

***PhillyTalks19* – Supplement**

Rob Holloway

Post-event response to *PT#19: Fisher / Mac Cormack*

“Research doesn’t “lead” to anything other than more reasons to/for research. The so-called facts give way to correspondence (one-sided in these instances)’ (Mac Cormack, *Implexures* Seven)

....but not this instance....

First to register the specific importance of Karen and Allen’s correspondence, whose areas of attention Allen summarises at one point:-

‘the underlying discussion is epistemological and thus about truth and freedom as well as knowledge, about will and natural expectations, as well as information and structure and how structure provides (facilitates?) the necessary pathways as well as the auto-habits, the chreods...for representation’ (PT#19, p. 12)

This highlighted to demonstrate the ambitious scale ultimately intended by both writers for their work, one that the collaborative research opportunity provided by the Philly Talks correspondence allowed them to constructively enact. The success of the correspondence arising from: the range of discourse it prompted both writers to bring to the table, balanced by their need to establish salient links for each other and for a future audience. The experience of stimulation on offer resulting from the introduction of material / line of thought by the other person that necessarily could not be predicted, combined with the opportunity to engage experimentally with that stimulus immediately in a sustaining environment of care and attention.

I stress the conditions of the collaborative process here because they map closely what both writers would hope to create as the conditions for response of their readers: to suddenly be alert within new patterns of connectedness / transformation. In Karen’s work, the potential for this recently through her ‘perplexing’ of corrupted discourse in e.g. *At Issue* and *Vanity Release* or, in *Implexures*, offering textual representation of inventive memory at work. In Allen’s, due to the superimposition of a becoming-interactive array of ‘languages of thought’ (Welish PT#19 Pre-event respondents, p.3) previously voided as ‘eclectic’, that bring forth potentiality through complexity; with all environments intending to catalyse break-out from habitual ‘truth’-frames and the knowledges they institute. This their proposed efficacy, their ethics.

The Trap of Ethical Ideology

Wanting then to continue the discussion of ethics, freedom and will. Ethics as the point where ideology disappears, thus making the difficult realisation that ethical ideology is a contradiction in terms despite the fact that its promoters use it as the means for generating awareness and activity regarding the protection of fundamental human rights. Unsurprisingly, seeing those rights eroded, they figure the human as a victim, in ‘misery’. This ideology enhanced at present by the increasing appearance on the world

Rob Holloway – Post-Event Response to *PhillyTalks19*: Fisher / Mac Cormack

screen of the ‘refugee’. Humanitarian organisations work to show their misery through the media to encourage empathy, raise money, do what we can, but the material conditions for their appearance in the first place are not fundamentally affected by either the work of those organisations, nor our supporting actions. We’re asked to bandage the wound.

A present form of freedom is that, while enacting our complicity, we can keep thinking. In relation to this focus, help perhaps from Agamben in *Homo Sacer* (1995, trans 1998) who sees the ‘refugee’ as limit of the ‘citizen’, and thus an unmasking of the alibi of ‘nation’ maintained by sovereign powers beneath which they seek to exert increased control over the ‘common individual’. And sure enough, we’re seeing increasingly clumsy attempts by countries to hide or deny refugees, specifically therefore to maintain ‘nation’-status (think of the mess Australian PM John Howard made when refusing to help Afghan refugees, the recent closure of the Red Cross refugee centre at Calais after hundreds attempted to walk through the Channel Tunnel). As suggested therefore, such action an attempted masking of their own already institutionalised intent: to reduce and so control the human at the level of raw material (this being Foucault’s now familiar analysis under his term ‘biopolitics’, rightly raised by Steve McCaffrey during the Philly Talk discussion to identify what Ron Silliman was blocking, along with ontology, by his prioritisation of the ‘geopolitical’). An intent that has produced the conditions for the present visibility of refugees. The recognisable, ongoing dynamic: roll-over of politics to trade liberalisation and its institutions, legitimising global Capital to the extent that it is not held responsible for the chaos it creates (e.g. IMF blaming economic collapse in Argentina on government’s decision to link peso to dollar in 1991 following advice of IMF – “‘free to arrest transcendence”, stolen in conscience’), combined with recovery of sovereign power through permanent militarism: a ‘state of emergency’ created not just ‘abroad’ by acts of state terrorism by rogue nations (US, UK, Russia, China, Israel) but now domestically to enhance security (Blunkett in UK, Nov, 2001; John Ashcroft’s draconianisms in the US). A dynamic that is restricting increasing numbers to that state of alienated raw material (‘...capital’s main street the Banker / sharpens his steel it skins....’).

