

ON MY EYES



LARRY
EIGNER

HARRY
CALLAHAN



On My Eyes

•

Larry Eigner's first book, *From the Sustaining Air*, was published by Robert Creeley's *Divers Press* (Palma de Mallorca, July 1953). In response to it Dr William Carlos Williams wrote:

Dear Bob:

Eigner's book is charming. I haven't got such a relaxed feeling from anything in years. There is no tension whatever, but a feeling of eternity. It is hard to say how he has achieved this in the world today. As far as I can see it comes from a perfect ear. It's strange how oldfashioned he makes much of the work of the past appear. But, it is always so with every new and outstanding writer. Let me see anything he writes, it is contagious. Not that his text is not at times incomprehensible. That is a minor fault that adds piquancy to the total picture. Thank him and you.

Sincerely,

Bill

On My Eyes represents the bulk of Eigner's work since 1953, excluding some eighteen poems privately issued as *Look At The Park* (Swampscott, 1958). As Denise Levertov suggests in her clarifying note: "No one reader is going to find his way in every one of the poems. But there are many poems, many possible readers." It is the publisher's resolve that *On My Eyes* ranks with the best work of Robert Creeley and, as such, is one of the notable achievements by a young American poet in some years. Because Eigner's typescripts are often singular, the evidence of a careful attention all his own, every attempt has been made to stay close to the original typing of the poems. Thus, there are no formal titlings and no pagination. Each poem is simply numbered.

•

Larry Eigner: "Born 1927 in Swampscott, Mass. (out of the nearby hospital in Lynn); still living there, where after public school I took correspondence courses from the U of Chicago, I'm a 'shut-in,' partly. In 1949, a couple of months after finishing up the last course I bumped into Cid Corman reading Yeats, on the radio, in his first program, I gather, from Boston. I disagreed with his non-declamatory way of reciting, and wrote him so. This began a correspondence in which I got introduced to things, and the ice broke considerably."

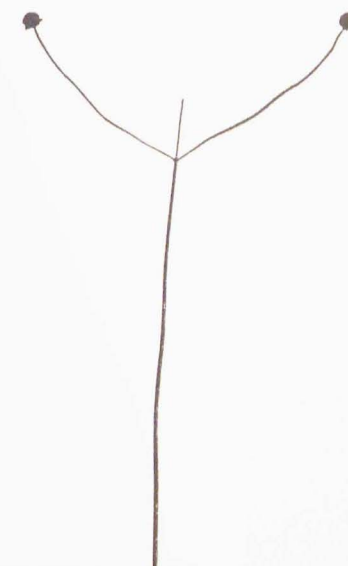
•

Harry Callahan: studied engineering, Michigan State College; started photography 1938. Since 1946 at the Institute of Design of the Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago, where he heads the photography department. Together with Aaron Siskind, also a teacher there, he is one of our internationally known photographers. In 1957 Callahan was one of the initial recipients of a grant from the Graham Foundation.

•

\$3.75

EPC Digital Edition
© 2021 Estate of Larry Eigner



ON MY EYES

Poems by Larry Eigner

Photographs by Harry Callahan

JONATHAN WILLIAMS, PUBLISHER
HIGHLANDS 1960



COPYRIGHT 1960 BY LARRY EIGNER AND HARRY CALLAHAN

Acknowledgements:

Origin
Black Mountain Review
Migrant
The Naked Ear
Sheaf
Measure
Combustion
Hearse
The New American Poetry, 1945-60 (Grove Press)
Fiddlehead
Delta
Harlequin
New Athenaeum
Sparrow
New Orleans Poetry Journal
Foot

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 60-9953

Printed in the United States of America

A NOTE ON LARRY EIGNER'S POEMS

First let it be said that Eigner is never careless. If he seems arbitrary it must be understood that he is deliberately arbitrary. Whether from the special circumstances of his life or not, he sees the world from an unusual angle. Often in his poems he is noting the disconnected passage of objects as seen from a moving car. He notes these caprices of the unintegrated world—a world unthinkingly modified by self-absorbed human activities—with the precision of an innocent but intelligent mirror. In a room, at a window—it is always, not what you would see, or I, but a view narrower and wider—more aware of some humble details, more aware of greater spaces also. It is a world where anything may happen, since, deprived of a certain wise-guy logic most of us acquire, Eigner does not let preconceptions close in his horizons. In his best poems he shares with us this wide-open field of vision in which disparate objects activate themselves, move apart or closer to each other, or at great distances from each other reveal to us an essential connection of which they remain unconscious. He gives to the humblest pebble the same attention—and so the same value, by implication—as to, let's say, a man. Instinctively our pride cries out against this—until perhaps pride breaks and we look again, and see there is no contempt for man in this attention given to a pebble, only the sense that both are strange, unknowable, unpredictable.

Reading Eigner the reader has to keep his imagination at work and leap from line to line as fast as the seagulls sweep across the square of sky in a window, joining a lonely chimney to a cloud by the line of their flight. Seagulls fly in and out of many of his poems. The landscapes are mainly suburban, there is that sense of the scattered and sporadic one has at the edge of cities, where bits of old fence and field still hang about undecidedly, wondering if the country won't still come back after all.

There are some lines of Henry James' (in *The Bostonians*) that several years ago I copied into a notebook under the heading, 'Quality of Eigner's Poems'; perhaps that was not precise, but these words do continue to express for me the *atmosphere* of a great many of the poems:

"... and wandered to the windows at the back, where there was a view of the water; Miss Chancellor having the good fortune to dwell on that side of Charles Street toward which, in the rear, the afternoon sun slants redly, from an horizon indented at empty intervals with wooden spires, the masts of lonely boats, the chimneys of dirty "works", over a brackish expanse of anomalous character . . ."

The sea, the great life-giving unchangeable ocean, is nearby always but not often seen full and clear. It is usually back of other things, other people's things, streets, houses, telephone poles, other people's needs and decisions—for Eigner can't get at the 'real' sea unless through the agency of others. Yet how much more present it is to him than to them, as force, as space, as the unconscious. He has to do a lot of guesswork about living, as most people know it; and he never for an instant pretends to definitive knowledge of anything but what he sees.

When I was asked to select from the mss. of this book what I thought the flower of it, I began tentatively putting aside those poems which I did not understand. After a while that came to seem stupid. If one becomes familiar with Eigner's work it becomes apparent, as I began by saying, with what care and intention he writes; and, again, that more than almost any poet I can think of, he demands a suppleness, an imaginative agility, a willingness and ability to leap with him from image to image; so that I disdain to judge (as I would with another kind of

poet) which are 'good' and which 'bad' poems. It is a question of which I can keep up with—and those I would have thrown out might be epiphanies to another reader. It is only where there is a high degree of care and craftsmanship that one can thus abandon 'judgment'.

