

ROBERT CREELEY

For John Wieners (2002)

Glass roses or something else hardly expected — an
Abundance of good will, a kind hand in usual troubles.
Do you hear voices all around you, a sort of whispering,
Echoing silence as if someone had left a window open?

Reading those several times with John, we were first
In a great hall, the Y uptown, where he said he'd heard Auden
Read, and now we did — the great velvet curtains, the useful
Sense of a company in the same place where we now stood, echoing.

Then at Bard, first time I'd met Tom Meyer still a student, and
We, John, Bobbie and me, had driven up from New York together,
In bleak aftermath of Olson's telling John he was going off with Panna,
On the phone in the Chelsea, the blasted heath we were leaving behind.

Sweet, you might say, impeccable gentleman, like Claude Rains, his
Boston accent held each word a particular obligation and value.
I see his face as still a young man, in San Francisco, hearing him
Talking with Joanne, hearing him talk with Joe Dunn, with friends.

When you are a poet as he was, you have no confusions, you write
The words you are given to, you are possessed or protected by a vision.
We are not going anywhere, we are somewhere, here where John is,
Where he's brought us much as he might himself this evening, to listen.

I think of all the impossible loves of my life, all the edges of feeling,
All the helpless reach to others one tried so bitterly to effect, to reach
As one might a hilltop, an edge of sea where the waves can break at last
On the shore. I think of just jumping into darkness, into deep water,

Into nothing one can ever point to as a place out there, just its shadow, a
Beckoning echo of something, a premonition, which does not warn but invites.
There is music in pain but not because of it, love in each persistent breath.
His was the Light of the World, a lit match or the whole city, burning.

—Robert Creeley