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Creeley's reception in France¹

Although Robert Creeley seemed keen to appear as a « uniquely American persona, »² to associate himself with what he calls « the Americanism of certain painters, like Pollock », « specifically American in their ways of experiencing activity, with energy a *process*, »³ some of the earliest influences he acknowledges are European, and particularly French: the Existentialists, André Gide, but above all Stendhal whom he admires for « the incredible clarity and fluidity of his thinking »⁴ and for his sparse use of words. Robert Duncan, one of his most attentive readers, suggests Creeley refrained from reading Barthes because it was « too close for comfort, »⁵ and Joshua Watsky has convincingly demonstrated that Creeley made his decisive encounter with abstraction in front of René Laubiès's canvasses rather than Pollock's, a fact confirmed by Creeley's excited letter of May 25, 1952 to Olson.⁶ While there is ample material to substantiate a French influence on Creeley, I will here focus on Creeley's own reception in France, beginning with a general overview and then focusing on a case-study: Jean Daive's encounter with Creeley's work. Jean Daive likes to present himself as an encyclopedist, a reporter and a photographer, although he is better known as a writer. He is the author of over thirty books, including a serial poem, *Narration d'équilibre*, and a serial novel, *La condition d'infini*, both published by P.O.L. A translator of Celan and Creeley, he founded and directed four poetry magazines: *fragment* (1970-73); *fig.* (1989-1992); *Fin* (1999-2006) and *K•O•S•H•K•O•N•O•N•G* (2013-). From 1975 to 2009 he collaborated on and initiated a number of radio programs on France-Culture, including *Les nuits*

magnétiques (with Alain Veinstein) and *Peinture fraîche*. He has been the president of the Centre international de poésie Marseille since 2001.

Following the workings of the Creeley-Daive nexus reveals how books resonate and writers connect, how the urge to translate, investigate and respond to arresting works generates literature.

How does one measure a writers' reception abroad? By the number of translations published? By the time-lag between domestic and foreign publications, often counted in generations if not lifetimes? By a writer's reputation with the general reading public? (And I can only think of the Beats passing that test.) By the impact of his/her work on French writers? And how does one measure this impact? By identifying imitations? (In a letter to his French translator Martin Richet, Creeley writes: « That another writer should parody the forms I've used is of no interest to me. »⁷) By identifying instigations, works sparked by the encounter with the foreign work? Or by the foreign work's ability to enter a conversation and affect what Creeley called the *context* of writing? Clearly there is no simple way to quantify a successful reception so that one has to proceed from a combination of impressions and facts.

Let us begin with impressions. Given Creeley's early popularity in the 60s and his growing recognition as a major poet ever since; given the fervent reception of American poetry in France since the 1960s; given also Creeley's regular visits to France from 1952, when he lived briefly in Provence, to 2004 (1968, 1982, 1988), Creeley's French reception is arguably something of a missed reception, a feeling shared by several of the poets, translators and scholars I interrogated. Auxeméry even speaks of an « erasure » (*effacement*).⁸ First, both Auxeméry and Pierre Joris⁹ suggest that Creeley was overshadowed by Charles Olson whose sheer breadth—long lines, epic scope, tapping of American literature and native American myth—came across as more truly American, as a more radical alternative to the European lyric tradition. Then, one thing French poetry of the past fifty years has envied American poetry is its inclusion of the vernacular, its

conversational tone. Even after 1968, written French remained substantially different from spoken French, and French poetry tends to come across as literary. Creeley is a very conscious master of this vernacular ease but with a twist. While his diction is simple, his language is often abstract and dense, the « grammar elliptical, »¹⁰ the syntax contorted, creating surprises at every other line-break. And, typically, Creeley is not conjuring a red wheelbarrow but « laying bare the structure of thought, »¹¹ tracking patterns of mind, engaging in a sort of phenomenological close-thinking. So that the oft-noted « simplicity » of Creeley's poems is a lure especially for the translator: the little words (pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, deictics) that Creeley favors are much harder to translate than rare words which usually only have one cognate. Finally, if the index of a successful *collective* reception is the ability of a foreign poet's work to enter and further the local conversation, as has been the case of the Objectivists in France for over 40 years now, this requires French poets to rearticulate this foreign poetics in their own words, to filter and appropriate it on their own terms, thus weaving it into the fabric of the ongoing local debates. Although many French poets have read Creeley, very few have written about him, only his translators in the paratext of their translations and mostly recently.