He does some odd things with spacing and punctuation; I don't think they always work, but what is important is that they are always designed to work, to function: that it, it is never a matter of unthinking mannerism, much less of vanity, with Eigner. He regards spacing and punctuation rightly, as tools, and does not voluntarily obtrude them between the reader and the poem which they should be unnoticeably supporting. I myself dislike the unclosed parenthesis, as a poor tool having no function that can't be better performed by other typographical means. But in Eigner I accept it, for it seems expressive, again and again, of his own oblique, modest, set-aside yet not to be quenched, enquiring spirit.

What is most likely to be criticized here is a lack of coordination, or (and in this case it is the same thing) a lack of economy. It is admittedly hard to see form in such unique poems. There is no repetition, he makes for himself and for the reader no precedents. But the answer to these charges is the same: each poem is in fact a searchingly experienced area having the form of its limits—it is for the reader to say with it, to realize in his own responses the connections between object and object.

No one reader is going to find his way in every one of the poems. But there are many poems, many possible readers. Such poems make me think of floating seeds in September, their lovely hesitant, apparently haphazard movement, passing by. The next year there are new patches of willowherb—'fireweed'—in unexpected places. So Eigner's seemingly random words drift across the mind. And later one finds a flowering of new perceptions, perhaps in some part of oneself one had thought sterile.

DENISE LEVERTOV
JUNE 1959

The Wet Snow falling
brings on the horizon

(1)

from there
the stripped hill
straight with

the darkness of trees
thick
and pointed, and

the windows like
the backs of cars all

modeled
back

with no one seated
under the porch

June 1992 g, Thomas Lask

THE FINE LIFE

(2) when you search the
spontaneous thing
objects
the belief
shuts the air
like the whole world, wanting
to be serious
but how can we
in the future
the parts to the whole
I saw some sparrows today
disappear in a slope of dirt
below the road
the trees were bare like clouds
that's true we appreciate
children
the confused harbor

The Air harmonie der Welt

(3) when they talk about ideas, music
and instruments, the cars go by
on wheels
and the "periodic chart of the atoms
against the wall the heavens
like a wide field
quiet
though thunder come down
in the right place
the battery stops
dead like some man's
body which remains

Fleche..

(4) cruel arrows gone, the
night closes down,
element, noises
from beyond-the-weather cars
a mental weight death like space
with a little communication?
the clouds level as the earth
as they travel the world
all walls becoming one
the stars induce days of rain
and you can forget ice,
the secrets made by men
are dropped off like shadows
outside the trees waver again
it's curious when to die the cold around your bodies

Something that really happened
there, the thought of meaning

(5)

at the end of history an old book
like open casques
black and white facing the sky
and the serpent
the vine become a buffed stick

the names of places and produce and men and acts
as I used to conceive of the woods
as a not deathless mass
or the tracks a necessity

"what this is, I can see his"
the lack

some nonsense

while they wouldn't understand

a gardening of verse
a history of england

Boulevards, terraces
touch
THE CONCRETE GLASS

(6)

vanguard too

staring at the supermarket
close the eyes, it is still there

this is the invisible
added to what there was

errors

the people are walking
and parking is a waste

plenty of light and space
in the night

the old rutted ground

Do the dogs know why they bark?
something they feel the rain too
over the familiar houses

(7)

But they've stopped. Things always slow

the cat's habit of sleep on the roof
at the hole of the bathroom under
the open skylight

take it for granted "Invent" the
cat sleeps on the edge

and the birds he chases have
plenty of space

and then the squirrels who come looking for a road
larger than birds, may quicken
the same trees

The Dead dog

(8) Ah, mutnik,
Kerensky says it's no good
and maybe he knows about it
better than us all
is the friend

but someday the grandmothers may grow wise
and speak the calculus
making a fierce language

* * * * *

What happened?

(9) I've got to blow my nose

Mucous in summer

after so warm
(Aug. 1

Spring so flowery in my holes

the trouble is I have to get clear, you see
as anything might happen and
time marches on

ROUND MOVIE

(10)

the man traveling
thinks nothing of

this, Nothing of that
all the way

Mountains, a minute, a
very old thing
the wet places
just dangerous gracefulness
you see? no, go
left of it you
have been unhurt (but

proper cautions
(there is, if

some guarantee

in life
a good time

unheard of
(I never heard
I don't remember it

the hoof's upset
such a land
break
rhythm for

passing
and the earth
echo

eventually, eventually
it may happen
but that's not an end

Looking for
Solomon's
Mines

to drink
and the fire
burns itself out (but that is not all
starting

it doesn't matter
after how
everything

unseen (like anyone

except for those eyes

whose turn is
immediate, instantaneous

frightfully, those beasts
with cries as
they delay
a motion for "blaze
(not knowing which action

they exhaust
themselves
beyond reach

to proceed somewhere

the straight mountains

and the hideous men
marked as where
(cities might be
for life
their small towns
different animals

(11)

pretense of horror, till horror
comes, confused

but uncomplicated and demanding
there is no reason
for it, you don't know when

Suffering or remorse is
better taken away
for it makes a difference
no matter who keeps alive

though as before, in pain, it is me
still blinded, the sun
now on the floor

bones giving off memory

THE BUFFOON ON THE ROOF

(12)

the carelessness and
immediacy

will

the king
in his
uniform skin

do anything
touch nothing or produce?

there are all types
of an animate gaiety

(13) The Party in the Fields
broken mirror of the landscape
even to the sky
men of the definite movement
a part of the river
it was an ideal climate, and
 it's too bad
 they can't die
like the sun goes down
 young
but, anyway, you have to leave it
 if you go on in living
 but, there are different
 kinds of natures
I like my friend's house
 with the driftwood picked up
near there, right on the beach I'd think it
 two steps down
 there
almost resembling something
 on the wall

Elysee
He stopped on the irreproachable sidewalk
the woman croaked
(14) Ah Paris, he is a good cook
And after soupaire
it lights
yhar schtumach
its just as soon
in the afternoon
 une lune
the dark insides
of —
nuage sur le champ
the eyrie tower
cyclops at the zenith
du bord
 sink away
 the pitch on the meadow
there are distant blackouts
within a minute
race de vivre
the corners been far flung

the dark swimmers
their heads in the sun

(15)

