

Note on *A Note*

In *A Note, Nomad* 1960, Robert Creeley discusses the relationship between a poem's morality and its use, or governance, of a reader establishing a direct link between a poem's formal qualities and the formation of a reader's subjectivity therein determining a poem's morality.¹ That what is said in a poem matters less than how one is "there used" is of critical importance and is a principle aspect of Creeley's critical sensitivity. *A Note* is not suggesting a moral determinism however, in fact it appears to be making an indirect case for what Foucault calls "self-crafting in a limited field of constraint", a necessary and non-perjoratively-tagged field of domination, broadly prompting one to re-examine one's relation to governance in-step with Agamben's notion of the apparatus¹. For Creeley, craft alone determined the morality of a poem, that is, how a poem made use of a reader determined its ethics. The "exterior attitude" of a poem is of little concern to Creeley, he recognized that far more was at stake. For instance, a poem explicitly operating as a social-critique has little to offer Creeley if the critique itself is not found in the "sight, sound and intellection" of structure itself. Now this raises questions concerning sense and how one makes distinction of sense-formation. A conventional and rather banal sensibility looks to diction, referents (social and cultural), and other normalized signifiers one may familiarly seek out while reading in order to glean sense from a text. Yet for Creeley, sense, like morality, was not gleaned from such superficial signifiers but from those with the most significant subjectivizational qualities inherent to any text. In this wise, one does not actually critique social ills with poetic vitriol or whimpering directed at the perceived abomination alone. In fact, a poem may perpetuate the thing it decries if it employs and deploys certain familiar speech modalities without distinction and regard for the complex interplay of constructivity and malleability where self and other is concerned.

¹ Agamben's reading of Foucault suggests that not only is one implicated, and therefore subjectivized by the presence of "pure governance," characteristic of an apparatus, but that social systems of dominance, apparatuses, hold the potential to operate as transcendent boundaries, affording myriad ontological possibilities.

Note on Space and Poetry

There is space. A *poetry* is possible when one takes into consideration vectors of speech, thought, and measure (time and distance). Thus poetry, unto itself, is composed of intersectional and mobile elements organized for combinatory performance. *A space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it.*² Notched out in the thrashing of composite elements in relation to one another, contingent upon the trace of its existence, poetry remains as it remains dependent upon its compositional disposition to produce and reproduce itself into possibility. Conflict sustains such combinatory commitment and make it function in a polyvalent unity of failed frontiers and necessarily reneged contractual proximities, essentially linked to the unintelligible, where language meets its unmaking. Poetry, to be enterable or exitable, that is active, having been activated by the failure of the certitude of its origin, anticipates and commands its own destruction. A space that cannot-remain-in-order-to-exist continues in perpetual orientation, situation, and temporalization is not a space but something else. A poetry to-remain is necessarily effaced. There was poetry.

² See Michel deCerteau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (California 1984). While deCerteau's arrangement of space is persuasive, questions of poetry were prompted by such reliability.

Note on Ethics and Experiment

A creative act elaborates particular aesthetics and ethical codes as it gravitates toward the sphere of a social plurality where the so-called *other* is implicitly encountered. The encounter is ongoing and plural, occurring within a limited field of possibility. Crucial to forms of discrimination is an adherence to strict and familiar forms of standardization, albeit from an aesthetic or socio-political standpoint, and so breaking with the common understanding works to disrupt the maintenance of privileged narratives that lend legitimacy to discourses that undergird their own privileged status. It is worth underscoring that it is a disruption of maintenance and hardly renders such regimes of privilege untenable beyond the pale.³

I suggest that the experimental disposition is not an aesthetical approach but a fundamental element of poetry, a basic nature, by which it survives today as it has for millennia. The formal dissimilarities across generations are marked and so are the similarities, but no matter, poetry remains active in its perpetual orientation. Crucial to that orientation is a dedication to a particular disposition and set of activities that drive poetry discursively toward all its intelligible frontiers of combination and recombination with real concern for pressurizing its own existence to the point of incoherence.

What then is the role of compliance in relation to ethics and art? Any universalizing trajectory appears to me as a mode of identification that deserves a skeptical and thorough interrogative treatment. Compliance to standard and rule suggests decreased dissemination, deployment, and mobilization of disruptive strategies of normative speech modalities and so adversely affects a work's capacity for amplified ontological possibilities.

³ It goes without saying that disruption is unequal, in fact, few experimental strategies ought to be considered effective.

It is a perilous discourse that fails to interrogate the acasual interrelatedness of self and other. Should intersubjectivity, fundamental to poetry, suffer compromise by such unoriginal failure, what then is one responsible to or for? Even to stammer and struggle to find adequate terminology with which to articulate one's own condition, let alone another's, is favorable to imperious assumptions of selfhood. To write is to participate in a sociality, to be plural and empathize with the other the same, while to write experimentally is an attempt to transcend the singular/plural binary while exploring the fundamental vulnerabilities of human relationships all the more. Verve and intellectual insight, and the manifold aesthetic trajectories they may launch, are equally important to an experimental disposition, as ethicality remains staked and tethered to working theories of subjectivity.

¹ See Robert Creeley, *A Quick Graph*, Four Seasons Foundation, 1970.