Now for some facts: the chronology of Creeley's French reception confirms the sense of a series of missed, or only half-seized, opportunities. Creeley was first brought to the attention of French readers in 1965, in *Tel Quel*, the prominent avant-garde review of the 60s and 70s. Issue 20 featured one poem by Ashbery and one by Creeley (« The Rose » from *For Love*), translated by Denis Roche. But it took almost 18 years before another poem¹² by Creeley appeared in a French poetry magazine, in Liliane Giraudon and Jean-Jacques Viton's *Banana Split*, and Creeley was never featured, except posthumously, in the main poetry magazines of the period: Henri Deluy's *Action poétique*, Michel Deguy's *Poésie* or Jean-Pierre Faye's *Change*. Creeley, however, was featured in the book that decisively revealed the vitality of post-war American poetry to French readers: Serge

Fauchereau's 1968 *Lectures de la poésie américaine*. In a chapter entitled « Olson et la Black Mountain Review, » Fauchereau likens Creeley's poems on the page to Giacometti sculptures and points out their musicality, not in the sense this word habitually carries in France where it conjures the melody and euphony of a Verlaine song, but « as an art of silence and interruption and abrupt rhythms. »¹³ Fauchereau senses a similar music in a recent sequence (*Ouï dire*) by French poet Michel Deguy. But Fauchereau fails to understand Creeley's turn in the late 60s, dismissing the 1964 poem « Anger » which Creeley had referred to as « the apex of trying to write from *inside* the emotion »¹⁴ as mere « word play [jeu des mots], » (Fauchereau, 233) regretting that a poet with such talent should remain at the level of words. That same year, 1968, Creeley was invited to give a talk on Edgar Poe at the Sorbonne (probably by Pierre Dommergue who, in *Les USA à la recherche de leur identité* (1967), had included a translation of Creeley's substantial introduction to *The New Writing in the USA*), but no French poet seems to have been aware of Creeley's visit so that nothing came out of this first invitation.

Creeley's first book in French came out in 1972 with the prestigious publisher Gallimard: *L'insulaire*, a translation of Creeley's novel *The Island* (1963), by Céline Zins. Two years earlier, Gallimard had commissioned Jean Daive to translate a selection of poems from *For Love and Words* but it was to take him 27 years to complete his translation, which appeared in 1997.¹⁵ In 1972, Dominique de Roux, the editor of the Cahiers de l'Herne, who had already published a two-volume 1000-page collection of critical pieces on Ezra Pound, commissioned Pierre Joris to make a selection of poems for a volume on Olson, Creeley and Duncan, but the project was later abandoned. Perhaps most detrimental to his French reception, Creeley is absent from the major and most read anthology of American poetry of the second half of the twentieth century: *Vingt poètes américains*, edited by Jacques Roubaud and Michel Deguy, and published by Gallimard. Attracted by American poetry's post-war oral turn and

by its formal inventiveness which he finds supremely represented in Zukofsky and Stein, Roubaud showcased the major poets included in Don Allen's 1960 *New American Poetry* anthology as well as those modernist poets who were also being revalued by the Language poets at the time. Although Creeley belongs by rights to Roubaud's selection, a note at the end of the presentation explains that he could not be included for reasons « independent of the compiler's will » and which one can only conjecture.¹⁶ This brief survey amply demonstrates the hazards that attend a poet's reception and indicates, by contrast, the great dedication of the French poets and translators who labored to make Creeley's work part of the French conversation.

I would like to suggest some of the ways Creeley is refracted into French by looking at the first book-length translations of his poetry. *Échos*, a translation by Auxeméry of Creeley's *Echoes* (The Toothpaste Press, West Branch, Iowa, 1982, reprinted as a sequence in *Mirrors*, New Directions, 1983) is the eleventh volume in the Format américain series founded by Juliette Valéry in 1993 to publish American poetry in translation and modeled on the American format of the chapbook. A poet and prolific translator of American poetry (Reznikoff, Williams, Pound, H. D. and Olson's entire *Maximus Poems*), Auxeméry had dedicated a poem to Creeley in his first book (*Le Centre de gravité*, 1983), already translated several poems by Creeley and written a short presentation of Creeley for issue 26 of *Banana Split* in 1989. Having experienced the Royaumont collaborative translation seminars, Auxeméry valued Hocquard's translation standards and practice, « his taste for precision, for flowing grammatical constructs and meticulous carving, his constant questioning of the real efficiency of what has just been produced ».¹⁷ Auxeméry remembers finalizing the translations for the chapbook together with Emmanuel Hocquard and Juliette Valéry and achieving « an elocutionary simplicity perceptible when read silently » [« une simplicité d'élocution sensible à la lecture de l'œil », *ibid.*] by « mouthing out loud » certain lines over again to attain « a unified tone ». (*ibid*)

