

For Robert Creeley

Senior Paper

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On a beach in Nerja

- after Robert Creeley's "Four Days in Vermont"

Sand sun-bleached pale and peppered
with dallying fragments of seashells rocked
to shore with the tide's ebb and flow,
your feet dug timidly into the coarse mixture
lying belly up with a toast to *Narixa* and feelings
of bounty in Andalusia, as onlookers mused
over the sound of water whispering to rock
at her tattoo of home and the unlikely bracket of a boy
and a woman with *Albaicín* on her shoulders,
watching the sun bleed red through the jewel of the Costa Del Sol,
the Sierras at their backs like a mighty headboard,
with wind that scrutinized ignorant bodies of two
travelers lost in one another on a beach in Nerja.

Clint Owens

Jubilee Road

- after Robert Creeley's "Jack's Blues"

We twist able-bodied leaves
around marijuana and flecks
of lavender. Cloudy waves
drown dispute.

Here be the doldrums.
Regurgitating philosophy, while
you listen to *Jubilee Road*
coaxed from acoustics.

"Yesterday's gone don't you
understand, cottontop's grown
to be a man." Men forsake
smoke for toil.

But we twist able-bodied leaves
and sheets torn from Bibles
around marijuana and pieces
of a tender age.

Clint Owens

For Janice

- after Robert Creeley's "America"

Sown deep in Appalachian highlands,
vexed men find treaty in liquor and fire

and let boys stoke coals with whittled branches
as they listen lips sewn-shut to stories of leather

yawning with clean hands
and murmuring in the bosom of the foothills.

Janice sits beyond the glow
of the choking ruby cinders,

watching her husband feed the
burgeoning inferno with dried tinder

and murmuring prayers to
whatever God was listening

to keep these children
away from the edge of the precipice.

Then come the sparks,
vomited skyward from the pyre

like paint from a rifle,
and the men are speaking to one another,

finding treaty in liquor and fire,
but Janice did not.

She found the boys beds,
and sat by the door

until the deluge
of stumbling boots ceased.

Clint Owens

People Watching #1

- after Robert Creeley's "The Statue"

My whispered rasp
dies in the air, like
an engine sputtering
from low gas.

You're lost in
the bellow of church organs
and people stealing photos
of lofty arches,

as we sit glossed over
in a pew at the back
awed more by people
and inventing lives

than the sound of
Basilica di Santa Maria del Fiore
bouncing off marble
panels and visitors.

But you heard me
anyway, in my hand
that squeezed reverence
into yours.

Clint Owens

Sinks of Gandy

- after Robert Creeley's "For No Clear Reason"

They crawled chest down into the grotto
over wet, untouched clay and stone,
carving new stories
and names like long lost brothers
into chalk recollections
left on the cave wall.

Blind minnows swim
in the cavern's sunless pools,
stumbling without purpose
in overlong figure-eights
with pale bodies deprived
of sunlight.

Then the candles choke to life,
and ghosts of soldiers dance
a shadow waltz that reminds us
of the boneyard hiding
beneath our eager
boots.

Clint Owens

Boggart

- after Robert Creeley's "After Frost"

Her lashes
are metal hummingbird wings,
that sliced his cupped
hands paper thin.

He hides the pain
with drama masks
and weak smiles -
a chameleon.

The Boggart thrashes
in his chafed belly.
He'll chew his cheeks,
and pretend not to notice.

In this hell
he is alone.
no light, no promises,
no voice.

Nothing but accidents
and gnawing fear
his memories
are just dreams.

Clint Owens

Princess Little Rain

- after Robert Creeley's "Somewhere"

Deep in a hazardous hollow
a cabin lay waiting for her,
Princess Little Rain,
the girl with dreams of horses.

She traps rain in buckets
that falls through the desperate ceiling,
and waters her lilies
when the rain ends.

And when God destroyed the hollow
with wind and angry deluge,
friends came on horses
and rebuilt her arc.

Clint Owens

Fisherman's Bend

- after Robert Creeley's "Kore"

The boy laughed.
And the earth hummed
neath' bare soles
flecked with cockleburs.

Fisherman's Bend,
right for the job,
"Yes Sir,"
his fingers fumble.

Quiet sunrise,
and slow, cold,
he watches him
waiting, and sighs fog.

"Boy, come here," watch
how I do it,
and his hands
speak for him.

Bottle green silence,
and Spring's pollen
is oil and water,
he paints with a finger.

"Yes Sir,"
I remember
the storm,
in your smile.

Clint Owens

Midnight in San Francisco

- after Robert Creeley's "Helsinki Window"

We took the wrong ferry
past Alcatraz. I didn't
notice until you
said there was no chance

of turning back to the shore
that we'd left in the wake
of the vessel, with Saluda
and the Golden Gate fresh

on our tongues. We stumbled
back to our hostel drunk
on cheap booze and spoke
with travelers in broken Spanish.