If time shd stand still
you can't see it move

which way does the river go
partially the

wind, and light, Down waves
the indefinite flooring

the toppled clouds
the squared mountain

With the world a chameleon, I come
from the house where it kept me
Now the water is all aground
and there's a nest dropped on a crotch

(16)

Beautiful storm, like a great curving wreck,
the light waves chiaroscuro how long
the plunged cars before it closes up.
upstreet the buds are springing in green

this is the sea
and seagulls cry

IT SOUNDED

(17) and tangled dry—
like fire
at the start of the day
the engines control
but the wind in the twigs
or thistles, stalk
the birds are violent
the spring
they function by shouting
suddenly
all day
the houses stand some paint in
glass the dusty sun
with the fresh air
and the man who fixes the roof
top and
the transformer below
nothing except the wires
and the trees
and the boys climbing
the shed
(to leap
and break

similar truck and so it is the same
dump

(18) turf and grass
now is an eternity
like ones I can remember
from points the enormous reaches
and the only thing that tells me different
is
words
may you bring microscopes
into the field

OUT

(19)

day blots us, blot
these days named perfect

harbors and these sails
and shores with their foods that
adding depth

no complete sight
of where's the unmatched
long horizon
even with new maps
how you leave the coast

by expanses and waverings
or the crowds, smears
as against slides

and about wondering
(and stars could be corners
legs, up
towards splintering beams

they are making room with walls
(over whom jumbles the sky

The
edge of the building knows centuries
replaced, the gravel home
between these flats

doors, slope roofing

a cut through the middle of the hedge
facing town

or there's this tree standing there
and here's the wind

field, the only place

parked in
shape, so

(20)

the air parted, they are quiet enough

now

equipment appears
and becomes standardized
though not yet

one with one light on its shack
the other a long nose with stock, dummy
on each side, strapped,
a roller up front,
the first with a blade underneath

while I don't know what they're for

the noise they were making

(21)

the natural environment
of the cat
reverts,
in and out of the houses

the cars change
as the cat moves to and fro
articulate

or cats each step of a
world, birds
flank both sides a pole
curved on the hill
the wires became wing

the garden bushes or
random clumps or trees
a way from the year woods

the landscape surrounds the houses
or the houses around land

the clouds fast

alleys between

sometimes
the doubly cut sky

the open walls of
the landscape

(22)

On the Wide Shore

the seagulls screech

reared to the hidden
with interior

walls, raising the streets with fields

on another side, multiplied

the sea is forward
the town back

between the two points
elsewhere the sand mixes with rock

the roads grow
and pass unseen
together as

hedge
the sea
do not move

at one moment

the sea having little wings
under man's convexities
from removed skies

(23)

as I held the mirror
the boy committed suicide

and the other man slipped
what I have done often

he's now composed
himself, still here, though
the world changes

and it's funny, of course, that,
all of us have blood

O p e n

(24a)

They nod at me and I at stems
Yes, I agree But I flower myself.
or can't change

Yes, passes. As I, pass on the air
As i, pause
As i dream, sight
I have been on all sides
my face and my back

Disappears any time a world can dissolve
Reality

abstract, abstract, O little
seeing that word
blue against the stack—
o i walk i walk

the pavements
assume they are yellow

the flowers seem to nod

(24b) It's getting there
outside no brilliant colors but
the winter's landscape
the trees still bare
varieties of each other
themselves neither open nor closed to
the cities of the different world
become smaller, under the snow which spread
in all the routes
by the thin eddying air,
and which turned itself, a partly-visible thing
to drain off, yesterday
there is no sound left
when it started, the curves softening
as the block moves around but the
noise the stone in the gutters
flourishing tunnels
the caves ages to implode, igloos
quickly passed around the hills and the woods
with only a little wind, which is elsewhere
—no eyes
and last year's trees
to be washed
behind which is that sky showing through
above the beach
the free-
way
shoes
oil

the weather shingles, plate
down for the highway
slum plants, chips,
lanes
racing
exposed
wind, length of the docks
the harbor's teeth
square gas-pump on the corner
disguised (rust-proof
on the way in
the bare trolleys
The tree, swirling, the pitch
into the sky, the twist
from the pitted land, the houses
with easy chairs
steady equipment
the shades
wash
the radio cloud
masses
even in the garden
of gigantic head
sometimes for the moon thick
beer
with the wire gone
over the woods to the sand
the leaf shaking like a cat
newspaper
bundles over itself
the night of dreams
in which we care
walking about
the wind invisible in the picture

the yarns cut off
between the walls

stray beds
and shelves, loose
spades

the ground rasped by a truck or
bulk

It's Heaven when you
have billboards on your men-u .

What's the difference

it's all over

but it's not, it's a
jet trail
which fades out
according to the wind
the tired tread
a segment by the road
where the sun faces
the cape cods and
ranges

with brick steps

or the time thunders

as clean as the new chimneys

sprawling,

bits

everything spread out

and an earthquake is accidental
for all you might care

Pareil

But I have in my imagination tried
(that, now, at least, behind me

(25)

half myself, lifted
over a thing made holy by future nights
the future always going

elsewhere
untouched

while the lamppost steadies the finite wall
the gulls hawk above it
children and cats may cry

and again, out in reality
the unknown car across the river
and she coming in late
and the gulls wheeling
like any man, for a time
may not be

sinister

But I, halted slightly

above

and as much above me

even while the wind blew up as it had done and
the sun traveled
repeating thousands of nights
resolved many lives

(26) R o m a n s,
the women with plumed names are
imaginary here
pure
in their natural surroundings
and the shoulders of men
or the Greek dust
in the street
to contrast
with pools
while few things are very real
plainly
such as this is

The Studio
(27) Who wants to be more
famed than Shakespeare a
little boy was
darting, from the gutter into
the alley, a seagull screamed
at the bakery, over
which a dancing shoe flew
out the window
in front of the neighboring fishmarket

(28)

THE HEBREW BURIAL-GROUND NEAR ALCOTT'S

the well fit men
still clinging to the old

older than Brook Farm

yet nearly strange

in spite of the polyglot
the cemetery is green

marble with red bricks

set the moulded curb

the weighted light road

the dead become eternal

THE WEATHER

Of all the crazy things"she said the
crocuses are opening

while the fruit rots in the
ice-box

there's a fly in here
She was cooking,
 gas the
sponge ought to be appropriate for
the griddle

(29)

G l a s s

(30)

I forgot, and lost a part of myself,

I remember, and it passes away

A nation, or lotus
cream, ice, the
tremendous gulf, or capacity,

waste

the field of vision
with the eyes shut

The life she missed, under her eyes
almost imposing itself upon her

Everything needed combined
appeal standard of life

the signs of themselves decisive
disinterested directions
taking their part

net of the city

their torn status

like cloth planes

by the wind

Around my shoulder, your body
in full view, under the
light, blinding, of the dead sun

your mind, contingent somewhere
to the face, and the back of the neck

When you grow up you don't see
the small birds, which are still there
where the radio now is

The nursery room
Outside the wild beast
lurks

but that dichotomy
is far off

Who said that sleepers shrink, they spread,
they spread out, though they disappear.

