Self-Portrait

By Robert Creeley

He wants to be
   a brutal old man,
   an aggressive old man,
   as dull, as brutal
   as the emptiness around him,

He doesn’t want compromise,
   nor to be ever nice
   to anyone. Just mean,
   and final in his brutal,
   his total, rejection of it all.

He tried the sweet,
   the gentle, the “oh,
   let’s hold hands together”
   and it was awful,
   dull, brutally inconsequential.

Now he’ll stand on
   his own dwindling legs.
   His arms, his skin,
   shrink daily. And
   he loves, but hates equally.


Source: Selected Poems (University of California Press, 1991)