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SECTION II
(continued)

POESIS AND AUTOPOESIS

READING/WRITING PARA(-)SITES: MADELINE GINS'S *WORD RAIN*

I love visitors, accidental mechanical ones, ghosts, microphytic agents, myself. I need this miraculous help as much as possible. In this book, I am the third I, near the beginning of a perhaps infinite series of them, and in the middle of this book.

(Madeline Gins, *Word Rain* 73)

Epistemology, understood as the meta-field where all scientific and artistic disciplines meet, is the area of the *blank*¹ where Arakawa and Madeline Gins have been pursuing their “unfocused” research for more than thirty years now:

Arakawa: He [Heißenberg]’s trying to say to us, don’t focus, if you want to see anything. As for intention, you have to spread intention—a single “I” does not exist...

Gins: Thought itself is a blind spot... Have to look at that again. (Creeley 39)

When thinking of Gaston Bachelard’s demand for a non-Cartesian epistemology we can immediately see in what sense Arakawa and Gins work on a rather similar enterprise. For Bachelard, following Whitehead, a substance should be defined according to the *coherence* of the principles which serve to coordinate its characteristics, rather than according to a *cohesion* within itself as realism posits it. Thus he prefers to speak of “ex-stance” or “sur-stance” rather than of a “sub-stance” (*Philosophie du non* 78). By this contextual or “intensional” definition, objects are described according to their relations to other possible states, according to their variations and according to the structures of cognition/contact on the part of the involved observer. Writes Gins:

Consider the point to be the quantum of intension. Intension may be defined as the point of connection between the subject and his subject matter marked by the relation of aboutness. It is this point of intension, the click of consciousness, which must at the Death of God come to be considered as the pivot of certainty. Of certainty of what? Certainly it is a holding pivotal point of relation. As it is moved to move/be moved here and there, it inheres, adheres, coheres (or is made to appear to?) (“Arakawa” unpag.)

¹ “Blank” seems to denote by approximation that which precedes and underlies all thought, action and perception and cannot be directly thought, acted, or perceived. See my earlier attempt at defining the term (Arakawa and Gins, *Reversible* 26).

Madeline Gins is certainly right in calling her books “guerrilla epistemology” (Gardner 61). We will see that *Word Rain or A Discursive Introduction to the Intimate Philosophical Investigations of G, R, E, T, A, G, A, R, B, O, It Says*, the earliest work by Madeline Gins (published in 1969) and unfortunately hardly known, can be read as a subversion of Cartesian epistemology, of humanism and its conception of subject/object—and as an early attempt at *To Not To Die*.

Dialectically speaking, any order implies its negation—disorder, chaos. But in the margins between order and (dis)order, we find the liminal case, the liminal infringement, which Christian Enzensberger calls the place where “dirt” of any kind occurs (32). This liminal area, this para-site, is also the point out of focus, where the parasite in the sense of Michel Serres thrives.

The parasite, writes Serres, lives well by “leaving the battleground” (262). Gins’s *Word Rain*, I will argue, adopts similar tactics. Instead of directly confronting the Cartesian tradition of space and thought, the guerrilla strategies of the text undermine “rational” and “narrational” discourses clandestinely. A book beyond Cartesian space, therefore, it is also a source of para-sites. Gins’s “Guerrilla epistemology” is not a simple, orderly, clean negation of order but the blurring of any kind of clear-cut distinctions, a profusion of parasites and para-sites. Thus, *Word Rain* does not argue dialectically as befits modernity. In fact, it does not argue at all; it *lets occur*.

Word Rain, then, is certainly a non-Cartesian book though it does not directly confront Cartesianism. Instead, it confounds that very system of order—the order of *cogito* versus *res extensa*—not by negating it, but by confusing it, smudging it over. The blurring of the borders between human being and environment, logos and matter, subject and object, person and text, reader and author is the most striking aspect of the book.

Gins, who like Arakawa believes in the necessity of a collaboration with the viewer/reader up to the point where the former spectator becomes a “mediator or an experimenter or both,” certainly does not regard the book as a passive object: “Is not the Book a more open-ended Receptacle than once imagined? A hollow tube? A Bottomless? A Conduit, Constant, from Nature to Model” (“Arakawa” unpag.).

Some readers of *Word Rain* will be drawn into the book’s eddy. Surfacing, still quite wet and ruffled, they will find that their experience of objects, their concepts of “self” and “things” have been affected, even infected by their reading. Readers of *Word Rain* will have to acknowledge that reading is by no means a one-way operation. Do readers control their reading or are they reigned by the words that rain on them? I will try to show how readers and text fuse together in the “mist” which is a pervasive metaphor of the book, but at the same time much more than a meta-phor: it is the mist of microbial miasmas, the mist of blurred sight, the “dirt” of perception, the mortal enemy of distinctness, but also the fecund space where new forms come alive.

In *Word Rain*, written language behaves as a horde of rebellious parasites. Its letters become more and more selfish, the stars of their own choreography. And the readers become their “medium.” As voiced entities, as emanations of the throat, these words also encroach upon the reader, and guide his reading:

When you see^f I say breathe fast; ^sslow breathing; ^mthrough the mouth; ⁿ you will breathe through your nose; ^{v^f} very fast, you are right; ^{v^s} very slow, you are right; ^hhold your breath. (5)

The words informed me clearly but in muted tones. They whispered past my vision. In this way the sentences breezed in, almost catching me unaware. (61)

These directions instruct the reader on *how* to read the text, and how to *breathe* while reading it. Moreover, the reader's breath and the voices of the novel's characters are equated with wind. They "waft," they "whisper." This breath-like quality of words reveals another parallel to the parasite as described by Serres. Associating wind and noise with the holy ghost at Whitsuntide, or the Jewish "ruagh," Serres suggests that the holy ghost ("the living word") is, not unlike the parasite, a "third term" (65). For Michel Serres *consonants* are the real parasites. They articulate the "waft," the streams of voice, or sound, thereby creating language—properly speaking—difference, phonetics, and eventually semantics (253-54).

Word Rain does not only stage the takeover of the parasite as media theory by printing mimicked sound; what is more, the letters of the text read by the protagonist of the text-within-the-text are said to be formed by two subversive, "colonies" of "microphytic agents" that are organizing themselves to "write" the statement "I am the living word"—a project that prompts us as readers of *Word Rain* to raise suspicions about the origin of the print we hold in our hands. After page upon page of text riddled with hyphens, crossed out words, mathematical formulas, photographs of fingers on the text, and finally, the material clustering of letters on the last page, it becomes clear that the "surface of signifiers" has taken on a life of its own. This revolt of signifiers turns the servant of the message—the material surface of the text, the print—into a "corps of the microphytic ballet." The medium literally becomes the message, and the "message" achieves agency by looking for readers to be its new "hosts."

Word Rain celebrates the parasite as "static" (noise, disturbance of the signal, or mist), as that which modulates breath, but also as microorganisms similar to William S. Burroughs's dictum "Language is a virus from outer space." In *Word Rain* the rhizomatic web of "microphytic agents" dispels logocentrism. These word-microbes disappoint the expectation of an immediate and transparent universal language. They mock the dominance of the eye, because they can only be smelled, not seen. And they become a "swarm" ("colonies"). Writing, hitherto enslaved by fiction's insistence on "meaning," begins to lead a teeming life of its own. But what is more — the "living letters" endeavor to infect the readers of *Word Rain*. The message of this text is: To read is the equivalent of agreeing to lose control, to be entertained in a para-site where the reader is "guest" and "host" at the same time.

Not a trace of mourning over a dissolving human subjecthood or divine logos. While Burroughs demonizes language as a virus in the framework of panparanoia—"What scared you all into time? Into body? Into shit? I will tell you: *the word*" (qtd. in Shaviro 38)—there is no humanist nostalgia to be found in *Word Rain*. For Burroughs, the viral inscription of language is a triumph of the symbolic order, of the law of the father, of capital, and in its last consequence, an invasion of evil. In *Word Rain*, however the rebellion of the "microphytic agents" is a joyful subversion of the logo- and heliocentric orders. Their mimicry—for Burroughs, protective camouflage—is less a weapon of defense than a means of lively intervention.

Burroughs's question—"Which came first, the intestine or the tapeworm?"—acknowledges the inherent symbiosis and co-evolution of host and parasite (qtd. in Shaviro 39). But "life" still seems rather revolting to him. *Word Rain*, however, seeks to heighten and redefine life. In *Word Rain*, life is not incarcerated in a subject and thus will not end with it. In dissolving the Cartesian subject's armor, and dispersing it back into the world, *Word Rain* unmasks death as the fate of walled-in entities. In *Word Rain*, boundaries become heuristic devices that will have to be renegotiated day by day. No longer are there clear-cut borders between organic and inorganic matter, between matter and idea or sign: "Metaphors [...] I plant these in my soil. I transplant these to grow in my soil" (77). Neither are there limits between flora and fauna, letter and microbe. Processes of liquefaction, lubrication, condensation, glutination and, eventually, cellular and literal vivification jubilantly present words as self-(dis)organizing and the "world" as a thick continuum encompassing signs as well as objects, matter as well as mind.

After all, "cleaving" is a concept of paramount importance in *Pour ne pas mourir/To Not To Die*. So far, Western thought has more or less relied on "splitting up" and "analyzing" the world. But "cleavage" is not only (cell) division but also (cell) coherence (Arakawa and Gins, *To Not To Die* 64). If destiny is to be reversed, Western concepts of identity, control and mastership have to crumble. This cannot be done by replacing one point of view with another. "Looking on" or "looking at" will no longer do, no matter from which perspective.

In the following I will read *Word Rain* with Michel Serres's essay on the parasite in mind, focussing—or rather unfocussing—on the dirt of experience, on the subversion of categorical order and the conception of an autonomous self.

From meta- to miasma

Well before Kristeva's analysis of the "abject" became influential, the German poet Christian Enzensberger wrote a treatise on "dirt" in which he described the subject as an ongoing construction of building walls around itself and of throwing out/up external stimuli, a process which, in psychoanalytic terms, can refer quite literally to vomiting. As we know, the concept of the modern subject arose in the wake of Cartesianism, and is constituted by the isolation and distillation of the "self," as well as by the abjection of everything that poses a threat to the autarky and autonomy of this self. These threats are what Enzensberger refers to as "dirt"—anything that infringes upon the distinctness of the individual. Because the subject needs to see itself as exclusive, intact, homogenous, organized, and unique, Enzensberger explains, it abhors ambiguity, heterogeneity, and hybridity, but most of all blending, mixture, and "unclean" states of aggregation. I refer to this subject as Cartesian, because it conceives of experience as a one-way-operation; because its creed is freedom (understood as independence), distance, and the choice to decide which experience to have and not have. Given these requirements, Enzensberger asks: "Does not any contact with the world, every experience, every action, every knowledge contain an element of dirt? Does the person really believe that he or she is most a person when completely separated from 'the world'? Is that the rationale behind the untiring obses-

sion with cleaning?" (16-17).² We will see that in *Word Rain* contact is contamination, experience infiltration.

With the onset of modernity, and in a world that continues to be dominated by Cartesian logic and ethics, the symbiosis between one's "own and proper" and the "other" must be repressed, or expelled, in order to not endanger the clear-cut distinction between subject and "abject," a distinction that must be defended and redefined day after day. As Michel Serres puts it in *Le Parasite*:

*Such repression refers as much to religious excommunication, political imprisonment, the isolation of sick people, trash collection, generalized hygiene, the pasteurization of milk and so on as to Freudian repression. But what concerns us is history as well, the history of sciences in particular: whoever belongs to the system perceives less and represses more its noises in proportion to how much he or she works for the system, thus never ceasing to be in the good, the just, the true, in nature, in norm. All dogmatisms thrive on this division whether it be hidden or explicit. (91)*³

For the Cartesian subject, Enzensberger suggests, any contamination is a sort of death. Along the same lines, the subject abhors "swarmlike" entities, tiny multiplicities, the teeming hordes of crawling bugs or wriggling worms—in short: the parasites (23-24). In the non-modern and non-Cartesian *Word Rain*, we as readers have the opportunity to witness these parasites at work.

As Michel Serres describes it, the parasite does not fight directly; it interferes, intercepts, and is neither "foreign" nor "proper." As a wizard of mimicry, moreover, the parasite itself remains imperceptible except for the effects it has on its "host." For Serres, then, the mimicry of the parasite is not a tactic to dissimulate an "essential self" or identity. Here it is not really a question of one being imitating another. Rather, the parasite cloaks itself by achieving a confusion of "figure" and "ground" through techniques similar to camouflaging:

In order to avoid inevitable rejection or exclusion reactions, an animal parasite will produce or secrete at the points of contact linking its body to the host's body a tissue that will be identical to that of the host. The parasited body is abused or duped, as one wants, and stops reacting, it accepts the other, acts as if the visitor was its own organism. It accepts the other and all its demands. The parasite plays on mimetic strategies. It does not play at being another, it plays at being the same.

I am not sure whether mimetism is exclusively parasitical, but this is a necessary ruse for thieves, strangers and guests; it is a disguise, camouflaging in the colors of the surrounding milieu, when the milieu is the host or the other. (272)

Cloaked by its tininess, the parasite multiplies exponentially; it fills the space with its invisibility. The parasite, explains Serres, does not rely on mechanical forces. It is a geographer, a topologist, and keen on

² Translation mine. Unfortunately the specific style of Enzensberger's treatise—subjunctive mood and indirect reported speech—is lost in my translation.

³ Translation of quotations from Michel Serres by Jean-Michel Rabaté.

knowing its territory. It has no need to argue with words because it has the unique ability to disturb the very means of communication. When you inhabit the channels of communication, you don't have to plead anyone's case at all (Serres 262). For Michel Serres, noise or static in a communication channel or in a message is a parasite as well. However, what is "parasitic" from the point of view of semantics, is the the *conditio sine qua non* for any sound or tone. Similarly, matter is usually regarded as irrelevant if not detrimental to writing and meaning. In *Word Rain*, however, writing and words depend on, or even *are* themselves everything usually considered as parasitical to meaning:

Words are made by: ink, print, paper, wood, air, electricity, light, holes, metal, glasses, rubber, erasers, smoke, lead, water, lemon juice, etc., tongues, connections, letters images, objects, films, nerves, blood, heat, fire, selection, decision, me and substance in every form. (47)

Writing a book which stages reading-as-the-profusion-of-parasites, Gins highlights the always-already inherently parasitical relationship between text and reader, author and text, writing and meaning.