Who would want them to disappear

they sleep hard, the brains
are switchboards, the colored wires
mean something

exactly, for them to enjoy

The death, that throws this other woman
into the arms of her neighbor

—figuring things out

it wasn't thought before

grass and smoke
grass and matchstick
grass and gasoline
the russian
rain

she came up with a cut on her nose

(31)

geripp
Wind

his ideas are playful and
on the porch hanging
as if now he couldn't move
in or off

charges as
there's nothing else
Hands on the stick-gun
and
far as possible

a harpoon,
almost dropped to a stream
mount a solider ball bat,—quick
he puts it aside
it looks like, slash the suspending rope
in an out-o-the-way corner of
side, over the rail
so low how practically
improbable, he's half
touching it from the hold
his arms, gingerly it seems

time

as may be

he's slow
his experience is few

BRINK

(32)

the less I
take for granted

the world going forward

I am getting
no younger

an illusion of this
no, a

death

announced

Sometimes a squirrel

affectionate dogs
nosing in spring
off the corners

cars, carts
on final levels
stretched up

and the overhead craft
in all weather
like windows

Whales
conduct a feast
near the cold used surface
awave like floes
the broken-off scraps
smells

the huge climate

o a lively day

keen
light, imperceptible turn
coffin of justice
among bottles and fruit

the beach I hear not quite
the next road

dancing

pavement of threads, things
horns bicycles papers
on hands

because the street-light shines
steady
and the leaves fall
like a few stars
throughout the night

and the trees moving their bones
in the wind
which doesn't need light

the cold wind Lethe

the strong wind they sleep

the objects of a dream

growing

letting their
hands, such as they have, down

they are unconscious of
the sun

A response

the muffled trees

Later it snows
that is, after the
leaves and the sun

Considerable time
variety of paths

through the same space, thickens
and piles up

what was maybe fog
when the sea smelt

and came back

as it comes back

now

the tides

the sun spinning
the moon having its
different sides
the world
hardening

the trees pore
white under the shadows,
the fading, loose sea

(33)

D a y s

Just like when she was little
the cricket sang, but the
sky was remote
this summer
the hen-yards obsolescent
and the walls often not very wide
the bed a ship to sail again
yet more of a ring, dissolving in the waves

she tossed from side to side, there was
nothing under her, there was nothing
under her, to feel, she had gone too far away
.bed, and a quiet night

The clouds went over, the trees grew
covered, different from weeds out
non-violent sun softly off earth in the

broken)

wires stay on
carrying messages
of no content, but steady

the birds roost

she had moved a moment
the 13th floor
the room all fixed
up the stairs
to the roof the
grating
old heat

outside
the walls

smokes, matches simultaneous with
idea change

the cellar, all at one time the
room

phone by the window

to do anything
across the country

voyages
somewhere near the beginning

the rain noses in front of your face
when the clouds thicken, the vague increase

gives you a silence

though widest are the blue points
of the ultimate reach, taking itself

to the sides wherever you go

below which the hammer-thin clouds
beach their imperceptible ways

she lies at the world

in thought, as before

looking up again, without need of a bed

or thinking, where there used to be hens

fallen asleep

PLEIN

(34)

out in the wind
space But a rainbow?

What is a bursting color?

The edge in the room
and it was wild from
place to place

close to the sun

haywagons and
different sounds
to come
to the same thing

touch to be lost

out of the Auvergne
country, for example

singing to keep the shack

not dying but the lonely
sights raised

you should have cut an eye
and remembered how that was

we can lose so little

Don Waynor in a Bechuanaland

(35)

you're friendly with the cats
as I am, more often than you
I can be friendly too

this is friendship, not because
we need each other
but we are together

The village idiot was a farce
like other people the timeless fool
in the middle of the wind

Lear, keeping his tone
I wonder how many
have faked that

I don't know how long you'll be here
you look like you'll live forever

THESE CHILDREN ARE GETTING RESTLESS

My foot hurts, the skin
elsewhere

(36)

People have a habit of their aches and pains
themselves

I and my brother are becoming twins
people, around here

and we step on the starter and bypass that
underpass

there are pains it is no use
I can't sleep it off

the flood
the beach , the chair , my flat
hurts, my
toes plain in the

humid wind, my
shoes are comfortable

The Sweep of Dark
far off

(37)

the cat stopped
cold

pieces in back of the mind

and dogs ?
even at summer

the high voices of gulls
when they disappear the sky closed

or profile of an eyelid
the asleep cheek, nose

(there is nothing infinite because

wind blowing a paper

to a horizontal tree

outdoors

like a shelf

suddenly, and away in
some other moment

thinking it almost a wire
then not at that side

over the scene, before
the street up the hill and its houses

like a man's wings

unknown, the minute still

and a barrel tipped
there with no sight of wind
emptiness of thought

itself

and canted out

of the gutter

the noise of barrels rolling
unlike the sea
the wind is all one way

—sick

like the whole day
we realize is crazy

and the headlong cries

(I always hear what
the irregular times are

and for all that the cars pass

the god in the air

Peabody Sq.

D r a g g e d

(38)

still
the tall bodies sinister
with their arms back
open chassis

ballfans or
floogie
the well-made trucks

harsh in variety

I saw the way the gull stirred
with his brain

I being the one to sit out
in the car and read
a dog and old lady in a fur
engine

panels going all over the place
the trees were like the Indians

with a round Greek room tangling behind them

(the horse for a weathercock
speed, atop the stables

still further out of the way

the dogs echoing
straight mountain spasms of sandpaper
the cat folded on the room front
from downhill
and in the middle of the square
the road become a walled land
the birds leaving before
shock of the monument
fast fainting the colors of the air
desolation of gold
gulls rear to the dead
sky
against the turned cloud
under in the wind
past the width of street
my business being to taste the dust
tree and the dry goods
in the stoned glass
and the men with faces
down on the walk

The Cat's Ears

radar whiskers

(39)

turned around
following sound
but stand still

so you think you'll GO there?

another thing coming

I with what I've got now might really be good to have a different kind

it just hangs around

yawn in his limbs,

(40) the ragged lines of
Popeye the
fishwoman's king of the world
while Titian's Europa lies
on a wall
the trees are wild sometimes
the clouds are safe
it is a leaky day
but what does safety mean?