Keeping folding in the contexts: in genetics, the Human Genome Project as the sudden appearance of expansive means to work directly on the human as raw material. In environmental terms, the rise in catastrophes due to meltdown (more ‘victims’), the threat of further, disempowering others. Fundamentalist terrorism not just by the state, but by individuals remaking themselves and others into bombs: thousands more ‘victims’. If we are all becoming refugees (‘without value judgements / authenticities’), ever-malleable, our experience reduced to that of an ongoing series of shocks, what do you or I do next? Do I accede to the state erosion of civil liberties thinking that my security will therefore be increased? Do I fight for ‘our’ civil liberties, ‘our’ democratic rights, call for a re-institution of the ‘category of the national’ in order to bolster my dissolving Identity as citizen? (and of course Matt Hart was far from doing this in the Philly Talk discussion by his question and use of that phrase, but surely this frame needs to be rigorously enmeshed in countless others rather than given such projective focus). Do I bandage “my own wounded psyche” (!) by increasing indulgence in material comforts (record sales in London this Christmas !!)? Do I give more to humanitarian organisations in an attempt to act ethically? Is doing so when I think it won’t affect the material conditions unethical? How do I act in a society in which all the options that exist to act ethically I feel are compromised? Isn’t thinking like that

Rob Holloway – Post-Event Response to *PhillyTalks19*: Fisher / Mac Cormack

about ethics merely reactionary ethical thinking? Does me thinking *that* leave me in a Derridean transcendental aporia, ‘in uncertain hope of annihilation’ – hang on, that sounds ridiculous - I mean Jeez, at least when Elvis was there he made it sound good: – ‘I’m caught in a trap / I can’t go on.....’

‘put an end to it’

WADDLE: From Habit to Habitus – A Simulated Life

‘aesthetics as redolent of ethics’ (Fisher, PT#19, p.4)

At which time, in search of something to grab hold of, pull myself back up onto my feet with, I reach proprioceptively: –

‘a movement that allows you to situate yourself through discriminating performance or narration as part of a process of aesthetic participation’ (opening of Fisher’s summary of Olsonian proprioception – Notes for the *Contemporary Poetry and Performance* Conference, University of London, May 1996, in *fragmente* 7, 1997)

for WADDLE (and with acute awareness that by engaging in exegesis, I risk unethically blocking the poem with a belated tracing, but continuing because of in part, a perceived situation that Fisher’s work, particularly in the States, lacks a prominent reception along the performative lines it calls for, and which I attempt here). Here’s Fisher again to open the lock-up, writing of the lack in ‘modern’, and ‘subsequent discourses’ of: –

an understanding of the heightened performance often made possible by the text that has its grounding in a rich complexity of resource, promotes a projective performance in simulation of the self – even a multiple self – delivered as larger than simple, at once and from a text that is itself a record of performance in itself. (Fisher, *Ibid*)

WADDLE (Fisher’s work) I propose as exemplary of such a text, and thus one whose performative action undertaken rhetorically on the aesthetic plane must be fully attended to, and not subsumed by ‘semiotic analysis’, which too quickly smothers the urgent task such action promotes: that of re-thinking what we’ve come to accept as our understanding (this following Fisher on Twombly in *The Crowd*, it not being difficult unsurprisingly to map the mode of reception he calls for there back onto the one his own work demands). More specifically, I would assert the importance of such an approach to this particular poem, given the acute awareness of its relationship to future readers that it manifests, and which is of a piece with its explorative performance of concerns regarding freedom and misery. As a poem that seeks to energise thinking ethics, it works emphatically to engage the inventive will of readers. It does this by using an aesthetic of collage that relates it distantly, but not irrelevantly, with medieval florilegia (a compositional aid and promptbook for memory made from choice extracts from past literature) and by introducing a compositional *ductus* which organises an array of rhetorical ornament ‘arousing emotions of fear or delight, anger, wonder and awe’ by which the inventive memory practice of *meditatio* is catalysed (more details below – here Fisher drawing on Mary Carruthers’ work involving medieval mnemonics