Hence, *Word Rain* is more *and* less than a metafictional novel. Its strategy resembles the technique of *mise en abyme*, a technique for which a strand of meta-fiction has become quite famous, only at first glance. In the fictional space of the text, a woman sits in the library of her "host" reading a text "in which" several characters interact. This woman might be understood as the subject of *Word Rain*, while the text she reads is her object. But from the first chapter there is yet another "subject"—an "I" that controls, and has a mysterious connection to, the fictive reading subject in the book:

I am folded into her. I am involved in the curves of her grey folds. I know how to use them. I know better now than at first but I knew then too. She moves as I shift. Words rain on a molded juncture which you might mistakenly call my head.

I fill her up at the typewriter. I move her femininely as befits her body. I take her with me. I introduce the tensile subject into her. I am her introduction to the room, to the word rain, to the waterfall pummeling down over membranous rocks. I find her room. I move in the damp ocean. Words cannot say how I am she. (3)⁴

The relationship between "I" and "she" in this text reveals a disturbing intimacy: "I wrote her and read her to her before she wrote this book. Except for a few insertions I left her on her own/(TOUCH)/ except to be with her every instant" (7).⁵ At the same time, it is a relationship characterized by an objectifying and dissecting instrumentality: "I introduce the tensile subject into her." As "tensile subject" the "I" of the text escapes the human and humanist scale. Although projecting itself as active, it is passively subjected to the waterfall of the word rain. Moreover, this subject does not seem to have a human physique, but: "a molded juncture which you might mistakenly call my head." At times, the "I" of the text goes so far as to acquire the

⁴ The text is unpaginated; my pagination begins with the first page of the first chapter.

⁵ The word "(TOUCH)" is inserted in this sentence so that, when the page is turned, it overlaps the word "TOUCH" on the opposite page. The text comments that: "They [the words] face each other. It will be seen that the word TOUCH is facing itself (and it may be imagined to do what it says when the book is closed)" (6).

traits of an extraterrestrial or alien, but it is not clear that it comes from the “outside”: “I must say that (even though it is entirely possible that I originate a million miles from here) I am closer than this book which is very close” (3). Or as we read later: “I was falling. I fell thousands and thousands of miles in a sitting position until I reached the chair that I sat in and it touched my bottom” (59).

While the meta-fictional novel works with hierarchies of narrative layers *reflecting* each other, *Word Rain* allows characters, letters and voices to interpenetrate and fuse within its pages. The “inside” (of *Word Rain*, of the text read in *Word Rain*, and of the characters) is always already colonized parasitically. Even the “I,” which one might initially presume to be the source of the discourse, is the effect of an *agencement* of foreign bodies: “Foreign materials of every nature scraped against one another, absorbed one another. This brought to mind a strange coherence upon which the hope of my continuance depended” (61). Due to the lack of distinguishable “layers” in this text, therefore, there can be no mirroring like that found in the meta-fictional novel. Instead, “platforms”—early precursors of “landing-sites”—travel through all conceivable and inconceivable states of matter and planes of consistency:

They^m [the “platforms,” D. B.] are substantially insubstantial. They are tenaciously inclined toward a solid, hard, hollow elastic pulpy quality. Through this inclination they undergo or come across everything indoors and outdoors, in every season, on the patio, ^vf in the library, etc., as for a start they pass through or come across friction, fluidity, liquefaction, lubrication, gaseity, vaporization, density, hardness, elasticity, texture, pulverulence, softness, water, air, ocean, land, gulf, ^m plain, lake, island, marsh, marsh, stream, wind, river, oil, resin, semi-liquidity, pulpy wads real or wafted. (39)

The distance necessary for any “meta” or mirroring is thus absorbed. As these “platforms” contaminate each other and coagulate, the “mist” allows for an absorption of the fictive reader/narrator in her reading, in the weather and in words.

As the process of reading *Word Rain* progresses, the relationships between subject and object, logos and life, master and servant grow more and more precarious. Yet as the writing seems to become increasingly “alive” and material, the reading, and presumably reigning, subject becomes less so, gradually evaporating into a mist, into a “rain” of words and letters. Similar to Serres’ concept of the parasite, this “noise” or “mist” acts as the *tertium quid* to the two antagonistic forces engaged in battle: “The old battle, the two fighters together vanish in this fog. When the mist vanishes, one can see the two as friends, associates, allies, now they have no other foe but the mist” (263).⁶ Though at first the mist merely disturbs the fictionality of *Word Rain*, it will absorb that fictionality more and more until the text becomes unintelligible, and eventually, unrecognizable as a text. Gradually, the mist is undermining the age-old tug-of-war between “subjecthood” and “objecthood”:

The mist. The size distribution, median and modal size of the drops vary greatly from case to case, according to the method of formation, history of the mist, its age, the wind, temperature and radiation

⁶ Translation mine.

conditions, thickening or thinning tendencies, admixture of smoke or other "foreign" microphytic agents, effect of rain or snow falling into from under or above.

It is noteworthy that the routine observation of mist as a meteorological element has been confined in all weather services and observatories, to recording the observer's opinion as to whether or not true mist exists at or in sight of his station in life at the time of observation, and 2) [sic] the observer's estimate of the degree to which his vision has been displaced or replaced by that of the mist. (107)

Presented as though it were a quotation from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, this passage emphasizes not only the continuum between subject, perception, and object, but by its pseudo-scientific diction also mocks the Cartesian rhetoric of "clairement et distinctement." Or as Bachelard puts it: The limiting case is where a substance can only be determined according to its alteration (*Philosophie du non* 95). Alteration, however, implies someone who takes notice of at least two states.

Similar to the "becoming-everyone" that Deleuze and Guattari count among the strategies of becoming invisible, the colors of clear-cut distinction, such as cold blue or warm red, dwindle away in *Word Rain*, making place for "taupe" and "gray," the colors of letters and fog, and—less often—for "yellow" and "green." On one hand, the off-colors of the "snuggling mist" obstruct clear vision, and on the other, unctuousness prevents any "seeing-through":

*The undiagnosed illness of which he complained was, I felt sure, a severe case of diplopia. The probable cause was the inordinate amount of grease which a thorough examination had revealed to be present in both eyes. He did not say, but I feel sure that, as a matter of blurred fact, he rather enjoyed the constant change which his condition offered him. There is also, as might be imagined, a great delight to be had in seeing **between** an object and itself. (71)*

Word Rain praises the loss of vision due to mist or smarmy retinas as the "delight" of "see[ing] between an object and itself," of losing clarity, and blurring perception. Bachelard, we recall, remarks with a certain resignation that in the wake of Heisenberg's Principle of Uncertainty the Cartesian formula had to be rewritten as "on connaît clairement ce qu'on connaît grossièrement" and "à l'une la clarté sans la distinction, à l'autre la distinction sans la clarté" (*Philosophie du non* 79). *Word Rain's* version, however, is free of any regret or resignation: "I am a precise cloud" (66).

This blurred or fuzzy logic is also what Michel Serres suggests in lieu of a binary logic, taking the place of the dialectics of inclusion/exclusion, friend/enemy, and subject/object:

We will never again answer by yes or no to questions of belonging. Inside or outside? Between yes and no, zero and one, an infinity of values appear, therefore an infinity of answers. Mathematicians call this new rigor "fuzzy": fuzzy sub-sets, fuzzy topology. Let them be thanked: we had been waiting for this fuzziness for centuries. [...] From now on, my book will be rigorously fuzzy. (78)

Serres's "rigorously fuzzy" and Gins's "precise cloud" leave the paradigm of the "eagle eye" behind, a paradigm which in many post-modern studies of gender, deconstruction, and postcolonial texts, has acquired a "bad" reputation as the signature of heliocentrism.

Jane Gallop, for example, draws attention to Freud's privileging of the visual and the concomitant devaluation of smell—for her, a hallmark of modernity. According to Enzensberger, odors belong to that kind of “dirt” that contaminates the subject most effectively. Odors do not allow for a focusing of the senses, much less their exclusion. Nevertheless, they remain quite distinct, even if hard to name. An odor is rigorously out of focus, a precise cloud, yet penetrating. It reminds the subject most strongly of its porosity. The olfactory, along with the other secondary senses of taste and touch, endangers the modern cult of distance.⁷ Visual perception allows the subject to experience itself as selective and distanced. The visual is thus the realm where the subject can most easily succumb to the illusion of being wholly active, while the perceived remains entirely passive, as if waiting to be perceived. The sense of smell is transitive as well as intransitive. It is not only perceived, it inhabits the subject. Writes Gins: “To be transitive is to have a carry-over onto something else. So thought smells to have a body all spread out in transitivity.”

At the same rate that sight is obscured, or made opaque, olfactory impressions gain heightened importance. To these, tactile stimuli are equally joined, and fuse in a *jouissance* of surfaces:

As I picked up the next page, I was aware of the texture of the paper interposed between that of my fingers. Their structures were nearly aligned. The nap, tooth, web of the paper surface felt nice to the pulsing tissues of my fingers. It reminded me of the taste of mushrooms. (62)

The fictional world of *Word Rain* thickens until “looking through” the surface of signifiers onto, or into a construed fictional world is no longer possible. Ultimately the letters on the last page of the text merge into a kind of “black noise,” an overlapping cluster of the print word. Only the last two sentences of the text become legible long enough to explain their analogy: “The body contains 98% of water. This page contains every word in the book.”

“Springy pudding” or glutination

Heuristically speaking there are at least four different levels or “platforms” in *Word Rain* which will, by and by, melt together into one “word puddle.” Prior to this, however, these “platforms” register and undergo several processes of glutination. One layer “above” the protagonist, an “I” addresses the actual readers of the book, giving him/her a para-site, i.e. the time, space, and everything there *is* in the book:

I give you this book for a present. It comes with a room, light, a country, sky and weather. I will arrange for you to be made aware of these in detail. You may look at everything. You will see only what I see. Look at this sentence. There is nothing on it. Now look at this sentence. I see a plate of desert ribbed with dunes held in place with drops of slime just above a layer of petrified tentacles. (3-4)

⁷ For more on this subject, see Buchwald 35-37.

This narrative voice directs the reader's attention to the strategies of creating the illusion of a "real world" as used by "realist" fictional texts. These are strategies that function only as long as the reader remains unaware of them, or as long as the reader can achieve a quasi-automatic "willing suspension of disbelief." As long as the reader's attention is not drawn to the fictionality of a novel, as long as s/he does not become aware that it is constructed with words, the reader sticks to the author's lime-twig, or to put it in Gins's words: "In any case I was certainly [...] caught on the hook at the end of the author's line" (80). In such illusionistic techniques the chain of signifiers is supposed to function like a window-pane, providing a "glance" at the represented fictional world, as if the reader were "looking through" it. Although the reader is expected to become psychologically involved with the narration, the metaphor of "looking" at the world represented emphasizes a certain conditional distance between reader and text. The reader is invited to "look," certainly, but can just as easily refuse to "look," closing her eyes or the book itself.

Literary critics in the tradition of *Wirkungsästhetik* (reader response theory) greatly stress the active role of the reader in "concretizing" the text—in filling the "gaps" with his/her own imagination. Without collaboration on the part of the reader, they argue, the fictional world of the text would not be created. Despite the "active" role of the reader, this activity is nonetheless an unconscious one. As soon as it becomes conscious, as soon as the reader is aware of what s/he is doing, the illusion is spoiled.

The intricate relationships of interdependence between "blood donating" reader and "vampiric" text are often clad in binary language, simplified into stereotypes of male/female, subject/object, active/passive, reader/text, glorifying critical distance. Once this relationship threatens to reverse itself—once, that is, that the text takes begins to "devour" the reader rather than the reader "digesting" the book—a certain discontent, uneasiness, if not outright disgust is articulated by literary criticism: the text is deemed "manipulative." When we speak of the "reception" of a text by its reader, it is thus not to be taken literally; the reader is supposed to "penetrate" the meaning of the text, and the organ predestined for this activity is the mind's eye. Hence the metaphor of "looking through" a text characterises both the "naive" as well as the "professional" reader: creating the illusion of a fictional world (the role of the reader), as well as disturbing that illusion (the role of the critic). Whether the reader "looks through" the signifiers into a created world, or the critic "looks through" the strategies used to create that illusion, the dominance of visual metaphors in discourses of reading is unmistakable.

Word Rain draws attention to this fixation on the eye, and pokes fun at it: "Look at this sentence. There is nothing on it"—and literally speaking, there *is* nothing on it (on this sentence). "Now look at this sentence. I see a plate of desert ribbed with dunes held in place with drops of slime just above a layer of petrified tentacles." Although literally speaking there is nothing "on that" sentence either, the narrative voice pretends to "see" something which is difficult to visualize. Thus the reader is still stuck with interpreting words in order to arrive at an image. These words—"plate of des[s]ert"—are ambiguous: a dish? Or a landscape? A "plate of dessert" would, of course, make better sense, especially in the larger context of foods that are repeatedly mentioned on the same page. But the word's spelling and its immediate textual context ("dunes," "layer," "petrified") suggest that we here read an arid landscape. Attempting to visualize both readings of this sentence at the same time, the reader encounters at best an almost impossible task, and at

worst, the perfect image of abject horror: the vision of a dainty dessert—with its connotations of civilized table manners—overlapping with an image of Lovecraftian dimensions—conjuring abject images of a landscape which, in the Jewish-Christian tradition, is the location of non-civilization, the place to which the scapegoat, laden with filth and sin, is sent, and where the devil resides. The “glue” between these conflicting images is—*horribile dictu*—“drops of slime.”

Word Rain exposes the reader’s willingness to “concretize” and “fill in gaps,” and it exposes the manipulative power of the narrative voice: “You will see only what I see.” So far this is a technique shared by high modernism and meta-fiction alike. But while modernist approaches, with the exception of surrealism, are still dedicated to some sort of enlightenment ethos—that replaces looking through “good prose as window-pane” with seeing through a narrative technique—*Word Rain*’s ambiguity does not aim at achieving an ironic distance between reader and text, but at a subversion of the very discourses of clarity and rational comprehension.