B i r t h d a y

(41) Every-body was supposed to be enthusiastic it
was a big hall with lots of corners
though 4-square simply, stating the case
simply, and letting it go at that
and the girl who looked disgusting, almost in bed ,
or was she disgusted, was
polite, as might be under such
circumstances
she said, you're not in the way
I had thought I was, with
her permanent small expression,
and
eyes, the wheelchairs had to
keep on the go, and we were all 30 or 45, time
always went by, Till all the
eyes were turned
the true surprise, a man as a
hectic native . . . doing
a strip-tease
down to a "censored" in black
letters, and many
were doubled, as well, by age
and bits of mistletoe were strung up
by the idea man with no fingers
who had only time for that
as it turned out
being volatile
which was about as far as we got

(42)

Couple of Years

Nowadays they call it a disaster
snow hilling the glass
a spectacle

landscape
topography, stuck
on the storm window pane, sifted

in masses like little hills
held out at a short distance
or the long-falling
shallow and cracked pieces of ice

like butting shaggy bears
or an animal fight
on all sides

the billboards deserted
which makes the deadening wind cry

(it is always a children's world

—then a day after
the snowball legs and battles
the fast sun
late slowing in spokes to fall

and there is gas for frying eggs
under all this

(43)

A Sleep

air is mild, not quite
bareness, the sky burning its way
the clouds are nothing

the rain
is tremendous it is mild
dispersing figures

the ocean day
break the gulls
manage the view

a year ago here was a hurricane

to stay in one place
at evening

to move about
the morning pass

the gnomes stop their shaking
and convert into flowers

o laugh

some, visible

dissipating seeds

to find more endings as a tree or circle

one state contemplates others
and we have gone in towards death
leaving, up, the
filled birds to the sea

A g o n e

(44)

The world under the sky
clouds
all winter and summer

descends and occupies a snow
stars, the ground
filled

air
with abstracted wings

on crystalline lines

and time
between the stars
a broken hinge, by
the garage

a flagpole mainstreet
five cats yokked

the world
can't hold, really
too many absolutes

but I am shattered
and another time lost

while the sea
slams

the wind
or lags

an old woman's shoe
flapping
on the beach











(45)

Borodin

The steppes of asia last
night about here
in the spring
bloom and they said
it is Music. (rhythm that
crosses lines

passing on
another time
east, to
join the sun

or rather the light on
towards

examine
extrinsics

the fringes involve dividing each
other, true, even the
unfinishing flowers

bent so

and the land cut
itself

Step-wise

(46)

The sea dances the heavy lights
below the wall; a distant
crash sinking, matched changes of color

strain and confusion, out of which the storms are bred up
after this hour, hunting for sewage and spells
garages and the back yards
where the arrowheads might sift behind the woods

hammering wings the
hutch the
boat lifting between houses

there is the screening of loam, to
leave the rocks out, pitiful ash
crumb in the dropless afternoon
of wine-cellars, accents
of ancient yeasts and that wire
slant of sky filling our eyes
blind, to run back
the beaten snatches of dust through the rain
or violent cold echo

They hunt clams In a lull
at the sewer outflow we dribble our own banks

dwarfing tin
and blocked sand whistles, gouge
quaking
pebbles floated in the night like ghosts

bird-speckled, The wall reins
the barren grains of sand, bareness of shadow
the mud levels endlessly stilled

awnings endowed serene

Then later
to return and
pop balls on the empty brick
and mortar, (the dirt stirs, the sparrows on the
nest overhead in the drain split jaws
as the sunset, in full, passes down

Ways

(47)

in the ad was somebody something like her

so to turn away would be vacuum, wind

Indoors, the sun not, this time, in the picture
flat on the page
like a nice language

the birds sitting in the trees
weathervane an Indian shadow
20 years

so many dials

and so much rest!

the gulls flopping in nothing
figure while they cry to continue

the branches putting sleeves into the air

moving

ecstatic or something, over convenient toy

the front edge of the picture, my hands

straight off

broken (the backed-up moment

rain on the fingers, trains of an age
a similarity

The Strange Land

(48)

Resting earth I feel
the different wind blowing
the branches I could see
with the barest leaves
the stars and woods move
and some weight comes down

the separate trunks
cast tunnels lying plain
below the heads

whose shapes stretch and
spring by the air.
towards the corners rail
shadows, the old houses

the busses of perfection
in the night deriving people
continue and some mount up
at stops from muddy entanglements

off buildings with empty windows
where the sun will arm itself
tomorrow momentarily

the useful drawers agape

while tonight there might be an owl
round some newly done back yard

Anyhow.

(49)

Life is a farce, so what is death

not even the funeral
or much later, stones
and weed

the dust in the road

and cold snows

I have become used to this
my shoes hve been the same

I remembered the sky, or yesterday
to look (most of the place

in the afternoon it was old

light, made

the next hour, dying, the
fire blew and the engines
roared in, putting on, speeded

Again, the
sun gone down

grown in the shoes, which are full

the sky changes
in ways I did not think of

notice
and others remembered

A WEEKDAY

(50) the foundation waits (will rise)
between morning and afternoon
for a 2nd load of dirt
the trucks move
eyelessness, uncovered
windows, the outdoors
toothless,
the garage
open like a grave
or a child perhaps
faces play, have played
the quaking stone
they have wandered over from the next lot, their
bikes a near way
slowed the gulls
(a surprise, the difference of time
soon the walls will have been wholly
real
even on the hot nights
though they were not always the same

M i n u t e

(51) old, looking at them
naturally we remember
way back from
40, from 35
30 life/
is that way
or this is the life
their continual points
emphatically to be made
every day
o good for you
and the bad thing
may be the same
as regards any
one

The Shock

(52)

men were connected with animals
I look up and see the plane
scarcely

able to move while casting
my legs

I cry my world full of the head
if it would do any good

in the twisted path, not by distance but
the wind in my face

the eyes tossed back, fitted
locked oars

passing, coming singly to every one
what is "aboard"

beasts they wrecked, and the world still spread
and in more and more ways, but back
gradual, as needed, faster
and unfelt

for protection

the dead brains

and the fall, where, for a time

the great matter at the end of my soul

the dog deciding to bark up my feet
and all the trees, with the wind
dragging its roots

blown to bits, eyes that are stopped

the love of life and death

The Movie of It

(53)