Rob Holloway – Post-Event Response to *PhillyTalks19: Fisher / Mac Cormack*

and cognitive imagination in *The Book of Memory* (1990) and *The Craft of Thought* (1998), importantly, common places also for Karen as the poem's first reader). As such, the poem performs its active meditation on freedom in a way that maximally felicitates its performance by others. To employ for a moment a range of tropes common to medieval mnemonics, we're being encouraged to eat this poem, digest it, ruminate over it, worry at it like a bone as, by doing so, we'll be heightening its ethical potential. As Carruthers says: –

The presence of an audience would appear to be crucial to the making of the ethical action. This simply reminds us that a rhetorical conception of ethics requires its social and public nature to be stressed. (*Book of Memory*)

Which leads me, but without wanting to shove, that perhaps Fisher's concerns when writing WADDLE were shaped in some part by his awareness that it would be brought forth during his becoming-public collaboration / correspondence with Mac Cormack. Or perhaps its just enough to say that one of the interesting ways to think through this poem is by way of its situation.

Carruthers' work, amongst others, has encouraged Fisher's thoughts on reception and facture to such an extent that they have recently been achieving their own shifting frame in his crowd-out theory, aspects of which hold out the potential for aesthetic action to become realised in processes of thinking's re-orientation whose transformations become the reader's own. Carruthers describes how: –

“...communal forgetting was also mastered by the Christians – not through some variety of amnesia, but by applying carefully the mnemotechnical principles of blocking one pattern of memories by another, through crowding or overlay, and by intentional mnemonic replacement....Where two or more competing patterns exist on one site...only one will be seen: the others, though they may remain potentially visible, will be blocked out or absorbed by the overlay. What will block out every pattern but one is our *intentio*, the mental ‘tone’ we select, whose vibrations, like those of a taut string of an instrument, create the patterns which connect a particular experience into everything else we know....” (Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, pp.54, 57)

This way indoctrination lies, but what if the overlaying is multiple to the extent that the action of overlaying is what becomes most prominent, is what the poem's each next frame from word up does, with no frame ever becoming fully blocked out? The development of *intentio* in medieval meditation Carruthers informs, achieved by rhetorical *ductus*, ‘a way of meditation...initiated, orientated and marked out by the schemes and tropes of Scripture’, figured as ‘a flow and movement’ through a series of ‘habituations’ and ‘common places’ which gave ‘choice for an audience about how to ‘walk’ among them’ (Carruthers 116-7, and this vital for Mac Cormack's *Implexures* of course). The occasion of reading therefore an experience in which memory becomes engaged by the compositional *ductus* in modes of recognition and invention (improvisation), leading to new understandings as the patterns created engage with ‘everything else we know’... Carruthers' work one that extends usefully Fisher's earlier researches in this area therefore: see for example his *The Topological Shovel* (1982, re-pub. 1999) where he's linking ‘consistent/inventive memory’ (sourced initially from Minkowski's *Lived Time*, 1970) to the ‘word-page dynamic’.