The reader becomes aware of the sticky strings of the text, a realization that only leads to her getting all the more stuck in them. There is “gluey stuff” in all layers of the text. The first to experience this is the narrator within the fictional world of *Word Rain*: “I had kept my finger glued to the corner of page nine,” she writes (21). And later: “As I pushed the first page of the second chapter between my sticky fingers...” (28). The characters within the text she is reading, moreover, are not far behind in coming into contact with the sticky viscosity that characterizes their fictional world:

Almost walking past him, she reached out and touched him. Her fingers became stuck in him. Horrified, Mary attempted to recoil. She was unable to release her fingers. It felt as though they were bound in a springy pudding. The old man hissed and wailed. About Mary’s many fingers, the pudding pulsed warmly. Her eyes wouldn’t open. [...] Once Mary was pulled out of him, the old man’s story ceased to be told behind them. He collapsed out of the room. (61)

Here the subversion of power, which Sartre ascribes to the viscous, turns the person who wants to touch—the person who wants to actively make contact, and who, in this gesture, takes the dominant position—into the passive captive. The viscous, says Sartre, at first appears as if it could be possessed. But at the very moment when one assumes to possess it, there is a strange reversal and the viscous begins to possess the touching person, making him/her sticky. To touch the viscous means to be in danger of dissolving oneself in stickiness. The being of the viscous is the soft and sucking adherence of all parts, coherence and secret collusion of everything with everything. In short, in his horror-stricken vision of stickiness Sartre describes the strategy of adhesion as a subversion of power relationships (700-1).

Later, he warns:

In itself, it is terrifying for a consciousness to become viscous. Being viscous entails soft adhesion, and by suckers coming from all parts, a sly solidarity and complicity of each with all, a vague and soft effort of each

to become individualized from which follows a falling back, a flattening emptied of the individual, sucked clean from all sides by the substance. (702)⁸

Word Rain, however, provides its readers with instructions for mentally and imaginatively engaging with stickiness:

Ropy gas fibers, ropy gas shavings, these are always present inside and outside. You can make wood shavings or shavings from a fruit. If a gas could have its outer edges gradually shaved off, if it were temporarily given the necessary solidity to allow this to be done while still remaining a gas, you could, as you have just done, in this way produce gas shavings. These would be of a ropy substance composed of stringy runners. These runners speed through a vapor as the agents of an intention. Once they have angled through it, they are brought into a new existence as the springy, pulpy substance of which their own growth has heralded the possibility. In this state, they carry messages, record actions, allow actions and when there is an intention provide runners. Similarly, when there are runners there are intentions. There will be more later.

I remembered the possibility of a ropy substance hardening into a pulp. (43)

The phrase “Ropy gas shavings” demands that the reader imagine the unimaginable, but with no promises of “freedom” or “enlightenment.” On the contrary, as the opacity of the text thickens, its world becomes less and less open to the subject. The reader witnesses that objects are not investigated without an effect on the investigators; the “glue” of their materiality remains on the hands of the subject. Similarly, observation cannot be a one-way operation and human relationships are not based on temporary *contrats sociaux* of autonomous individuals.

“Oiled geometry” or “the clear embolisms of symbols”

In Gender Studies, mathematical systems have been described as belonging to the “daytime side” of the male-female axis. They are associated with being “dry” and “sterile,” as belonging to “form” rather than to “substance,” to “spirit” rather than “flesh” (Whitbeck 69). Thus did Samuel Smiles hope engineering students could learn “discipline” by studying maths: “An engineer could not fulfil his major task, bringing order from chaos, if he were sensuous, self-indulgent, reckless, untidy, or emotional” (qtd. in Hacker 40). In this view, mathematics can give form to passive “chaos” but cannot create anything out of nothing. In Postcolonial Studies, moreover, the Western concept of mathematics has been regarded as the secret weapon of cultural imperialism, especially for its implicit emphasis on rationalism and “objectivism” (Bishop). In *Word Rain*, however, greasing theoretical concepts and anointing geometry may indeed produce a “clandestine procreation”: “I induce a sly birth with my eyes the lines of creases. (Delete) I massage geometry with scented oil” (1).

⁸ Translation by Jean-Michel Rabaté.

Pregnancy and procreation have long been relegated to the “night side” of culture, to the side of femininity. For the modern subject, these appear to be somewhat “dirty” and “disorderly” processes, which must be strictly controlled. The association of birth with *vernix caseosa* and baby oil, and of death with “extreme unction,” documents the connection between lubricants and biological processes on the one hand, and “civilised” rites of passage on the other. Gins collapses the semantic field of aridity and abstraction with the semantic field of greasiness and palpability, so that rigidity and slipperiness are not used as opposites but fuse in “liniment algebra” and “creamed mathematics.” With a bit of salves and greases it might be possible to let the reader experience the untidy procreative power of mathematics. When geometry is massaged with scented oil, it is sanctified as well as debased by materiality (at least from the perspective of rationalism). On the other hand, it becomes procreative and alive: “This page is a continuance of my insertion. There is a word for this. It is, according to my preferences, a fecundating mathematical process, lubricated multiplication” (48).

When the calculating machine is lubricated, multiplication works like a well-greased clock:

I have made investigations into her language. I have investigated the means of her disposal. I have preserved these in oiled geometry, liniment algebra and creamed mathematics in hope that they will not become mixed with the word rain.

[...]

$W = \text{word}$ $O = \text{zero}$ $E = mc^2$ $M = \text{meaning}$

$W + E + O = M$

$- M$ $- M$

$W + E + O - M = O$ ----- $*W + E + O - M = O$

[...]

$Org(x)$ means x is an organic unit

Yxy means Organic unit x is transformed into organic unity y
(i.e. x divides into several parts of which one is y
[cell division] or fuses with one or more units to produce y [cell fusion])

$Orgs.(x)$ x is an organism

means if something then something

means subclass or subrelation

Axioms

1. $Org(x) Th(x)$ Each organic unit is a thing

$Org Th$

2. The members of Y are organic units:

$Yxy Org(x)$ $Org(y) Mem(y) Org$ (7-8).

Everywhere in this text, and in its very title, mysterious formulas (e.g. a formula for calculating the attention span of the reader) mock scientific abstraction and its myth of universality. The “clear embolisms of symbols,” well-smeared with the ambiguous humor of those who prefer not to speak directly, produce “cough”, “dream blood” and “philosophical investigations” by their very own surreal-word alchemy:

*The whirlpool of the pivotal question subsides.
The mouth of the sea
Wet words peel off the surface tension
Screams of air bubble up*

*and mumble through
the clear embolisms of symbols*

*C = carbon O = oxygen U = uranium G = gold
H = hydrogen cough = COUGH
pH2ilOsOpHical investigatiOns*

<i>The gas mask reads in the mist</i>	=	7	=	24
<i>Dream blood</i>	=	2	=	10
<i>Word</i>	=	1	=	4
<i>Instant Water</i>	=	2	=	12 (63)

In guerrilla semiotics, mathematics often functions as an “encrypting technique.” *Word Rain*, however, uses the indirect, but nonetheless effective strategy of mimicry. The “anointed” equations pretend to be mathematics which could be read, given a certain amount of paranoia, as hermetic abbreviations. But behind the inscrutable smile of “G, R, E, T, A, G, A, R, B, O, It Says” there is no secret but the name itself. The cryptic allusion to celestial orbits is a simple (?) case of homonymy:

*Platforms can also be: G = grate or gas
R = rostrum or reason
A = attention or action
E = energy T = time B = bush
O = orbit*

*In this case a set (S) of platforms (p) would be:
Sp = G, R, E, T, A, G, A, R, B, O,— the name of a star. (39)*

Lubrication helps build up the differentials between inside/outside, figure/ground necessary for the generation of “self” or *gestalt*. Grease, as waterproofing agent against the “word rain” might temporarily hold the rain at bay and conserve the identity of an object: “I have preserved these in oiled geometry [...] in hope that they will not become mixed with the word rain” (111).

But according to Enzensberger contact with grease again means a loss of mastery:

Grease sticks, but not absorbing, rather like a film. Every surface, including the skin, is dispossessed; no matter if it is fluff, down or velvet, it turns into grease. Water runs off from it, wiping spreads it even further

[...]. Once I am done, I am completely cut off, there is no getting through, I slip, I trip, I can't master it. I possess nothing, the fat possesses everything, and whatever I touch will bear the signets of its new master: grease [...] I am lost. (21)

While greased geometry becomes the midwife for “a sly birth” and fuzzy logic, it also means a willing loss of control. In the end the emulsifying power of shady microbial words—“It was due to the fact that each colony secreted a pistol spray of cobalt blue violet bile which, though indiscernible, had been found to aid in the emulsification, digestion and absorption of words” (115)—triumphs over all endeavors for identity.

“Word rain” or liquefaction

Similar to these sticky and greasy substances, the element of water is pervasive on all “platforms” of the text. For the characters in the text that the protagonist is reading, the word rain condenses into elements of their fictional world. But it is the signifiers which “produce” water, as in the following passage in which the abundance of liquids owes its existence to a series of negations, i.e. to a purely linguistic operation:

[...] under the mist, I was reading.

Not across a plain lake, a wooded field, a river stream, a windy hill, a gulf or a marsh but right out across her front lawn the woman ran clinging to her blue raincoat. She ran through the word spray and touched its streams with her free hand. Around a motion's breeze spun a spinwheel of pulses. (44; emphases mine)

The bright sun of the first chapter, emblem of heliocentrism, seems to be quite tactile and easily absorbed by the living bodies of reader and “host”:

The sun was poured on him. It settled into both of us. It crept right through the library window, through intangible crevices, down onto our molded membranes and was absorbed through the acrobatic mush of our living to sink into each of us as a variety of infra-red supportive hands which hugged and pushed in among other places beneath the diaphragm; and thus, similarly, across this room in two separate cases, the sun once again defined a somehow familiar comfort (of sorts). (17)

As the text “progresses,” however, the sun is visibly clouded by mist and fog in “an onslaught of vapors” which impedes sight (as well as sense) (53):

The sun poured onto my back and hugged my shoulders gently, almost at my skin scraping, loosely winding me about with light rays, stepping all over me, so much, much more so had it done so before so as it did not do so now with the grey and taupe vapors hanging around now mistily. (31)

And later:

Grey and taupe vapors composed a mist. As the grey mist swirled, for a moment, the taupe vapors were missed, until the grey parted and the taupe vapors strained themselves through. The sky, led through the end of the reader's line of sight (the quay), was seen as mist. Mist scene. The quay at the

tip of the sighted pier hardened into a sighted touch of the body of mist which the reader saw. (?) My lips touched it too.

The mist was sighted. It has also been cited that hollow spaces contain many points of reference. The incidents of light have been noted and frequently reported. (42-43)

In the end the sun is done for: “The sun bit the dustⁿ in back of me” (22). Moisture and haze pervade the fictional world of the protagonist, as we see in the following passages:

Little drops of moisture slipped around and down my neck in that hot early summer afternoon as ahead of me I allowed the print to filter through the sticky room into view. (14)

Cloudy vapors dulled the window panes by padding them inside and out with their ropy gas fibers of an invisible weather-proofing substance. Grey and taupe vapors slapped the fresh air about. [...] When I looked down, the bold-faced print wavered up to me through the vague mist from the hollow of my lap. (30)

I took a sip of the pineapple juice. It was pineapple-grapefruit. The mist pinched the atmosphere. Moisture leaned up against me. It caused the curvilinear desire for something to drink to jut out just like that. [31]

The mist was almost dripping down as it snuggled about close and far. (36)

The misty vapours affect the reader/narrator within *Word Rain* through her body, her thoughts, the pages she reads, the characters of her reading matter, the letters—and the implied reader as well: “Words are water soluble. This is clearly and moistly so. After all the reader is a reef in the blue-eyed Red Sea. (And all this belongs to an organic question, it says.) (63). Words are soaked with rain until they become “word puddles.” Words rain even on “the molded juncture which you might mistakenly call my head.” They evaporate and recondense into a “waterfall pummelling down over membranous rock.” They form into a “river of hypotheses, categories and disjunctive relations” letting in turn “tumble out” words. Reading is like raining and being rained on at the same time. One wishes that the phrase “it is reading” could be said in the same sense as one says “it is raining.” Watery words are active and passive, transitive and intransitive, creative and created. Water and words are not distinct entities with definitive phenomenal qualities. Instead, they continuously change their state and identity. After all, there is some kind of miraculous magnetism in this text between water and words: “A drop of mist had condensed just between the word “the” and word “package.” Water is magnetic in a special way” (32).

The woman reading from within *Word Rain* is not a pure observer, simply registering each of these processes; she is drawn into them: “Words vaporized before my very eyes. My very eyes. As^s I continued, they recondensed on the heavily padded internal tips of the line of sight” (61). Strictly speaking, the protagonist is able to understand the processes of liquefaction because she experiences what it means to liquefy. Humidity pervades her: “The mist punctuated my face. It underlined the bags of my eyes. It rained through my eyelashes. It met with the perspiration on my blouse” (87); “A light rain came through the jellied senses” (111). The distance between recognizing subject and recognized object vanishes rapidly: “The little droplets of letters gathered into word puddles on the pages. I is slipping out of me” (19). Mer-

leau-Ponty's admonition that in speaking and listening one becomes that which one listens to and that language is literally "pregnant" and "impregnated" with sense (165), also applies to reading. It is as if the entreaty uttered on page 74 was already granted: "Please grant this apriori osmotic bond forever." And eventually this is what comes to pass: "She is raining" (103).

Her thoughts are described in metaphors of pumping and evaporation as if thinking was a processing of liquids: "The contrapuntal valval actions of my memory, my thoughts released a foam through which I perceived, now and then, roric figures mistily arranging themselves on a polished, rounded field of spun thought" (71).

In addition to the description of thought and memory as phenomena of water balance, as occurrences of osmosis and forming cysts, the organic character of these events leads to a decomposition marked by smell:

An incorporeal cyst was formed to mark the occurrence of every parallax in my thought. The zone of incorporeal cysts within the field of my being, within the millions of fibers within the body of my imagination, was my memory. The intractable ligature between this memory zone of cysts and the various platforms of perception and interpretation was an apriori osmotic bond.

