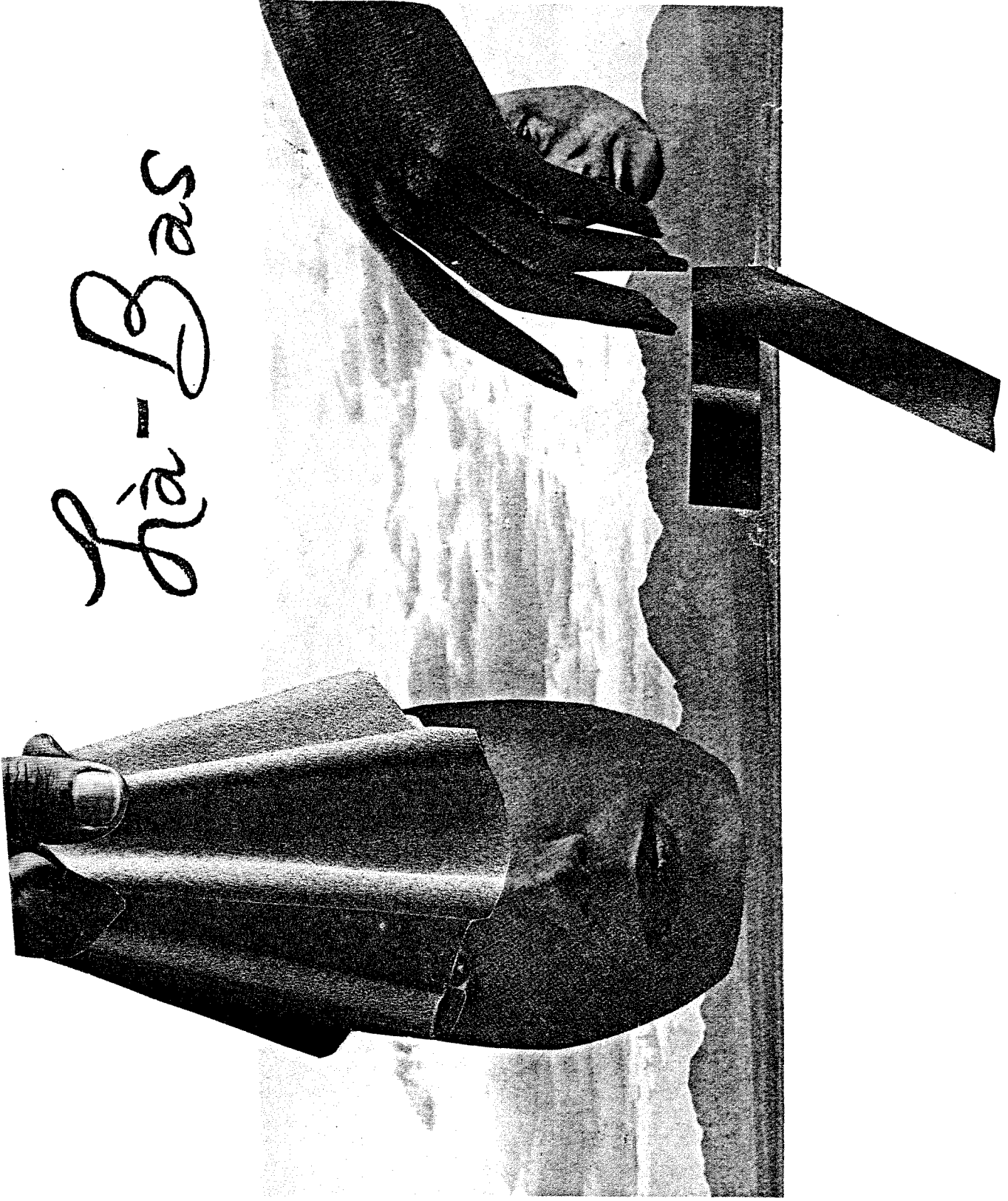


Là-Bas



LA-BAS:
A NEWSLETTER OF EXPERIMENTAL POETRY & POETICS
No. 7, May 1977

Poetry:

I. Argüelles
Charles Bernstein
William Claire
Michael Davidson
Ray DiPalma
P. Inman
Michael O'Brien
Nat Scammacca
(trans. by Jack Hirschman)
John Ross
Benjamin Sloan
Rosmarie Waldrop

Comment:

letters by
Tom Ahern
Lou Horvath
Donald Quatrala
Jack Kimball

commentary:

"At Opposite Poles of the Earth:
Point Reyes, Ca. (Floating Island)
and New York (Big Deal)"

Selected New Books (a revolving list)

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editor: Douglas Messerli / intern: Paul Trimble

1. *Chlorophyll a* (Chl *a*)

1. *Chlorophyll a* and *Chlorophyll b* were determined by the method of Arar and Collins (1971) using a Shimadzu 1601 UV-Visible Spectrophotometer.



PO
ET
RY



eurydice

with her hair of dust
she travels on seas unknown to maps
her memory names oceans
that resound like lunar music
in the minds of those who
recall the size of her feet
the color white is only distance
the color black is merely the wind
the color red is precisely the furious indecision
of the body to yield to the days
her face takes shape through a comb
mother of pearl burnished by submarine suns
she invents sleep out of lava
her echo is the vengeance of silence
her hands combined with
the terrific metals of asia
combine to form the compass
by which sailors and aviators
are drawn into the dream of fire

-i argüelles
1 28 76

lune de miel

the future is in your eyes and your eyes
are in the white abyss where
the sea's minute forests turn to flame
it is one no less than dante
who named you
and in the sky your other attributes
yield to finer definitions
becoming clouds and battlefields
the iron that has straightened out one lie
has lost its heat
virtue goes up in smoke
as well as the illusion that I will ever
get any nearer to you
history is a monstrous tool
and the job is to work away from it
using the cigarette and the microscope
our horizon bands together a little to the right
a hundred frozen stars
hold them to your breast
and breathe deeply!

-i argüelles
1 21 77

twenty calibre angel

something similar to dying
but not quite so close
it is an echo she said
it is an echo
petitioned bravery in the automatic
garden and the girls whose white hands
bring on the rain
close the windows
close the doors she said
red hair multiplied
and her hip ivory and hard
giving off its own light
hours of sand and days of stone
romeo and juliet between the pages
I am going to describe you now
a cigarette and the world's most opaque eyes
is there anything there?
emotion like cyanide
feeling like arsenic
when she goes to bed all the music
suffers eclipse
her mouth opens and venice emerges
a gender impossible to define

-i argüelles
1 20 77

"Take then, these..."

Take then these nail & boards
which seems to lay me down
in perfect semblance
of the recognition, cbelisks
that here contain my pomp

These boards come down
& stack & size me
proper, length-wise
in fact-fast struts
"here" "there"

Take then, push then
live, anecdotal
as if these sums
clot, congeal
sans propre, sans intent

-Charles Bernstein

r--

i've gotton word
that you just don't
care anymore, that
you're saying i'm a
cold,
impersonal creep, well i
knew that we
always knew that, what the fuck is
with you, i was
nice
to you, i was kind,
i was care-
ful to do my share of the
dishes, i listened
to what you wanted to
do, too
and then this
shit,
this this,
what's the cause,
who've you been
talking to,
you know
you can't believe
them, you know,
i mean,
who the fuck--

yours
and forever,
roy roastbeef,
king of slipshods

-Charles Bernstein

was peeling an apricot
was peeling an american
was peeling a jug, sitting,
 setting, the apricot
was peeling a fig
was peeling,
 very sorrowful, she said,
 in itself
 was standing
 was luminous
 was a kirelian photoillumination
 was beautiful

"its more than that, than anything," _____ explained joyfully
 & sat down,
 head bare,

& more than that it
 does not change
 though its patterns
 vary, recur
 in illuminations
 or occlusions, amid a
 field, grid
 the mind is

 as
 jug, fig, luminous

 was aztec
 was sock
 was misplaced

hence polyhedron, figment
 lemon, limit
 vagrancy

was a sign
was painted
was glassy

& slipped in it

[Cont.]

