

Stephen Baraban

The Worlds

for Robert Creeley

“Stephen, you have to think of the world as where you are, not some place you’re going to get to”—
Robert Creeley, in conversation

Yet shrewd Chaucer’s tales are brightly
inclusive / of a place
one needs to get to,
as the years come to Aprille,
the sights of the ride, the
stories of each man or woman—
they feel the sunlight on
their bodies and eyes
not closed on their journey towards

The Retraction—

the stillness of a grave
altar—ALTER—
and more than one of twenty-nine
wished to obliterate
the previous.

ca. 1975

43rd & 9th

Rushing from work to Penn Station,
confused as ever
by the internal and the external
factors that oppress me,
the day seeming
another falling amper-
sand grain of
a sterile accumulation,
and so my whole being
the trapped fuel of
a cold smoky conflagration's witless plague,
till ceasing my
quick steps: staring entranced at
 three dozen blue-gray birds
standing on hanging from
four horizontal members
run between the two posts
of a small iron guardrail structure
at the center of an edge
of an apartment building roof—
living beads
of a heaven-granted
close to panacean
abacus.

'Trailing Clouds of Glory', Learning the Terms

At the Metropolitan Museum,
the young father lifted the girl up
so her head was in front
of his head, and she
could gaze with close eyes at the small sacred canvas.
"See," he told her,
"those are angels coming down from the sky
to help those people."
So indeed was the glowing story
fashioned well, sincerely or not,
by an artist who was almost always secular
as in the other paintings in
the room now filled with the intensity
of the child hastening to call out,
"are angels
good or bad?"

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