The delicate memory cysts would from time to time decompose releasing foul-smelling skatole. To prevent this from occurring too frequently, or for too prolonged a time, I used iodine, symbol I. I synthesized this, this I, through the gruelling process of interpreting and reinterpreting dreams and signs and through squeezing the necessary tincture out of all this I read. (73)

"I" becomes a passing effect of stagnation in the water balance; it coagulates and revaporizes. Sometimes "I" is a signature of the narrating position; sometimes it is a chemical element: "I went fast. Faster than I have ever done before. I was picking up the meaning without stopping to accumulate words. Speed. I loved it. Soon it would be over. The words stuck to the mist, I to the meaning" (85). The protagonist, "I," forks and then flows back into itself again. Flows of water, of scents, of identities dissolve all stable ground:

~~The mist dappled my face.~~ I settled down in my body. The mist was settling down too. The smell of fragile birthday candles (blue, I thought) being snuffed out, wove in through the partially opened door. Another smell straddled it grotesquely. The microphytic agent? Who asked that. The mist steamed out of the two o's of my nose. That's impossible.

I poured my concentration down onto the page. I thought the word "parallel" was misspelled. Only half of me knew how to spell. I concentrated on it, but I was no longer in sure grounds. (86)

At the end of the novel, there is left neither narrator nor narration. Instead of referring to something outside itself, language is steeped in a soup of parasitical life and washes everyone away who tries to grasp it. Watery words reign supreme. Yet, despite their dominance, they still have to fight for survival:

The colloidal fog creamed the wide face of the afternoon. The epic of microphytic life besieged the thin flexible rectangles. I turned to wipe off my face. Later I disappeared from the picture. A low sound, a tracer, moved lowly along the pavements, everywhere. This was barely enough to generate the critical amount of tension necessary for the maintenance of solidity. The words clung to the pages for dear life. (108)

Finally, only two intelligible sentences remain, sentences which can now be understood as being synonymous: “The body is composed 98% of water. This page contains every word of the book.”

Of course, *Word Rain* is a book in the tradition of surrealism. Its imagery owes a lot to surrealist performances and installations such as the *Taxi pluvieux* by Dalí. But *Word Rain* is also a document of feminist aesthetics. Luce Irigaray discusses in “La ‘Mécanique’ des fluides” the hegemony of solids in physics and metaphysics and the concomitant exclusion of liquids and their specific (feminine) qualities in the discourse formation of modernity. For Irigaray there is a certain solidarity—pun intended—between the preference for solids in physics and the insistence of phallogocentrism on stable identities—a solidarity which includes psychoanalysis (qtd. in Gallop 39-40). Thus, for Lacan, discourse cannot include the woman, because it needs stability and identity, while the language of woman appears to be fluid, hysterical, formless and useless as the secretions of the womb [sic]. Her language is said to be “continuous,” “compressible, dilatable, viscous, conductible, diffusible” (Irigaray qtd. in Gallop 39). Due to its conductivity, the language of woman is easily and readily traversed by other flows. It fuses with other bodies in the same state of aggregation. It dilutes homogeneously until it becomes impossible to determine what belongs to what. Since the language of woman is *per se* diffuse, it can never have a stable identity or allow identification (Irigaray qtd. in Gallop 39).

Now, according to Irigaray, Lacan’s *object a* is excluded from the subject because, one might argue, it usually refers back to a fluid state—milk, urine, saliva, blood (Gallop 41)—approaching “dirt” in Enzensberger’s taxonomy. But even the purest and most pristine of fluids, water, undermines the identity of solids. For Enzensberger, the paradox of all liquids, but of water above all, consists in the fact that it both produces and dissolves order. On the one hand, water cleanses, producing order and clear outlines by readily absorbing all and everything, even the most disgusting matter (Enzensberger 16). On the other hand, it dilutes and dissolves order—first as trickle, but eventually in a flood. The deluge no longer cleanses but is the end of all order. The most “perfect” purity is, at the same time, the end of all experience. As soon as all dirt is eliminated, the system has purified itself to death and experience comes to an end. There is no longer anything to experience. Writes Enzensberger:

One thing was clear: dirt was categorical. All purity was in vain. The more rigid a categorical system, the bigger the dirt it produced; the more refined it was, the more manifold kinds of dirt. In some systems the human being itself became dirt. He considered the current system as such a one. A certain ambiguity occurred: cleanliness became dirt, and perhaps vice versa. (41)

Enzensberger’s “ambiguity” depends on the double-meaning of the word “human being.” Referring to the biological corporeal body, “human being” indeed appears as “dirt” in the system of subjectivity. Referring to “subjecthood” it is at least a disruptive element from the perspective of “pure becoming” in the sense of Deleuze and Guattari, or vitalist approaches to subjectivity. From a posthumanist perspective, “human being” as philosophical or biological category is an ideological and historical construct. The unintelligible “clusters” at the end of *Word Rain* are less a *degré zéro* of order and humankind than the productive chaos of new or other corporealities.

“Microphytic agents” or becoming-swarm

We postmodernists know better. We must say [...] that language never “speaks itself as language”: it’s always some particular parasite, with its own interests and perspective, that’s issuing the orders and collecting the profits. What distinguishes a virus or parasite is precisely that it has no proper relation to Being. It only inhabits somebody else’s dwelling. Every discourse is an unwelcome guest that sponges off me, without paying its share of the rent. My body and home are always infested—whether by tapeworms and cockroaches, or by Martians and poltergeists. Language isn’t the House of Being, but a fairground filled with hucksters and con artists.

(Steven Shaviro 43-44)

The “microphytic agents” enact the most subversive strategy in *Word Rain*. They undermine the idea of authorship and authority, they infiltrate the notion of a subject inventing/controlling its own ideas, even of having written the pages of the book the narrator is reading.

As we see in the following passages authorship smells suspicious:

He [the author of the manuscript the protagonist is reading] said that it was entirely possible, almost certain, that two microphytic colonies of bacteria had settled on the blank pages, twisted their tiny bodies into male and female letters and had remained there, clinging to those pages for dear life, even before he had a chance to get started. [...] The author then cautioned his reader to smell each page as a simple yet sufficient precaution against being taken in in the future. He assured the same reader that although the odor of these microphytic letter heads and bodies was indescribable, it was nonetheless distinct and unforgettable. He said that touching the page would be no help at all but that the smell would always and immediately give them away. (13)

The tiny particles had been studying for thirty years the strenuous art of abstraction-deflection up to the point of a worded sentence. So that now the wordy tours jetés and minutely perfect extensions had come through practice to be a habit, a nearly natural function of the ropy gas shaving bodies to which they belonged. At times they even talked while unattended to. Here they were mumbling about how late the sandwich and how hungry I was. (32)

The spirit-matter dichotomy, so dear to Cartesian reasoning, breaks down when invisibly small bacteria begin to invade the domain of the mind, language, and meaning: “Microphytic bacteria live long deaths. They just said that and one of them is urging a group of them on to say: “I am the living word” (19). Moreover, this corruption of the logos seems to be infectious:

There was certainly no question about it. The smell was there certainly. It was surprising, though, that they were completely indiscernible to the touch. Touch. I let the page slip out of my hand not entirely sure that I had not been contaminated by the taut and tenacious microphytic agent. (31)

Parasites; in the sense of teeming, crawling animals, are present both in the world of the protagonist (“A worm twisted up into the weather. Let’s pause for a moment”), and within the fictional world of the text she reads (13). In that text, the characters are particularly puzzled at the arrival of a mysterious package. Their guesses concerning the content of the package, though, quickly intertwine with the scene of reading by playing on the semantic affinities between “ant colony” and “microphytic colony,” or between “word rain” and “moist package,” insinuating by analogy that the book *Word Rain* might also have been written by word-microbes, or may at least be infested with them:

Mary’s guess, in a word, was pissmire colony. Why, because they had ordered them from California seventy-four years ago. And though the request had never been answered in her grandmother’s lifetime, the receipt was still on hand. In fact, letters about the difficulties of procuring and then maintaining a healthy colony and the complications involved in the shipment of it were still part of their current affairs.

That was piss for urine and mire for ant, so named for their discharge, which was an irritant fluid so named because popularly regarded as urine.

The bottom corner of the package was already moist. Also, the lack of organization of the ant colony company would easily explain the absence of any marking on the package and the missing letter. By the end of the page, the others were mistily saying doubtful yet possible. (37)

Steven Shaviro propagates in great detail the connections among ant colonies (“Ant Farms... a machinery whose only purpose is to be its own sweet self.”), the insectoid paradigm in general (and in the works of William S. Burroughs in particular), and the notion of writing as “secretion” or “discharge” of almost cosmic dimensions (Shaviro 45). Similarly, Enzensberger claims, the written word could be regarded as secretion (34). In *Word Rain* as well there is more than just a metaphorical nexus between the secretions of the “pis[s]mire colony” and the smelly humidity of language. The first chapter of *Word Rain* discusses the origins of the words infesting the book: “So too every word has been lived, although I must sadly admit that I do not know any living word besides myself which is a secret” (5). Later on we read that it is a colony of microphytic bacteria which forms “the living word,” oscillating between “secret” and “secretion.” Words are better smelled than seen, insists the text, because they are the result of micro-bacterial metabolism:

One short sniff was enough to assure me that the original author had had no part in this page. Instead the literal guest ballet of the microphy... Instead the frozen corps of the microphytic ballet... A microphytic colony had subsumed his role and imprinted itself on the page where it had become all stuck in its metaphors. (30)

Eventually the protagonist begins to suspect that even the outlines of her “host” (in whose library she is sitting) are formed by *literal* microbes: “Halfway across the room, the man turned to face me. [...] It was possible that thousands of microphytic bacteria made up his outline. The smell was unforgettable” (16). Host and parasite, host and guest, fuse into one another. Microphytic agents are interspersed with everything.

Reading *Word Rain*, we may even be tempted to smell at our own copy of the text: “In my nose, there was a smell. I held my nose. [...] However both pages had microphytic the odor of microphytic spelling inside and out” (87). But even when the text becomes so “non-sensical” that it literally reeks of microbial intervention, this is no sure indication of infection. Authorship as such, style, and intention have become hopeless categories:

Nor was the author's style any more what I had thought it was. He had been so taken with the laughter that he had remained doubled up, bent over with it in a corner of the last paragraph while the succeeding paragraphs were straining at the bit, or at any rate haphazard.

The page was brought to my nose. The smooth paper smelled only like the expectancy of a smell before a distinctive smell. In this case, there were obviously no bodies on the page. If the author were to claim an intrusion as an excuse for this page, in view of the findings of my nose, he would not have a leg to stand on. The joke about the 4³ inch slab of grease with microphytic bacteria forming the most voluptuous of human lips was his baby. (69)

Even the pages expressly ascribed to a human author emanate a scent: “A moist draft turned the page, which seemed to be heavily scented with a human perfume” (115). “Human” is now measured against characteristics of the microbial, and even of paper:

Mist buckled the page. It snapped to attention while the microphytic alphabet roamed the weather's inversion noting subtle differences. I sat apart. Looking for all the world. My face was paper thin. Murmuring pages. Pressed-pulp rectangular shavings piled razor thin planes through and through the mist and my animation was left suspended. (109)

The text of *Word Rain* is staged as the product of a heterogeneous collaboration of human and non-human “agents.” Other texts as well are part of its production; they give guest performances or are “hijacked,” cannibalised and fed into the “mother’-text. Intertextuality as literal incorporation is, after all, a form of parasitism. Accordingly, half of *Word Rain*’s ninth chapter, “A. Mist and Flood—Evaporating Endings,” consists almost entirely of endings of other books—Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness*, for instance, Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women*, Gertrude Stein’s *The Making of Americans*, Samuel Beckett’s *Stories and Texts for Nothing*, and Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick*.

The “quoted” ending of *Mickey Mouse Comics* is, moreover, programmatic for the parasitical paradigm:

Once her soiled gloves had been taken care of, Minnie began to settle down. For a while all was quiet with Mickey there beside her. Then, turning to him with the beginning of a smile on her downy face: “Mickey,” she said, “Did you hear that sound? I think we have mice in the house.”—Mickey Mouse Comics. (118)

Because “Mickey” and “Minnie” have proper names and a house of their own, and because they enter the symbolic order of language to get rid of the “dirt” (“soiled gloves”), they “pass” as subjects. The anonymous mob of mice in “their” house, however, is an intrusion of vermin—this is how bourgeois subjects are made. But “Minnie” smiles as if she understands the ideological character of the dichotomy separating owners from thieves, based on two “classes” of mice, i.e. concealing that in both cases we can speak

of mice. Says Shaviri: “Who is the parasite, then, and who’s the host? [...] We all have parasites inhabiting our bodies; even as we are ourselves parasites feeding on larger structures” (39, 43). The separation of “proper” and “alien” becomes obsolete and makes room for symbioses that cultivate other, though not quite as transparent, *agencements*. It makes room, in other words, for a modest kind of “presence.”

I have not been able to rid (read this word with an accent) myself of words. But the words, the rain of words, the weather being what it was, with not one day, one hour willing to stand up alone without its weather, the low warm puddles, the reflective mist; these combined to achieve the final opalescence of my presence. (107)

Despite what are, at times, dictatorial gestures (“I am the only one who can decide to breathe. I will help her and you when you practice to be me”), there is no autonomous, individual “I” in the text who simply uses a writing instrument (4). Writing has become “WRITING (WITH A BLOOD VESSEL STYLOS),” because author, writing, and letters are inseparable (80). The narrator shrinks to a nomadic *pli* of utterance, as weightless as the microbial letters: “Over there in the center, I am imploded as the size of a fly. Words fall off the curls of nothing after I have left for the next moment” (3). The capital “I,” once a pillar of an authoritative and subjective ego, disperses and is folded into the other letters: “i entered the m(i)st. i started (i)odine. i filled f(i)ll. i make h(i)m. i am always (i)n. (So what)” (106). “I,” insists *Word Rain*, is a word:

*I am a word. Any word pick any word. Which leads us to my secret. Even I have to stop and think how to say something at times. I might finally be wordless. I will not say.
I am the liar the one who says I am not telling the truth. (4)*

It multiplies; it divides. It is nucleus, medium, creator, and creature at the same time, without ever being a “one.”

But where do the words come from, then? Words said to have a breath, words which can take the protagonist unawares? Are they “apparitions,” a spectral fold in the phenomenal world? As an ironic side-swipe at the surrealist dogma of *écriture automatique*, pages 71-73 are footnoted:

This footnote is here to record a miracle. The asterisks above the line segments indicate the place at which three words appeared even before my fingers, my typewriter, arrived at that space on the paper. [...] Since these words seemed to coincide with what I’d been about to say, my first thought was that my thought had somehow managed to pre-empt the role of my hands and to outline itself there. [...]

