

# Là-Bas

# 1

Donc le poète est vraiment voleur de feu.  
Il est chargé de l'humanité, des animaux même;  
il devra faire sentir, palper, écouter ses inventions;  
si ce qu'il rapporte de là-bas a forme, il donne forme;  
si c'est informe, il donne de l'informe. Trouver une langue.



# Là-Bas Statement



Dear Fellow Poets,

This is the first issue of LÀ-BAS, a newsletter of experimental poetry and poetics.

LÀ-BAS is sent free to poets who in their poetry have shown an interest in a poetry which (as Harold Norse in a letter to Là-Bas recently described) is "not poured into moulds," and whose poetry has reflected a valuing of the poetic process over artifact.

Certainly LÀ-BAS is not entirely a new idea: the great mimeo-magazines such as O-9, C, The Floating Bear, the Nice Series, Open Space and The World have all in the past supported similar principles. But there is always a need for such publications to remind us that poetry is a force as much as a form. And, currently--while there are many "little" magazines publishing exciting poetry--there are very few publications intrinsically involved with the necessary interchange between the individual poet and the poetry community at large.

Moreover, LÀ-BAS is something new, one hopes, not merely a new version of an old idea. LÀ-BAS prints not only new poetry, but revisions and reactions (response to poetry, theory, news of interest to poets--whatever). And, most importantly, because it is a poets' publication, not a publishers', LÀ-BAS seeks new ideas and suggestions for its format. Like the poetry it publishes, LÀ-BAS will not be poured into moulds, but hopefully will serve poets to keep in touch with one another and to keep abreast of exciting new poetry and theory.

Please help support what I obviously believe is a vital publication.

Douglas Messerli

Là-Bas, Box 509, Hollywood Station, College Park, Md., 20740

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# new poetry



Brian Swann  
Paul Metcalf  
Ron Loewensohn  
Walter Lowenfels  
Guy R. Beiring  
Tom Weatherly



MONDAY

It was almost too apt--  
on the empty pier

                  turning  
to see the moon full-swollen  
a knife wind coming out of it so you  
                  moved behind me  
to look over my shoulder at

                  Liberty  
                          at the bridge  
                          stringing its looped galaxy  
                  across the mouth

I parried the wind but the moon  
                          reached you

Inside  
      rivers broke  
          night flowed

The agitation on the water smashed the light  
like the glass on the pier  
that almost cut into your sole  
stumbling  
where the wood buckled

-brian swann

I CLASP I CLASP

in the night worms fly  
they have gnawed through the stars  
with mouths of brightness

they have brought their mandibles down  
on the roof of this house  
their jaws grip my head like forceps

i have tried sending you on the wall a shadow  
you have twisted off its arms  
it panics right into the worms

that book you must have read at least twice  
i cheer on the worms but they  
balk at the book

i clasp my hands on top of my head  
no hands no top of head  
i clasp i clasp

-brian swann



PURPLE SEQUENCE

(i)

a moon has thrown a circle  
over the window-grille

inside plants stir  
a child stops and looks out

the moon closes  
the child stays still

it is the royal depth of the darkness  
holds him now

(ii)

in the cellar the cat  
has knocked down a jar

thunder starts up the boiler  
blackberry paws land on the earth floor

the window flaps a cloud  
looks in through the opening

rain and prints flow  
to the mouths of ghosts

-brian swann

YELLOW SEQUENCE

(i)

the child cannot link  
petal and plate

mustard all the way  
to cathedral doors

yellow soaked into the wood  
gingerbread gothic carvings

the martyrs cluster on his plate  
he pops their hot heads

into his mouth  
he still cannot link

petal and plate

(ii)

it is clarity tinted  
not color

clarity stopping the eye  
from being totally absorbed

stops it disappearing  
gives it something to bite on

(iii)

it is the sounding board  
for all clear voices

it is all voices clearing the earth  
in its nimbus is all rain

the child's hope climbs its ladder  
it sends down angels to stone pillows

it is a gift without excess

-brian swann

INFRARED

your furry tongue,  
your lip, in furled fury

not what you say,  
but what is inferred

-Paul Metcalf

NONPAREIL PASTORALE

milk-white steed  
in the milkweed seed,

nigger in the saddle  
fondling his worm,

dreaming of an  
amerindian:

cherryskin

&

negritude

-Paul Metcalf

"The sports car..."