In *La Fin* (Gallimard, 1997), Jean Daive offers a selection of poems from seven books (*The Charm* (1968), *For Love* (1962), *Words* (1967), *In London* (1970), *Away* (1976), *Later* (1979), *Mirrors* (1984)) spanning Creeley's poetry from 1962 to 1984. The edition is bilingual, with a facing page presentation and, in lieu of a more standard introduction, opens with four interviews Daive conducted with Creeley. The interview as format holds particular importance for both poets. Jean Daive has carried out innumerable interviews with writers and visual artists and published a book of interviews with Anne-Marie Albiach under his name, with a « true manifesto » in lieu of preface.¹⁸ And Stephen Fredman has suggested that Creeley was probably the first poet to publish a book of interviews as one of his own works: *Contexts of Poetry* (1973). The bulk of the selection is from Creeley's early collections, *For Love* and *Words*, in which Creeley elaborated his characteristic mode: short, syntactically dense poems of great verbal dexterity, intensity, immediacy and often pent-up violence, as Ben Friedlander characterizes them. Most important to Daive, are the jazz-like rhythm, the hum of conversation, the domestic space (a room where a man and woman alternatively love and hate each other), the day as measure, how Creeley carves out the page with a word or a punctuation mark and what he calls Creeley's « *fulgurance immobile* »:¹⁹ Creeley as the poet of the instant, the instantaneous. The book opens with a feverish description of Creeley's reading at the 1977 Cambridge Poetry Festival: Daive makes Creeley into a daemonic creature, the locus of exchanges between inside and outside, sucking in the cosmos, projecting sounds in all directions. Daive indicates his kinship with Creeley by granting him « atonality » (*ibid.* 7), a word Daive recurrently uses to describe his own poetics and which both refers to an absence of tone and affect, a distance from oneself and one's feelings, and to that current in modern music that does away with a tonal center and a hierarchy of pitches, creating the feeling that any note can follow another, and best exemplified by Schönberg and free jazz. Daive ends his

description with a programmatic question: « what is your secret Robert Creeley, what is your secret? »

An entirely different Creeley comes across in Martin Richet's selection *Là 1968-75* (2010 Héros-Limite). Martin Richet is a writer and a prolific translator of contemporary American poetry into French, particularly of Language poetry, and the editor of the electronic bulletin *Jacataqua*. He came to Creeley's work through Bob Grenier, whose *Sentences* he translated. Unsurprisingly, Richet's selection²⁰ showcases Creeley's transitional period of 1968-78, a decade of sustained experimentation in which Creeley foregrounded « the primacy of the physical act of writing » (what he called *scribbling*), happily courting the risk of opacity and negligibility. As Richet notes, his selection would fit perfectly in the middle of Jean Daive's selection in *La Fin*.

A fourth approach is exemplified by Stéphane Bouquet's 2006 *Le sortilège*, the only French full-length volume which, instead of selecting from various books, translates an existing collection, *The Charm*, which contains Creeley's earliest poems: a « strange, indecisive and hybrid collection » writes Bouquet in his afterword, something of a « potpourri », like Creeley practicing his « scales », « tuning his voice ». At the time, Bouquet himself was a young poet tuning his voice, looking for models outside the French tradition which he found too obsessed with language, saying he wanted to read and write about *real* situations: « All things considered, Creeley was the first instance of 'realist' modern poetry I ever encountered ».²¹ Against the « literalist ideology » which dominates the translation of poetry in France, he says, Bouquet translated the one-syllable *The Charm* into the 3-syllable *Le Sortilège*, so as to embrace Creeley's lessons in polysyllabic French.²²

Perhaps the strongest impression Creeley made on French poetry *collectively* occurred when a group of French poets first heard him read aloud at the 1977 Cambridge Poetry Festival: Jacques Darras, Michel Deguy, Denis Roche, Jacques Roubaud and Jean Daive were all struck by Creeley's singular welding

of breath and syntax, a voice which foregrounds writing. Reading the page's layout exactly, Creeley stops at each line break, creating a halting rhythm, syncopating line and syntax—what Roche calls a « skunk rhythm » and which he says is almost impossible to do in French. Still, in the 1982 radio program devoted to Creeley on France Culture, one can hear three French poets perform their own translations of « I know a man » in an attempt to import Creeley's « skunk rhythm » into French.²³ Though by 1977 French poets had begun to give in to the practice of the poetry reading, Creeley's Cambridge reading jolted major French poets into acknowledging what Roubaud calls « an irreplaceable dimension of spoken poetry » and revealed to those still reticent to orality that there were ways of reading aloud that foreground writing.