I love visitors, accidental mechanical ones, ghosts, microphytic agents, myself. I need this miraculous help as much as possible. In this book, I am the third I, near the beginning of a perhaps infinite series of them, and in the middle of this book. (71-73)

Words appear and obscure the agency of utterance: “I, no i, (me, mine, she, her, us) am B(b)eing occluded. The occurrence of words” (107).

Words “happen” thanks to invisible “microphytic agents” procreating in the suitable culture medium (paper, author, reader): “Every book fell through me. The way bubbles are held in soapy water, conversation is held in me, and when I blow, it is vocalized. I travel in words”(66). When the “I” of the text compares

itself with paper it is as if it needs to prove its superiority as host: "I am warmer than paper. I can hold more words. My erasures can be made to reappear. Words need not merely press themselves parallel to me; any angle of entrance is acceptable and useful" (66).

In this anti-myth of creation, there is no creator who creates anything without creating himself. Instead there is a chain-reaction of "self"-generation. The "consciousnesses" of narrator/reader or author appear as epi-phenomena, their "actions" a kind of "breeding": "I unfold a sentence. Out of the sphincter valve of each word comes the shorthand of a new sentence. And here, in the defining mold which these sentences cast lies one flavor of my consciousness, perhaps vanilla" (49).

The lessons Steven Shaviro ascribes to William S. Burroughs are also taught, and with a vengeance, by *Word Rain*:

Don't try to express "yourself," then; learn to write from dictation, and to speak rapturously in tongues. An author is not a sublime creator, as Dr. Frankenstein wanted to be. He or she is more what is called a channeller, or what Jack Spicer describes as a radio picking up messages from Mars, and what Jacques Derrida refers to as sphincter. (Shaviro 45)

Contact with the culturing medium threatens the reader with infection and infiltration. The reader is thus "sentenced" by *Word Rain* [48]. The "activity" of reading is described as copying, as if DNA was inscribing itself. The individual turns into a "replicator," and the reader into a catalyst:

It is enormously true that coincidental with the ability to read is the ability to make copies. Copies have been made of simple, complex sentences, words, microphytic agents and molecules, in the presence of the reader who acts as a catalyst. At the same time, the reader is also continuously re-copying himself. (116)

The similarity here between the "microphytic agents" and viral infection is striking:

When a living cell is invaded by a virus, it is compelled to obey this order. Here the medium really is the message: for the virus doesn't enunciate any command, so much as the virus is itself the command. It is a machine for reproduction, but without any external or referential content to be reproduced. (Shaviro 40-41)

Imploringly, "I" attempts to move us, the external readers of *Word Rain*, to comply with its paradoxical instructions. The following quote shows that there is more at stake than a simple verbal "double bind" ("I am screaming at you. Don't listen to my words"). In fact, in this passage there is more than a whiff of remote control, of infection, and even occupation:

Listen to me. Now, right now. Whatever I say you must do. Anything I tell you, you will listen to. As I speak, so shall you move. Listen. Remember I have my claws of disease. I say to you now, Forget about these words. Throw them away. This one, right now. Out. Away. I am screaming at you. Don't listen to my words. Read this with your eyes (did you know that each of you have at least fifteen pairs) closed. I will tell you what you will do. I am telling you what you are doing. I am not writing this, I am talking it. Don't dare think otherwise. Are you listening to the razor in your ear? Put all thought out of your mind. Put it here... Smell this sentence. Now do this Cut off your head.

You better get away from yourself for awhile. Burn these words with your attention but do not see them. [...]

I have your head over here. Come here and get it. I will let you feel it again. Here are the wet, deep tube, the powdered face, the light-sensitized almonds, my ear drums, the balanced parts whose normal composure is arrived at by my telling you so. Try not to look at your nose, pick me off this page again. There must be a strong concentration of me in you. (77; emphases mine)

Similarly, even if more in the panparanoiac vein of Burroughs, Shaviro claims: "It is not "I" who speaks, but the virus inside me." He continues:

*And this virus/speech is not a free standing action, but a motivated and directed one: a command. [...] to speak is to give orders. To understand language and speech is then to acknowledge these orders: to obey them or to resist them, but to react to them in some way. An alien force has taken hold of me and I cannot **not** respond. Our bodies similarly respond with symptoms to infection, or to the orders of viral DNS and RNA. (Shaviro 42)*

The reader of *Word Rain* is similarly drawn into the eddy of the text, becoming its collaborator: "if you feel you have nothing to say, pick up this book and say anything from it. Rearrange the words any way you like. The last page is the key. [...] I cannot prove that I (you) am reading. Is there enough space for you?" (120).

But what is more: S/he is written by his/her "own" reading process: "The paragraph which you are about to read has never been written. You are writing it now. I will write you." Soaked with the word rain, left directionless and decapitated by the instructions of "I," infiltrated by the "microphytic agents," the reader of *Word Rain* can now begin to infect others:

I appear on a page which would otherwise be blank. I, the mist, the agent, she, appear to swoop you and stratify you, circle you, and synthesize, just as I do now in this short paragraph into which I have fallen. I am not telling you but you are thinking that the two pages between which I fall were made by me in her for you to see against the same word rain, through the mist, against different patterns of breath, similar but different accents to your attention. I have taught her how to make this special ruler by which you can measure yourself. In order to make these words move, you must give your attention to them. Notice, I am gone. (54)

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THE CONSTRUCTION IN QUESTION

1. Opening.

What is Wrong with Poetry?

I quote from Lecercle's "The Tense of Architecture," about what he thinks of as a dangerous mindset, aesthetic treatment, architectural isolationism: "The danger here would be to treat them simply as artists, to read the proposition as a *haiku*, and their manifesto as a volume of poetry (which in a sense it is also), thus [...] shutting them up in an aesthetic ghetto" (43). Now I want to make a serious point: why, oh why, do we consider "aesthetics" to be a bad word? Is it like the "l" word for liberal?" like the "f" word for the delightful act we presumably enjoy? It IS a volume of poetry, this *Reversible Destiny*, not just a prose manifesto—presumably also, enough people will be speaking about the prose. This is, it seems to me, not just a prose construction, but an Open Field for the imagination.

Really, think of it: why could we not consider *Reversible Destiny* as precisely an open field? A field, granted, with landing sites, with taking-off sites, with thinking and wishing and believing sites. In short, a field no less poetic for being architecturally placed.

We know it's about process, not some static already done already thought-out construction, not a deconstruction of a previously binary mode, but rather about something imbued with the possibilization we might think of as surrealist: Anything that can be imagined can be real. Breton said it and we believe it: I would add, with four small letters, that it can be also *realized* Architecture realizes. As Lecercle writes, "By contrasting an assertive, designational architecture that has noun determination but not tense, and a processual architecture, an architecture of the verb, which is therefore tensed, they opt for a dynamic, not a static/monumental type of architecture, and compel us to envisage architecture, which goes against our common or our good sense, as a process in time rather than a monument in space" (45).

Fine, but why not both?

It seems to me that what Arakawa and Gins want to do, and do, is precisely against the kind of limitation that goes: not this but that. Not poetry but prose. Not aesthetics but, what, pragmatics? No way. I think it is about both, and more.

They have, Arakawa and Gins, examined before and for years and for all of us, the mechanism and (s) of meaning. They know and have taught how perception works and unworks in us, in and on our gaze and mind.

The response to meaning is always, if apparently just somehow, built into the how we see. It is not just somehow, of course. It is their genius to make us think it is somehow only. But it is certainly how.

Question: What is she thinking of? Can you give an example?

Or at least an illustration?

Answer: She is thinking of that construction which says: Do Not Think of This Black Dot, or something like. She could never get it out of her mind. Question in Answer: Can You?

Question: What can Meaning Mean?

Answer: It depends on when. And what a question!

Question: Why is there no present?

Answer: We are in it, so it is not a site of discourse.

Singular points

Citing Sighting Siting: What this system of landing sites leads us to think of is, among other things, how we have always cited some past sites, in our minds and our mind's eye.

Question: What is so singular about this, after all?

Answer: After all.

I want to talk about cleave. And about their work on pairing. Do you remember the (was it two of it?) glove(s) in *Mechanism of Meaning*? About how it seemed to be about both separation and pairing? Wasn't it already about doubles?

Question: What gets separated? Is it the same thing as what (can) get(s) paired?

Answer: Well.

Question: Do you see how the idea of the glove already prepares the work of thinking about reversible destiny and about reversal?

Answer: Of course. You are talking and thinking about inside and outside. This is where deconstruction thinks it started. Read Hillis Miller. Just read. Anyone. Read. But it starts with a glove turned inside and out.

Question: Are you going to go on like this, or shall I ask another pertinent question?

Answer: Yes, yes.

Question: Insiderness and outsiderness, is that what you are aiming at?

Answer: Not just me. All of us.

Slopes and Slants

I remember going to one of their exhibitions and walking up the sloping board as Judith Mallin photographed us. M. G. and me. We pulled on a rope.

Question: So?

Answer: Well, this prepared my consideration of sites. How you cite sights backward prepares how you site sites forward. For landing.

Question: Where?

Answer: Landing sites. There.

(silence for a while)...

Answer continues: Really, how you make citations of what you know prepares your sites and their potential for what you will learn next.

(silence)...

And continues: Yes, you are right in what you are thinking.

Question: What do you think I am thinking?

Answer: Why, that someone said to Count Harry Kessler about Cézanne that the empty spaces were what he didn't know yet.

Question: Is that what I was thinking?

So that is what it is to write backwards. All these reversings have to do not just with Arakawa's life-long fascination with Leonardo da Vinci and his mirror writing. They have to do with the genius of THINKING BACKWARDS.

Question: Is that about reversible destiny?

Answer: Of course. What the mind conceives it can create. Install. Instill. Do it. Think.

How to take/give/read shelter

If I understand it correctly, there are two kinds of architecture being thought of here. One kind has meaning, is extensible and reversible, because it is a *helter-skelter-shelter*. It performs. The other kind is self-sufficient, stable, represents and is ultimately boring.

Question: How do you mean me to take this?

Answer: Any way you can. TAKE THIS.

It takes place. It is what Takes (our) Place.

Question: Do you want to talk about ellipsis here?

Answer: Yes.

Question: And can you define it?

Answer: Yes.

Question: And will you?

Answer: It is what is short on one side and long on the other.

Question: Does this refer to architecture? Or just to life?

Answer: Yes. Just.

2. Entering

This is the way to do it. You can lose the I. You can come in.

Question: Did you forget cleaving?

Answer: I forgot nothing. But it is now bioscleaving. I quote Lecercle again: “In Gins and Arakawa, a house, in that it is a tentative constructing toward a holding in place, within a bioscleave, the site for the deployment of an architectural body, is such a haeccity” (45). In short, it is a hereness and nowness that we can point to. HERE it is.

What looking at Arakawa and Gins’s ways of thinking about thinking can teach is an anti-linearity, anti-time-trapped freedom of reimagining, exactly what this volume aims at doing for textuality. In this case, doing is meant to be being. *The Mechanism of Meaning*—what they originally presented in their working out of the methods of meaning and grasping and constructing and receiving meaning—was an advanced realization of the “Mapping of Meaning,” the ur-subtitle or subdivision Arakawa had couched on his almost bare canvasses of the early sixties. It revolutionized, in slow and quick tempo depending on the receiver, the conception of thought many of us had had, and the presentations of thinking—verbal, pictorial, architectural—originally called models of

mind. In forcing the sighting and sitings of ambiguity and our reading of it as best we could, best illustrated by the diverse (re)presentations of a lemon, under the subdivision “Presentation of Ambiguous Zones,” they were working against our textual habits of definition: being clear, inhabiting a clear textual decision, reading clearly.

It is around this zone, though under the subdivision “Splitting of Meaning” that the meditation on “A Line is a Crack” appears, and, under it: “say ONE think TWO” (*The Mechanism of Meaning* 43) or “Perceive A as B” (50).¹ Rather like the child’s exercise of rubbing the tummy and patting the head, this exercise of potential doubling of consciousness is valuable in reading texts and subtexts.² Still another exercise in the “Splitting of Meaning” is the divided glove, and one-half of Mantegna’s *Dead Christ*.³ The “Meaning of Intelligence” works the same way: you have to forget, you have to find something nonexistent, you have to stretch your mind in regard to PLACE (marked) and to SHAPE (unmarked), and, in short in regard to seeing, and, more complicated still, in regard to rhythm: “Intermittently,” they say, showing a landscape, two landscapes in fact, “disregard any time not marked time” (89). Now, of course, nothing is marked time, and we by now know enough not to look for it. We are thus trained, self-trained, if you like, to disregard instructions. This is, of course, what it is all about. ABOUT.

And it is also, already, about the reversibility of concepts, of our ways of thinking, well on the way to Reversible Destiny, a working out of anti-cyclical time. Take the panel called “Reversibility” of 1997 (85).⁴ It stretches the concept of reversal, has its own stretch marks and hanging lines as memory devices, and insists that we look at an object “for more than one minute” to retain our own names, whatever they are. Does boredom enter in? Is that not part of the point? Part of our consideration of textual time must include, surely, our capacity for getting annoyed, bored, irritated, diverted. And yet, as the preface to *Reversible Destiny* puts it: “Being a person is an astounding event or series of events” (2). The experience of experiencing this work of thinking and rethinking is the point of reexamining our textual timing, and our vision of what we can think, in “real” presence as in “virtual” presence. Let us rethink thinking right now.

As for the texturisation of textualisation—what I like to think of as an architexturisation—a Vermeer painting, with a door leading into another room, and in which I find myself concentrating simply on the broom leaning against the door frame, is juxtaposed with an Oriental scroll in *The Mechanism of Meaning* (65). Supposed to lead to a meditation on the distance or nearness of the experience of textures, this image, like many others, may equally well lead to a diversion, also the point. These *are* the ways of meaning, these are the models of mind which force a reconsideration of our textual timing. They were the preparations for the “perceptual landing sites” found, now a

¹ See Caws, fig. a (mech7_3.jpg).

² For example: in the texts of Antonin Artaud, famously constipated and unable to get out, as he put it both physically and metaphorically, two ideas at once except through the same words, I discovered, oh so long ago, various extraordinary subtexts reinforcing the ideas of struggle, the notions of incompatibility and impossibility (see Caws).

³ See Caws, fig. b (mech7_5.jpg).

⁴ See Caws, fig. c (mech9_1.jpg).

decade later, in *Reversible Destiny*. Here, now, those models have evolved as escape routes from mortality and limited thinking, the textuality of meaning and being increases its complexity (and our potentiality) and demands a still wider range of reading rhythms.

