

Aporregma<sup>1</sup>.

Construction for **razor smile #1** by Keyman

There is very little to do when the words dry up other than to listen to the stuttering language.

What forces exist, how do they relate, what new arrangements can we find,. What is the arrangement, what does it do and how does it work. Deleuze is a thought mechanic, sitting in his garage with his toolbox, bonnet up, head in the open book of an ancient text, tinkering and fiddling to see if it will rev harder this way, whether it will start if this bit is connected to that bit. He lifts his head out of the book, from under the bonnet, walks over to the shelves, rubbing the blackness off his hands and onto his shirt as he goes, and sorts through a series of odd shapes on the shelf above the sink. He pulls down a squirming, reddened looking baby, bawling silently and wrapped in a cream nappy, walks back to the engine and attempts to mate the baby with the main concept.

In an essay on the poet and critic Eric Mottram by Allen Fisher<sup>2</sup>, he says, or quotes Mottram as saying, that

*"Planned experiment is the production of the new: it must contain accident, the undetermined and unpredicted."*

These three elements of the new, the **accident**, the **undetermined** and the **unpredicted**, form a critical nexus – a set of elements in relation – around which the sorcerers work. They form the space of creation, which arises from our past, our history and our backgrounds but which moves forward, away or beyond us. In order to allow this back to become a front, this past to become a future, there must be a space, a gap, the moment of duration.

The image is of a cone...behind us, within us, our depth, is this cone of memory. We live at its pinnacle. Riding through time, creating a wake, becoming a wake.

The conflict between Deleuze and Badiou, if we were to see it in Badiou's terms, surrounds the new. Derrida too is divided from Deleuze by the positions they take with regard to the new, except this time with regard to the ability to create concepts. One believes it impossible, the other sees it as the purpose of philosophy.

Aporetic thought is at the heart of philosophy. It's most easily recognised mode is that of the paradox. The famous Cretan Liar paradox, sometimes known as the Epimenides paradox, places a very simple problem in many minds. This problem is that of the limits of what we can say. We don't need to agree on these limits to agree that the paradoxes make a strong case for the existence of some sort of limits. We are limited by language.

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<sup>1</sup> An aporregma is a fragment, something broken off from or severed.

<sup>2</sup> AFonEM#1.htm in the webpages folder on the CD-Rom or available at <http://www.albany.edu/mottram/emmag1af.html> on the web.

Fisher notes a reference to Wittgenstein in Mottram's Kent Journal, which is the main focus of his essay:

The underlying subject of the Kent Journal combines ethics, with the poetics of "open field". As Wittgenstein, in his 1929 *Lecture on Ethics* makes plain,

*"This running-up against the limits of language is Ethics... a definition of the Good... can never be anything but a misunderstanding."* (Kent Journal, p25) Thus in a broken nutshell, the discussion about ethics, definition and boundary are at the fore place of Eric Mottram's thoughts in 1974 America.

This string cluster is directly related to Eric Mottram's use of, first, Schopenhauer where *"the absence of all egoistic motives is thus the criterion of an action of moral values,"* and then Wittgenstein's axioms on fact found in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, first translated in 1922, as Eric Mottram notes, by Ogden, (1.13, 1.2, 1.21, 2.1, 2.201, 3.4, and 3.411.)

Ethics moves in and out of this oneness which refuses to cause suffering to any phenomena. The sense of the all is reached by contemplation methods. The æsthetic is another way: it, too, is harmless.

A thought mechanic must learn to manipulate the objects at hand. Sometimes this involves tracing routes through pre-laid mazes, turning left at Aristotle and right again at St Augustine, bumping into free will in Spinoza only to find out that it's an illusion and Aristotle lied in the first place and you should have gone right all that time ago.

These objects at hand, thoughts, are not nice delicate little animals, discrete and cuddly creatures that can sit on your lap. Occasionally of course you get a nearly dead thought and it can appear easy to handle until some other thought mechanic comes along and conjures it into a terrifying monster that spirals out of control.

Thoughts can kill and have done many a time and not just through being the inspiration for murderous deeds but quite literally, through eating up the thinker from the inside. The thought mechanic must learn the lessons of hygiene early on if they are to gain continuous pleasure from philosophy and the salutary lesson of Nietzsche is worth remembering at this point. Nietzsche knew he was getting himself dirty, letting the thoughts eat away at him and thought, like the junkie he was, that he could handle it. We all know what happened to him.

The æsthetic path for a harmless ethics pervades Eric Mottram's thinking. But such thinking cannot be carried by an informed being. Performance needs presentation of "an inner nature or subterranean lake" or as Olson said in *Poetry & Truth*, "an actual earth of value" in which, following John Keats, "a man's life is an allegory."

"So ... it is impossible for there to be propositions of ethics./Propositions can express nothing that is higher," (Wittgenstein 6.4) and "It is clear that ethics cannot be put into words./Ethics is transcendental./Ethics and æsthetics are one and the same.)," (6.421). This is, as Eric Mottram notes, "to be invented".

In a letter about the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein writes, "the book's point is an ethical one ... draws limits to the sphere of the ethical from the inside as it were..." Ethics is an area of the poetic and poetry itself is not a self-completing action.

In his 1929 *Lecture on Ethics*, Wittgenstein says, "This running-up-against the limits of language is Ethics...a definition of the Good...can never be anything but a misunderstanding."

