

living," to move to "the place of whatever renewal of energies seems to be possible."

Writing is the activity by which this is done. And one feels this in the writing, which moves toward "clarity," away from self-reflection toward the external world, and which *moves*, more directly, liberated. There is also movement from head to body, and from head/-house to body/-road. As much as the unbound thinking – or, here, the unbinding of his thinking – he practices, Creeley seeks unbound being, like that of Buck Rogers, the floating of highs, or the hippies "in the world unequivocally . . . literally on the road, in the fact of their own bodies." And at the end of this section, he is again the wanderer, welcoming movement, the risk that promises renewal. Death, he realizes, is stasis, and his crisis is one of moving, the resolution of which is emblemized in the account of enplaning at Denver ("Tired of dying. Wanted only a trace. Sense of deer tracks, or rabbit – out there, in the snow. Sentimental – thought full of feeling. Welcome, stranger! Come in the door with bag in hand, smiling. Anyone. Anywhere"). And like the wanderer of his previous poems, the poet for whom "The Finger," in *Pieces*, is the representative fable, a fable recalling Williams' in "The Wanderer" – like the wanderer, he is moved to move because he still seeks the goddess: "I do keep looking, in that sense. . . ."

The complete break and shift to poetry in Part 2 marks another stage of crisis. "In London," as this part is called, is not limited to Creeley's stay in London. That title and the epigraph establish a point of beginning, which is actually one of displacement, disorientation, and vocational crisis. Williams' words from *A Voyage to Paganry* ("But what to do? and/ What to do next?") are appropriate – that voyage was a crisis in Williams' career. And by association with a wasteland atmosphere, which "London" evokes, and with his Gerontion-feelings ("You have nor face nor hands/ nor eyes nor head either") the epigraph sets up Creeley's crisis in terms of Eliot and Williams.

The atmosphere at the start is Eliotic. It is autumn, and Creeley is weary, low, homesick, much concerned with the past. He is, to quote Eliot, dying with a little patience:

We'll die
soon enough,
and be dead –

whence the whole
system
will fade from my head –

Without energy, spiritless, his activity is mental – and that, minimal, able only to note the issue:

Die. Dead,
come alive.

He is enclosed ("all in the head"), suffocating ("No air is/ in this/ room"). He knows what he should do — what the great poems of the book subsequently vouchsafe —

Love —
let it

Out,
open up

Very,
very voraciously —

Everywhere,
everyone.

But he can only state his desire ("Dance. Make happiness . . ."), not release it and be released by it.

This is the context of "The Edge," which, incidentally, is preceded by "Bobbie," a poem erotic enough, I should think, to satisfy Rosenthal. "The Edge," like Williams' "Love Song" ("I lie here thinking of you"; "you far off there . . ."), addresses loneliness.

Place it,
make the space

of it. Yellow
that was a time.

He saw the stain of love
was upon the world,

a selvage, a faint
afteredge of color fading

at the edge of the world,
the edge beyond that edge.

Here Creeley uses Williams in the context of his own dispiritedness, one determined by the past tense and the meanings "fading" and "edge" have for him. ("Neither sadness nor desire/ seems the edge: this precipice" and "Love's faint trace . . ." — subsequent entries — turn us back to "The

Edge.") The Williams recalled in the poem is exemplary, and Williams throughout *A Day Book* is the model of poetic activity and recovery.

There is, for example, "Kiki," which may refer to Williams' "Young Love," the ninth poem of *Spring and All*, but certainly calls up the deepest similarity between Creeley and Williams — their dependence on woman, their service to love.

World in a
plastic octa-
gon from a
most perspicacious
daughter.

Kiki, named after Kiki of Montparnasse, is a doll in a plastic container. She is the symbolic representation of his world, one with which he cannot now make contact; and she — woman, muse — is very much the explanation for Creeley of the question Williams asks in his poem ("What about all this writing?").

"An Illness" also alludes, in "all dignity of/ entrance," to "By the Road to the Contagious Hospital." But more important than such echoes is the notable fact that in this part of *A Day Book* the meditative tone and movement is very much like that of Williams' last great poems and for the reason that Creeley, too, is confronting death and petitioning his wife for love. In "The Act of Love," Creeley's confession of love overcomes the distance from his wife occasioned by his devotion to writing and by his sensualism. In respect to the issue of writing, one thinks of course, of innumerable instances in Williams' work — *A Dream of Love* is one — but especially of "Asphodel, That Greeny Flower," where the very act of writing declares the love that wins him forgiveness. And again one thinks of "Asphodel" when reading "An Illness" because of the situation and the meditative logic, tone, and cadence:

Across from me [in the hospital]

a young woman, dark
haired, and in
her eyes much dis-

traction, and fear. The
other one, I
remember was also

young, a man, with
lovely eyes, a greyish
blue. He was

struck by what
we were
hearing, a voice,

on a tape, of an
old friend, recently dead.
Have you noticed

the prevalence
of grey blue eyes?
Is it

silly, somehow,
so to see them?
Your breasts

grow softer now
upon their
curious stem. In

bed I yearn
for softness, turning
always to you. Don't,

one wants to cry,
desert me! Have I
studied

all such isolation
just to
be alone?

