

JEANNE MARIE BEAUMONT

When I Think

after Robert Creeley

about how naive I was though never
admitting it, how badly I chose early on
spending my affections carelessly as
spare change then making quick getaways
igniting the bridges—or when I think of the time
wasted brooding and stewing, my heart a sort of
crock-pot simmering bitterness, it's good to be
grown-up at last with boxes of journals I'm unlikely
to get back to and albums of photos as a very
selective mnemonic aid as though most of life
had been a string of holidays, reunions, bright
birthday parties when of course it's dreary Mondays,
Friday nights watching old black-and-white movies,
hands ink stained from the newspaper, waits
at the post office, subways, trips to the drugstore,
thousands of bowls of cereal, pots of soup—And
when I think of all those I went to school with,
worked alongside, ate with, taught, those I will not
ever see again due to the odd cruel way time
shakes us and scatters us and never recombines
us even perhaps someone I was married to, even
him, and those I failed or let down or otherwise
proved myself a disappointment to, and those I will
never share the same time and place with, we will never
coincide, and that's a shame but also reassuring

because how much are we capable of accumulating,
of absorbing I wonder, for already I try to grasp
one thing only to feel another slip away to make room,
a musical chairs of the mind and who keeps taking
a chair away—so that when I think of the finite
it seems the most profound fact, the boundaries
of minutes, years, borders of gardens and countries,
frame of the painting, edge of the screen, that one
chair left though it has the softest fabric, high back,
cushions to nod right off in until the music stops.