Eric Mottram's doubts about the æsthetics of W.H. Auden and others, link to his doubts about their ethics. Æsthetics and ethics are directly relational, as EM was to find elaborated by Herbert Marcuse's *The Æsthetics Dimension*, published four years later. As Wittgenstein writes, a contradiction has a civil status (*Philosophical Investigations*, 125). To use a paraphrase of Ezra Pound, paradise never could have cohered.

Never believe in a quiet thought, they will always turn bad unless you keep them very quietly locked away from every other thought. Never bring a quiet thought out to play in the park since you're very likely going to feel ashamed and humiliated by its behaviour. Most thoughts – and it's worth remembering this – are not cuddly cute things at all but are in fact slightly slimy, tentacled and permanently moving entities that should be kept on a short lease and never underestimated.

The poet, critic and author Pierre Joris writes eloquently and interestingly on collage<sup>3</sup>. He makes the suggestion that it is a response to a problem placed in the artists eyes by Cubism with regard to the invention of perspective, that of the subject/singular line of sight as unable to cope with reality. Collage and plagiarism...Mottram as writing poetry made up of lines and words from other writers, other texts, poetically formed, relaid into a new poem.

Joris quotes William Carlos Williams saying "a poem is a machine made of words"

A core reason for the critical neglect of collage-thought were the New Critics & their determination that 1922 was the high- or rather the final-point of modernist experimentation. For some 40 years the critics again debated irony & ambiguity as central to the poem - a poem removed not only from its author (intentional fallacy) but also from the world of matter around it - & thus from the heterogeneous materiality needed to make or see the work as collage. This seems to be changing - with a vengeance. The Gregory Ulmer quote above comes from an essay in which Ulmer proposes a new & needed "post-criticism" - "constituted precisely by the application of the devices of modernist art to critical representations" and that "the principle device taken over by the critics and theorists is the compositional pair collage/montage". And indeed, this process has started, though how far it will go is questionable, the

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<sup>3</sup> joris on collage.htm in folder or <http://www.albany.edu/mottram/emmag1pj.html> on the web

viscous inertia of academic criticism is unlikely to change its time-honoured expository/ representational modes very fast. One example must suffice: Derrida's enterprise - as theorised in his concepts of "citation," "graft" & "dissemination" - puts this masterfully into action from the early essay "Dissemination" (dealing with, & incorporating as collaged elements large extracts from Philippe Sollers's novel *Numbers*) to *Glas*. Well, with the critic's scissors snapping at their heels, it may be a good survival strategy for the poets to move on & find a post-collage mode.

To try to think such a post-collage technique, the most useful theoretical insights I've found have been Deleuze & Guattari's meditations on rhizomes, machinic assemblages & lines of flight - the complexity of which concepts seem to me rich enough to permit a rethinking of the limits of modernist collage - for example of the question of seams vs. the seamless mentioned above. My own first results in thinking through these matters can be found in *Towards a Nomadic Poetics*, a manifesto-like piece of writing coming soon from Allen Fisher's *Spanner* series.

A series of peculiar creatures. They are creatures from another planet, science fiction creatures, where, according to Deleuze, "*one has the impression of a fictive, foreign world, seen by other creatures, but also the presentiment that this world is already ours, and those creatures, ourselves*"<sup>4</sup>. David Hume opens up the possibility of a revisioning of our own being to such an extent that we would feel like we were as unknown to ourselves as are the creatures from another planet. Humean thought would make aliens of us all. The "open field" Olson suggested in his poetics.

There is an idea of Deleuze's about open systems that connects with this and which can be found in one of his interviews, where he says that all the material and intellectual resources are in place to begin theorising and constructing open systems – this is made in response to a question which suggests that Deleuze was against systematising, which he rejects<sup>5</sup>.

If we don't end the idea of separation between everyday life and magickal work, then we're going to continue being at the mercy of those who wish to control us. So for me it's very much a political thing, too<sup>6</sup>.

What sort of alien? How might we be made alien to ourselves or how might a becoming-alien process work? At a basic level, of course, there is the notion of a subjective change of perspective, but this has a number of weaknesses. Firstly, it relies upon the notion of a subject, when in fact the very effect of becoming-alien would tend towards a weakening of a sense of unified and continuous self. Secondly, to push this back onto being a 'subjective' process is, quite simply, a cop-out. It relies upon a prejudice that insists there is a subjective/objective split, which comes down to a dualism of mind and body, a sort of 'Cartesian hangover', where the effects still linger though we don't always recognise their source. Why multiply entities unless we need to, why assume there are two sorts of being, two modes of beings, if we can work adequately with one and account for differences via other theoretical and practical means? The argument, for example, that no material measurement of brain

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<sup>4</sup> Gilles Deleuze: *Immanence – A Life*, p.35

<sup>5</sup> Gilles Deleuze: *Negotiations*, p.89

<sup>6</sup> From Genesis P.Orridge interview in the webpage folder on the CD-Rom as *Paradigm Magazine* – Genesis P.Orridge Interview.

activity is ever going to adequately explain my conscious experience may well be valid but even if it is valid it doesn't imply that there is thus a mind and a body, simply that there are differences between the measurement and the experience. Difference is the issue to be explained, not used to explain. The becoming-alien might be better seen as a re-mapping of the world, which involves more than a simple subjective perspectivism. Philosophy re-maps the world in this sense.