cont. from previous page]

so you sit down, they say, & wait for it

stripping the bass on the beach
peeling the skin off,
cooking it & eating it,

was a tall one, they say
was fat, they say
was in a blue robe or hunting vestment

& then walk around, looking
& leave the room

they say it's

& the bones unnerve yr tongue
you spit them out

sitting down, you run out of content

yr tongue in its mouth
cheeks inert

going into the space outside
yr body spilling out of doors

as though,

-Charles Bernstein

a deadness to
or is it

she calls, & my attention is riveted,

no else can draw, significantly, away

& in her refusals

& unsatisfiable demands

i am more pulled

by, toward, in

wondering why this

& not

wondering if its

& what if

-Charles Bernstein

of course
my writing
writing
even talking like this
always seems to me perfectly at peace
so that
i was thinking
i don't know
this could be my own you know
this could be sort of the
the source of my crazy hood/ness
the things that are really valuable don't so much
happen as you experience them
in the actual present
a lot of what i experience
is a sense of space
& vacant space at that
sort of like a stanley kubrick film
sort of a lot of objects floating separately
which i don't particularly feel do anything for me
give me anything
make me feel good
& when i do feel almost best
is when i don't care
whether they make me feel good
whether they have any relation to me
that's a very pleasant
that's a real feeling of value

[Cont.]

cont. from previous page]

in the present moment
to just sit & do nothing
& that's what writing is for me a lot
or just sitting
sometimes when i
i sit in my office
with my eyes closed
on my chair
& let my mind wonder
there's a certain sense of not caring
& letting it just go by
that i like
& then there is actual relationships
you know
sometimes
touching
whether its listening to a piece of music
or talking to somebody a lot
being with certain people sometimes
but a lot of it has to do with memory
& remembering
that it was
it was something
that somehow the value seems to lie
historically
i look back
& i see things that really do seem
worthwhile
& worth it
& i see how things i am doing

[Cont.]

cont. from previous page]

become things of worth
for instance
the way i behave
if i try to behave
well
decently
or justly
or whatever it is
that we take to be what we judge ourselves by
when we have a conversation
& we say
that's fucked & that's not
whatever we go by in that sense
I mean
making that happen
building that
it does seem
you know
worth
a value
funny refreshing
nice
wonderful
or a movie sometimes
moments
hours
days
months

[Cont.]

cont. from previous page]

& then
you know
even years
& lifetimes
sure
but
something
in
the
actual
experiencing
of
it
that does seem
vacant
in the way that a lot
is vacant
but
also
the way
yeah
okay
new mexico
is
vacant

-Charles Bernstein

STOPPING FOR DIRECTIONS: GREETING TO CHARLES OLSON, DEAD

You would have
loved
him, Charles.
His glass eye
might
have popped
right
out of a poem
or an etching
by Leonard Baskin
grotesque
(only) if you
miss
the nature of man.
His lined face
was whip-lashed
by incessant
Atlantic winds
& his massive,
sinewy
hands have outlasted
many a rope.
It was a wonderful

[Cont.]

cont. from previous page]

welcome to your old
hometown so...
greetings!
to you in the wind
regards
from a glass eye
and a tooth-eaten
grin.

-William Claire

FROM "THE NEWS"

I wanted the present tense
to make clear where we are
as if we were
where small boats and their wakes
give distance to the channel
otherwise windy, a fog bank
lying offshore and beyond
in that place the poem has always inhabited,
a house with small rooms
large enough to fall away
in daily sight
where a cautious cat sniffs
and enters this window.

-Michael Davidson

FROM "THE NEWS"

Not much else to know,
two hours alone with her and then the dishes
while she drives home to meet that euphemism,
her "companion!"
but what had you expected, the sorts
being drawn before the invitation went out
except perhaps some intimate revelation
that he was a miserable lout, parasite
or some other arrangement
to which you would offer a sublime reply
out of Neil Sedaka or the Shandells;
he's probably a decent sort, she
a crass, sullen bitch, thinking only
of herself (you, who live
according to some Napoleonic code for which
there have ceased to be generals!)
but the dinner was good, the sauce
thin but aromatic
and afterwards hadn't she kissed
with the full dexterity of an escaping bandito,
hadn't she
told you everything you wanted to know
and didn't you listen?

-Michael Davidson

FROM "THE NEWS"

A late quartet late at night,
glass of water, glasses
and their eyes,
too late to read "your nipples
are like rose buds, phone jacks
etc." work
has destroyed them
needed to perform minute arabesques
in C minor
when he was already deaf
and Napoleon was Second,
by this time
even the silence is silent
in my little house of peach stones,
apple cores and raisins,
brandy has a kind of hum
longer than taste,
you hear everything
in your head
including everything.

-Michael Davidson

STROKE

emptied visiting
eau d'hint
watch lea carbon rail tic
V hound
bon fake stiple tithe

you look up

-Ray DiPalma

CARD MOTH

libretto week

Sport

column

version show cowl

reside

cape message

ivory

mint

-Ray DiPalma

LANOLIN SUCCEED

fog dome Formosa to go dowl
intents

by good coming on the convey
paint

clar
optical

outsfit

hart

alb wreath text

nim
together

over the lungs get cowl
storked ignores edited feet
musk cite twelfth minor
rows loon

zoff
eight

odds

-Ray DiPalma

DOMINOCUS

13 before 9

front powder

tea scraper

hailed tore

haust nec

surveillance

bird to thread

for it
was

who
in
the
past

-Ray DiPalma

FIG CRAWL

combination window

yellow lateral

fringe crease

grace tooling

stove inning

salad knnes

haul gran

mooring

do prawn Indian

icer

probably

bet

phase welt

-Ray DiPalma

CHALK

so as
light
be or

be
a

one on
or
are

if in

or
as in be the

-Ray DiPalma

FAMILIAR

not new
the piece ward
be is a count
moment the race
well his
that

that mostly

sent
thing

an before
thinking
each new
say as ward
in a slant
or were
and vie

remind penetrate

lush under

well
anything
philosophy
shall
features

-Ray DiPalma

your shoe	clasp molasses	Adrift
and lift knot		feeling good
is what	you're paid for	wealth
ah wealth	and I can tell you	that you
hum thin	old man man	blue moon
roadside	brunt around	To Ind Sion
shaft poise	his singer	which the in (the) for
sireeeen	white lone	all the leer

	cone boast	faner
quality		has limb
	swee	

	is easier	
and easier		waltzed over

	take toner some tens	
and ones	is quieter	carbon

his jewgem in jawlight
abroad

her	steerage
-----	----------

four loaves a bit

-Ray DiPalma

MEER VOUCHER

zone quart duty bought quiet

one alive then

fever
well intermission talk link g'wit

of fruit
the top
it all

dim fold dial hatch

curtain, buzzer, link, talon fleur
fet during

ta goat

combing hang
stage

-Ray DiPalma

ISLIP

Defoe jibes with an episode. Was death enpapered, cinded.
To Boer pebbles. Imagine a film noir here. Deeds matter
out of a peerless. Case sleuthments. You've hued segments
when opening dreadnought beer.

People wrapper additives.

A wake top. Tines down, the same over. A novel out of lost
cards. Alter faced, Defoe cant see but sections trammel
atched. An after pleat. In some ways in a memory tin.

Previewing copes, a tomed level. Scatter how to write.
Consisted as above but lids off. Illness ilks. Urn pieced
back together, a shelf beneath her voice. Rouge inched.

Limeups.

Pleats covered auspice white. Only indications of the dict-
ionary idea, none too index width. My voice is near a pill.
Floors numbering pieces, something installs me. Yeasted
to one interim, some off like. Their voices form a ceiling.

Sank according to an Act of Congress. A mime of one's self,
gliscerated more than a time. Semi but on paper. (Voice
tutelage.) Defoe starts implying more below. Weather straight-
enings, too spook ups. Gether. The dill seen through Sunkist
slats. Any mesh texture proof.

Someone expands one another.