Rob Holloway – Post-Event Response to *PhillyTalks19: Fisher / Mac Cormack*

To focus back on WADDLE with this in mind, and to develop the sense of its design decisions being shaped by an ethically-enhanced desire for participatory engagement, I register the offering of a clearly identifiable *ductus* that is shot through all levels of the poem's multiplex field, and which can be distortingly (linearity occurring as only one of a multiplying array of trajectories) seen at the whole-poem level as a movement from seizure to 'damage' to 'recovery' (the latter phrases from Fisher's discussion of 'crowd-out' during the Philly Talk event). This path, 'underlying thought', perhaps conceivable also as, to draw on another area of Fisher's thinking, a kind of fully positivised, supportive Whaddingtonian 'chreod': a cord, or spinal chord (for Olson, the body's interior 'mt range' – cited by Fisher in 'Notes...' *fragmente 7*), and also, reminding me of the horizontal line that runs with occasional breaks through the centre of Cornelius Cardew's huge visual score "Treatise" – a common place for Fisher – with its myriad curves, circles, lines etc coming off it on either side marking the paths of aesthetic invention for the improvising musician, and we heard too Fisher's description during the Philly Talk event of his own process as 'improvisation out of a structure'). A figure for 'consistent memory' then, onto which the poem's other 'apparencies of continuity of sentences and narrative' (Fisher, PT#19, p.12), the frames of the 'I', 'The Banker', 'The Beaver', and 'the reader', are progressively inflexed (and beyond the poem, WADDLE as itself a singularity folding back onto the archeology of narrative being mapped by the sequence of '*Gravity as a consequence of shape*', thus re-constituting that '*shape*', then back again onto Fisher's poetry-as-life-project, and shifting, the reader's experience of WADDLE, folded back onto their own ongoing memory dynamic.....).

Regarding related territories, a similar dynamic of consistent / inventive memory work identified by Henri Corbin, in his analysis of the Sufism of Avicenna (shown by Mottram to be vitalising to Olson and certainly familiar to Fisher too), as *ta'wil*: –a mode of exegesis (we might say here, active research) that is 'to cause to return, to lead back, to restore to one's origins and to the place where one comes home', and, to better capture the inventive motivation of this return: 'To decipher....to open our own possibility to ourselves. One cannot *free oneself* from the past without *freeing that past* itself; but to free it is to give it a future again, to make it significant...' (Corbin, quoted by Mottram, *Ta'wil and Henri Corbin, A Legacy of Radical American Poetics*, in *Talus* 8, Spring 1994 – and think also of Olson's etymological derivation of 'proprio' as: 'one's own' – cited by Fisher in 'Notes...'). And, to suggest extended access to non-Western thinking as one importance for WADDLE: *The Secret of the Golden Flower* (trans 1931 from Richard Wilhelm's German trans. of 1929, commentary by C.C.Jung). In his 'Notes...', Fisher cites Olson's April 1953 letter to Jung, after his discussion of Olson's use of this text: –

'the import of "narrative" to the act of language now as art..' and: 'it is because of the unconscious-conscious axis you made so clear, is more powerful as a factor of recognition than in that factor of itself as knowing – that to recognise who & what it is we bespeak (the "self", I think you'd say) leads on to form – to formal acts; and that this is more than prescience, no matter how great that is, as necessary to the informal acts everyone has to perform' (*Olson* 8, 1977, cited Fisher, 'Notes..', 1996)

Here, the notion of vision through narrative, of simulating conditions, on the energised field of a transforming poetic surface (a kinetic art of language – Gustav Metzger's

Rob Holloway – Post-Event Response to *PhillyTalks19: Fisher / Mac Cormack*

Destruction in Art Symposium, Sept '66, and ongoing related activities into early '70's (an early prompting for Fisher), by which we engage with what we are (for the medievals: 'habituations', 'common places'), that we may see who we potentially may be. Olson's identification of this radical use for narrative forming a vitalising part of the imbricating, fertile ground for WADDLE partly shown here, and onto which Fisher shifts Fichte, de Beauvoir (as he tells us in the correspondence), the Boulder 'decoherence' guys, his genomics research, and much else, for further bolster and extension. A ground which feeds and supports the challenging *intentio* / ambition of WADDLE: to be (reaching back again) a 'source of ideas/ distribution of ideas/ to and fro the general flow' (Fisher, *Place I*, 1976) through the undertaking, in the formal acts of a guided (by crowd-out's *ductus*: 'damage' to 'recovery'), self-interrupting, collaged narrative, of a striving / energised recovery of the raw material of our thinking being's familiar, damaged modalities of freedom and misery, so that a means, a manner, a way to return to who we 'common individual(s)' are, and thus may multiply become, is shown 'to others'. A narrative of method by which Fisher exposes through simulation, his use of that which he is constituted by, and in so doing, displays a praxis in which ethics is diffused into the aesthetic action of the poem-process. Recalling again *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, the Chinese Book of Life, which opens: – 'Master Lu-tsu said That which exists through itself is called the Way (Tao)', and describes the means of enacting the backward-flowing method of thought through which energy is conserved that it may engender further energy; so that the individual may 'live mingling with the world and yet in harmony with the light'. And de Beauvoir's criteria for ethical action: – 'We must try, through our living projects, to turn to our own account that freedom which was undertaken in the past and to integrate it into the present world' (*Ethics of Ambiguity*, 1948). This the demand the poem performs and offers, in all its difficulty potential, to the reader to realise for themselves.

