manuscripts and Galley Proofs, 1949-1970. III. Artwork, 1950-1970.

Collection Contents

Series I: Correspondence, 1960-1990

19 Folders

The series consists of correspondence, some printed material, and occasional manuscripts, collected by Jaffe from authors and artists who collaborated with Williams. Most letters were written by Williams and document joint projects with collaborators. The most substantive material relates to Thomas A. Clark.

Arranged alphabetically.

b. 1, f. 1	Atchley, Dana Winslow	1968-1988
<p>Correspondence, mostly from 1968 to 1971, that documents the publication, <i>Six Rusticated, Wall-Eyed Poems</i> (1969) and graphic design work Atchley completed for Jonathan Williams and Nicholas Dean for <i>Blues & Roots, Rue & Bluets: A Garland for the Appalachians</i> (1971). Other correspondents include Dean and Michael A. Loeb, who served as representative for Grossman. It also includes a letter from Atchley to Jaffe about the correspondence.</p>		
<p>Material created by Atchley in the graphic design of <i>Blues & Roots, Rue & Bluets: A Garland for the Appalachians</i> is available in Series II, Manuscripts and Galley Proofs.</p>		
b. 1, f. 2-14	Clark, Thomas A.	1970-1990
<p>Correspondence, mostly from 1970 to 1980, documents Clark's projects for The Jargon Society, including <i>Some Particulars</i> (1971); <i>A Still Life</i>, with Ian Gardner (1977), and <i>Ways Through Bracken</i> (1980). Other topics include disagreements between Williams and Ian Hamilton Finlay, as well as his own financial and personal tribulations.</p>		
<p>Manuscripts and publications intermingled throughout the correspondence include a typed manuscript by Williams for a poem, "A Wee Tot for Catullus;" a memorial essay written by Williams for his father, Thomas Benjamin Williams (1898-1974); copies of The Jargon Society cards and postcards; and a proof copy of <i>Ways Through Bracken</i>.</p>		
b. 1, f. 15	Gardner, Ian	1972-1990
<p>Correspondence that documents <i>Pairidaeza: A Celebration in Lithography & Poetry for the Garden at Levens Hall, Westmoreland</i> (1975). Other topics include shared acquaintances and domestic affairs, as well as the difficult temperament of Ian Hamilton Finlay. The correspondence also includes a single letter to Gardner from Thomas Meyer.</p>		
b. 2, f. 16	Phillips, Tom	1966-1989
<p>Correspondence by Williams, mostly from 1969 to 1980, that chiefly documents, <i>Imaginary Postcards</i> (1975). Other correspondence includes letters from Thomas Meyer, a single letter from Phillips to Williams, as well as a letter from Phillips to Jaffe about the correspondence and publications.</p>		
<p>Several publications by The Jargon Society are intermingled throughout the correspondence.</p>		

b. 2, f. 17	Roman, U. Grant	1962-1965
	<p>Correspondence and related material originally compiled by Roman that primarily documents the publishing of Jonathan Williams, <i>Lines About Hills Above Lakes</i> (1964). It documents the planning for the book and Williams' dissatisfaction with the final publication. Includes copies of correspondence between Williams and Henry Wenning, a bookseller in New Haven, Connecticut, who introduced Williams to Roman.</p> <p>Related material includes prospectuses for the book, pamphlets about Williams, a printed resume for Williams, and a promotional pamphlet for the Nantahala Foundation.</p>	
b. 2, f. 18	Smith, Henry Holmes	1967-1980
	<p>Correspondence by Williams that discusses his projects and their shared acquaintances, including Clarence John Laughlin.</p>	
b. 2, f. 19	Webb, Jon Edgar	1960
	<p>A checklist of Jargon Books (1951-1960) with a letter on typed on it from Williams about Irving Layton, Arnold Ward, and Clarence John Laughlin.</p>	

Series II: Manuscripts and Galley Proofs, 1949-1970*7 Folders*

The series consists of galley proofs and a manuscript for two works by Williams, as well as a typed manuscript for *Passage*, written by Michael McClure and published by The Jargon Society in 1957.

Arranged alphabetically.