There was already a visible, tangible upbeatness about *The Mechanism of Meaning*. You may have had your doubts, but there was room for them and optimism also. Under “Neutralization of Subjectivity” (that is, the unlimiting of our natural ego-centered reactions, as in Zen consciousness), we read: “Although it is uncertain how nonsensical any or all meaning is or may turn out to be, probably there will never be a reader of this book dispossessed entirely of the mechanism of meaning” (11). Susanna and the Elders comes under the same subdivision, so that Susanna confronting herself in the mirror models, paradoxically, the letting go of the excessive involvement the reader/observer has with herself.

In these panels and in these pages reproducing the panels, reading time was occasionally built in: “Look at any close objects as you open and close your eyes for several minutes” (*The Mechanism of Meaning* 12).⁵ Or, after a particularly intricate text concerning the imagination of the full and the empty, and elaborate instructions: “Stop Thinking About This” (13).⁶

Inviting the impossible arrests the thinking process. Think of the panels that read: “Do not think of this black dot,” as impossible a direction as “Turn left/as/you turn right.” Impossibilities arrest the mind. Or at least, slow it down to a point where normal reading rhythms, the pace of understanding that we might have thought we understood, are undone.

Nevertheless, in thinking as in reversing our thinking, we are not undone. We are redone. Rebegun. This is not, therefore, one of the “ends of representation,” but one of its rebeginnings. What is possibly thought, and not now rethought, is this construction in time and in space, this deconreconstruction.

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⁵ See Caws, fig. d (mech1_3.jpg).

⁶ See Caws, fig. e (mech1_4.jpg).

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UNION OF OPEN SETS

I am moved to respond to the freshly minted philosophical treatise, *Architectural Body* by Madeline Gins and Arakawa, but also to the works contained by *Reversible Destiny, We Have Decided Not To Die*, for therein lies a writing of prodigious moral imagination and *esprit fort* possibly to unravel and displace the usual Fates who foment our ends. And just as meta-history is with us, it is unconcealed and audible that all existence is deeply interdependent and sacred.

Tantalizingly ahead of their time, Gins and Arakawa's generative oeuvre stands in stark contrast to the diminishment of sovereign space through a collection of optic/haptic field processes, figuring-forth a *phusis*¹ with a multitude of promontories from which even the most odious social-urban jeopardies may be negotiated. This truly is a secular tool "for the people." Let these now be paranoetic strategies to restore a sense of self, transfigure destinies emergent through psychic and somatic experience of architectonic place, space, time, and heighten sensitivity to the liquidity of surface and kinesthetic non-locality with ideas that engage theses of the Cosmos, to espouse a thriving socius/polity; still somewhat of a mirage perhaps, but an audacious shimmering bridge between wave and particle, by far the two august languages of reciprocity. One might say that a noun is a verb in repose; that naming is not synonymous with wisdom. In fact, the work of Arakawa and Gins deictically describes aspectuality and animates the necessary path, the vehemence and vigor of Being, renascent goodness within the emphatic amplitude and intimacy of that felt volume, and henceforth in presence of what it is to not forget.

To the degree that we withdraw from hyper-capitalism's thrall, we are able to originate. It is of grave import that we limn and grasp our vision of genuine collectivity and plenitude: to acquit ourselves from promulgation of incessant fear and aimless reactivity, walk away from the noose of hierocracy, voyeurism, and distanced complicity; that we let each other, art, poetry, and architecture prevail upon us, our innards be grabbed by mother earth to cultivate the breadth of our embodied awareness to discover and consummate reverberant limits of maturity, rather than consent to the proliferating jejune and amniotic, utilizing the full spectrum of affordances in the structure of our light, our sensualia and circumambience; people... expanding limits of their personal genius and governance.

In the twenty-first century, philosophers need to construct the conditions that will cause answers to be forthcoming. To figure out the architectural body, one must literally figure it out into the surroundings. (Arakawa and Gins, Architectural Body 88)

¹ Of a *phusis*, Gr., the root of our "physics." Pre-Socratics and Aristotle used for Being or truth or "the deep." The nature of things, the force, laws, order of nature. The sum of innate properties and powers by which one person differs from others, distinctive native peculiarities, natural characteristics.

[...][A]n organism that persons lives as a community. (*Architectural Body* 98)

The world may not be ready for this but these propitious blueprints are absolutely necessary. Gins and Arakawa approach aspects of cultural being by thawing the idea of the “frozen music” of architecture, through autopoiesis, *élan vital*, ingenious invention, fire-new forms and fresh language to induce and express this privilege of recovery of paradoxical mobility and flux. During the most lively and vivid apprehensions of the evanescent moment, we are at the essence of reflection.

Gins and Arakawa take democracy to a higher plane and are suggesting no less than the actual move from bleakest human deadlock, foreclosure of Being, talented predators we rue, hyper-capitalism’s merciless indifference to suffering; from their grotesque vanities and evil extravagance of harm, self-blinding consensual fictions, inexorable ideological circumscriptions, disintegrating community, environmental degradation, to rapprochement, a touching presence with salience and values no longer dominated by reduction of human understanding, and where, as with the Sumerian harp, the tone of each individual string is suffused to its instant, *pro tempore*.²

My understanding of the propositions of these artists/paraphysicists is that they locate truly venerable modern questions via negentropic perceptual and cognitive strategies, thereby stripping away epochs of automaticity, data-smogs and shaky verities, to purport cultures thriving in the immensely fecund territory left vacant by architectural antecedents; to suggest removal of inherited topologies from reified mediators... a need analogous to hunger... to instead draw attention toward, in decentered insight of flowing forms, the *vincula*³ or *metaxu*,⁴ ephemeral yet unadulterated photonic bridges of congruence and volition featly between persons and planet, the long axis in the swerve of atoms, *clinamen atomorum*... that’s just it... a stereognosis of mind and body called to self-transcendence, in part, by disentangling from our beginning with the express intent to begin afresh.

Arakawa and Gins purport change through poetic architecture parlante, physiological imperatives and geometries of attention, to suggest that we look up in tolerance of doubt and uncertainty into embodied seas of energy to evince the gentility of multiplicity, discretion, trust, dignity, and rigor... so that the trajectory of cultural necessity and bearing of our float will not depend from a column, but from a materialized cogence of Being.

They have founded a clearing; ideaed a phenomenological rigor with which to begin relational magnetism anew, an activity of being in Being, and so freer of the compound chain of historical misreadings which are material to tragedy. Grace does not conclude.

² *Pro tempore*, L., for the time being, temporarily.

³ Of a *vincula*, L., a bond of union, a tie.

⁴ Of a *metaxu*, Gr., the connected in-between or medium in which a movement takes place, a bridge.

From the memory of all the centuries, let these examples from our own time fight for us; between a past and a future, there is pungent prescience and incandescence of *Kairological* time.⁵ In fine, not a mock-here, mock-beyond, hermeneutic circularity, or the polemicist's thrall, but the consonant tangible and useful Beauty lavished upon us in surplus, in experiential meaning, refracted presence, purpose and character, instinct and intention, captivating... inalienable, which then gives mediators and path-constrictors the slip while accessing a deeper subjectivity, a more exact equivalence, often becoming one with our material in notions akin and percipient to all cultures. Being, ontologically observant and so choosing its own de facto nature and dissemination. Our many questions regarding these premises have to be considered with reference to the nature of the case in its entirety. Nor is this an instantiated utopia, but a beguiling broadening of imagination of synergistically fostered life, arousing hope, and possibly altering our sense of woundedness and receptivity.

Regarding the title and premise *Reversible Destiny, We Have Decided Not To Die*, suppose we unenslave ourselves from the pretext, gloss, and tiringly successful chronos; release our scissile stranglehold? Arakawa and Gins, with their plush minds, brilliant charm and giftedness, point and generate coherent light but also bend it in the opposite direction, as Virgil might have indicated for Dante, to a way through; we lift our feet from snares... we are the source of knowledge rather than the mere occasion, in a tensile, continuous present, discovered infinitely intuitive in each *kairos*. For a while, we take off our data-gloves, we reunite. Strikingly, gravity determines time/space but when gravitational force is reduced, the time/space continuum is transcended, remarkably dimension-free. A quantum wave of calm inner space possesses its own resonance and energy, and it is the place of veracity and felicity with what we refer to as eternity, timelessness, our true vernacular and indigeony, noospherically speaking.

Arakawa and Gins instance and confer upon us, interlace at the inner spokes and outer rim of Being simultaneously. In appearing as a particle, yet moving as a wave, we recognize the lifeless hierarchies which are only semblances of thought and passion, and so we revision our self-destructive copulation with time. In the impinging orbifold, one might hear a *rauschen*, the murmuring and rustling of a barely perceptible prismatic equivocality, where hope of immediacy and wholehearted per seity, that which is heuristically knowable, refines through itself not only by inference, but through *that which is*, eloquent veridical proprioception; then also hypostasizing, with which we enchant ourselves and others, as in a union of open sets, underneath us... shades... we squint, yet the capacity for abstract ideation and thinking equi-primordial thoughts is already intact; able to hold the contradictions, or zazen's *hishiryō*—absolute thinking, beyond thinking, non-thinking. A moving equilibrium of genuine silence alone can describe it.

I am startled by this protean tour de force because of the love of humanity expressed resolutely throughout Gins and Arakawa's works, fruitfully opening out arcs in the kinesphere of continuous Being via seemingly limitless dimensions in spacetime, language, text and image, in a radical embrace of the present.

⁵ *Kairological*, Gr., the appropriate time for action, the right time to act.

Therein lies our ownmost possibility of *Reversible Destiny, We Have Decided Not To Die*. That we might be inspired to cause our embodied selves to extend our gravitations so that we deliberately further personal and collective insight toward a *kairos* in its utmost discernment and, with a plunge into *fiat lux*, holding an architectural body of knowledge in felt fidelity of re-creation germane to joining that which previously was thought to be topologically external in captivating and distinguished harmonics of implicate/explicate order, thereby altering toward a cross-radial event horizon.

What is forgotten in *kairos* is mortality. Of the *kairological*, infinite and experiential temporal density... when essence is radically made known; a matter of definitive vision nearer to genesis and grace, includes the recognition of the "signs of the times" and the fulfillment of time with respect to one's nature, immanently companionable and occurrent. *Kairological*, a most complex term, first mentioned by Hesiod, also meaning virtue, most particularly justice, and a faculty on par with intellect and immanence; meaningful time and place. The incipient aperture opens, the right time, a quality of time begins. *Kairos* are perspicacious, extraordinary events appearing to occur interstitially within a static loom of successive *chronos*, are moments in which one can excel, in a tacit, transcendental, stepping aside from the milieu of linearity into a multiplicity of emergent properties which emanate from unconcealed eternity and behoove aperception.

This is a staggering vision of generative, oceanic, purposive defence in the finest sense of the word. Not an aggressive defence, but emphatically one most dear. We are brought fortuitously back into an awareness which previously had been infinitely deferred and which moves beyond all classical impass so evidently characterizing the inner life of modern persons. Arakawa and Gins intelligible environs ask us to be our vivid selves, an innocently matchless polity in a sublime revolution originating as no other tremor throughout history, through naked awareness in immediate spatio-temporal relation to love, front à front, and which nears in similitude, the holomovement.

If you should wander over the open flowing field of narratives, you will not come across another vision, another architecture to evince such *in situ* sensing, ones experiencing the activity of experiencing thereby freeing attention from the past to take on urgent ontic and epistemic questions. Arakawa and Gins are surely living treasures.

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INHABITING THE IMPOSSIBLE

What is now proved was once, only imagin'd

(William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*,
"Proverbs of Hell," line 33)

Architectural Body, the most recent cynosure from the prehensile social imaginations of Arakawa and Madeline Gins, is a philosophical gyroscope that offers windfalls of what we are most deficient in: Quixotic ideals, audacious impossibilities, and utterly propitious visionary stratagems. Applying what their insights incite would require nothing short of a comprehensive transformation of the human species, from our most subtle perceptions to the overcoming of death itself.

Arakawa and Gins spur us to "force flexibility upon invincible necessity" (*Reversible Destiny* 11) by asking us to reconfigure our lives according to an oxymoronic enterprise: Reversible Destiny. *Architectural Body* was written "in the spirit of always taking things further, a spirit characteristic of those desiring to do the impossible" (*Architectural Body* xix). Reversible Destiny's infinite trajectories all radiate from the same point: Impossibility. As in, "turn left/as you/turn right," or, "Say one, think two" (*Meaning* 13, 43).

Arakawa and Gins's *The Mechanism of Meaning* is an enchiridion of interactive cognitive exercises, diagrams, visual/verbal paradoxes and language games that confound habitual sense-making schemes and cognitive sequences. A reader's engagement with this work allows her to witness meaning emerge within perceptual acts and in the process, to redefine what it is to be a "reader," a "viewer," a "perceiver," and ultimately, a "person."

The exercises in *The Mechanism of Meaning* extend the liminal by slowing down and breaking up perceptual processes to reveal what we have become habitually immune to: how perception occurs in discrete stages of complex activity comprised of multiple "micro-events." In this way, Arakawa and Gins's work is related to the revolutionary stop-motion photographic experiments of cinematic precursor Edward Muybridge, who was the first to record and isolate the micro-movements of extremely rapid motion, "artificially" revealing what otherwise could not be seen.

But *The Mechanism of Meaning* does more than reveal hidden perceptual events; it also *deliberately elicits* responses. The work is subdivided into categories such as, "Presentation of Ambiguous Zones," "Splitting of Meaning," and "Feeling of Meaning," "by virtue of how readily they would elicit a [particular] qualitative state, coordinating skill or behavioral tendency" (Gins, email correspondence), in order to observe and ultimately develop one's ability to reroute and transform those states, skills and tendencies.

An “organism that persons” cannot passively absorb *The Mechanism of Meaning*. Instead, one *performs* perceptual operations that re-train us to organize information in non-automatic ways, to become aware of how we are always—though often unconsciously and passively—involved in the process of *making* sense. Indeed Gins and Arakawa want us to see that each of us *is* a Mechanism of Meaning. *The Mechanism of Meaning* exists as a kind of manual for life that exhorts us to expand the scope of what is perceptually possible in order to ultimately expand the scope of what is conceptually and behaviorally possible. I see it in some ways as being in the company of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*—a set of tests for fielding the perceptual states and illusions that one encounters in death, a how-to guide for controlling and transforming one’s habitual responses. This manual for developing the ability to maintain the highest level of consciousness throughout the stages of death, is also meant to be applied to the living of one’s life with an equally intense self-observation, active awareness and acuity.