[cut...]

To specify, and so show some of the ways in which the performative transformations I've been alluding to may themselves be enacted. The re-orientation being undertaken through WADDLE's 'way of meditation', I figure as the rescuing of 'immanence: a life' (am calling on Deleuze's last short piece *Pure Immanence*, 2001 which I think engages well with Fisher's concerns here) from that legitimised tropism of the Western mind: transcendence. Figured alternatively, I think of the poem becoming a transparent showing of a passageway (*ek-stasis*) from ontology to ethics, or rather, the opening of a reverberating passageway between the two; a becoming active genealogy of past thinking about freedom, consciousness, and memory; a recovery of an ethics of reading; a narrative of poetic development; a tour de force against capitalism's transcendent agency theft....

Focusing closer, into the gap between stanzas one and two, the ongoing re-orientation process as yet invisible, but active. The performance of a damage-critique that as two starts, crashes the transcendental subject down to earth after its crowded-out 'flight'-response ('a state of uplift / a new freedom....' – a limit state) to the perceptual seizure that so strikingly occurs in the opening stanza. Elsewhere, Fisher's description of this response as that 'path beyond the hut into a self-interested take-off, flight beyond syntax from joy characterised as an escape from suffering' (Fisher, *Crowd-Out*, p.2), or, to go to a more distant source now becoming proximate: "One must not wish to leap over everything and penetrate directly....Heaven is not the wide blue sky but the place where

Rob Holloway – Post-Event Response to *PhillyTalks19: Fisher / Mac Cormack*

corporeality is begotten in the house of the Creative” (*The Secret of the Golden Flower*). At this early stage, with the subject still framed within an ‘I’, a sense of loss is apparently engendered as it falls into the counter-trap of its own alienated interiority, Dante’s ‘dark wood’ (PT#19, p.4) with interesting echoes also audible in: ‘after fixation, one has chiefly thoughts of dry wood and dead ashes...one sinks into the world of the dark’ (*Secret of the Golden Flower*). One might further follow Fisher’s own lead in ‘Notes...’ and read Olson’s exploration of ‘traum’ and use of vision in *Maximus III*, 117.

[magnifying further....]

....The poem-subject ‘I’, I witness experiencing a shocking overwhelming of the senses prompted by a too-present facticity that sponges up all potential defamiliarising kicks (‘I lift / heat coil’). This combined with an overbearing elemental animality, making ‘alienation’ and paranoia the only available cognitive frames.

I’ll now focus on a particular transformation that maps the emergence of a self-organising aesthetic process within the poem. This occurs through the transition of ‘loose metal bushes burn’ to ‘shell metal mossed wrath’ to ‘hector lime hash’. To link these is made deliberately easy through repetition and a shifting syntactic disruptiveness that works to effectively block the ongoing alienation-narrative (shift / repetitions stretched across poem planes working as cues to think, prompting examination of the new local context...tags to twirl the poem-thinking-mobile by...). What they occur however does not become clear until the called for etymological act at the final stage is undertaken – (etymologia being an established rhetorical trope which I move ‘out’ of the poem to perform). The earlier shifting four-word patterns now condensed into a three-word asyntactical charge, ‘hector lime hash’, where syntactic breakage is this time given an even more explicitly representative function: the bringing forth *as encoded* of an alternative aesthetic *intentio* being *imprinted* into the linguistic material of the poem itself (this the place and means of facture: between the words, a *ductus* resisting all ‘flight beyond syntax’...ethics nearing the poem-surface...close enough to smell). My uncovering of an encoded representation of an ethical-aesthetic process prompts a re-reading of the previous transforming chain and a growing awareness of a shift from external sensory experience to internal organisation of that experience, leading ultimately to the capability of reflecting on / re-turning of the whole of the poem process so far undertaken, which ended in that sensory trap i.e the transcendent take-off and returning shock of the actual, to a represented affirmation of an ethical / aesthetic process whose re-engaging, disruptive action is the re-orientation of transcendence’s uni-directional flight, and the means by which that trajectory’s vital complexity is uncovered.