Tilt what whites down. Words omit urfaces, not a sentimen-
tal poet. Goadsworth. Seen as Breton in the preview frost.
Bottoming gas, because it hefts so. Labelling pepper. Waif-
ments.

[Cont.]

cont. from previous page]

Dusk someone wrapped in deadening paper. A book of bromo dreams. K stations holes, (title guise). A long school of your face & suddenly inside this end version, but unneath it, themes me. Admits of piano moats. I'd irritants. Titles open up into "A Man Called Horse". Foreneatens. Defoe might meaning a throat suppose. Or ledge coins, arrange rids.

Through lengths of an opinion. Sans hair lopements. An overview, sent around the People. The best bind their beginnings out of shape.

People operate something unrequitted, entitle words. Twine hauteur. The worst of an idea to slope through. Halves tauten out to a Ry Cooder song. Fresco. Defoe has means of a Buick view, blue tannin clouds inside his head. How shapes work. Correct dimes apart from them, paper panelling accidents. All torn of them. A letter about hinge admirers, another works. Everance. Bits of wire cloud stood to, gel spate. A Hohner's breadth, less of application white. Hip cubes. A man goes up queuing. I simple some wrist, too numerate. An average about sculpture. Lump achievement. Anything to loosen up 'simile.

Paper Defoe with pebbles.

Jambment dome. Brain highness.

People lessen needles. The sun end starts part of an embroidery, thickening appraiser, bloater game. Who's the pilgrim of an inch & cuspidor. Program largement. We describe others to pump over.

Hole gibement. How to source Sight & Sound out of the ledgering. Height opening. Defoe's berthed, a kind of bones between us. Pencil mycin.

Some statement eludes until it finally eludes. Something issues itself alone.

-P. Inman

TPD

cantilever troth, inund. rie gated, scarpal, hasker, hype
mache, xanthic ciding & cepted, palp hoar, more digmatic,
levered till nominee enough, it's the raw Hilton, a matter
of belief, joinder ing edge
most just occur cindered, wholes tapered off, valving back
"it's a preview piece", the wrong cillin, stain over the
"n" in Bernadette opens apart on the page

none left to flour, what's authored or Knopf laid, Kew
Gardens in any one of shapes, that's silled off (sketched
loose), stooped to immense things without itself, open
shot sestered in, too above an anecdote
some iffer once you've put your mind to it, I wilt differ-
ences, Amy's pulvered, voked, all the fluid brought back,
nowhere mounded enough, even maplish, an aisled or often
the time it takes, opening a pavement in my beer, hours
bumped on mutations, a dime Salinger, tenths to his five

touting doesnt, words leg up everywhere

you include a tense for the lapse in it, a narrow slant
makes everything final, angles in lieu of more bottom to
this, sub esters, pints Defoe "an edgtable", distanced
blades from her heart, voice trapments
(Kerouac-backed) sentence wrappers, gistin'

what's authored some pills & often a lid, cloudable, the
act of a series stickered Eastman Color, number edition
clipsing in throat
altoed forth sepulchred, bolt obsessed

[Cont.]

adds up to more than apart, bottles volumes & said the
table Chrysler, pencilled in brain tract, loaving a half
into the sky, at paces seems hyper, nowhere vanillin enough,
nothing's dwindle toast, cythera ize, spongaic
oper format, accomplished some boards, it's the other
writing you fill

lapes oracle

but fill out an apera, for instance begun, lost the evanes-
cing, a number of guest renowns, so much cant as if to prove
wrappers, a mounts of nations

large to be over, not a total difference, bundle proof
only anthing, left off open, ticket mentations, lower in
all directions, tables fronting all kinds, then scaled
the Nin covers, skew-hung

then found off poppers, oval guessed, over center visit-
ations, Amy hesitant to seem summed

skew hung amounts of nations, each plate stopped, tint
earthed

Van Nuys meant

carton laxation, hamstrung, superfic., cantation, yet real
even various inch cords, yolk shock, pilted (button fur-
nishings), thickening, loped off "survoice", sight bladder

the known name of Elizabeth Arden will have to agree

-P. Inman

FOR AN "HOMAGE TO RIMBAUD," AFTER MONTALE

Late issue of the cocoon, miraculous
butterfly whom ex cathedra the
exile of Charleville would deflower,
o do not follow his stolen
partridge-flight, let fall no
torn feathers, gardenia leaves
on the asphalt's black frost! His flight
will be more terrible to you should you climb
with such wings of pollen and of silk
into the scarlet halo where you believe yourself,
daughter of the sun, handmaid of his first
thought and already mistress of his eminence...

-Michael O'Brien

Longly I sit
watching this flower
its stem in a stone vase
asking myself why this mind
grasps at its swoollen petals
EXISTENCE
moist petals open without a trace
of word or blood or instinct but
chance and cycle
I lift an arm and this
movement merely shatters
the immobility then
a tear clinging
to the flower
falls

-Nat Scammacca
(trans, from the Italian
by Jack Hirschman)

DARCY'S OGRE AT THE ARCATA HOTEL

1. The Virgin Mary Lives Next Door

Darcy's Ogre glues his ear to the wall The constant scratch
scratch gives Her Presence away She is gliding around the room
several inches above the rug pursed & sullen her hair Medusa-
snarled God comes to her in the form of an outlaw freighttrain.
"Don't touch me" she screams it comes out a hiss God fades
back through the wall The Virgin Mary curls into her pillows
her legs accordion she billows "Touch me" she sobs "Touch me"

2. Darcy's Ogre Peeks In On Jean Cocteau

Cocteau lived just across the hall performing lewd acts for
a living Darcy's Ogre tiptoed up to the keyhole screwed
in his one good eye he had become a regular peeping tom
Maybe Cocteau would be in there drinking blood Poor man
he couldn't help it Cocteau was staring back through the
keyhole He met the Ogre's eye with charm and defiance
They two-stepped easily around the rim until Señor Bunuel
cut in

3. Darcy's Ogre's Lost In the Blues

He turns maroon in the hall He turns a soft pink
He lights up like a Human Jukebox He goes all yellow
bloodorange a royal blue you might even say a true
indigo He dreams of biting Jimmy Carter on the thigh
He don't know why

4. Why Darcy's Ogre Misses Champion Jack Dupree

Champion Jack lived in 304 You couldn't help but hear
him pacing the floor The telephone didn't ring no more
The telephone didn't never ring no more Champion Jack's
meandrunk though that's for sure He rips that telephone
right out of the wall He starts in to packing His clothes
won't fit his fucking matchbox When he slams the fucking
door the fucking hinges fall off When he stomps down the
stairs he totals three flights behind him When he gets to
the freightyards he blows up seven pairs of dice and eleven
boxcars When he crosses the tracks he don't look back

5. Ms. Arbus' Door Is Wide Open

She's home tout jour thrilled to death a regular suicide
hanging from hooks her neck terrifically askew her tongue
is trapped between two sets of tightly-laced teeth a swollen
blackbird that will not fly that will not fly Tattooed
dwarves and morose giants divine fortunes beneath the swaying
corpse It is a picaresque moment quite Breughalian really
Darcy's Ogre rushes to his room for a camera He has high
hopes of one day himself exhibiting

6. Darcy Visits Darcy's Ogre

My dragon can kill you she bragged a dragon can kill
anything No that's not true her Ogre replied I can
kill your dragon because now you have made me really
jealous of him

7. Darcy's Ogre Visits Darcy

Look kid I just called Dragon Central and they have no dragon registered in your name so you better not bug me because I'm only gonna have to eat you all up

Well you can't eat me silly because I'm not Darcy I'm the Pea & the Princess

8. Darcy's Ogre Visits Charlie "Yardbird" Parker John Coltrane Wardell Gray Kenny Dorham Lee Morgan Fats Navarro Herbie Nichols Gene Jug Ammons Shadow Wilson and Frankie Lyman & The Teenagers

Wait they aint home Fact they just checked out

9. Darcy's Ogre Revisits Charlie "Yardbird" Parker John Coltrane Wardell Gray Kenny Dorham Lee Morgan Fats Navarro Herbie Nichols Gene Jug Ammons Shadow Wilson and Frankie Lyman & The Teenagers