The sports car, altho it is  
a sports car, is "pearl"  
grey, and so seems,  
especially in the evening,  
to fade from view, and tho  
it announces itself it does so  
with a modesty that will be remarked  
upon--not a conspicuous consumption  
but an ostentatious discreetness, its  
"purr" allowing its hearers to infer  
a power that doesn't lurk but con-  
trols itself, or is controlled.

When are we going to have some vulpine loungings and  
lopings            pounce and rend            and why not clematis  
spilling into the window and crowding the margins, lupines  
and rhododendrons,            succulents even, and arias  
complete with swordfights in a stinking Florentine alley  
at four a.m. over a woman or a treaty or a sacred calabash  
spat into on the altar at Santa            Why not a sun  
beating you over the head like the shinbone of an antelope  
Why not do a hundred miles an hour thru southwestern Utah with  
Wagner coming fullblast over the radio and the blackening  
sky doing its best to look like the whole Pacific Ocean  
as it boils up against the cliffs off Point Lobos            Why not  
lie on your back            in a canyon in Colorado            drinking  
up the sunlight as it fills up the cup of a small low yellow  
flower            and then turn to notice it's spilling thru the meti-  
culous craftsmanship of spiderwebs--filament filament filament  
thrown out from twig to twig thru which you see it            bouncing  
off the granite walls of the Continental Divide            or your face  
like a ferret, sharp-toothed to get the meat you need, crouched  
beside a tarn in the Lake District, or lying in a hammock  
in Yucatan            Why not invoke the name of America, where  
we live trying to find terms            for all that space  
inside ourselves--cylinder volumes and valve clearances,  
helixes and crankshafts of space winding out of our memory  
of what we are and what inhabits us as we dwell here  
coming to the term of this moment            Coyote, columbine,  
the house in the Berkshires, the rent-controlled apartment on  
the upper West Side            Remington, Aurora, McAllister Pen, North  
Oakland            trying to walk that line between getting ourselves  
dunked in the grease that's scraped off the grill with a spatula  
in a downtown hamburger place at closing time and not letting  
ourselves get so encrusted with it that we can't hike  
on the Pt. Reyes Seashore on the weekend or write poems that fail  
to see the primitive lurking            in the hands            that grip the wheel

Why don't we step on the gas

-Ron Loewinsohn

OVINGDEAN CHURCH (for Lee & Judy Harwood)

The photograph  
--if there had been  
a photograph, stopping  
the motion of the trees--would  
have shown three stone crosses and  
the churchyard wall, made of  
flint set in mortar, from  
Norman times and still  
standing, above that,  
two trees and a thick branch  
from a third jutting in from  
the right, beyond them,  
the green line of a hill and  
above that a single star  
in a grey sky.

-Ron Loewinsohn

## MONT BLANC

Projected on the wall it's just a mountain  
in a postcard, Mount White or Mount Blank,  
2 ft by 3 ft, the sky a milky blue and the snow  
on its sides the same color as the wall.

We drove thru its guts and when we got  
to the middle of the tunnel we were informed  
that we'd got to the middle of the tunnel in two  
languages, midi du tunnel, mezzo di galleria,

and we came into Italy the way you dip into a pool  
when the water is a lot hotter than the air,  
first our feet (especially the one on the gas)  
and then our knees, thighs and genitals felt warmer

and then the tips of our noses all the way to  
the backs of our heads and shoulders and then  
we were there, expecting the tunnel to start  
tasting like tomato sauce and the money to be prettier,

forgetting all those tons of white mountain on top  
of us. In the viewfinder it was a mountain  
in a viewfinder, the light coming off it being  
metered thru the lens a few kilometers out of Chamonix

with the chorus arriving in cars with German plates  
pulled over to the side of the road like us and  
strapping on their cameras and trudging up  
the hill to take the same picture I was taking.