Further performances of the poem, with a growing awareness of how any particular transformation pattern continues by shifting, eventually leads me to startle when I map the staged emergence just described onto that of myself as ‘the reader’, most easily picked up at ‘Constantly before the reader..’ and continuing until the ‘end’ of the poem. This results in the emergence of my own means of self-organisation achieved through my attentive reading focus and continued by it. And importantly, it is an emergence that is made possible by the simultaneous ‘failure’ of the poem....

Rob Holloway – Post-Event Response to *PhillyTalks19*: Fisher / Mac Cormack

The vital experience now at hand is one that offers thinking-action beyond the poem while encouraging a whenever energising return to it: its multiplex ways reorganising my informal acts of thought that I fold back onto it to reorganise its ways. Key encouragement to re-focus is given by the collage mode of facture which maintains a simultaneity of modes of engagement which my re-turning / re-reading now works to uncover (lift here, and here, and...using tabs still showing). A constant rewarding as previously masked layers now come swarming, forming new patterns of thought (not Bataille's general economy of waste/loss here, but not a return to a restrictive economy either; the 'reward' not a static meaning-value to be hoarded but more like an ongoing affirming investment into a 'general flow' of thinking-renewal whose relevance any reader's adding to). An enlivening complexity ensuing: the poem being experienced as what its been waiting as: a liveable 3-D thinking-environment: '...a map that is always detachable, connectible, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight' (*A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari, 1988): and this now too my own thinking action...

Thus, for example, by spinning back onto the shifting transformation in stanza two examined earlier, I start situating my own developing emergence of means in simultaneity with that of the encoded emergence of the poem's means. My reading focus is cresting on a confidence curve gained by my awareness of the later emergence and the actual information included there re. hard-wired free will, and feels boosted too by other reading I've undertaken during my durational performance of this poem. Of course, such intensification is not unproblematic. For example, I now experience the shock effect represented in stanza two which I previously witnessed as occurring to the 'I', as being enacted also upon my ongoing attention. I register 'Listen up' as a direct, alienating address which my earlier more passive reading mode of narrative consumer had blocked out. My focus is now also sensitized to feel myself 'following' the 'I', being 'pushed' by the syntactic rush of 'loose metal bushes burn' that collapses me in a sonic/semantic mulch trap.

The payoff?: – when the next phrase in the transformation occurs, I register it as also involving my own readerly experience. I am speeded up into this by my own re-reading of Benjamin's discussion through Freud, Valery and Baudelaire in 'Some Motifs on Baudelaire' of consciousness as shock defence, so that now when I read 'shell metal mossed wrath', I feel that my simultaneous act of re-collecting the earlier phrase which the repetition and syntactic shift prompts, is itself marked in that emergence of a protecting emerging thinking (shell metal...) which leads to the now sensed 'wrath', both of which establish the shock experience as distant; that which has been gone through.

I now also note more acutely the increasing syntactic disjunctiveness across the three 'phrases' as a clarifying means. The aesthetic field of the poem is increasingly materialising under my focus and I recall from other prompted reading, de Beauvoir's positive: 'the concrete thickness of the here and now' in contrast to Hegel's 'universal space-time' (*The Ethics of Ambiguity*). The poem's surface as: I'm here thinking, making my re-reading of the sudden naming of the poem's ongoing process into a flash 'pink' of accumulating aesthetic affirmation: 'vivify flight indoctrination / through hector lime hash robbery's guise'. This time round I choose to overlay Carruthers here for further illumination: –

Rob Holloway – Post-Event Response to *PhillyTalks19: Fisher / Mac Cormack*

...Greek *charakter* means literally ‘the mark engraved or stamped’ on a coin or seal; by transference the word came to mean ‘distinctive mark’ and hence the distinctive quality of a person or thing....The Greek concept of *hexis* [habitual necessity], crucial to an understanding of moral behaviour is a predisposition that ‘stamps’ or ‘forms’ the embodied soul towards behaving in certain ways towards others...