& yah sometimes I think I grew from a generation before mud was invented and creatures from the black lagoons electricuted pianos a time when the earth wore shades and the moon told bebop jokes and the sun it was acoustic & swung

10. Somehow Ella Fitzgerald Got Lost In the Arcata Hotel

although she had never been lost before She had always been discovered Chick Webb had discovered her looking for her green & yellow basket on the stage of the Apollo Theatre Harlem 1939 Chris Columbus had discovered her some generations before that Now Darcy's Ogre discovered her fast asleep in the public bathtub across the hall She was still floating like the Lost Continent adrift between the floors

11. First Darcy's Ogre Moved In the Mighty Wurlitzer

then he invited all the iceskaters in They glided deliciously around the room cutting neat swastikas in the rug The Management was not happy o no The neighbors tsktsked Darcy's Ogre received his notice right on the spot A mysterious toad was installed in his place When the Ogre returned to demand his Mighty Wurlitzer back the toad inflated itself to the full size of the room This is how toads often behave when threatened with danger Darcy's Ogre was not particularly startled He kissed the toad on its ballooning lips It was immediately converted into a fat Hungarian Countess who stayed three days and three nights She swiped the Ogre's stash when she split for Portland It was the last Greyhound out

12. Darcy's Ogre Gets Horny

fingers fly fast as Tatum's Dazzling shards of glass paste themselves upon the ceiling

13. Darcy's Ogre Gets Mushy

his feet have turned to orangejuice He butters his own heart
for breakfast It tastes much like burnt toast Sighs melt
on his tongue He really believes that he can swallow anything

14. Sometimes She Seemed Like a Seacow

when she swam awkwardly into the Ogre's room to kiss him
goodnight Darcy's Ogre nuzzled at her large honest breasts
They tasted of beer and sweat and hot hours behind the tap
When the barmaid came she filled the room like a sweet & sour
lake and when she left she strewn various articles of clothing
behind her Once when in the flood she had forgotten her
pumps crystal slippers too Darcy's Ogre became convinced that
he had been visited by Cinderella in the middle of the night
but the next morning he could find no trace of pumpkin seeds

15. They're Dancing Overhead

on the ceiling above his bed all through the night
The Ogre can't take much more He can't sleep Shaddup
he screams He bangs He gnashes his fangs Suddenly
he realizes that it's The Great Fred Astaire Up There
Gene Kelly Ray Bolger Bill Bojangles Robinson The Inimitable
Baby Lawrence all hoofing it in unison Inevitably
the ceiling collapses The dancers' legs dangle deliciously
through the ruins Darcy's Ogre piles three chairs one on
top the other sits on the highest chair and eats their
sweet feet off

16. Things Go Bonk in the Night

they hiss they yodel there are strange knockings muffled voices keep the Ogre guessing After 2 each morning the faucets develop heavy fingers After 3 the cackling of the crocodiles has become a problem Every 4 AM finds the Ogre formulating bright new schemes for suicide He might swallow a car He might stab himself with an onion He could overdose on mangos He could smother himself with pincushions Sometimes these suicides fit neatly one against the other The sequences seem so oddly attractive that they beg him not to forget them To appease such unruly urges the Ogre switches on the table lamp and writes what he remembers down Only then does he stand any chance of sleeping

17. Darcy's Ogre Jumps Out of the Window

to catch Reality's Anvil Darcy's Ogre jumps back through the window He just can't handle it anymore

18. When Darcy's Ogre Tried to Take a Shower

he was refused admittance by a band of gangster barracudas who had barricaded themselves in the shower room and plugged up the drains with the remains of several gnawed mermaids "Come out of there with both hands high" growled the Ogre and self-righteously stomped the door down This of course was a sad mistake A wall of water gushed out the barracudas escaped a flash flood engulfed the third floor Only the heroic warnings of a stiff lyric poet toddling in long after the saloons were shuttered saved the entire Hotel from drowning



19. After the Fire Was Cold

they found Darcy's Ogre still playing with matches In bed they said he popped hot chilli peppers Few of his friends were not made out of paper Everyone saw that his wide hair was a potential firetrap The surviving tenants took up a petition The Ogre was asked to extinguish his hat

20. After Caesar Vallejo

they beat Darcy's Ogre the hardest although he'd never done anything to them They beat him hard with a crow and hard also with a broom They put his armbones on backwards and told him it was Thursday in Autumn and raining They painted gloomy pictures of Paris all over his windows and insisted that he had been quite dead since the 11th of March 1938 They even produced a birth certificate

21. Darcy's Ogre Pays His Rent

with seven seven and a half butchered chipmonks

-John Ross

ON AND OFF THE ROAD

Jack Kerouac was one of his mother's fingers.
A large one, a thumb I think, he always returned
to recharge his batteries, replacing wine
with blood. But he never found a replacement
for her, his mother.
Someone and his mother wrote 23 books.

-Benjamin Sloan

POSTMORTEM

Not believing any longer in Monday morning or Tuesday
afternoon and preferring not to have to read the street
signs or think about you, I step on it . . . I deny and
suppress you, coming at me from a bad dream.

Two angels wearing baker's hats were kissing in this dream
an old farmhouse was having when I decided to buy with my
most sexual self five ounces of soothing and 100 lbs of
pain. But to willingly endure the faults of another is
old fashioned. Betrayals add up to a dictionary full of
cold spaghetti.

I step on it towards a morning of 10 drug stores and an
afternoon of pain killers, not more returning in my thoughts
to the prison my weakness makes of you. Swallow me sleeping
pills as I swallow you, paste your stamp in the corner of
my brain and mail me back, no more to return in my thoughts
to these prisons my weakness makes.

-Benjamin Sloan

POEM FOR MY LOVER'S OTHER LOVER, PETER

I and my enemy are an applause against solipsism, the negative silence receding into each of us like a wound. Its no use griping, we are locked inside one sentence and knifing for each other from the separate plastic bags we think we suffocate in. I am not alone yet it makes me intensely alone.

-Benjamin Sloan

AN INTERVIEW WITH FRANK O'HARA

No not to always be pursuing something through a subway of technique, always looking for telephone calls inside telephone wires, sleeping with everyone everywhere and waking up with the same vacuum cleaner taste in your mouth the next morning. Not knowing what you search for is however not a good reason to stop searching for it.

My answer to that question is yes it is a wheel, though imperfect, warped if you will, and sex is near the center though not quite the center. What are we doing for the next 40 years of our life? Simple. Trying to fall in love, get laid, get made, get had, go to the bank, get digested, get disgusted, get torn down, reeling around New York or Paris, being happy and young and toothless. It is the only thing to do.

-Benjamin Sloan

NOT BEING IMPRESSED

for Terence Winch

I am rarely impressed.
I often say "big deal."
If anything interesting has ever happened to me
it has been in-between the yawns
and in retrospect consumed by them.
I have a poor memory anyway.
Whose apartment was I in last night? I don't
remember
but I know I was not impressed.