You needed rest. The vigor
of forced optimism took it
all out of you, and you danced
up the hostel's age-old steps.

I let you go. I let the stairs
take you and drank beer
with strangers, building
hardy unions that would be

dead by the time the late moon
pierced the midnight in San
Francisco and a dazed visitor
stumbled upstairs to his lover.

Clint Owens

Ritual Poem #1

- after Robert Creeley's "A Prayer"

1. Write a secret on a small piece of ribbon

* note - each ribbon must be of a different color and size

2. Repeat process until you run out of secrets

3. Tie each ribbon to the base of a single helium balloon

4. Climb to the highest point in your vicinity

5. At precisely 5:55 p.m release the balloons

6. Crow as loud and long as you can

Clint Owens

Listen

- after Robert Creeley's "I Know a Man"

There were sparks as I
stoked dying embers, and
wood smoke and liquor -

"Not sure yet, I have ideas."
I smile at that,
and listen.

And what about you,
working or working or
do your pockets have termites.

Sky, I say, night,
whippoorwill,
you are my music.

Clint Owens

Harvey Gamage

- after Robert Creeley's "Zero"

Sing! And pull and
pull, but together,
yes that's it, and breathe!
And you are now, awake,
and yelling PULL! we are men,
and we are free,
children of children,
and there is rain,
and laughter but you don't
feel it, and you crow,
Here I Am!
And names are dead
on the Harvey Gamage comrade,
and there is rain,
and laughter but you don't
feel it, and you forget.

Clint Owens

Vagabond

- after Robert Creeley's "Chicago"

We smoke cigarettes
in train cars with
aimless brethren
"going somewhere -

I swear." But we
Haven't forgotten
the mailmen and
applications

clawing at our doors.
But why leave Eden
if all we need to stay
is five-dollar whiskey?

Clint Owens

Wildcat Falls

- after Robert Creely's "Myself"

He said step where I step,
and watch your feet,
careful, follow me,
shoulder home and walk.

Chest scraped raw on stones,
not quite smooth with time
and current, as you dive headfirst
into the frosty pool

and glide through boyhood,
and torn blue jeans,
stained, cigarette ash
and signatures.

Wildcat Falls thunders
in young ears,
whistling through,
clenched teeth, claws bared, *you are me, us.*

The pines applaud,
and you bow slowly,
filling your lungs with the
scent of honeysuckles.

Hear this Arturo!
who said,
"It may be the -
prayers of your mother,

and it may be that God
still loves you, in spite
of your tampering with atheists"
but you're lucky.

Your chest scraped by stones.

Clint Owens

Paper Cranes

- after Robert Creeley's "Water Music"

He hammers nails with two strokes,
duck-tailed wooden beam cross' a shoulder.

Children playing,
wind-chime voices float

over sweet corn,
summer, robin.

Pockets empty, lint,
change, J&H Wilsons.

We're here son.
We're here.

Clint Owens

For The Messengers

- after Robert Creeley's "Quick-Step"

Tick-Tock, Tick-Tock,
time is running out
and the dream

that was supposed to be
around the next corner
is still three corners

away. And the conductor
is slapping your wrist
and murmuring

"Where is your water-mark?
Your stamp? I need to see
a ticket sir." And you reply

that I am a messenger.
I live between time
in the ruts you've forgotten.

Tick-tock. Tick. Tock.

Clint Owens

Rattlesnake Pipe Dream

- after Robert Creeley's "A Wicker Basket"

My bulletproof vapor escape plan
hides searching hands and mom's best pearls,
tucked neatly in a shirt pocket,
forgotten, not quite, repetition.

Rattlesnake pipe dream,
and hard earned pocket-ace wit,
"Careful shit's got some bite."
Singed fingertips.

Lost in the trees,
and he'll follow, I'm sure
of it this time,
he'll follow and take me home.

Hands white-knuckled, blooded,
from concrete walls with names
and stories buried beneath,
"He's a fighter."

They said at the barbershop, and school.
Little one needs help.
Wrong! so wrong,
take me home.

We'll craft memories from spider silk
and get drunk on starry eyed theories.
But love doesn't pay and neither does
imagination. Head in the clouds,
"going nowhere..."

But for a while it lasts.
And he'll follow, I'm sure
of it this time,
my Brother will follow -
take me home.

Clint Owens

Lament for Prometheus.
- after Robert Creeley's "The Skull"

Mangled shackles lie
like corpses, ugly and rusted,

seasoned with bits of charred flesh
and yesterday's prayers to the Mother.

