

BIBLIOGRAFÍA

A) RECENSIONES Y RESEÑAS

GETTING ON: CREELEY'S LATEST POEMS

Robert Creeley's latest collection of poems, *Memory Gardens*¹, contains a poem, "Hands", which establishes a link not only with "Tell Story" ("Tell story/ simply/ as you know/ how to./ This road/ has ending,/ hand/ in hand"), a poem from *Mirrors*² in his previous collection, but also with his very first volume of poems, *For Love*³, which included Creeley's "For Friendship" ("For friendship/ make a chain that holds,/ to be bound to/ others, two by two,/ a walk, a garland,/ handed by hands/ that cannot move/ unless they hold."). It is only fitting that this be so since Creeley has maintained right from the beginning of his poetic career the need for the immediacy of the perception, specifically one arising from the senses, and he has also obsessively expressed the need for care, for love, to ward off our continuing solitude. This gesture of holding, of giving, of shaking hands, expresses in a universal language that care, that love which friendship bestows. "Hands" brings together, once again those recurring elements of Creeley's poetry:

Reaching out to shake,
take, the hand,

hands, take in
hand hands.

This action of holding, the enacting of care, appears again in "Echo", the third poem of "Four for John Daley"⁴, which is also a good example of Creeley's concern with the placing of words, his continuing care with the music of the poem, with its subtle sound schemes:

Lonely in
no one
to hold it with—

the responsible
caring
for those one's known.

The loneliness which makes you turn in and which is contained within ("Lonely in"); the feeling of absolute solitude ("no one") isolated in a line; the third one broken off at "with" reaching out to the next stanza, which stresses the need for "caring" to be

“responsible”; and finally the recipients of that continuing care: “those one’s known”. Simple, effective, immediate.

Care and death seem to be the mayor issues in *Memory Gardens*; caring for those near us, or for those now only alive in our memory because they are dead. Both are the mayor concerns that advancing age brings, so it is natural, one feels, to find them in this last volume of poems by Creeley, now sixty. With these two issues, a third: Creeley walking the tightrope over the abyss, on the point of giving in to that “demanding world” which he “tried to put quietly back” in *Mirrors*, his previous collection of poems, on the point of giving up living and becoming a “memory” for those who knew him.

“Knock Knock”, gives us a title with more than its share of black humour; the ‘knock knock’ of juvenile jokes here becomes the knock of “it” —death— come to take you away, to “get you”, as in the knock-knock jokes. So, the only way of not being “got” is to stay silent and not answer (Say nothing/ to it./ Push it away./ Don’t answer...).

“Memory Gardens”, the title poem, is another of those dedicated to people who belonged in Creeley’s life, and who are now dead. In this case the person is his mother. The poem, unusually, has no punctuation marks except for the final full stop, the effect being the enactment of the giddy fall in Creeley’s mind to his “mother’s place”, to hold *to her*, to be united in death.

Had gone up to
down or across dis-
placed eagerly
unwitting hoped for

mother’s place in time
for supper just
to say anything
to her again one

simple clarity her
unstuck glued
deadness emptied
into vagueness hair

remembered wisp that
smile like half
her eyes brown eyes
her thinning arms

could lift her
in my arms so
hold to her so
take her in my arms.

In his collections of poetry Creeley often brings together poems issued or published before in journals, small booklets, or for special occasions; *Memory Gardens* contains twelve poems which were issued previously as a poetic calendar. Each one is related to the month which it accompanied and, on the whole, those that are less weighed down by topical references —Chaucer’s April, Wyatt’s May, July and Independence Day,

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Christmas— work better since they allow personal memories and concerns to be worked into the poems without any noticeable clashes. For example, “Memory”, which corresponds to December, introduces lines which, because they are so far from Creeley’s habitual concerns, clash with the rest of his very personal, and recurrent, feelings. Stanzas like “For the babe newborn/ was my belief,/ in the manger,/ in that simple barn.” stand out in their inadequacy, and the poem loses all its energy precisely because of the descriptions and the generalizations, after a promising, personal, and Creeleyesque, first stanza: “I’d wanted/ ease of year,/ light in the darkness,/ end of fears.”, only to be brought back for its conclusion to Creeley’s personal world, a world which is also ours, anybody’s: “Only us then/ remember, discover,/ still can care for/ the human.”

The poems which show a Creeley on the point of abandoning his life of action, physical or verbal, are —since Creeley has advocated action, the kinetics of the process, throughout his poetic life— the most bittersweet. “Hotel”, a place of passing inhabitants, where one cannot take the personal, shows an exhausted Creeley, actually happy to be alone; his way out is too nihilistic for the Creeley we have known before now, “Give up and lie down.”:

It isn't in the world of
fragile relationships

or memories, nothing
you could have brought with you.

It's snowing in Toronto.
It's four-thirty, a winter evening,

and the tv looks like a faded
hailstorm. The people

you know are down the hall,
maybe, but you're tired,

you're alone, and that's happy.
Give up and lie down.

Even in the midst of these thoughts of death, it is the Creeley of “I’ll Win”, who exposes —tongue in cheek— his plan to evade death, the Creeley one has always preferred. Action is still Creeley’s answer: the assertion of his self, of his independence, of his life, laced with that humour of the New Englander, the slightly macabre sense of humour:

I'll win the way
I always do
by being gone
when they come.

When they look, they'll see
nothing of me
and where I am
they'll not know.

This, I thought, is my way
and right or wrong
it's me. Being dead, then,
I'll have won completely.

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1. Robert Creeley, *Memory Gardens*, (New York; New Directions, 1986).
2. Robert Creeley, *Mirrors*, (New York; New Directions, 1983).
3. Robert Creeley, *For Love: Poems 1950-1960*, (New York; Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962).
4. Creeley's youngest child.