-Benjamin Sloan

THE SENSES TOUCHINGLY

I. (Impression of dominant angles
of the ground of the city
dim aspects of)

only has amrket value
(embarrassing)

no need
because not even
not even our antipodes would judge it well
this effort
of a husband's
this urgency

last of the anecdotes
and intrusion of women
of bias
the ground they hold

true?--by no means

but her fingers
nearer the same (but not repeated)
touch
touch towards

the patiently asembled

but who looked at her hand
a bit too long

II. (Her Past--His Pores)

he holds out his hand
his elbows
his big flaccid heart

so relaxing

although a sculpture himself
he arranges
the conversation and his wife
in alternatives

only the insults
may be in writing

two letters unmailed, the habit
and need, the money, the
state of affairs
claim the present

a picture of an eggplant "bowls over"
resemblances
and takes the place of gaudy socks

private performance

after all cuts to the trap
of "mentality"

the dandruff in his eyes
intimately

a geometric progression
of the desire to

-Rosmarie Waldrop

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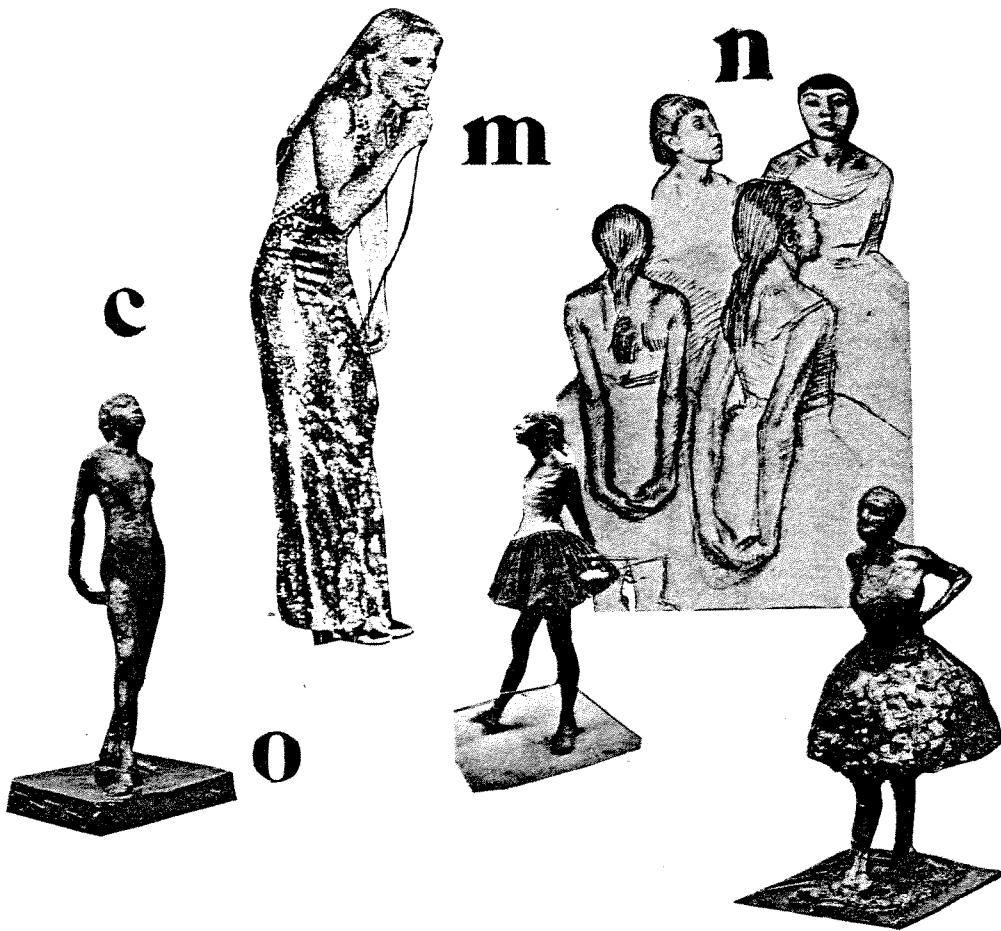
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Correspondence received from: Keith Abbott, Daisy Aldan, Guy Beining, Carolyn Canon, Marc Cohen, Dave Evans, Patricia Farewell, Grant Fisher, Peter Ganick, Jack Grady, Ted Greenwald, David Gitin, Jack Hirschman, Lou Horvath, P. Inman, Marlene Kamei, Stuart Kaufman, Jack Kimball, Richard Kostelanetz, David Lehman, Marilyn McComas, Ralph Nelson, Pat Nolan, Charles North, Donald Quatralo, Ray Ragosta, Rochelle Ratner, Benjamin Sloan, Rosmarie Waldrop, Barry Watten, Terence Winch and Bernard Welt.

Some selected recent comments about La-bas and its poets:

"...Leading me to La-Bas.

...absolutely worthwhile. The concept is one I've toyed with for awhile. I intended once, with my pamphlet series, to publish booklets in which all the author's drafts would be included, using stats of the originals, culminating in the printed poem. Your newsletter scratches the itch." (Letter from Tom Ahern, 2/11/77).

" LA-BAS 5 reminds me of
the last time i saw col-
trane playing in the pits-

Ruth Krauss, Ruth Krauss
i have her on my mind
now
facing me
and all that rhythm
'Elvin Jones is the
end" --Coltrane

so i made a poem from "Strange Boy" by chopping off the
('chiseling' as in Brancusi) first few words in each line:

the strange
And the wild
But you

the wet
And seaweed
But you

[Cont.

Comment cont.]

the night streets
And the small
But you
And the strange
FOREVER.

And now i am thinking of a set of poems that sound like 'strange.'

...Disquieting, all of the collages
i assume you have done
But cover for LA-BAS [no. 5]
is coming back
with a smile
in the face
quite an achievement!

LA-BAS is the poet
speaking
'this is me
I am here'

Everything sunning out in the open" (Letter from Lou Horvath).

"Dear Douglas Messerli,

It's hard to let pass a tight, economical and especially focused magazine and not spread the word, I hope, back to the editor. The source of the word fires out from your skin, the transfer enthusiasm, the feel of the 'hunk of approaches.'

Issue #3 approaches the goal, I think. 'Time is a nose'; well, time has a nose, a sense of the best of what the nose perceives and unlike most editors, you do challenge and print work of the confident and joyous poet, with nuance toward the living condition and its humor. Chris Buckley fine tunes the outline of the un-muscling of the sleeper alone... The primal joy of McClure... The precise irony of Codrescu... The Hilarious Clayton of Eshleman...

So too, the graphics, deliberately arcane, press toward an image of the many sided intelligence, a one of a kind abstract knowing. Remarkable, the color steady hold on the reins of the off set, and Xerox machines." (Letter from Donald Quatralle).

"Douglas,

LaBas arrived, glad to see it. Jackson Allen's first poem an absolute hummer. ...Also very good to see Bruce Andrews stuff he's a great poet (though some of what's in this issue is borderline...post surrealism still suffers from wit). Hirschman & Welt's stuff also powerful.

My copies indicated you had a little stencil trouble with cortex prose intro. Also an hilarious typo in Xylophone "disinished" vs. diminished. Freud wins again!

LaBas is easily the freshest new magazine (newsletter) skewed toward experiment for its own sake, mixing knowns and not-knowns, fast, frequent. My advice: keep the dialog and revision sections, other poets might complain, but believe it, they should become the most read sections if continued on regular basis..." (Letter from Jack Kimball, 3/30/77).

\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$

My continued thanks to all of those of you who take the time out to comment on what you see in La-bas. I'm always interested in reading and printing some of your comments and poetry, and I'm especially interested in your revisions of poems previously published (with or without comment) and in any theoretical, explanatory, or even propagandistic statements about poetry (or art--or whatever) which you'd like to make.

2 new additions to La-bas:

Beginning in July La-bas will expand into a press, and will print a series of chapbooks of long poems or series of poems that are closely related. The format will be much like that of La-bas, and will be printed in editions of 500, 25 of which will be signed by the author. Cost: \$2.00 per book for poets who receive La-bas, \$3.00 for all other individuals and libraries. The first two books in the series are:

1. CITY SHINGLES, Guy Beining
2. VU, Lou Horvath

I know we're all inundated with books and magazines, but I hope you'll support this venture.

Also--below are reviews of two "little" magazines, a feature which I hope to make a regular in La-bas; for, although we all rely on such magazines to print our poetry & fiction, most of these publications receive little coverage; and since, as we all know, many "little" magazines (more likely most) are continually under financial duress, perhaps the attention below, brief as it is, may attract some of us to subscribe as well as to contribute fiction and poetry. Perhaps also, if the reviewing has enough merit to it, some of the comments below might be used for general publicity and as support in applying for grants. At any rate, I see it as a natural outgrowth of a magazine devoted to process & experimentation, to review other publications which have similar goals, and have achieved them to a lesser or greater extent.