When I write Jean Daive to ask whether I might interview him about his relationship to Creeley his answer immediately introduces a third: « Robert Creeley—a longer story than expected and / Lorine Niedecker— a longer story than expected »²⁴ I immediately think of Cid Corman's *Origin*, a crucial post-war poetry magazine which gave Olson, Creeley, Duncan and all the poets subsequently associated with Black Mountain a *place* to write. Significantly, Creeley calls it « the meeting place »²⁵ and saw that it had the ability to change « the context of writing » (*ibid.* 508). Creeley's work appeared mainly in the first series; Niedecker's in the second and third series; and Daive's in the third. Issue XIII (April 1969) contains Cid Corman's translation of *Décimale blanche*, Daive's first book, initially published in 1967 at the instigation of Paul Celan, first in the second issue of *l'Ephémère*, than by Mercure de France. The book took on « an inaugural importance »²⁶ in that it triggered responses from, and thus crystallized, a group of young poets who were to become variously known as proponents of *poésie blanche*, *minimalisme*, or *modernité négative*: Anne-Marie

Abiach, Claude Royet-Journoud, Alain Veinstein to mention those closest to Daive.

As several of her letters to Corman show, Daive's *White Decimal* made a strong impression on Lorine Niedecker who was eager to get the opinion and approval of Louis Zukofsky, her principal poetic interlocutor and correspondent since the mid-1930s. Writing to Corman in May 1969 she reflects: « I live very happily until I'm 65 then a young musician writes some poetry in Origin 13 and I'm in anguish! »²⁷ She says she finds in Daive's poetry « the kind of thing that's been pushed out, down, in me all these years, but always there, dormant » (*ibid.* 186). And she muses that her ideal poetics would be « a mixture of this kind of writing and of objectification ». Quoting one of the sparsest pages of the book — « she speaks / she renews her precipices »—, Niedecker wonders: « Who is she? Woman, aeroplane; mathematician, artist, the Earth with its atmosphere. That's it—this poetry is the Earth with its atmosphere. » (*ibid.*) « The Earth and Its Atmosphere » is the title Niedecker used for an unpublished selection of her poems. It chimes with the title of Jean Daive's trilogy, *The Axes of the earth* and with *The Meridian*, the speech Paul Celan gave upon receiving the Buchner prize in 1960. In this speech, Celan recursively approximates the role and place of the poem, defining it as a search for oneself and one's origins through encounters with others. Defining it also in topological terms, as a « map ». The quest is hopeless, but while erring, company is found:

I find the connective which, like the poem, leads to encounters.

I find something as immaterial as language, yet earthly, terrestrial, in the shape of a circle which, via both poles, rejoins itself and on the way serenely crosses even the tropics: I find . . . a meridian.²⁸

A meridian is a line of longitude, the half of an imaginary great circle on the Earth's surface, connecting all points of equal longitude. Here it refers to that

imaginary circle connecting the birthplaces of the poets in Celan's speech (Lenz, Franzos and himself). More generally, it is any imaginary circle connecting poets across time and space, and it presides over a poetics of encounters that Jean Daive's work engages us to trace by spreading out clues. Mindful of meridians, the poem is necessarily « mindful of dates, » says Celan. And indeed, Daive proceeds to draw his own imaginary great circle, predicated on dates, in the colophons of two recent books. The colophon of *Dire Cela*, his second book of Creeley translations, specifies it was printed on « May 12th, Lorine Niedecker's birth day », and the colophon of his second memoir of Paul Celan, *Paul Celan, les jours et les nuits*, indicates it was printed « on January 23rd, Louis Zukofsky's birth day. » I want to propose 1970 as the pivotal date for the meridian linking Creeley, Niedecker and Celan in Daive's mind. Jean Daive had first heard about Creeley in 1965, from Paul Celan who had given the American poet « the momentum of an event. »²⁹ When Celan took his life in 1970, Daive took on the implicit assignment given out by his dead friend and began to translate Creeley: « The experience of having translated Celan's poems together with Celan, he explains, helped [him] tackle Creeley's poems which are at once simple, elliptical and abstract. [He] soon perceived how *near* Creeley and Celan are. » (*ibid.*) That same year, Daive made his first trip to the United States and conceived a novel with a spiraling structure, *La condition d'infini*. At the end of 1970, Lorine Niedecker died. Creeley, Niedecker, Zukofsky, Celan and Daive all « met » in the pages of *Origin*.