Although predicated on very different systems, both *The Mechanism of Meaning* and *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* strike me as providing exercises in perception that have the most significant consequences: the ability to determine one’s fate.

Arakawa and Gins insist that “every act of perceiving be unique to itself” (*Reversible Destiny* 153) without automatically categorizing, defining, and immediately familiarizing it. Perceiving is never simply a matter of “what is.” But “what is” is what it is because of what we continually reinforce through definition, what we habitually pay attention to, and how we organize our sensing into repeated patterns.

How might we perceive the world if our sensations were not immediately entrenched in definition, designated and labeled? What if, as Lyotard so beautifully writes, “the possibilities reserved for childhood remain[ed] open in every circumstance?” What if our perceptions were more like those of children, who “reverse the destinies of their beds, the tables, the rooms, ignoring the assigned purposes of each” (*Reversible Destiny* 11)? In Arakawa and Gins’s *Infancy House*, “the tentativeness of infancy reigns,” residents are “freed from having to make hasty, ad hoc perceptual judgments” and can “keep events of perceptual capture in abeyance for long stretches of time” (*Reversible Destiny* 302).¹

The desire for a pre-deadened open state of perceptual infancy is a preoccupation they share with the perceptually revolutionary filmmaker, the late Stan Brakhage. In the most-oft quoted passage in Brakhage’s *Metaphors on Vision*, he asks us to

[i]magine an eye unrul[ed] by man-made laws of perspective, an eye unprejudiced by compositional logic, an eye which does not respond to the name of everything but which must know each object encountered in life through an adventure of perception. How many colors are there in a field of grass to the crawling baby unaware of “Green”? (1)

¹ See Shaneen, fig. a (INFANCY_HOUSE.jpg).

Gins, Arakawa, Brakhage: all three are seminal figures, in stimulating an ever-expanding perceptual plethora. Relentless in disturbing passive percipience, they are exuberantly inceptive in creating methods for experiencing sensations in all their nuanced richness, density, and complexity.

Gaps are essential to reconfiguring our perceptual habits into “perceiving tactics” for Gins and Arakawa. They liberally activate the double meaning of *syncope*—in the sense of “a gap” as well as “swoon” or “vertigo,” a key aspect of Reversible Destiny architecture. *The Mechanism of Meaning* points to what gaps in meaning reveal, and employs them to aid in disrupting the seeming instantaneity and constancy of perception. Gaps as cognitive stutterings and stumblings, allow space to interject, to branch off, to veer, creating opportunities for overturning cognitive passivity and for forming new perspicacities.

Gins and Arakawa define their architecture as “procedural.” Their buildings exist as *sets of procedures* that act directly upon the body to provoke “spatiotemporal collaboration(s)” between a moving body and its surround. Instead of being rigid or overdetermined, as the term might imply, procedures “are always invented/reinvented on the spot, they exist in the tense of the supremely iffy” (*Architectural Body* 73).

Architectural Body outlines several architectural procedures, one of which is the “tentativeness-cradling procedure,” in which “surrounds are set up to generate or maintain a person’s tentativeness in her forming of the world,” so that she is “forever getting her bearings only tentatively” (*Architectural Body* 76).

Arakawa and Gins’s “tentative” architecture is meant to counter the instant determinacy of our prevailing architectural surrounds that restrict us to too few limited behavioral patterns. Instead of allowing us to discover and bask in what might be generated by the “hesitancy” that “permeates the world in its abundance,” our current environment encourages our passive and “much too hasty resolving of the indeterminate into the ‘known.’” (*Architectural Body* 46)

As an antidote, Arakawa and Gins urge for an architecture of process that dynamically engages ever-moving bodies, foregrounding the intrinsic tentativeness of every live, active, fertile situation. Tentative architecture *verbs* a building (a monumental, static, permanent fixity in space), into a *building* (a dynamic, processual, experiential unfolding in time).

The purpose of a tentative architecture is not to exist as a “final solution,” but as an arena for posing questions and testing hypotheses. As the authors of *Architectural Body* put it: “The tense of architecture should be not that of ‘this is this’ but instead that of ‘what’s going on?’” (49).

In the architecture of tentativeness, change is a constitutional element of the house itself. A site of Reversible Destiny is never complete—it’s inception has duration, and it continually cultivates its future within its presence. Rather than being a *work*, it continues to be *at work*, a live element forming and formulated by the living that occurs within it. Sites of Reversible Destiny serve to continually re-commit the body to its own tentativeness, encouraging inhabitants to flex their motilities, and to see themselves as mutable, ever in flux creatures continually configuring themselves at each instant. Gins and Arakawa explain, “the term ‘organism that persons’ portrays people as being intermittent and transitory outcomes of coordinated forming rather than [...] entities [...]” (*Architectural Body* 2).

It is a rare person who is not at least slightly troubled by the fact that “part of being a person is to feel uncertain in regard to and tentative about what comes next.” Arakawa and Gins, instead, want us to boldly reinfuse ourselves with the “generative chaos” of that uncertainty, to reenliven our dulled habitual routines. Instead of rushing to eliminate the uncertainty about what comes next and to fix things into known, easily digestible and repeatable forms, Arakawa and Gins inspire us to see that such uncertainty provides every moment as a fructuous one, in which nothing is as yet determined. In this tentative moment, all that is to come is still to be created; every moment can be one of abounding freedom and possibility. This architecture of the present celebrates “the tentativeness of the forming moment—raw process, the raw process of venturing forth” (*Architectural Body* 45).

Arakawa and Gins illustrate how the tentative-cradling procedure might open us to the copious possibilities, alternatives, and freedoms existing in every moment—and they present it as a joyous and exciting prospect. For example they propose a house that has “twenty entrances” a house in which

[...] someone having an entrance available to her wherever she turns, with every path she comes upon likely to lead to a welcome mat, will... be continually in the start-again mode, reveling in that tentativeness which the moment just prior to entry brings. (Architectural Body 45)

A willingness to fearlessly face one’s tentativeness, to be engaged and at one with it at every moment, requires an orientation of openness, creativity, constant involvement, and attunement to change and nuance. We have been habituated out of our own freedom. We have been trained to forget and curb the exuberant what-if of every moment.

A tentative architecture exists as a constancy of perceptual event and invention, akin to Gertrude Stein’s “continuous present”: “[...] the composition forming around me was a prolonged present [...] a continuous present a beginning again and again and again and again” (516).

In the architectural poetics of Madeline Gins and Arakawa, language and architecture integrate in an intimate intimation. Concepts are materialized architecturally as physical structures that embody our thought patterns and linguistic systems. *Architectural Body* proposes procedural architecture as a “built discourse”: an architecture composed, as is verbal discourse, of “juxtaposed repeatable and re-combinable items.” An architectural procedure resembles a word, and “tactically posed surrounds [...] are its phrases, sentences, paragraphs and texts” (*Architectural Body* 57).

Perhaps manifesting one’s mobility via reversible destiny houses and towns would transform *habitation* into *communication*, in multivalent polyphonic discourse. Most importantly, for poetics, a “built discourse” liberates the poem into being a non-trivial enterprise. “Surely,” write Arakawa and Gins, “tactically posed surrounds will factor out as those poems that have ever eluded poets, poems through which those of us who wish to can save our own necks” (*Architectural Body* 57). Reversible Destiny architecture offers a wildly generous and most propitious proposal: the audacious impossibility of an utterly necessary, consequential, manifested poetry.

For Arakawa and Gins, language is not abstract, never divorced from the body, never existing in the mind alone. “A person who is held in the grip of language alone will have lost touch with many other scales of action vital to her existence” (*Architectural Body* 82). As we inhabit it, architecture as “built discourse” gives voice to the speaker and is inscribed within her very categories of understanding.

The works of Arakawa and Gins profoundly challenge alienating dichotomies between subject and object, as well as the primacy of the Cartesian subject that asserts his cognitive will over secondary objects. Indeed, the first section of *The Mechanism of Meaning* is entitled: “Neutralizing Subjectivity.” Here, Gins and Arakawa propose a radical reversal of the subjective; in the cylindrical building of the *Ubiquitous Site*, “the body, moving in a veering unbalanced balance, loses all sense of identity” to the extent that “there is no single initiator of actions to be found” and the *Critical Resemblance House* even “relieves one of having to have a personality” (*Reversible Destiny* 259, 189).² In the *Ubiquitous Site House*, subjectivity is muted and replaced by a more fruitful orientation: “each of us becomes an everywhere evenly distributed agent, dropping the centralizing habit that member of our species have had for such a terribly long time” (*Architectural Body* 34). Thus Arakawa and Gins mutinously re-locate the “self” within its interdependencies.

Gins and Arakawa’s emphasis on language’s embodiment places them in league with the poet Charles Olson and his emphasis on the *proprioceptive* in the act of linguistic creation. Poetry is a form of somatic engagement. Indeed, Arakawa and Gins architecturally reactivate the kinetic meaning of *poesis*—to make.

Linguistic and cognitive systems are engendered and develop in moving, experiential, and socio-architecturally interactive bodies. Arakawa and Gins humorously and provocatively point to how one’s moods, preoccupations, interruptions, and physical and emotional states, all play a part in being an “organism that persons.” In their “Street Index” for the *Site of Reversible Destiny Map*, streets have such names as: *Centimeters Boulevard*, *Not This Street*, *Bad Cough Street*, *Where Did I Put It Street*, and *Quit Doing That Street* (*Reversible Destiny* 203).

Gins and Arakawa’s term “environment-organism-person” (*Architectural Body* 44) reconfigures traditional divisions between subject/object, self/other, and individual/environment. Received dichotomies between past, present, and future are also transformable: According to Arakawa and Gins, “Beginning,” “past,” “future,” “I,” “me,” and “you,” are all words that have no place in this process. They are “superfluous” (*Reversible Destiny* 189). Such a recusant redefinition of the self as multivalently, or multiply, existing in time(s) and space(s), challenges the need to think of ourselves as restricted in linear time and confined to linear, fixed constructions of memory.

Recurrence and return are crucial and problematic aspects of perception, desire, consciousness and memory. I see Gins and Arakawa’s work as offering extremely significant methods for examining the processes of remembering. For example, in the rotating rooms of their *Rotation House*, “memory recycles

² See Shaneen, fig. b (*Critical_Resemblances_House.jpg*).

through shape as rooms serve as mnemonic devices for each other.”³ In the *Rotation House*, “five rotations of a room become a house” in which the rooms, acting as “spatial anagrams” of each other, seem to change in size and form, though they are in fact identical. In moving from room to room, repetition brings estrangement as residents are “struck by how the same features appear different or remain to some degree the same from one rotated version of the room to another” (*Reversible Destiny* 283).

These methods are perhaps not unlike those employed in the writings of Robbe-Grillet. His scenes, locations, objects, and descriptive passages appear repeatedly (sometimes verbatim, sometimes with slight variations), causing the reader to become dislocated within the utterly familiar. In his works, memory is confounded, unstable, mutable. Perhaps memory is a creatable fiction, operating similarly to what Arakawa and Gins call the “fiction of place” (*The Mechanism of Meaning* 103).

The use of repetition in Gins and Arakawa’s *Critical Resemblance House* can be seen as a way of confronting and examining how repetition acts an intrusive presence in our production of memory. Inhabitants of the *Critical Resemblance House* are forced to make close comparisons between repeated rooms, furnitures, and fragments of rooms. Perhaps doing so forces memory to construct, undermine, and reconstruct itself continually. This house’s repeated labyrinthine paths disrupt the comfortable reassurance that recurrence, and returning to, usually bring. Though I have never been in the *Critical Resemblance House*, I imagine that the role of repetition and the kind of comparisons it engenders could have revolutionary ramifications for the construction of personal as well as historical memory. Might history be something that is never static, might the past be capable of being constantly generated, might there be many alternative histories?

There exists an illimitable number of ways to configure and compose architectural surrounds. Unfortunately, however, the plenitude of architectural possibility is too-often restricted to environments such as four-walled cubicles. We live in a tyranny of the upright and vertical. As I sit at my computer I wonder, what behaviors and conceptual patterns does repeatedly sitting on a chair allow for, require, eliminate, and reinforce? How does privileging the couch as the predominant piece of furniture in what we call “the living room” situate us in the world, affect our thought patterns, problem solving strategies, relationships, expectations, and desires? And how might they be affected instead in a *Reversible Destiny* living space in which “curved walls that lead ever elsewhere and make it difficult to know where to come to rest help strip residents of the dwelling habit” (*Reversible Destiny* 267)?

Gins and Arakawa offer architectural strategies for dilating conceptions of “shelter” with their *Indeterminacy House* that “splits open and open, and the encasing of an active, architecturally projective body in a sheltering place becomes redefined.” In such a house, “sheltering” could mean: forcing the body to unfold and to continually transform itself and its sense of place, interactively, through its movement in and engagement with the house. What if, as Arakawa and Gins propose, “you are not given a finished house but instead form it through your movements and through those of whoever else is in there with you” (*Architectural Bo-*

³ See Shaneen, fig. c (rotation.jpg).

dy 28)? How might such an environment alter our received ideas of intimacy, love, sexuality, domesticity, familial structures?

In a site of Reversible Destiny, visitors can amble along altering inclines, negotiate radical discrepancies in scale, maneuver through confounded distinctions between exterior and interior, ambulate past walls that are inside out, have breakfast at a table with a wall running through it, locate themselves in repeated rooms, situate themselves amidst the countering of all perspectives, accommodate different levels and changes of terrain, and attempt to sit in chairs suspended from ceilings. Familiar patterns and concepts cannot negotiate this terrain, we must create new ones.

Balance, and the loss thereof, is a key concept in Gins and Arakawa's work. Losing one's balance might be seen as a physical correlative to the gaps and cognitive stutterings employed in *The Mechanism of Meaning*—as a way of opening new potentials for perceptual experience. Indeed, Arakawa and Gins cajole, "Instead of being fearful of losing your balance, look forward to it (as a desirable reordering of the landing sites, formerly known as the senses)" (*Reversible Destiny* 202). Arakawa and Gins can perhaps be seen as providing a physical catapult to Rimbaud's promulgation that being a poet, turning oneself into a seer, involves "making your way towards the unknown by a derangement of *all the senses*" (365).