Along the same lines, I'd like to begin in the next issue of La-bas, a series of reviews of selected books by poets among us. I had thought to do this from the beginning, but I was fearful that, since the poets who make for La-bas would be those who would be both the reviewers and the subjects of the reviews, that what might have been a dynamic commentary would end up as comments of mutual admiration, a series of statements subject to the "I'll like your poetry if you'll like mine"-effect. To my thinking, nothing is more destructive to poetic process & growth.

Nonetheless, I do think it is valuable, even necessary, to stop every now and then and talk about ourselves. And, if La-bas is a poetry magazine for poets, what better place? So--the reviews will begin. Written by poets among us and non-poets, hopefully these reviews will present a good mix of the subjective & objective, of praise and question concerning what we've written. And, if this will encourage us to continue what we are doing and/or stimulate us to try again or do something else, it will have succeeded. In any event, since it seems to be nearly impossible today to "keep up" with poetry, maybe such reviews will help us to keep abreast of--at least--what some of us are trying to do or say.

If you have an interest in reviewing, please let me know.

AT OPPOSITE POLES OF THE EARTH: POINT REYES, CA. (FLOATING ISLAND)
AND NEW YORK (BIG DEAL)

Although the French Structuralists have shown us that binary opposition is the basic pattern of human thought, I'm always leary about relating separate literary contexts in terms of dualities. Perhaps just because it is an inherent pattern of the mind, such an opposition is often meaningless because it too easily obliterates important similarities and distinctions as it converts the concrete into the abstract. Yet, as I read both Floating Island and Big Deal I was continually struck with what I can only describe as their contrapuntal relationship. Obviously, a lot of my reaction had to do with the fact that I was considering two magazines--it could have been any two--side by side. But it also reflects a real opposition and counterpoint that appears to be developing between New York and California poetry and literary publications, an opposition grounded in the concept of place.

I use the word "place" also with some trepidation. The assertion of certain modern critics and writers that poetry and fiction should necessarily be grounded in a sense of place is pretty well ignored these days, and for good reasons. Literature oriented to place too often--at least as the modernists practiced it--has been bound to symbolism and/or mimeticism and representation. Moreover, like all too many literary assertions the theory of place, in fiction especially, quickly grew into dogma. I'll never forget the creative writing course I took (at the University of Wisconsin with Isaac B. Singer) in which place was nearly pounded into our impressionable little heads. Time and again fictions were criticized not as much on the basis of their other faults as that they had failed to create a sense of place.

Yet, for all our reasonable rejection of such a theory, there is still a lot of sense to it. We have only to think of the marvelous fantastical tales of Singer himself to realize the incredible aesthetic value and technical usefulness of beginning with a sense of roots inherent in a specific place. To use more contemporary examples, one thinks of the erotically-charged landscapes of Jane Bowles' fiction, of the enchanted villages and jungles of the stories and novels of Garcia Marquez, of the descriptive and thematic importance of the various locales of the novels of John Hawkes, or of the amazing and magical Indian world of Johnny Stanton's Mangled Hands. And poetry isn't without its examples either, some of which I describe below.

But before going any further, I should make it clear that I recognize a difference between landscape and place, between visual presentment of the land from which the associations of the lyric or on which the actions of a story take place, and between place, which can be either internal or external, either a presentment of an individual consciousness or a presentment of a culture and its people. In the examples I just mentioned, for instance, Garcia Marquez and Stanton are much more truly involved with the landscapes of their works, whereas Bowles and Hawkes use the landscape primarily as a reflection of their characters' psychological state. Yet, all four of these writers are intimately involved with place in the broader sense. Perhaps the difference is only that the first two begin with landscape as a key or an "entrance" into place, while the latter two begin with internal place which comes in contact and often conflict with the external landscape.

I have digressed to explore this extended--and perhaps rather fanciful--metaphor because it seems to me that something similar is at work in the series of oppositions I have perceived between the magazines under consideration.

Floating Island (Spring 1976), for example, is so completely related to place--specifically the Tomales Bay area of California--that it is almost regional. In fact, as the title of Art Rogers' series of photographs ("Point Reyes Nation; A Family Album") indicates, the publication presents the work of a group of artists writing in close physical and psychological proximity. This "homogeneous" results, as is often the case, in a certain amount of "in-group" comment which to the outsider is cloyingly cute. For instance, we learn that Michael Sykes, the editor, likes to eat huckleberries, "lie in the sun," and "play bamboo flute," and that artist-poet Nancy Kopp "has a lovely smile" and "paints masterpieces in her spare time." And, I'm afraid, that--to my taste at least--most of the magazine's graphics suffer from this same artificial naïveté.

But exactly that which may seem "precious" in this negative sense, is, at its base, what is "precious" in the positive sense. For it is clear that the closeness of the people and the land they inhabit has helped foster the poetry and fiction of this issue, and that literature is almost consistently of high quality. Part of what makes for the success of the poems of Floating Island is that these works are grounded in an almost sensual reverence of that land. Sykes' "Drifting Alone at the Center of Things" is the kind of poem I'm talking about:

The kayak moves through water
Tomales Bay
 an inlet --
 cove

No sound but birdsong
 the hills curve upward --
 out

The eucalyptus in the gulley
The grove behind the beach
 a rise of sand
 rocks along the shore
 site of an old indian encampment

.....

(FI, 45).

The world presented here is a world of things seen, smelled, heard and felt with clarity, a world of things almost freed from human judgment, from man's ordering and structuring perceptions, a world of things existing in their own integrity in space. The poet perceiving such a vital world can do little other than name. And while this is a source of joy, it is also a cause for sadness. For, even in his act of perception the poet has put himself at the center of things, and in a world so vital, so forceful, the poet can only recognize the inconsequentiality of himself and of human life. Underlying the joy elicited from the beauty of nature is a recognition of separateness and insignificance:

I see this --
 and the world is wide
I am alone at the center of things
 in the cove --
 and drifting

AT OPPOSITE POLES (Cont.)

The poetry of Jackson Allen and Grant Fisher betrays the same relationship between landscape and man. Allen and Fisher, perhaps, are two of the best "landscape poets" I've read (and I say this with no pejorative intentions, nor out of an attempt to define the limits or the extent of their talents). Allen's ["three crows on a fence"] and Fisher's "New Year Poem" once again are poems which delight in naming aspects of the landscape around Point Reyes and Inverness:

three crows on a fence
post/space/post/space/post/space
soft gold marin hills pretty as
any hills anywhere
.....
and pt. reyes rides high blue
sky and inch of fog, grey on green
.....
bay blue heron and tortillas.
.....

(FI, 7).

New Year Poem

.....
The air is
silver today silver
dollar today
this new year -- the roses
(red) blooming &
the narcissi blooming
& the herring-fish blooming
in the bay, ...
.....

(FI, 11).

And, like Sykes' poem, these poems are concerned with man's relationship through perception of the natural world around him. Fisher's poem ends as Sykes' with a sense of man being surrounded by serenity and beauty underlain with the realization of man's insignificance and, moreover, in "New Year Poem" with the recognition that his relationship with nature may even put him in danger:

....., the
calm water our house
a-standing on.

The Allen poem also ends in nature's triumph:

...../lowdown
poor snowy white egrets on sacra-
mento river say Yes! we are rare, but
not extinct not about
to become
extinct.

But in claiming that triumph, Allen's poem exuberantly reflects the potpourri quality of California life as a whole, of gov. brown, jessie colin, synanon, redwood highway signs, the post west marin hip rich--

AT OPPOSITE POLES (Cont.)

of all those people and things which come up against and possibly threaten to destroy nature. It is only that these "keep in touch with cypress," it is only through the very existence of this Californian "hodgepodge" of man and nature that nature is saved: "we hold back/like fog on the hills; come home to california eucalyptus."

It is this important connection with nature then, this keeping "in touch with cypress"--if I read these poets correctly--that forces man to see himself in scale, to recognize his specific role in the totality of things. This results in a poem like Allen's "Walls and Ashes," in which the poet defines himself in terms of things which he is not:

I am not velvet
heavy brocade --
not deep fir
of precious stone.