You stand in their rubble
contemplating the truth

found in self-created axioms
and mourn for Prometheus,

Remembering the blistering heat
and that Shelley is dead

and that your "beloved
race is trampled down -

by thought executing ministers,"
But despite the broken

chains lying like a boneyard
at your feet, you are certain

that embodiments of Zeus
will not return to quench their

hunger on the titan
that built man from clay.

Clint Owens

- after Robert Creeley's "Sing Song"

To all who would listen.

There is a certain appeal to an absence of free will.
The choice not to choose swaps agency with inevitability,
priming us to re-mistake the mistaken, re-forget the realized,
and above all re-destroy the once destroyed.

We shoulder backpacks filled with faded brochures,
pockets full of sand, and tiny scraps of paper torn from God's manual,
until our bowed backs break and we are forced to kneel at
the feet of our idols, begging freedom from a barrage of love, pain, and news broadcasts.

My father told me once "I came into this life the same way
I am going to go out of it. WIDE - OPEN." I believed him. He said there's no
shortcuts or road-signs where were going son. And the blueprints
are burning. Charred remnants of past certainties are twisting and turning.

So we wear plaster smiles, and theater masks of powder and gelatin. Plant seeds of imperfection.
Desperately listen as fears pasted together with toothpicks and glue take root.
Falling prey to the tension of our own mental inventions, superstitions of competition.
And we feign surprise to find Jennie doubled over the toilet relieving herself of would-be
imperfections.

Dear reader: There's blood on your hands!

What a burden is must be to have eyes like diamonds.
Match-stick promises burn away my finger-prints, as we twist able-bodied leaves and sheets
torn from journals brimming with cries for help around Marijuana and pieces of a tender age.
Children of children, fight your way through a sentence, and pretend that the walls surrounding
our prison aren't made of glass.

Days, melt into weeks, melt into fears, your tears taste salty on my lips,
and the fog has descended.

Routine cowboy! Did you grind thirst for the horizon
into pulp on the soles of pavement-scarred boots?

Read a Book, write a Letter, break the mold, fuck the cliché, think for yourself, and for god sakes
be your own person.

To all who would listen

Memory Box

- after Robert Creeley's "The Tools"

Memory Box, mouth open,
robbed of its contents.
Spread evenly upon the faded carpet
they gleam, my memories,
each one a treasure that can never be stolen,
and yet sometimes we bury them.

I inspect each in turn: secrets, promises, loves,
with an attention to rival
the most thorough watchmaker,
and still some remain cloudy, intangible,
ghostly recollections as slippery as the dreams
on the tip of your tongue.

They are me, my composition,
this battered collection of experiences:
A night spent huddled in a rarely-touched cul-de-sac,
drawing warmth from embrace,
and impossible ideologies
encouraged by hardy spirits.

And when I return them
to the memory box, and place
them at the back of the tallest
shelf I dread opening the box
the next time because I know
it will be less full.

Clint Owens

Embodiments of Fear

- after Robert Creeley's "Dimensions"

1.

Fear is a quiet
parasite that takes
you down slow

munching quietly
at the edge
of moments

and we forget
it's there sometimes
mocking our panic.

2.

The hatchet
is easy to bury
when the ground

is soft so we
ignore it and
swallow

the key to
a closet stuffed
with promises.

Clint Owens

Powder

- after Robert Creeley's "Walls"

Blue powder
coats her
nostrils like
wallpaper

falling in
wet sheets
from a nose

that sniffs
speed and
the smells
of lost-boys.

Clint Owens

Tales of a Psychonaut
- after Robert Creeley's "So Big"

0's and 1's flash
green on the
monitor,

and it makes
more sense
than home

these days
this language
never changes.

Machine.
Coworker.
Husband.

Man.
When in truth
I am hollow.

Clint Owens

An Ode to Harrison Bergeron

- after Robert Creeley's "The Mechanic"

1.

O' Harrison Bergeron, do you not know
that pirouettes are difficult with cement shoes
and rag-tag potato sack masks covering
her sweet face, eyes bottle green.

This one looks strong, we'll have to account
for that, and clothe her in one-size-fits-all perfection.
She's just too pretty, they'll notice I'm sure of it.
And show us a twirl, just don't stand out okay?

Sometimes a rat squeezes under the door
and displays some color, but we're all
afraid of being the worst so why would
we let you, Harrison Bergeron, reach kingship?

Clint Owens

Mr. Meister Minister

- after Robert Creeley's "The Carnival"

Unmarked flags lined
with letters
and yesterday's cries,
hank lank on their poles.

We'll fight invisible
enemies and their mothers,
Everyman,

paw with cracked nails,
at wooden doors and moan,
Tell me my name!

Tell me my name...
Oh, God.

Clint Owens