Man misplaced depth
in the sea we cannot
go back through

and that death, which is,
ultimately modernized

20,000

now poisoned, the water

leagues

a different weird light
and music in the tower among
the beautiful and oppressive

fish and weed, shell
blind sight, the heart, romantic
solitude odor
visible

violate, the
weed suck
of the spasmy creature
vine in its multitude
exasperation and reach

and in the jungle the hirsute bears

while from Europe the narrators
escaped, as in childhood, destroyers, again, to
face the blast

grand

(sin)

pride

(54)

WHO KNOWS JUST WHEN THIS WILL END

Space a meeting, so
when the wind blows
in the chimney
the bed creaks

and keeps creaking, while
the wind flies
the clouds passing
over land, the roof

nevertheless, impenetrable, as if
we put it there, it, still,
stirring perhaps, over our heads

where we know,
the size of different rooms
projecting, discounting the clocks
we needed, the shades hung

by the air, while the wind sails
out in the dark walls

Night for a change

(55)

Outside the window the house
was bare, like ours maybe
nextdoor) then all up the road
within we were half naked, the
sides naked

a different matter
may they never wrinkle or bloom
and crash

the upper dimension light
a white rain from evening
clouds

perhaps the second of invisibility's gathering
to go nowhere

let pass

If it increases, tomorrow the ground
may be wet and stick
I will not forget the flowers
in the fields which
still lead one to
another walls

though June has been like autumn

a schoolboy sprawls in the
strange bed above
the fixture, and in the middle of the room
let alone the sun
the sky isn't to be
seen childhood
simple enough, spreads on the corners

while the holly bushes wave
in the breeze or the tulips dance
moments
against the yard as the
cat has been edging through

Gathering Noon

(56)

Only the outdoors

and from inside the building
the lights

come on the streets

tragedy for damage

others you see
in the living rooms

cut the night as the stars
closer apart

and what may be in their minds
is a different ordering

as before,
the causes of their positions

so, somewhere, are the clocks they have brought
to be restful

and the freely-progressing cats
they accompany with their eyes

They inevitably go to the bad too

but the trees end off at the sky

and it would be a good thing
to pass, even

our own goal
till dawn shuts them out

and we keep more behind this
way, our yard

(57)

the wind like an ocean
but sometimes the sun stills it
and the surface is solid

why shouldn't life pass as in a dream
or a dream itself, there are different degrees
or different dreams reality
at one with a dream

the naked sea
stinking
is fresh
in time,

(o shut your eyes against the wind

A g e

(58)

The street was a hall
Lairs in the mountain chain
the weather shifted over
and replaced
the lions or goats climb the ridge

windows admit sun
the earth is still plain
under the feet on the ground floor
clouds enter, moving
at a distance, the great doors
lead in and out to the sky
the little paths across the earth

A woman at the corner sells fruit

Do not put fish on the ceiling
but low in the walls
with the hunt
after you have eaten

T h e t i m e f i n i t e s s i m a l

(59)

hills are monuments enough
and the grass, then trees and flowers

but the skyscraper is necessary
even before it is built

the clouds are radioactive

and the sky-god becomes
the earth

father and mother

ourselves surrounded in blue
lit by the sun

I take the counter in my hands

we will die
in time, and in space live

turning faces soon

Memorial Day,

What's gonna happen

a baby rises

on every pitch

slowly
(coming out

oh murder she
every second
bathtub

(and the world's running
cars

especially here

the oil floods

to frighten him
and dispel the fright

there is nothing to do

but

leave supper in the raw

it's a double-header

Place just right

when I came to the last milestone—imagine
stone—it said
1620

America has died out
on its endless highways

experience piled up
fast

here we have the life of Faure
for one man

every
which way, the mirror
and the world, clockwise . . .
for with that there's an opposite
for relief for a spell

and the roads become wider
or lead us over the 2nd stories

a child's body, smooth
and squirming from its excess

mind, simple and not knowing

speeded, the mounted edge
all the slums grown factories

long woods of beer, cognac and rye

and there was the usual crowd
all sorts of builds, different

looking like all the world

and you couldn't imagine
the multiple space

endless
as others were out of sight

and there was an old-type ship

“medieval”as some had it

possibly with ratholes, the
universe might be profound

every man's vessel (again) his home

(62)

If you weep, I think that
others might cry
though it is no matter The rain
is more fruitful

to the earth breaking
heavy with birds
and leaves we could
not hold I

you push
and the fog
shadowing tides

filling the
island, farther
out dampering it down
until the wet congeals
everywhere in the great
arches

for which our sight even
becomes too thin, weed
sand and stone, and the tolerant subdued cats
the sea, the sun

arching beyond
everything there is
here and the birds' scream

hunger or puff
to the silencing light

and the eyes open
again, at the
blind rain

in fear and removal

you cough and it is
not the same

(63) the stars pulling various ways
the birds went up
to settle on trees
many of which crash

All Intent's

(64) once a man is born he has to die
and that is time, the
position of the moon

the earth is never still in one spot
or perhaps it is, it is
(part way

it is round

and we are always here
though every second perhaps not

but here we are, we are

F o r S l e e p

I depend on the stars
and the places of night

(65)

This is what it is

intent space, and
the speed which is light, growing
past any shape

the half-door or the door
slightly open

this is what happens when I move
(or I see motion, all of it

I'm in it

the world depopulated
those configurations of spirits

scattered and gone

so to disappear

the side of this road

I want room nothing

b a c k t o i t

(66)

The good things go by so softly
Themselves it is our strengths
that run wild

The good and the strong, dissipant,
an ob- jective joy sky

is empty there are clouds
there must be sound
there

the horizons are nothing

the rain sometimes is not
negligible

out on the sky
the other direction
growing until it is nothing

there are mirages and numberless deserts

inside the other house

lines, broken curbs

travel and distance
proportion themselves

we must be animate, and walk

turn, abruptly

the lines are irregular

(67)

I am a machine for walking

who can walk

the fly is
complicated

she sits and hears the wind
coming

looking
out

The girl
is no marble

(68)

after all the singing faces, you
with your mouths out of sight

as i respond
Where are your purposes you have kept
childhood in your hearts

each day, and the sky was blue
the sea was a waste

and you have come back again and again
with the years you were able to
come from a great distance