Creeley and Daive share Celan's impulse to define things and beings contextually, in terms of their position in time and space, often through the use of deictics and pronouns which not only refer to objects but to the very instance of discourse, its taking place. In *Words* and in *Pieces*, *I* and *you* rarely appear as substitutes for an antecedent. Rather, they are defined by their polar opposition and related through what Benveniste calls an utterance, or enunciation.

In a sense, notes Stéphane Bouquet in a 2007 presentation of Creeley's work, it is about tracing a map of things and people, of situating what is inside / outside, what is approaching or receding, what still belongs to the commonplace or what dissolves in an 'imprecise distance', what connects or disconnects. Where are we and in what company?³⁰

What secures a sense of place may be a room, or the pronoun *I*, but at the risk of confinement. Both Creeley and Daive had to break their way into speech and writing, to reach out to the other and enter a company of writers. Creeley's preface to his 1956 *A Form of Women* begins: «Not having spoken [...] until I was fourteen... »³¹ And in an online biographical note, Daive portrays himself as an autistic child whose desperate ambition was to « speak or more exactly to open the mouth. To utter. »³² It was only when he moved to Paris in his early twenties that he felt he would open up. There he made two decisive encounters: with Bernard Noël's book *Extraits du corps* and Paul Celan's book *Sprachgitter* (Speech-Grille). In both, he recognized himself. « Before writing *Décimale blanche*, Daive writes, I meditated on confinement, on being confined inside a body, inside a voice and I found scenes liable to accommodate this impassable situation »³³—scenes suggestive of Dutch interiors in seventeenth-century painting, with their black and white tiling. In several interviews Creeley explains how he made his decisive breakthrough in the late 60s:

I had ended up in such a small room that no one could share it with me. No one could survive in this place fraught with tension. One day, I was able to break away from this universe and enter the world. Suddenly I was everywhere. There was no more fear, no more terror.³⁴

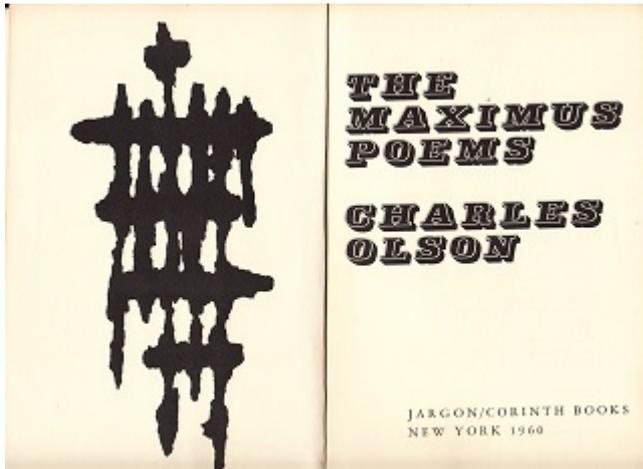
Both Daive (« to geometrize the fear »³⁵) and Creeley resort to geometry to contain the terror of the outside and map the open, both favor composition by

numbers and series. Daive is the author of a book entitled *I 7 10 16* (Le Collet de Buffle, 1974), of a serial poem and a serial novel. Creeley famously composed *Mabel: A Story* according to a compositional grid reproduced at the outset of the book and he explained to Ekbert Faas: « I love patternings that can be situated in numbers » and « the first way I could know that the world existed was in my ability to count it. » (*op. cit.* 188, 160)

Outward is a utopia that can be attempted provided there is grid, so as « to come out into a map and not into the undifferentiated outside of death, » writes Bouquet.³⁶ Olson famously dedicated the 1960 edition of *The Maximus Poems* to « Robert Creeley — the Figure of Outward, »³⁷ a term elaborated in a short poem written near the end of his life, in which the link between an I and a you is created by distance, by the span they define:

the Figure of Outward means way out way out
there: the
 ‘World,’ I’m sure, otherwise
 why was the pt. then to like write to Creeley
 daily? to make that whole thing
 double, to
 objectify the extension of an
 ‘outward’? a[n] opposite to a
 personality which so completely does (did)
 stay at home?³⁸

Olson perceives himself as the fixed point and casts Creeley as the roving end of the compasses. In the editor’s note to the 1960 Jargon-Corinth edition of *The Maximus Poems*, Jonathan Williams explains that the glyph on the title-page, really « the enlargement a sliver of perforated tin ceiling, »« becomes Olson’s ‘Figure of Outward.’ »



[FIGURE 1]

Title-page of Charles Olson's *The Maximus Poems* (Highlands (N.C): Jargon-Corinth, 1960)

The glyph resembles a grid, a network of lines of longitude and latitude, and a grille—one and the same word in French. I suspect Jean Daive was struck by a Celanian chime when he translated Creeley's pronouncement: « The measure is the grid », ³⁹ struck to uncover Celan's grille under Creeley's grid.