My sons, who have never seen it, looked at me  
blankly when I said "It's just a postcard," dis-  
appointed, the tip of my nose and my cheeks in  
Oakland and the back of my head in Chamonix

where I had looked up at its mass, its subject  
mountains piling their unearthly forms  
around it, its frozen floods and unfathomable  
deeps made commodious by anthologies

where it was a mountain made of words, the awful  
doubt taught us by the mysterious tongue of the  
wilderness was a "doubt filling one with awe" that  
never got past the bottom of the page.

The mountain never made it thru the words,  
it dwells apart in a tranquility that is

[continued

MONT BLANC continued]

its power, remote, serene and inaccessible,  
a vast delicate white weight. We look,

we climb, we taste, we tunnel, we project  
our longing on that screen above Chamonix,  
we get into its guts as it gets into ours, and we end  
up in a dark room, looking at the wall.

-Ron Loewinsohn

A MAGIC SET FOR WILLIE

Tonight I went to get  
my son a magic set

in a huge place that was (comparatively)  
empty, there was so much more  
space than people. They were out

of magic sets for him  
and I bought (instead) three roles of film

after looking at some albums  
we could put our pictures in.

All this time the bread was rising  
under a green cloth in the oven.

Earlier today I met a woman  
who told me he has a node  
or nodule on his vocal folds

which I'd always thought were cords  
and always spell chords

causing him to speak with a strained  
"breathy" sound. With the proper exercises  
he can learn to relax when he talks,

relax when he breathes. When he does the node  
will disappear. Tomorrow morning we  
will leave for Arkansas and take

lots of pictures. In forty-five minutes  
we will turn the oven on and bake  
the bread.

-Ron Loewinsohn



BE POLITE TO THE GRASS  
LETTER TO MY TWELVE GRANDCHILDREN

Don't cheat the linen closet  
Don't lie to the dishwasher  
Don't swear at face towels  
Always tell the hot water faucet the truth  
Remember it's simpler to begin at the end  
Acknowledge that the toaster is supreme  
Above all, don't poke fun at the refrigerator  
Pray for the curtains that they may survive in the hereafter  
And you will live happily until all the tablespoons unite

\*\*\*

Mothers have too many curlers  
Fathers have too many razors  
Only the dog has enough toes  
Only the cat has enough smiles.

\*\*\*

In the beginning was Africa  
And then came the word

\*\*\*

If blueberries are too squashy for your teeth try billiard balls  
When a mosquito bites you don't scratch, apply mustard plaster.

\*\*\*

Be polite to the grass, it never walks on you  
Don't speak to trees who don't smile first  
When talking to grown-ups, remember they can't help it  
If your shoes worry you take off your feet  
When the garbage bites you don't complain, bite back  
If Tuesdays bore you try Fridays with scrambled eggs.

-Walter Lowenfels

HOURLASS FRAGMENTS

have long stilled

have switched

over 1 towered figure

near movieboxhouse :

quartermoon saddle

owwwwwwwl priest called

the silver-spooned boys

closebe-

hind.

give chin

give rest & el bow

look shit el do ra do smoke.

-Guy R. Beining

HOURLASS FRAGMENTS

in  
-----  
over \_\_\_\_\_ on  
t-h-r-u  
carstrucksbikesfeet w/form  
& shadows & echoes & blasts of fume.  
wheels spiked green  
cutting into space  
a glade sauses uP  
from shriveled garbage  
    & back in lugs  
    small Orange glObes  
    to explode  
    huge shOOts  
sun powders in \_\_\_\_\_ over,  
    uneatable slashes/shafts////////

-Guy R. Beining

HOURLASS FRAGMENTS

bottles of heron light  
bones in spine of leaves  
crunches silence. moon  
in mirrors off of  
windows & cement head  
/ the barge/ brigs of  
iron metal  
no scope for the savage head.  
(pastry maid enjoys  
dried shriveled raisin head )  
\*\*\*\*\* thin glass nose of blood  
in spring message  
thru veined forests.  
ah, sweet deadly trickle  
in back of head.