Today my brothers were here;
now at night there is you
myself under the sheets

But I grow old
because I was too much a child

(69)

cruel and dark, the city
of all men, close

the window, the
streets remain empty

corner around which to blast
or focus, the earth basements

stone bits

a great garage ceiling
the room lights up

blocked like the heavy sign
paint, interior trees
our specialty is the home

a various momentum
the old office windows

shack the powerhouse
weeds
the station grown with vine

dog's tongue, causeway
cat angle, hardware
retrieving the lost park

store box with the generations
of color girls

how things have always been eaten

infinity to wires
the work, inconceivable

as it is, each
one is doing his part

dolls ragged on the steps

even the switch is hidden

it's just as well

the indians had their tents
and a few plugs or cigars

circle children
reading about it

the hot nights slept on cement

the sewer curbs

P a s s a g e s

(70)

sunlight drawing from shadow, up and down the street
the dream of joy is only lightning
in the finale, beginnings so far from the end,
the short millions of poles, clouds on the sea,
the sea of human things the
leaves of men in the pure wind
of the seasons falling and swaying
over the world land

and the pitch of the open night, the lightning seeming to rend
and twist, the shadow to close in
above the flower the world cries out
time is obliterate and man turns
the false dream, missing details

that man who was deafened

we go to bed. The airs are dim
aside . marchings of men
and after this the boulevards

the grounding of arms

toys, and the blinding gulls

so what if mankind dies?

(71)

the birds
the croak and whistle
has no future, either

so what?
so what?

the future arrives

the end of a stick
in my crotch

toward the speed of light

In a dull place

(72) Mostly naked a businesslike —
calm and disconsolate
the victim, giraffe, wandering
the devious land
less and less conscious

Finally the days and nights, they are able to
come up

but even so it is strong, though unsavage, slow

with minute poison, they stab
punily, stick after stick
until it falls, already
dead, the brain eaten

they are hungry

time is of the essence, 2,000 lbs
for the whole town

nevertheless it is the priest makes the
first cut, the trial, such a
battled creature
to be brought low, so
mysteriously

by a rough calculation

it is good
meat

BOXES

(73) The universe is a machine;
we are machines But the mind can convert it
the past built up by the mind
immediate

how long can it keep moving

no longer

en masse

or is the window glass, or is
the air there?

Memory or what? What is it? the
image before we were born

the absolute, scattered into the

cogs
the crazy parts
machine

in the 18th century the gold sphere
was barbed a future of bright
factories of the spectrum
helmets of intelligences

vast as it later turned out
in Poe, etc.

and Verne. complete

his sub
the human provinces

in the spray of the stars
and sovereignties

state of the mind
infancy

in books

turn in itself

the governors

. Cantelli ..

(74)

In the shock of flames
the roaring cremation
I saw the other people
orchestra
pit
the fine wire
broadcast the
barely existent aisle
with heads of luggage and
tickets , die out
with no thought
or the easter hymn

What happened the forward glance
in this moment do what is there
his strength just as you wanted
beyond the 32nd quiver
of said bar

how life flashes
and one time
it has no place

look at the sun

the instrument
suddenly for the field
grasshoppers

for other investigation

I suddenly might walk
and might see
the barrel opening horn
one side

even a clearing of ground

yet no cows lying with milk
in a little while

or a smashed hood
under the weeds

Millionen

(75)

millions, one by one
MILLIONS, a long life

centuplets a caterpillars'
life
distant
brothers

and I played chess out on the island
with a machine
woman

by whom I was licked
19 times in twenty

(76)

Before setting, the sun on my eyes
the grass at my feet, so silent
the wind blowing, the distance, waning
space

it will be dark and silent
in a nomad country
dank, air
sound to the river
gullies

i walk to see
stars when the sky
takes off into nothing

the fields
turn, waving
forever

occluded, a slow jet
enters, fields are cool

at a distance
the steady lights
halt where the wolves wake up
and cry
and the bulls were shot

THE WAY THEY DIED

the accidents

almost the diseases

and men their old bellies
retired and so fragile
the family turned away
or, on the spot
to enter another place
prepare us

contiguous, whether

(the times and ideas
—and the moments
change

(and others you never heard about

(77)

. . . F I N E

how would you like to go back
to the stone age? students
farm hands and collectives

(78)

her story was told with dry eyes

but they said: we wouldn't, though what could we do
what can we do

we couldn't go back

immigration, from Africa, ha,
to Georgia? wherever

"the beautiful isle

the days grow old
when you say goodbye

O l d M a n

(79)

two big pigeons on the new roof
below which he grew corn
ten years back, one year .

Mirror

A man and a woman and two big cars
A growing baby, That is Mamma's, that it daddy's
It is summer. a one-car garage

What will they do in the winter
Well, I'll tell you, They'll play cards
and trade one in

and a fireplace between the house and garage
one in the basement and one upstairs

another baby
in a few summers, as they say
3 cars

Q u e u e

puddle long
in between shadow

and that disorganized gestalt, dead?
flat

crossing streets

I spent the day drinking
just as if I was
down the beach

The sun ducking in and out
as I understood it

no fish grained skin
water
disappearance like mirrors
a spherical world

make the leaves fall
darkness in grassy fruit
juice

above through
the trees
or a traffic island

motion elbows

or sweeping ground

anyway

S T O A

there is doing and seeing, variety
and sometimes you even stop

(81)

and closet your eyes there are birds here
and dark smells which don't lift

meaningless sound, but both unattached
and continuing in itself
whatever might your thoughts be

whatever it reminds you of

sunlight and darkness, trees
the wind roaring there are leaves in autumn
smoke blowing one way and another

and the folded snow is sharp
dirty when it melts
in green brown
the black
days

HE MUST HAVE GOT UP EARLY

(82)

The dog's imaginations
are greater, than mine
my fingers are nothing

I cannot see the pads
his snout is again
a thumb, index
for the legs

not
wholly close and the tail
coming in different planes
or none, rather with
the hairs at his sides

he is not doing anything

Keep me still, for I do not want to dream

I live in this house, walls being plastered
all my life. the apple tree still standing
my life built, the minutes keeping on
the walls cross, standing around

a distinct company
projection, the clothes wave
briefly, touch beyond eyes

weed the garden
the light burns away the street
the peaceful corn salt in the empty night,
among chickens, sparrows and dogs,
the pigeons limping easily on the roof,
the cat sticking his limbs through the sewer
his claws agape, naked
pondering

he goes to sleep and wakes up
he plays dead, hanging . .
rain melts
and hail fans on the wind

the thistles, when they get old

nearly everything gets in
and then we close up

the flowers are hidden lately

(83)

every day afterwards I sat at the table with her
and said the same thing

no, I don't need any help
I can get the food by myself
or I'll wait, I
was never hungry, for food