« Speech-Grille » is the poem in which, « after twenty years of conflict between inner and outer worlds, » Celan uses the comparative *like* « for a nearly final time » before banishing it as « treacherous. » As he explains:

I stand at another point in time and space than my reader—who can only understand me 'from afar,' cannot get hold of me, can only grasp the grille bars between us. [...] No one is 'like' another; that's why one should try to see the other, even if it's through a grille.⁴⁰

The grille also figures Celan's position regarding language's ability to signify the world, a position shared by Creeley and Daive one might argue: neither a window nor a wall, Celan's « language mesh » suggests partial passage.

In 2004, only a few months before he passed away, Creeley traveled to France to see the prehistoric cave-paintings in the Dordogne and composed a series of poems entitled « Caves. » Jean Daive says it was receiving these cave poems that urged him to make a new selection and translation of Creeley's poems into French, a selection made, says Daive, « from the psychoanalyst's point of view »⁴¹ and spanning Creeley's whole writing career. In the preface, entitled « Robert Creeley: the time of the animal, » Daive likens the speaker who enters these caves without the least fear to an animal. And like the animal in Rilke's Eighth elegy, the speaker in Creeley's poem perceives the « Nowhere without the No » and enters the pure space of the outside or what Rilke calls the Open.⁴² Daive feels these are the poems of « a dying man who sees his life go by. »⁴³ In *Sous la coupole*, his 1996 memoir of Paul Celan, Daive describes Celan's voice as he heard it last, on the phone, as *cavernous*.⁴⁴ At the end of the preface to *Dire cela* (the deictic only one N short of Celan), Daive obliquely suggests that Creeley may have told him his secret a few hours before they read together « in two voices » at the Maison de l'Amérique latine. Elsewhere Daive suggests the secret might be the presence of infinity within the instantaneous.⁴⁵

Creeley's death seems to have thrown Daive into a retrospective quest in which he brought out the meridian I have been tracing. While composing and translating *Dire Cela*, Daive edited a special issue on Olson and the Black Mountain College in issue 20 of *Cahier critique de poésie*; he investigated the friendship between Olson and Creeley in a long poem with a summary and endnotes entitled *L'énonciateur des extrêmes*, first published in *Cahier critique de poésie* 20 and then as a book by Nous in 2012; he wrote *Une femme de quelques vies* (Flammarion, 2009), a book-length poem composed outside the cabin where Lorine Niedecker used to live on Lake Koshkonong. With *Une femme de quelques vies*, another poet enters the meridian. After Norma Cole translated the book into English as *A Woman with Several Lives* (La Presse, 2012), Jean Daive translated two books by Norma Cole, (*14000 Facts* and *More Facts*) under the title *Avis de*

faits et de méfaits (Corti, 2014). While composing and translating *Dire Cela*, Daive also launched a fourth magazine whose title announces a will to break with the series formed by his three previous magazines, *fragment*, *fig* and *Fin*: K•O•S•H•K•O•N•O•N•G acknowledges Niedecker as tutelary figure. And in 2015, Daive published a new book on Celan with Nous, *Les jours et les nuits*.

An enquiry into the friendship between Olson and Creeley, *L'énonciateur des extrêmes* attempts to understand what was on their minds in 1951, when Olson was in Yucatan « directly below Gloucester, »⁴⁶ that is, on the same meridian. More generally, Daive writes, it is an inquiry into friendship, an attempt to articulate what has always escaped him, how thought travels between friends, what transference takes place.⁴⁷ Daive here defines friendship as « the ability to speak in place of the other, »⁴⁸ a phrase one can understand *geographically*, as when Daive writes « for » Niedecker outside her cabin, or *literally*, as when Daive translates Creeley. Addressing one of his French translators as *Mon frère*, Creeley defines translation « as a consummate art of reading, the closest a reader can get to the place the author himself has stood. »⁴⁹