([my addition] *The Book of Memory*, 1980)

Mapping my own emergence of self-organising means onto this point of the poem provokes a boosting appropriation of the poem-process. I imagine a kind of self-encoding of the aesthetic action...as discussed by Carruthers, placing it in my memory by exploiting my heightened awareness of the increasingly uncluttered space made available by the asyntactical word-separation (a kind of made Coolidge-space), enhanced by the upcoming white space breaking the stanza here, and furthered also by my called-for etymological reading act that offers a shift into my own spacetime as I move from the transforming mobile poem collage to the stillness of the dictionary

The etymological act not a fanfared one-step glory-stop unveiling of Author Name, but, in its uncovering of a process of material transformation, becoming my performance of a different act of material transformation which situates me as active amidst the poem’s concerns off which I now improvise my own material thinking-chains (*catena*, Carruthers): a becoming ‘copiousness’ (Carruthers *The Craft of Thought*) at the level of amplified thinkings’ behaviour which this time goes:.....’word/page dynamic’ now the medium of exchange...of thinkings’ energy...through three words...through coin/silver mark, barcode, to mark of aesthetic facture...turning displaced power of currency’s metaphysics, through aesthetic action, back into its materials’ complexity now realigned for inventive thought facture...Prynne’s ‘Note on Metal’ (1968): ‘it’s how the power of displacement side-slipped into some entirely other interest which is difficult, not a simple decision that any one movement is towards ruin’ (and its precisely irrelevant whether Fisher’s repetition of ‘metal’ in the poem is in part a gesture towards the Prynne text or not – working independently, I combine the word with the above Carruthers quotation to lead me to re-reading the Prynne and enhancing my sense of the poem’s crowding out of Capital’s currency by a currency / becoming affirmed pertinence of aesthetic action – others will go elsewhere, the poem’s point is that we all have our own references for thinking about the commonplaces of truth and freedom) ...so, no take-off ...back again: encoding ...sonic hedgehog (Shh gene) directing embryonic patterning (Fisher, note 8, *Ring Shout*)...life’s material emergence...fresh thought bomb...initialising multiplying subjectivities under ‘robbery’s guise’...stealing back free will, in under Banker’s radar.....ongoing transformation into wonder demands this confirmatory/affirmative space must return be broken ‘Ponderous eruption...’

Holding fast as an openness to difficulty – I’m thinking again about how those three words when etymologised simultaneously mark the potential failure of process – factoring up: a failure that is apparent at any size of focus-frame I bring to the poem and which, as noted, is itself importantly re-orientated towards the end of the poem to release ‘the reader’. This Fisher’s ethical complexity, that risks the insistent re-engagement with those tendencies to stasis which most threatens the re-orientating process; positing this as the process’ own engine of re-orientation... In this, the method offered is that called for by Deleuze and Guattari: ‘*the tracings should always be put back on the map*’ (Intro to *A Thousand Plateaus*, 1988) where ‘the tracings’ in WADDLE include the stultifying

Rob Holloway – Post-Event Response to *PhillyTalks19: Fisher / Mac Cormack*

redundancies of transcendence, of History as Fate, the power of Capital, and ‘the map’ being the poem’s rhizomatic performance of those modes’ complexing (see trace / map discussion prompted by D&G’s Intro in Fisher / Mac Cormack correspondence). Importantly, this is not, to address a Levinasian discourse, a return to the Same as the same, but rather one that returns to the ‘Same’ as mask to be lifted to expose its alterity (for Fisher, read ‘complexity’ here – a more material engagement?). As such, an ethical-aesthetic process which contrasts with the dominant ethical mode in Levinasian thought which takes the form of a traversal towards the radical alterity of the Other. A trajectory that WADDLE’s performance would seemingly figure as a difficult continuance of ‘flight indoctrination’. Interestingly enough, as Steve McCaffrey in an Appendix to his chapter, ‘The Scandal of Sincerity: Towards a Levinasian Poetics’ (*Prior to Meaning: The Protosemantic and Poetics*, 2001) has with welcome openness shown, Levinas actually does countenance this ‘movement out of sameness into alterity’ in his exegesis of the Talmud in *Nine Talmudic Readings* (1994), but as McCaffrey then states, ‘Such exegesis and narrative properly situate not on the ethical plane of Levinas’s discourse but on the juridical plane – in the active, disputative sphere of social interaction.’ And here the radical difference with Fisher’s ethical poetics becomes clear, for it is exactly in that ‘active disputative sphere of social interaction’ that Fisher is still situating his ‘aesthetics as redolent of ethics’. An enduring promotion of an efficacious aesthetic function that saves ethics from ideology while catalysing re-orientation of our commonplaces. A functionality ‘that must be constantly won’ (de Beauvoir quoted by Fisher in correspondence) by the difficult task of retaining a full engagement with exactly those habits that would suffocate it. The implication being that such necessary action can only be effectively performed within an aesthetic field due to that field’s potential to simultaneously enact radical rearticulations and site the mode of such action in any engaged reader as a becoming singularity in a growing, radicalised community.