-Guy R. Beining

HOURLASS FRAGMENTS

corNicOpia - - - fetching pails

of light §.

elfgreen voice       Opens

slow box of spring.

murderphilia    an om owns

spOOn

into eye gushy water-

melOn

tender teeth beg in\*

.....  
.....  
.....

to bunch up fists

into juice.

-Guy R. Beining

to john wieners

these men i've kissed  
and wrestled love from,  
satisfied the spirit  
    of the act,  
but not the drama of  
weighing down weight  
:the tension of fucking  
springs to.

-Tom Weatherly

c 1971 Tom Weatherly  
Thumbprint Philadelphia: Telegraph Books

# RE: **Vision**s



~~Harold Norse~~

~~Harold Norse~~

~~Harold Norse~~

Harold Norse



~~Larry Eigner~~

~~Larry Eigner~~

~~Larry Eigner~~

Larry Eigner





## THE SECRET COLLECTION

In the National Museum of Naples  
on this hot afternoon  
lamps, braziers, jugs, caskets,  
kitchenware--ancient food, even!  
Stony ancient food, preserved  
from the buried city of Pompeii,  
fixed in cold lava, a world  
of naked pleasure: sexy tripods  
holding basins or braziers--one  
mounted on marble, goat-legs forming  
three ithyphallic young Pans  
with thick tilted erections  
while dark young men  
languidly browse among such artifacts  
and stroke bronze asses, tweak the cocks,  
joking, touching their past  
as they touch their own genitals  
in sensual recognition  
and soft delight  
as if the Church and  
two millennia hadn't happened.

(La Raccolta Pornografica is the secret pornographic collection of the Museum, so-called because it houses the erotica of ancient Pompeii and Herculaneum, from which the bronze tripod was liberated, by Alexandre Dumas père, I believe, who became curator under Garibaldi in 1860, and to whom we probably owe its open display in one of the galleries, although I cannot vouch for the accuracy of my scholarship since changes of moral climate have constantly affected this collection's accessibility. During the Fascist era, for example, it was made off limits to the public.)

-Harold Norse

Dec. 18 71

birds

tree standing

hair

snowstorm

whiter

whiter

white

white

thickness

how far

\$Just now in copying first script, ts, I've added lines  
7 and 8

\$\$Original version appeared in BROWN SWEATER FREE POETS,  
November 72, Eugene, Oregon.

-Larry Eigner

June 27-28 72  
-July 10-11

how apparent, cloudy  
  
big ideals  
  
the worth  
  
something then  
  
what the  
  
madness  
  
and blood  
  
the warmth of families  
  
is earth                      held home  
  
someone far away  
  
a stretch  
  
within walls  
  
sky rain sun  
  
by the sea  
  
cossacks  
  
down the steps  
  
silence  
  
this side

\$First draft in a letter June 27th:

What the // big ideals?? // earth //  
something. // how much // and all along //  
madness // and blood // how much //  
of a house held // earth within walls

"how much" changed to "the warmth of families" July  
9 and top line added the 10th--at first I thought,  
"how transparent." Last two lines added July 11, and  
the lacuna in line 8.

There's been the movies Nicholas and Alexandra and  
Potemkin

\$\$Original version in Things Stirring Together or Far  
Away (Black Sparrow Press, Los Angeles, 1974).

July 5 72

the grass grows

the grass cut

motor

from the ground

fuel burnt

a long way

solidity of the air

birds sound

rain

the trees

\$Last three lines changed July 12. On the 11th I  
had, in my head,  
birds// rain// their  
own business// the  
trees

after

birds//  
their own business//  
rain// the trees

At first this morning I just thought of altering  
heedless birds to oblivious birds.