Notes

1. This paper was initially given at the « Robert Creeley and France » event which inaugurated the Celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the Poetics Program at SUNY-Buffalo in April 2016. I thank Professor Jean-Jacques Thomas, the Melodia E. Jones chair, and the conference committee of the « Poetics : (The Next) 25 years » conference for their invitation. I also want to thank the French poets and translators who kindly answered my questions: Jean-Paul Auxeméry, Stéphane Bouquet, Jean Daive and Martin Richet.
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8. Auxeméry, Jean-Paul. Email to the author, March 2016.
9. Auxeméry, Jean-Paul. Email to the author, March 2016.
Albatros, « Ballade pour Robert Creeley », émission préparée par Jacques Darras et produite par Jacques Taroni pour France-Culture. Première partie, « Fontaine Médicis » avec Jean Daive, Michel Deguy, Pierre Joris, Jacques Roubaud ; deuxième partie « Roissy Charles de Gaulle » avec Pierre Joris, Denis Roche. These interviews were probably made in June 1982. On June 9, 1982, Robert Creeley read at the Centre Pompidou with translations read by Deguy, Roubaud and Darras. In a letter of November 1984, Creeley mentions being introduced to Steve Lacy by Pierre Joris during a Radio France interview « about three summers ago in Paris » (*Selected Letters*, 365). Both recordings are available on Pennsound <<http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/x/Creeley.php>>
10. Perloff, Marjorie. « Robert Creeley Out of School : The Making of a Singular Poetics. » *Form, Power and Person in Robert Creeley's Life and*

- Work*. Fredman, Stephen and Steve McCaffery eds. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2010. 32.
11. Friedlander, Benjamin. « Introduction » to Creeley, Robert. *Selected Poems, 1945-2005*. Friedlander, Benjamin, ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008. 8.
 12. « The act of Love » from *In London* (1970) translated by Liliane Giraudon, Jean-Jacques Viton and Sidney Levy as « L'acte d'amour » in *Banana Split* n° 9/10, 1983.
 13. Fauchereau, Serge. *Lectures de la poésie américaine*. Paris : Minuit, 1968 ; édition augmentée et illustrée, Somogy, 1998. 231.
 14. In Clark, Tom. *Robert Creeley and the Genius of the American Common Place*, New York: New Directions, 1993. 65.
 15. The person at Gallimard who commissioned these translations of Creeley was the poet André du Bouchet. Born in France in 1924, Du Bouchet had fled to the US with his parents in 1940. After receiving his education at Amherst and Harvard he returned to France in 1948, became chief editor of *transition*, the famed transatlantic magazine founded by Eugène Jolas whose daughter he married. In the words of his translator Paul Auster, du Bouchet's work is based on a rigorous attentiveness to phenomenological detail, stripped of metaphor, almost devoid of imagery, and generated by a language of abrupt paratactic brevity; his poems move through and almost barren landscape, a speaking « I » continually in search of itself (Auster, Paul, *The Random Book House of XXth Century French Poetry*. New York : Random House, 1982. xliii-xliv), a description which chimes with some of Creeley's own concerns. In 1967, du Bouchet founded the important review *L'Ephémère* with Yves Bonnefoy, Louis-René des Forêts and Gaëtan Picon.
 16. *Vingt poètes américains*, Deguy, Michel et Jacques Roubaud, eds. Paris : Gallimard, 1980. 34.
 17. « le goût de la précision (de la grammaire la plus limpide possible et du découpage minutieux), l'interrogation permanente sur l'efficacité réelle de ce qui était produit » (Auxeméry, Jean-Paul. Email to the author, March 2016)
 18. Daive, Jean. « Biographie » <<http://www.pol-editeur.com/index.php?spec=auteur&numpage=12&numrub=3&numcat eg=2&numsscateg=&lg=fr&numauteur=50>>
 19. Creeley, Robert. *La Fin*, Paris: Gallimard, 1997. 7.
 20. Containing poems and prose from *Pieces* (1969), *A Day Book* (1972), *His Idea* (1973), *Thirty Things* (1974), *Backwards* (1975), *Away* (1976), *Mabel: A Story* (1976).