.....

Accesses of being occur in the sequence, and even at the end, where the gathering of great poems, beginning with "A Testament," is remarkable, lesser moments are acknowledged, as in "Kid":

The kid left
out back waits
for his mother's

face to
reappear
in

a win-
dow,
waving.

This is the measure of Creeley's honesty and of his world, where he treats each day what is given him, where there are no destinations and nothing remains fixed. Resistance to death distinguishes these poems, and in them more often than ever before he accepts his body and tells his need for friends, wife, children, people, for the world outside the window. One feels in them the presence of Whitman as well as Williams. An obsessive word of this volume is "around" (as in "See/ the things around you;" "I felt around myself;" "See/ the night/ all around"). And in this part there is a significant change from wandering to walking.

"You" establishes the context:

Back and forth across
time, lots of things
one needs one's

hand held for. Don't
stumble, in the dark. Keep
walking. This is life

Walking not only enjoins movement, as in Part 1, it accords with Williams' injunction to Paterson to walk in the world. One is no longer, or not quite, the romantic wanderer so prominent in Creeley's poems, though he may still be present in "I/ walk down a road/ you make ahead." A more fitting example is "For Betsy and Tom":

We are again
walking in a
straight line – feet

fall, footsteps. We
walk! I am
happy, foolish I

stumble on to the next
person, I think
to myself, charming in

the peace she so manifestly
carries with her. All the
children follow us. The

dogs walk also,
with a sort of sedateness.
They think

they think. We
whistle. I want to
love everyone alive!

Or in " 'Bolinas and Me . . . , ' " which tells also of wandering, and of homecoming: "Walking/ and walking, dream of those/ voices, people again. . . ."

Among the great poems toward the end of the book are "A Testament," "The Act of Love," "The Birds," "An Illness," "People," "For Benny and Sabina," "For Betsy and Tom," and " 'Bolinas and Me. . . . ' " (Of these Rosenthal mentions only "People.") Subsidence occurs toward the very end, and " 'Bolinas and Me. . . . ' " works through many difficulties to affirmation. In the small closing verses the world again is open for him. It seems, in "Sea," that he has dismissed the "wake" that, in Part 1, had figured, as in Hart Crane's "Southern Cross," the perils of retrospection. Reverie toward childhood now brings him home ("it all comes home").³ *Place* is what he has in mind when, in the concluding poem, he denies that "you can't/ get back/ what's gone by." In that poem he tells his daughter that "We live in a circle"; this gainsays an earlier entry: "You think in the circle/ round the whole [hole?]." The "we" is salutary, and so are the thinking of others and the act of memory it has now stirred him to undertake.

A few words on *Listen*, and I'm done. The play deals with the usurpation or possession of another person; this is what the women, all of them designated by "You," the other in the protagonist's mind, protest. The most excruciating instance of such relationship is treated in *The Island*. Creeley ponders that situation in *A Day Book* when he says, "No one owns. I think the most useful truth I've been given to acknowledge of others, as a man, is that in one's own experience another's is not necessarily denied nor increased." In *Pieces*, he tells the arrogance of thought that owns and must be humbled:

There was no one there.
Rather I thought I saw her,
and named her beauty.

For that time we lived
all in my mind
with what time gives.

The substance of one
is not two. No thought
can ever come to that.

I could fashion another
were I to lose her.
Such is thought.

The American production, which is the only one I've heard, sometimes achieves a pleasant antiphony and nostalgic tone, but the opening fanfare announcing it is embarrassingly arty – and timefilling – and the enunciation, as often with actors, is too deliberate, perhaps too British.

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NOTES

- 1 An appropriate title for an essay on Creeley might be "Where I Lived and What I Lived For."
- 2 Mary Novik's *Robert Creeley: An Inventory, 1945-1970* (Kent State University Press, 1973), now enables us to date Creeley's poems, which have always been ordered chronologically and constitute, as he appreciates in Zukofsky's work, the one poem a poet writes all his life.
- 3 The lines summon for me "The Picnic" (in *The Charm*), the finest poem on this theme. It concludes:

Time we all went home,
or back,
to where it all was,
where it all was.