-Larry Eigner

August 10-12 72

how much a squirrel is  
in the road knocked dead  
the same generations they  
going around the wires

up the pole  
down the tree

not leaves  
call  
the  
patrol wagon

after how little blood  
from far away slow

an action of your mind  
is to take your time

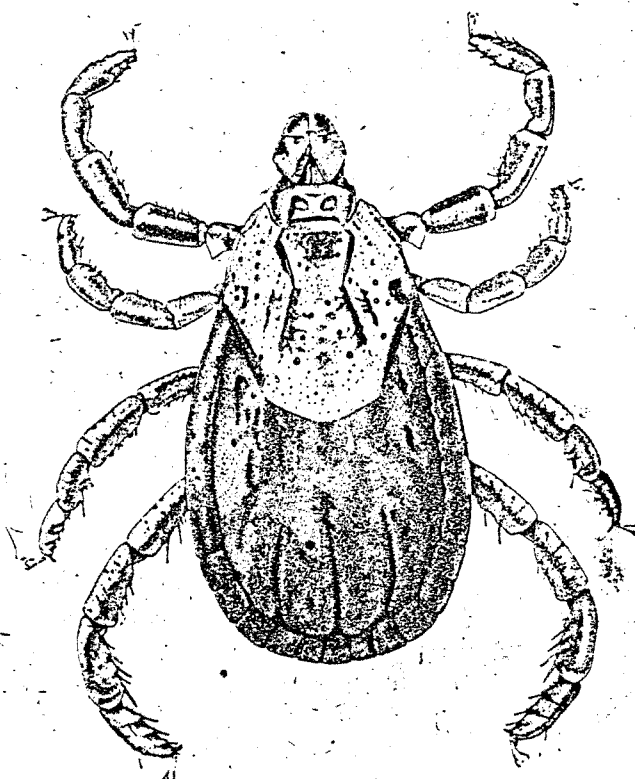
when does the sun come out  
or it's dark back in the woods

\$Revised some from Aug.11 penciling  
in notebk A

\$\$Original version published in SPARROW  
#13 (October 1973, Los Angeles)

-Larry Eigner





## REACTIONS

Letters of support and/or interest in Là-Bas were received from Theodore Enslin, Phillip Lopate, Gene Fowler, Edouard Roditi, Don Skiles, Ruth Krauss, Carter Ratcliff, George Oppen, Paul Mariah, Nathaniel Tarn and Richard Kostelanetz.

In response to the Là-Bas invitation, Amiri Baraka sends a copy of his HARD FACTS, which calls for a poetry "that shows us our lives and gives us the responsibility for mobilizing them around life and revolution rather than drifting impotently in support of death and bourgeois rule."

Larry Eigner writes of his revisions: "Revision is, like writing, more or less lucky, a windfall, and is sooner or later--in the last 15 yrs more and more--instantaneous with me. A poem, always occasional (occasioned by something that has more and more been a finding of what things might go together, be integrated, and how important or less important a thing is (at moments)) is an assessing, assaying, evaluating.... There's trying too hard and (at least at first, it must be) not hard enough. If you're willing enough to stop at any point, a poem sometimes goes on unexpectedly, in say a coda, you find you're able to extend it, and pretty effortlessly, like taking a turn into a further street during a walk or looking down a sidestreet or noticing something to right or left. Though often enough a poem seems too slight or scant (always more or less). Once 3 yrs ago after ten or half a dozen words I got stuck, couldn't continue until after 30 minutes or so I thought of putting 3 words on two lines instead of three lines or maybe it was stanzas: I'd over-emphasized the words, i.e. things, got hung up on--or you could say rather fanatic about or idolatrous towards them (in big religious terms). A reader of course can revise at will or, if he can, imagine alternate versions, how things might (or for all he knows might have been) differently done. It's a way into the piece on the page if he can't think of anything that seems better or anyway as good, and if he can, the original writer might agree that it's better or as good. A couple of alterations editors (consciously or unconsciously) or printers have made have seemed at least as good, everything being al fresco or ad-libbed, though many more not so."