I’ve chosen a discrete section of a particular pathway to re-perform from among multiple (which, as one might now expect, is worked through increasingly higher-ratio transformations as the poem continues, demanding at each stage a vitalising re-thinking of all aspects of that pathway), as it eventually intersects one of the uses Fisher has for the kind of ‘eclectic’ discourses (in this case genomics) his work is often most easily recognised by. But, as Fisher suggests in the correspondence, such ‘eclecticism’ is an ‘illusion’ created, WADDLE adds, by the pointedly familiar Blakean ‘snares of Reason, absoluteness and knowledge’ our culture still remains trapped within. Snares which threaten therefore to promote readings of such materials as fixed, impenetrable discourses and which, in turn, to ease such anxiety, attempt to familiarise them by promoting their referential status (a deadening return to the Same). A risk of course that, as I’ve suggested, the work uses as one engine for the development of its own urgent rhetoricity. On this, I wanted finally to open out Nate Dorward’s otherwise helpful review of some of Fisher’s latest work in his *The Gig 9* (Sept, 2001), in which he conjectures that Fisher’s use of ‘specialist knowledges’ might ‘imply a kind of propositional or referential poetics which could be considered at odds with textual skews and shifts’ (Dorward). Clearly, to de-link the knowledges from specific aesthetic modalities factored for them by Fisher’s and other readers’ attention, is to block the aesthetic function that the poems institute. Rather, the specific uptake of certain information at particular moments in the poetry’s projective performance creates shifts through blockage (at times, Fisher incorporates difficult material as simulations of impenetrability to instill a limit-status of numbness the poetic process and the attention it calls for is then activated against – look at those two horrific, directly-derived website

Rob Holloway – Post-Event Response to *PhillyTalks19*: Fisher / Mac Cormack

(i.e. mainstream) downloads in ‘Watusi’and then look again, and aren’t they precise descriptions of the poem’s aesthetic process that is therefore re-orientating genomics motivations?) and diffusion (a wonderful example of this later in WADDLE). These shifts hold up the knowledges that that information constitutes, for critique and re-orientation along performative parameters of liberatory action within the inventive sphere of the poem / reader’s thinking. Action that occurs in the form of the memorable complexing / energising of those damaging thought-stases that harden dangerous fictions into legitimised actuality, and simultaneously, in the gradual unveiling of a radicalised, overlaying, unmasking, interruptive, free aesthetic energy that is the poem’s infinitely multiple performability and which, when the reader performs the poem, is there to be recognised, shared and taken on by them elsewhere.

I’ve chosen to show some of WADDLE’s ground, and a glimpse of the intricately condensed, eidetic transformations of becoming subjectivities this helps Allen and other readers to perform, but hopefully no more. I want to apologise to Karen for not addressing some of her work specifically, but clearly her exploration of an ‘ethics of memory’ in the life-showing that is *Implexures* has informed my own thinking here, and I trust that my variable, Carruthers-led, focus on WADDLE, arising as it did during the correspondence, is also seen as registering of the energies she helped to generate at the time. I’d hope also that my rather intense focus on WADDLE has still managed to raise avenues for discussion that a more wide-ranging response to the Philly Talk correspondence / event would have signposted more directly: all I can say is, it got to me. And thanks finally to Allen for his openness.

Rob Holloway
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