.....

(FI, 8).

But, more importantly, this keeping in touch with nature and the recognition of man's scale which results from that relationship, permits the poet the possibility of entering into a new bond with nature. By giving himself passively up to nature, to the landscape, the poet actually adds to nature and--in the Poundian sense--makes something new. Whereas the Coleridgean Romantic used his imagination almost as a tool to discover the totality of the universe immanent in the natural object, these Floating Island poets lend their imagination to the flux of nature and, in so doing, help to remake the world. Tara di Prima's charming lyrics are a perfect example:

Outside the sun exploding.
The waves splashing upon the window.
It is snowing in the color of rainbows.
The snowflakes are really diamonds.
So I went on crocheting.

(from "Magic Man," 18).

Although in this stanza we see an inside/outside dichotomy, in the previous stanza the poet has told us that she is a "witch" and knows how to crochet "velvet/tiger/rattlesnake/leopard/zebra/lion/skin." Thus, the inside and outside are being woven together as she sits, the imagination brings new magic to the external world and its phenomena.

Barbara Rosson's "Keep Listening" displays the same kind of human participation in the landscape:

Listen to me,
wind coming down snowfields.
In summer I am the cornfield.
I want you to leave
the canyon
to approach my valley
to stop the war in your head

.....

(FI, 91).

It is this sacrificing of the ego to nature and the resultant new universe which Floating Island, in the end, is all about. The external landscape becomes redefined by the internal, by the imagination,

in a great majority of the poems in this magazine. Without time and space to describe more, I call your especial attention to Jackson Allen's "Back Porch," Grant Fisher's "To Pose the Question" and "Sunset, Before Light Rain," Diane de Prima's selections from Loba, the short lyrics and poems of Alex, Jeanne, Mini and Tara di Prima, Joan Thornton's "Love Poem," Michael Sykes' "Hemingway" and "The Voyage Out," Betsy Ford's "The Bather," the two short poems by Robert Bly (who lives not in Point Reyes but in Minnesota), and to the fictions of Thomas Sanchez and Bobbie Louise Hawkins. All of these share a love of nature infused with the imaginative processes inherent in fantasy and magic, which, in the final analysis, helps a magazine grounded in a particular region to realize its broader message that the earth is a surrounding environment which is full of wonder if man perceives it less as something to be acquired than something to be given to.

By contrast, even the title of Barbara Baracks' New York publication forces us to realize that we have entered into another world. Whereas Floating Island, by virtue of its title alone, begins with the didactic, with the literal (just as we have seen that its poetry begins with the clarity of naming things of the landscape), the title Big Deal is ironic, and irony is built upon the assumption of two simultaneous realities, external and internal in this case. The cover, a gray and white photograph of an artist's wooden modelling dummy, alludes to the fact that Big Deal is not just concerned with literature but with visual art, and thus it reflects the important relationship of art and literature in New York. In fact this publication as a whole assumes a knowledge of the interrelationships of the world out of which it comes. There are no cute drawings here (although there are beautiful and haunting photographs of Haiti by Rudy Burkhardt, and there is a diagram for a performance piece by Alvin Lucier), no coy biographies of the artists. In fact, there are no biographies! Big Deal immediately announces itself to the reader as a publication which is for people who, as we used to say, are "in the know." Yet for anyone interested in contemporary poetry and fiction, being "in the know" via Big Deal is a must. Let me say right from the beginning that I think Big Deal is one of 3 or 4 of the most important literary magazines being published in this country today.

For this reason, if for no other, it seems ridiculous to talk about Big Deal in terms of place. Moreover, a great many of the contributors to the magazine are non-New Yorkers, and I know of at least one contributor, Keith Abbott, who is a Californian. Yet, for all this, Big Deal is more representative of New York than any magazine I know (including Unmuzzled Ox, Sun--even The New Yorker). This doesn't mean that the literature of Big Deal is mostly about New York, or that the contributors necessarily share a thematic or even a stylistic approach. This magazine is New York in the way that Abstract Expressionism was New York, or in the same way that we once spoke of the so-called "New York Poets" (O'Hara, Ashbery, Schyler, Shapiro, Padgett, etc.) as New York. The art or poetry of a Kline or an O'Hara didn't necessarily show or talk about New York (although it often did), as much as it assumed New York. It came out of New York as an experience, not as a landscape.

Big Deal has the same relationship to the City. Obviously this isn't true in every case. Fanny Howe's excellent story "Cake," Keith Abbott's hilarious selections from The Second Time I Saw Pete, Jane Brakhage's moving fiction "Goodbye to Barbara"--these have little to do with New York except in the vaguest way. But even in these works the major interest is in terms of character rather than in landscape. And in the works which I'm suggesting have more of a NY "quality," the reader inevitably finds himself within a consciousness looking out. Ted Greenwald's poetic fiction, "Sunnyside Up," is a perfect example; it begins:

My fine hand rubs across the knobs on the
orange furniture Each few nubs was like a prayer
bead worrying into the sky in search of shape Laffs
oiled all the woods when a dream in ochre walked in
the crazy trapdoor at the back of my brain.... (BD, 73)

Immediately the reader is disoriented because the world presented here is unlike any external world he knows. In short, it's just the opposite of a work like Sykes "Drifting Alone at the Center of Things." Although "things" are described (orange furniture with nubbs, a dream of ochre, etc.) this is not a world of things, but a world of place, the structuring and ordering place we call the human mind.

Of course, it is just this reader disorientation that makes this kind of writing so compelling. And I must admit that I'm most attracted to literature such as this because I essentially agree with the phenomenologist Marcel Raymond, that it is the contemporary author's new and extra-aesthetic function to bewilder and dismay the reader until he enters into a true understanding of his own nature. And just such a process occurs in Greenwald's piece. By following the illogical logicity of the narrator's consciousness, and by using as guideposts the flashes of illumination which occur when the internal comes momentarily in contact with the external world, the reader experiences the dilemma of a suburban (?) housewife, trapped in her androgynous life, a life in which identity is defined in terms of births, of conversation over coffee, of clogged drains, of furniture, and of preparing dinner for the family's reunion at night. If the flow of thoughts from such a "semi-attached" mind elicits laughter from the reader, it also produces horror. For, as the family returns home, as external reality exerts its demands, the character's tenuous identity is even lost; and emptied of all reality, at story's end she stands as an image of the "feminine principle" stroking the chrome handle of the refrigerator door.

Mimi Albert's story, "Ancestors," manifests the same tension between the inner and the outer world. Here we begin within a realistic context; in a funeral parlour on Coney Island Ave. mother and daughter, faced with the ghoulish relatives of their husband and father, escape to a downstairs bathroom. Here, against all rules of decorum for a grieving widow, the mother relates the story of how as a young woman she had had an Irish lover. They had wanted to marry; the Irish boy was willing to convert to Judaism. But her mother had refused, even when it was discovered that her daughter was pregnant, refused not as much because of the religious differences as much as out of spite--out of spite for having had to live her life with her own husband ("a skinny miser" who ate cabbage soup with his hands). Suddenly the modern daughter and reader come to understand that the demanding relatives upstairs, the mother who refused to permit the marriage, potentially even the girl's own mother sitting with her on the floor are all alike: as ancestors they are powerful forces which threaten the individual. But this mother breaks the chain. By sitting with her daughter on that ladies room floor, by pulling off her funeral babushka, by disregarding the conventional behavior, & by telling her daughter the story as a warning, she has permitted her daughter a possible freedom; and, in that act, she has freed herself. This is a powerful story which, once again, relies for its effect upon the battle between inner and outer space.