Blues & Roots, Rue & Bluets: A Garland for the Appalachians

Correspondence about the graphic design is available in Series I, Correspondence.

b. 2, f. 20	Notes	1970
b. 4, f. 21	Camera-ready copy	1970
b. 2, f. 22	Galley proofs	1970
b. 3, f. 23	Oversize galley proofs	1970
b. 2, f. 24	Photocopies of page proofs	1971
b. Bsd	Notes on Arnold Ward and a Theory of Ceramics Typescript manuscript broadside by Williams, which accompanied an exhibition, "Arnold Ward. Exhibition: Sculpture and Ceramics," at the International Trade Mart in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1951.	1949
b. 2, f. 25	<i>Passage</i>	1956

Series III: Artwork, 1950-1977*11 Folders*

The series consists of drawings, collages, engravings, and illustrations by Williams and his collaborators. The works primarily relate to Williams and The Jargon Society.

Arranged alphabetically.

Dawson, Fielding		
b. 2, f. 26	Ink portraits of Jonathan Williams <i>3 drawings, 30.5 x 22.7 cm</i>	1975
b. 4, f. 27-29	Collages <i>3 collages</i> Collages created by Dawson for Lyle Bongé, Fielding Dawson, Fielding Dawson, and Jonathan Williams, <i>Hot What?: Collages, Texts, Photographs</i> (1975).	1975
George, Thomas Reuben		
b. 4, f. 30	Drawing of trees <i>1 drawing, 21.2 x 35.7 cm on mount 25.8 x 45.7 cm</i> Ink drawing intended as an illustration for Ronald Johnson and Thomas George, <i>A Line of Poetry, a Row of Trees</i> , (1964), but it did not appear in the final work.	1963
Jones, Barbara Mildred		
b. 2, f. 31	Book cover illustration <i>1 drawing, 23.7 x 15.2 cm</i> Pen and colored marker drawing of a scale for the cover of Jonathan Williams and Barbara Mildred Jones, <i>Super-Duper Zuppa Inglese (and Other Trifles from the Land of Stodge)</i> (1977).	1977
Ruff, David		
b. 2, f. 32	Engravings, "The Love of the Gentle Land" and "The Light in the Wood" <i>2 engravings, each 10.1 x 14.8 cm, on paper 27.7 x 20.3 cm</i> The engravings originally accompanied the fifth issue of <i>Inferno</i> (San Francisco, California).	1951
Sinodhinos, Paul		
b. 4, f. 33	Book cover illustration <i>1 drawing, 41.8 x 29.8 cm</i> Pencil drawing of three figures and six animals for the cover of Thomas Meyer and Paul Sinodhinos, <i>The Umbrella of Aesculapius: Poems</i> (1975).	1975
Williams, Jonathan		
b. 2, f. 34	Etching, "Spring Rounds" <i>1 etching print, 17.8 x 12.2 cm on paper 22.9 x 17.8 cm</i> A proof signed by Williams for his friend, Stanley Willis, a classmate and later English teacher at St. Albans School.	1950

Williams, Jonathan (continued)

b. 4, f. 35	Calligraphy <i>1 print, 32.2 x 38.2 cm</i> Original calligraphy signed by Williams for the book cover of Charles Olson, <i>The Maximus Poems 1-10</i> , (1953).	circa 1953
b. 4, f. 36	Envelope Large envelope with a printed return address for Williams and abbreviations representing the 5th General Hospital in Stuttgart, Germany, probably used by Williams while he served as a conscientious objector in the United States Army.	circa 1953

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

Authors, American
Poets, American

Genres / Formats

Drawings (visual works)

Names

Atchley, Dana
Clark, Thomas A., 1944-
Dawson, Fielding, 1930-2002
Dean, Nicholas
Gardner, Ian, 1944-
George, Thomas, 1918-
Jaffe, James S.
Jones, Barbara, 1912-1978
McClure, Michael
Phillips, Tom, 1937-
Roman, U. Grant
Ruff, David
Sinodhinos, Paul
Smith, Henry Holmes
Webb, Jon Edgar
Williams, Jonathan, 1929-2008
Williams, Jonathan, 1929-2008 -- Friends and
associates

Corporate Body

Jargon Society