21. Bouquet, Stéphane. Email to the author, March 2016.
22. Bouquet, Stéphane, *Le Cahier du Refuge* (198, février 2011) : 18.
23. Albatros, « Ballade pour Robert Creeley », émission préparée par Jacques Darras et produite par Jacques Taroni pour France-Culture. Deuxième partie « Roissy Charles de Gaulle » avec Pierre Joris, Denis Roche. The translations of « I know a Man » appear at 6' 43'', 11' 50'' and 34' 10''.
<<http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/x/Creeley.php>>
24. Two American poets, a man and a woman, two « loners with strong group affiliations » to quote Marjorie Perloff underlining Lorine Niedecker and Tom Raworth's closeness to Creeley, « both obsessed in their condensed, 'minimalist' lyrics, with the grammaticity and paragrammaticity of language, both intensely personal and yet intensely oblique and constrained love poets ». (Perloff, Marjorie. « Robert Creeley Out of School : The Making of a Singular Poetics. » *Form, Power and Person in Robert Creeley's Life and Work*. Fredman, Stephen and Steve McCaffery eds. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2010. 34.)
25. Creeley, Robert. « The Black Mountain Review. » *Collected Essays*, Berkeley, University of California, 1989. 507.
26. Gleize, Jean-Marie. « Jean Daive. » *Dictionnaire de la poésie française de Baudelaire à nos jours*, Jarrety, Michel ed. Paris : Presses universitaires de France, 2001. 187.
27. Niedecker, Lorine. “Between your house and mine”. *The Letters of Lorine Niedecker to Cid Corman, 1960 to 1970*. Pater Faranda, Linda, ed., Durham: Duke University Press, 1989. 187.
28. Celan, Paul. « The Meridian. Speech on the occasion of receiving the Georg Büchner Prize, Darmstadt, 22 October 1960. » *Collected Prose*, Waldrop, Rosmarie, trans. Riverdale-on-Hudson, The Sheep Meadow Press, 1986. 55. In a 1998 interview with Jean Daive, Creeley summons a similar image to explain Olson's theory of projective verse, of the poem as a transfer of energy, an exchange: « Renaissance man with arms and legs outstretched within a circle. It is that kind of projection—to the end of the Earth. » (Creeley, Robert. *Dire cela*, Jean Daive choix, présentation et traduction, Caen: Nous, 2006. 21)
29. Daive, Jean. Unpublished interview with the author, November 12th, 2015.
30. Bouquet, Stéphane. « Creeley, » *Action Poétique* (190, 2007): 8.
31. Creeley, Robert. *A Quick Graph, Collected Notes & Essays*, Allen, Don ed., San Francisco : Four Seasons Foundation, 1970. 6.
32. Daive, Jean. « Biographie. » <<http://www.pol-editeur.com/index.php?spec=auteur&numpage=12&numrub=3&numcat eg=2&numsscateg=&lg=fr&numauteur=50>>

33. Daive, Jean. « Le poème pourquoi en sait-il plus que les mortels? » *Anne-Marie Albiach. L'exact réel*. Marseille: Eric Pesty éditeur, 2006. 9.
34. Creeley, Robert. *La Fin*, Paris : Gallimard, 1997. 16-17.
35. Daive, Jean, « Biographie, » POL website, *op.cit.*
36. Bouquet, Stéphane. « Creeley, » *Action Poétique* (190, 2007): 9.
37. « For Olson, Creeley was ‘the Figure of Outward’—outward in the same sense that a letter goes out, folded in its envelope, to share language and make connection across a gap in time and space. » (Friedlander, *op. cit.* 2)
38. Olson, qtd in Maud, Ralph. *Charles Olson's Reading: A Biography*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press, 1996. 106.
39. Creeley, Robert. *La fin*, *op. cit.* 10.
40. Celan to Hugo Huppert (December 1966), in Hupper, Hugo. « (‘In the Prayer-Mill’s Rattling »): A Visit with Paul Celan. » *Acts* (8/9, 1988): 156-157.
41. Daive, Jean. Unpublished interview with the author, November 12th, 2015.
42. For additional context, see Agamben, Giorgio. *The Open: Man and Animal*, Attell, Kevin, trans., Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004.
43. Daive, Jean. Unpublished interview with the author, November 12th, 2015.
44. Daive, Jean. *La condition d'infini 5. Sous la coupole*, Paris: POL, 1996. 25. *Under the Dome. Walks with Paul Celan*, Waldrop, Rosmarie trans., Providence, Burning Deck, 2009.
45. « Robert Creeley est le poète de l'instant. Mais de quoi est-il fait ? Cet instant n'aurait-il pas un temps à partager avec l'infini. » (Daive, Jean, « Biographie », POL website, *op.cit.*)
46. Daive, Jean. *L'énonciateur des extrêmes*, Caen: Nous, 2012. 73.
47. « Il veut raconter l'Amitié, mettre des mots sur ce qui depuis toujours lui échappe. Comment dans l'amitié s'opère un transfert de pensée. » (Daive, Jean, « Biographie », POL website, *op.cit.*)
48. Daive, Jean. *L'énonciateur des extrêmes*, Caen: Nous, 2012. 74.
49. « La traduction, cet art consommé de la lecture, me semble le plus près qu'une personne lisant puisse s'approcher d'où l'on s'est soi-même trouvé. » (Creeley, Robert. *Là. Poèmes 1968-1975*, Richet, Martin, sélec. et trad., Genève : Héros-Limite, 2010. 185.