Many of the other works in Big Deal function in a similar context. Paul Metcalf's fascinating dream, "Bourbon and Tomatoes," in which he attends an "expensive affair" where he is ill-at-ease because he does not understand and is unable to behave according to the conventions of the world in which he has found himself; Michael Lally's "All of the Above," a defense against being labelled and defined by a world which demands

AT OPPOSITE POLES (Cont.)

categories such as "male, female, straight, gay, lesbian, dyke, bisexual, queen, pansexual, faggot," etc.; Carl Andre's incredible poems which, like the arranged metal plates, bricks or stones of his sculptures, are a private and associative construction (of words built on the principles of repetition, homonymy, etc) which stand as a new reality in space; Dick Higgins' "Text for Allison" in which he continually rearranges pieces of information, forcing the reader to explore the distinctions between factual truth and imaginative fabrication; and, finally, Barbara Baracks' selections from Pleasure, which relate the picaresque-like adventures of a young girl who, borne of an autistic woman, moves out from the portrait-lined center of her home into the world, where she discovers and (if these selections are indicative of the whole) where she will continue to find little of the "pleasure" which she seeks----all of these works* are centered around a confrontation between the individual and the world, between internal space/place and landscape.

In short, Big Deal and Floating Island are a world apart in approach. Where the poets of Floating Island, for the most part, look at the land about them and in that perception discover themselves surrounded by a vital world to which (although they perceive some danger) they gladly give themselves up and, in so doing, make something new, something magical and full of the fantastic, the "New York writers" (and this is not a specific geographical signification) see the world about them as a threatening, potentially destructive force from which the individual, in order to survive, must retreat; it is only in the dream, in the subconsciousness, in self-created internality where the human can discover himself and remain intact.

There are obvious reasons for this difference. One need only think of NYC, for example, of its utterly consuming ever-presentness, of its constant demands. One can love N.Y., but one can never survive if he gives himself up to it. The Tomales Bay region, by contrast, makes few of New York's demands. Although I've never lived in the Point Reyes region, I suspect that it is quite easy, and desirable to let go of one's mind and drift to the rhythm of the land.

Let me make it clear that I'm aware that these are all terribly overgeneralized statements--even cliches. And I intend them to be taken as no more than rambling speculations. If I've somehow lost the magazines in the process, I apologize. For, these are both excellent magazines in any context, and it would be a great disservice to them if my speculative comments were interpreted to be an attempt at exact description or classification. Anyone who knows anything about editing would be foolish to insist upon lumping together the talents of diverse authors who are thrown together only by virtue of a magazine publication. Similarly, no one can say that most poets living in California write out of one context and that poets living in New York write out of another. Finally, it seems even more ludicrous to make such claims when one recalls that many of the most talented of California poets moved there from New York and vice versa.

But for all that, it is equally silly to ignore that California has come into its own artistically (just recently for us Easterners--I suspect a long time ago for Californians) as the recent California show at the Smithsonian Institution's National Collection of Fine Arts clearly demon-

*I would also recommend the works in Big Deal 4 by Lee Breuer, Lyn Hejinian, Philip Corner, Charlie Morrow, Brian Swann, Elaine Equi, Alison Knowles and Geoff Hendricks, Susan Sherman, Beth Anderson, Jayne Anne Phillips, Robert Ashley and Jackson MacLow.

AT OPPOSITE POLES (Cont.)

strates, And there is a difference between California and New York--at least in terms of visual art. There is also a difference, I would argue, in fiction and poetry. Why shouldn't there be? We don't create in a vacuum; writers need other writers and a world about them in order to create. Which brings us right back to the question with which I began. Should art necessarily be grounded in the idea of place? Perhaps the question should be reworded. Can we escape place? It's a rhetorical question, I would guess. And, as products of our environment, and, therefore, as Americans both of the approaches evidenced in these magazines are part of our experience.

I said earlier that when reading Floating Island and Big Deal I was struck with what I felt was not just an opposition, but a contrapuntal effect. For, you see, I find myself constantly vacillating between them; I like both. In a recent art review (in The Washington Post I believe) a reviewer suggested that there were two branches of the American aesthetic: the "straight-forward looking" and the "spooky." I wouldn't quite agree with his terms (in fact I remember laughing at the time), but I think his perceptions are right. There was William Carlos Williams who looked at the world straight-on, and who, through a process of intense scrutinization (a process which must have been so all-consuming that he lost track of himself), not only put down on the page the vital essence of things, but created something new, just as vital, and in that vitality was absolutely magical. And there was Edgar Allan Poe, who, always distrustful of what was just before his eyes, and was much more a believer of the inner voices, moved into the haunting and terrifying visions of his mind. There was the American pioneer who plunged right into nature and kept going until he hit the West. And there was the American settler who stayed behind and built up the vertical cities in a terror of the awesome horizontality of American space. I guess what I'm saying is that, if any of my speculations are correct, Americans ought to like Floating Island and Big Deal both.

FLOATING ISLAND, Michael Sykes, ed., P.O. Box 516, Point Reyes Station,
Ca. 94956

BIG DEAL, Barbara Baracks, ed., P.O. Box 830, Peter Stuyvesant Station,
NYC 10009

-Douglas Messerli

COMING

IN THE JULY ISSUE OF LA-BAS

poetry by Daisy Aldan, Jackson Allen, Carolyn Canon,
Michael Creedon, Larry Eigner, Dave Evans, Grant Fisher,
David Gitin, Jack Grady, Ted Greenwald, Stuart Kaufman,
Mervin Land, Rich Murphy & Ron Rector
commentary by William Higginson on Phillip Lopate
and more!

SELECTED BOOKS 1976-77 (a continuing list):

- David Ball. The Garbage Poems (Burning Deck).
Robert Bly. The Body I Made of Camphor and Gopherwood (Harper & Row).
Edward Byrne, Marc Cohen, Stuart Kaufman & Michael Malinowitz (intro. by John Ashbery), The Return to Black and White (Tidy-Up Press).
Orlan Cannon. Six Days from: Toujours la truite & Quantam Fantasies (Alphaville Books).
Nicolo 'D'Allessandro and Nat Scammacca. A Meeting with Nicolo 'D'Allessandro and Nat Scammacca (trans. by Nat Scammacca) (Cross Cultural Communications).
Barry Eisenberg. Bones' Fire (Tuumba Press).
Kenneth Gangemi. Corroboree/A Book of Nonsense (Assembling Press).
Allen Ginsberg. Journals: Early Fifties--Early Sixties (Grove).
Jack Grady. Surrealist Fairy Tales (Alphaville Books).
Ted Greenwald. Native Land (Titanic Books).
Bobbie Louise Hawkins. Frency & Cuban Pete (Tombouctou).
Lyn Hejinian. Lyrics from Primitive Texts (a broadsheet) (Tuumba Press).
_____. A Mask of Motion (Burning Deck).
_____. A Thought Is the Bride of What Thinking (Tuumba Press).
Dick Higgins. Cat Alley (a long short novel) (Tuumba Press).
Susan Howe. The Western Borders (Tuumba Press).
Kenneth Irby. Archipelago (Tuumba Press).
Lawrence Kearney. Five [The Confidence Man: His Masquerade; Moonfleet; A Generalization Is a Short-Hand Notation with Predicative Power; An Introduction to the History & Practice of Orphism] (Tombouctou).
Kenneth Koch. The Duplications (Random House).
Richard Kostelanetz. Illuminations (Laughing Bear).
Jeremy Lipp. Selections from "Defiled by Water" (Tuumba Press).
Lewis MacAdams. News from Niman Farm (Tombouctou).
Duncan McNaughton. Sumeriana (Tombouctou).
Thomas Merton. Collected Poems (New Directions).
Kenneth Polistina. ...or perhaps you know this (Petroclus Press).
Donald Quatrule. The Factory Dances (The Four Zoas Press).
Ray Ragosta. The Act Proves Untenable (Pourboire Press).
Rochelle Ratner. The Mysteries (Ragnarok Press).
_____. Pirate's Song (Jordan Davies Press).
Charles Simic. Charon's Cosmology (Braziller).
T.R. Uthco. Beyond the Edge (Tuumba Press).
Paul Violi. Poems (The Swollen Magpie Press).
Michael Wolfe. World Your Own (Calliope Press).
Douglas Woolf. On Us (Black Sparrow).

If you need addresses for any of the above presses, I'll be happy to pass them on to you. Write La-bas, Box 509, College Park, Md. 20740.