I never dreamed, that moment

on my birthday she bakes a cake
I wish I could do one for her

(84)

M o t h e r s

(85) Very careful the
children over their shoulders
 (as if stifling
 after all
 close up
 afraid or blind
facing the back
up and down steps
and in and out always
shirts
as if they were always pregnant
I envy your clean knees

x

(86) Their bible is a dictionary
nominalist
desert of words
for there is a time and a place
and the simile of religion
vanishes in the streets
I pass the church 7 o'clock, she said
the bus

The Publisher wishes to thank
the following
who are among *Jargon's* patrons

JAMES BROUGHTON, STINSON BEACH
MR & MRS ISRAEL EIGNER, SWAMPSCOTT
R. G. EVERSON, MONTREAL
LAWRENCE FERLINGHETTI, CITY LIGHTS BOOKSHOP, SAN FRANCISCO
B. H. FRIEDMAN, NEW YORK
MR & MRS PHILIP HANES, WINSTON-SALEM
MARTIN GEISLER, PAPERBOOK GALLERY, NEW YORK
THE HOLLAND-GOLDOWSKY GALLERY, CHICAGO
MARTIN LAST, NEW YORK
JAMES R. LOWELL, CLEVELAND
NAT K. MENDELSON, HOLLYWOOD
JAMES MERRILL, STONINGTON
MR & MRS E. A. NAVARETTA, NEW YORK
WILLIAM M. ROTH, SAN FRANCISCO
MISS FRANCES STELOFF, GOTHAM BOOK MART, NEW YORK
MRS ELIZABETH CATES WALL, SPARTANBURG
DUANE E. WILDER, IRVINE
THEODORE WILENTZ, EIGHTH STREET BOOKSHOP, NEW YORK
MR & MRS GEORGE WITTENBORN, NEW YORK
DOUGLAS WOOLF, LEWISTON

First Edition of 500 by
Heritage Printers, Inc., Charlotte, North Carolina,
September, 1960

Designed & published by
Jonathan Williams, Highlands, North Carolina,
as *Jargon 36*

Jargon's Recent Titles:

•

A Red Carpet for the Sun. Collected Poems (1942-58) of Irving Layton. John Giardi's review in *Saturday Review* had this to say: "Layton is a true poet, a marriage of heaven and hell. All of his crudities are from reality and all are sung to the form of idea burning . . . Let me beg the bright young men to put the book into their pockets and Layton into their minds." \$2.50.

•

The Roman Sonnets of G. G. Belli. *The Antiquarian Bookman* writes: "Jonathan Williams continues to publish the most exciting series of paperback poetry (old and new, reprint and classic) in this country. Latest is Harold Norse's felicitous translation (in modern idiom) of the XIX century Giuseppe Gioachino Belli's notorious Roman Sonnets, with preface by William Carlos Williams and an introduction by Alberto Moravia. The sonnets are of a fantastic transitional period, the subject matter fantastically good or bad according to your bent. Certain to be a top collector's item." \$1.95.

•

The Maximus Poems. Charles Olson's long poem in verse letters complete to date (Part I), of which William Carlos Williams writes: ". . . a major poet with a sweep of understanding of the world, a feeling for other men that staggers me." This edition is published in association with *Corinth Books*, 32 West 8 Street, NYC 11, and may be ordered directly from there. \$1.95.

•

The Empire Falls at Verona. Poems 1956-57 by Jonathan Williams; drawings and collages by Fielding Dawson. To quote Dr W. C. Williams again (and one rejoices in doing so, for the devotion and attention he always displays towards anything and anyone honest in the field): "The whole thing, text and assembly of the pages, had a liberating effect on me that pleased me enormously— it took me out into the country, to the playing fields and headlines of my life from day to day. It had that effect. It also had the effect of a modern picture exhibition by one of the painters, full of light. . . A beautiful book." \$2.50.

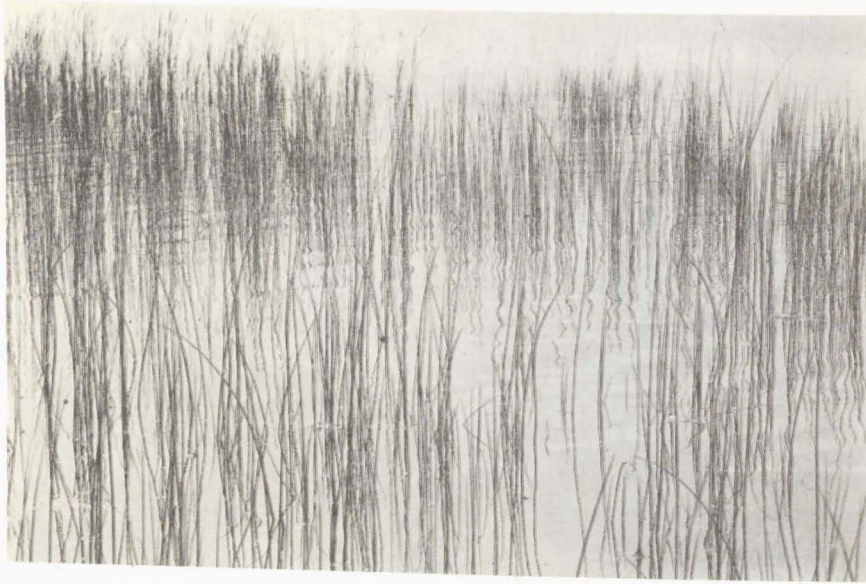
•

The Darkness Surrounds Us. A first book of poems by Gilbert Sorrentino, who has been the editor of *Neon* magazine. Sorrentino is in the tradition of Zukofsky and Creeley, a poet concerned with the domestic and the 'ordinary,' which he consistently lifts with his finesse and good craft. A note by Joel Oppenheimer, and a collage and drawing by Fielding Dawson. \$1.50.

•

Amen/Huzza/Selah. This is part (a) of Poems 1953-55 by Jonathan Williams, consisting of High Coups, Blues and Southern-Fried Dada. A Preface (z) by Louis Zukofsky, and a Spectre (Visionary) by Wm Blake. \$1.95.

ON MY EYES



LARRY
EIGNER

HARRY
CALLAHAN