In a Reversible Destiny environment, a "resident" is automatically redefined as one who is unable to take the simplest activities, such as standing or walking, for granted. A procedural architecture destabilizes, unhinges, trips, disturbs equilibrium, and disorients. In a Site of Reversible Destiny, passively inhabiting or ignoring one's surroundings becomes impossible. One's physical body must be intensely involved, active, and capable of change.

In *Architectural Body* Arakawa and Gins propose Gulliver as a model for an active engagement with one's surroundings. Because his scale is so radically disrupted, his attention to his environment must be constant, he "must move circumspectly and cradle tentativeness in regard to every action." Gulliver's predicament forces him to "proceed as a cautious and considerate interloper" (*Architectural Body* 78). Arakawa and Gins seem to suggest that, adopting Gulliver's attitude might be a beneficial way to approach our surroundings and indeed, every situation in our lives.

The work that's involved in the miracle of simply maintaining one's balance, is something that we habitually take for granted and are unaware of—that is, until we fall.

And what wonders did Alice encounter when she fell down the rabbit hole? Arakawa and Gins aspire "to have the body so persistently thrown off balance that the majority of its efforts have to go entirely towards the righting of itself, leaving no energy for the routine assembling of the socio-historical matrix of the familiar or, for that matter, for the 'being of a person'" (*Reversible Destiny* 297). Perhaps we need to fall, to be disturbed, imbalanced, and exposed to sensory chaos in order to be shocked out of our complacency and forced to create alternative ways of being.

Arakawa and Gins's *Indeterminacy House* offers "an overabundance of choices, it promotes indecisiveness in residents, who often find themselves unable to determine where they should position themselves

and why.” But, such extreme destabilization has a most salubrious purpose: “the house rewards those who meet its demands by bringing Reversible Destiny within their reach relatively soon” (*Reversible Destiny* 308).

Might cognitive breakdown, incapacity, or a form of insanity, ensue from living in sites of Reversible Destiny? Perhaps Gins and Arakawa offer an answer when they ask, “What if an architectural body could (communally) self-administer appropriate daily doses of both order and chaos?” (*Reversible Destiny* 12). *Architectural Body*’s chapter “Architecture as Hypothesis” outlines the possibility for the coexistence of change-inspiring discontinuity with a continuity that allows for recuperative space to mediate shocks, disruption and transformation: “Constructed to exist in the tense of *What if*, it presents itself as intentionally provisional, replacing definite form with tentative form, the notion of a lasting structure with that of an adaptive one” (*Architectural Body* 29). In a lilting sequence in *Architectural Body*, the authors give a tour of the *Ubiquitous Site House* that begins with the visitors referring to it as “this heap?” and asking, “Are we at a dump?” Eventually, however, the visitors are able to realign their expectations and situate themselves to be able not only to maneuver through its abounding surprises and nuances, but to curl up and take a cozy nap.

Perhaps inhabitants of Reversible Destiny houses will respond to such disruptions as did Alice in Wonderland. After falling down the rabbit hole, growing larger and smaller, and experiencing other disturbances to her habitual expectations, she comes upon a cake that again has “eat me” written on it. After taking a bite, however,

[...] she was quite surprised to find that she remained the same size [...]. [T]his is what generally happens when one eats cake; but Alice had got so much into the way of expecting nothing but out-of-the-way things to happen, that it seemed quite dull and stupid for life to go on in the common way. (12)

The amplitudinous universe of a Reversible Destiny House adds possibilities without eliminating them. The compass of *Architectural Body* is sweeping: the desire for trial and error, surprise, adventure, improvisation, and newness, is also meant to allow for the full scope of human needs—including eating, showering, resting.

Gins: Yes, Cooking—that doesn’t present a problem... Whatever people do in other houses, they can do in this one.

Robert: You mean people can actually live here?

Arakawa: Live here and do daily research... Into what goes into being a person. (Architectural Body 29)

The possibilities that a house allows for and demands can be infinitely multiplied and expanded. What constitutes “human needs,” “comfort,” “the quotidian,” can be redefined in myriad ways.

According to Arakawa and Gins, “Every person proceeds by continually turning the unfamiliar into the familiar” (*Architectural Body* 50). An *Ubiquitous Site House* provokes its inhabitants to enact an ongoing negotiation between, as well as a reconceptualizing of, the “familiar” and “unfamiliar.” (What is familiar? When and how did sitting in front of a TV screen for an average of 26.4 hours a week become “familiar?”)

Must what Arakawa and Gins call our “deadening and habitual relationship to the world” (*Architectural Body* 51) be how we define “the familiar?”

Arakawa and Gins consider “an architecture that does not allow anything whatsoever that is in play to be overlooked to be a fine training ground for an ethical stance” (*Reversible Destiny* 12). And indeed, the scope of such an architecture is comprehensive—applicable to and with consequences for, all dimensions of a living being’s fulfillment and self-surpassing.

An architecture of entelechy.

Sites of *Reversible Destiny* ensure radical connectivity by revealing the inescapable inter-affectivity between an “organism that persons” and her surrounds in every activity—even the most minute acts of perception. Inhabitants of these sites must be utterly engaged and fervently attentive, in an informed, invested, participatory, responsible responsiveness. Is this not a desirable model not only for architectural, but for cultural, social and economic surrounds? Widespread realization of Arakawa and Gins’s architectural directives would spawn a radical re-rendering of society.

What might be the outcome of socially implementing the hypothesis put forth in *Architectural Body*, that “what stems from the body, by way of awareness, should be held to be of it” (*Architectural Body* 50)? One result would seem to be the impossibility of alienation and dissociation.

Gins and Arakawa define the “architectural body” as consisting of “the body proper plus its immediate surrounds” in an indivisibly reciprocal relationship. Succinctly put, a person should “never be considered apart from her surroundings” (*Architectural Body* 51). Living with an awareness of one’s self and one’s environment as synergistically co-created and co-responsive would challenge the dichotomy of the individual versus the social and transform a socioeconomic system that requires the suffering of millions to be hidden from those who benefit from that suffering.

Reversible Destiny as a matter of radical responsibility.

The art of *Reversible Destiny* is an art in which practice replaces aesthetics. Its architectural revolution, it seems, would necessitate a revolution of values.

In *Architectural Body*, Gins and Arakawa urge us toward a *crisis ethics* that calls for a sweeping and immediate restructuring of societal priorities. If we believed that we had the capacity to not die, wouldn’t we do everything in our power toward that end? A *crisis ethics* “permits no category of event, not even mortality, to be set apart for special treatment.” It summons us to approach every aspect of our lives with the “dispatch a state of emergency requires” (*Architectural Body* xviii, xvi). Buildings are not just empty vessels in which living and dying happen; instead, for Arakawa and Gins, “Architecture as we newly conceive it actively participates in life and death matters” (*Architectural Body* x). It seems that prioritizing non-dying would require the elimination of our death-obsessed and self-destructive cultural habits such as ecological destruction, a permanent war economy, and disease-inducing lifestyles. One might suppose that a crisis ethics would entice us to come up with alternatives to violence, war, and nuclear and genocidal holocausts as problem-solving strategies. One could claim that archite-cultural conditioning powerfully shapes, encourages, sup-

presses or extinguishes possibilities. Our modes of thought create our violent, destructive and self-limiting behaviors. Gins and Arakawa operate on the assumption that by architecturally engendering new corporeal experiences, we can transform our brain-encoded, body-grounded conceptual patterns.

Perhaps it is not too much of a stretch then, to claim that creating architectural environments that support and sustain breaks with normal consciousness and behavior, transcendence of outmoded needs, and self-mastery of mind and flesh—if done on a grand enough scale—can reverse our destiny as a species. To the extent that the world is not given but formed, the most fundamental and firmly held beliefs and ideas can be altered. Each of us is therefore responsible and none can be complacent about the assumptions, practices, habits, and ethical decisions with which we determine our collective and individual destinies.

Arakawa and Gins have met the defaulted hopes of miscarried modernist utopias razed by totalitarianism, nuclear destruction, and the Holocaust, with an unabashed hopefulness: “[The] post-utopian spirit is the one that has found the means no longer to have fearfully to dally with any set of given necessities whatsoever” (*Architectural Body* xix). Imagine, for a moment, what becomes possible when you refuse to accept the limits of *any set of given necessities whatsoever*. A tentative architecture has unlimited creation and future-orientation as a constantly generative constitutive component. This can be used as a strategy to avoid the ideological limitations of utopian programs and go beyond prescriptively closed systems of uniformity or hegemony. I think of Arakawa and Gins as in kinship with the wild generativity of Charles Fourier, who made provisions for all manner of experience from the most banal to sexual and gastronomic excesses. Arakawa and Gins, however, provide strategies for avoiding Fourier’s curtailing of possibility with his severely ordered overdeterminacy. The tentativeness and purposeful incompleteness of a site such as the *Ubiquitous Site House* works against institutions of domination, oppression, and totalitarianism.

Gins and Arakawa’s architectural-poiesis deters ideological fixity because it is ardently variation-engendering: Sites of Reversible Destiny are fertile fructifying breeding grounds for the widest possible array of corporeal, experiential, perceptual, cognitive, emotive, ethical, and somatically expressive capacities. Reversible Destiny is an opulent architectural ethics of abundance. “Might not an architectural surround set up to cooperate with the gathering of intelligence increase, at the very least, one’s feeling of connection with and sense of responsibility to the world?” (*Reversible Destiny* 12).

Not only do our current architectural surroundings severely constrain our physical and conceptual possibilities, but our social institutions and economic distribution systems and policies as well. Arakawa and Gins propose that a beneficial society would be one that gives primacy to “a thoroughgoing architectural questioning of the purpose of the species” (*Architectural Body* xx). One could extrapolate, then, that this would require a massive shift in economic priority. In addition, it seems that orienting a society primarily around such aims would result in a shift away from research primarily being funded by, and done in the service of, corporate profit, pharmaceutical companies, and advancement of war technology, as it is now.

Gins and Arakawa kindle our atrophied democratic proclivities by calling for a “populist architecture of hypothesis” (*Architectural Body* 61). They write,

What then is preventing us from inventing ourselves further? [...] [T]he species has not yet learned how to... work communally at the same time they continue to form themselves as separate individuals [...] every individual has been formed communally, and therefore all actions have communal echoes and repercussions. (xxi)

We must think in these terms if we are “to arrive at having a great many more than the paltry sum of possibilities that is usually (our) due” (*Architectural Body* xxi). Gins and Arakawa envision that:

Together the members of our species will exponentially increase the tremendous amount of forethought that is needed for town planning. Exhorted and cajoled by their town... to perform architectural procedures, people work and play at figuring out what in the world they could possibly be. (Architectural Body 60)

Gins and Arakawa encourage *each and every one of us* to become an architect by living our lives as “case studies [...] no one should consider herself a [...] non-puzzle, everyone should live as a self-marmot (self-guinea pig)” (*Architectural Body* xx).

Gins and Arakawa are exorbitantly democratic in providing architectural procedures and applicable directives that can be used by anyone. *Architectural Body* gives “A Crisis Ethicist’s *Directions for Use*,” for example: “12. Associate your bodily actions so strongly with your tactically posed surround that they become as if integral to it” (*Architectural Body* 98).

They provide architectural procedures for “Invention and Assembly,” a kind of do-it-yourself kit for anyone to be able to go “from human to trans-human.” They outline practical steps by which *anyone* can “become an architect in earnest” and encourage everyone to develop a “trans-human capability, coordinating skill... or activating condition that is absent from your repertoire.” You can find and invent the kinds of actions, physical circumstances, and structures that would facilitate the development of that capability and the desired outcome you want it to generate, and then put together instructions so that others can join you in “performing it to the hilt” (Gins, email correspondence). Arakawa and Gins provide many ways to apply the principles of their large scale aspirations to individual, communal, and grassroots endeavors. Arakawa and Gins inspire and focus on the active development of organism-personhood for *everyone*. Indeed, a “ubiquitous site” is defined as “all that which is in the immediate vicinity of a person [...] this is a ubiquity of *you*... inclusive of your power to compose a world and be in contact with it...” (*Architectural Body* 34).

This kind of all-inclusiveness and comprehensiveness leads me to imagine a redefinition of scale—not only spatial, but emotional. As far as Reversible Destiny architectonics are applicable on the macro level, they can also reach into, illuminate, and transform the most subtle aspects and deepest complexities of being a person. Only in a truly democratic architecture would it be the case that “how she flexes her muscles, a person flexes her surroundings” (*Architectural Body* 40). This leads me to further imagine the effects of everyone’s flexing his emotions, her memories, his desires.

An architecture of democracy is also an architecture of intimacy.

“It is not monumentality but an approachable workaday architecture our species is in need of” (*Architectural Body* 39). Many would not consider (not initially, anyway!) such a dynamic challenging architecture

as “approachable” or “workaday.” With this claim, Arakawa and Gins necessarily, wonderfully, generously, redefine these terms.

“Oh to have the opportunities of a snail!!” (*Architectural Body* 32). In *Architectural Body*, Arakawa and Gins invoke Francis Ponge’s poem *Escargots*, which expresses the snail’s inseparability from its shell and the earth. For Gins and Arakawa, “Ponge’s snail musings adumbrate our concept of an architectural body.” They adapt Ponge’s *Escargots* into their poem *Humansnails* to gorgeously illustrate how the intimate intensity of a snail’s intertwining with its shell-body-environment, is akin to the relationship of an “organism that persons” to her architectural surrounds. *Humansnails*’ sited awareness “goes through it as it goes through them;” each marvelously swallows, expels, disperses, and is wrapped around and within, its ubiquitous sites (*Architectural Body* 31).

Arakawa and Gins explain that their *Ubiquitous Site House* exists as a “procedural tool,” as a “piece of equipment” (“a functional tool... a hammer... extends the senses, but a procedural tool examines and reorders the sensorium”). This house has various settings, and the “zero setting (is) what we call the *snail setting*.” The “medium setting, in which the material stays always at a slight remove from those within it (is) named the *close to snail setting*.” The “snail setting” provides “the most direct way we know to reorder sensateness... sensitivity... sensibility... one’s sensorium...” (*Architectural Body* 33).

What are the power and economic structures embedded in an architecture of monumentality as opposed to a house equipped with a “snail setting”? What would it mean for what we call our livelihoods if it were considered a socially, even economically, valuable and viable activity to spend time getting through a house in which “it might take several hours to go from the living room to the kitchen” (*Reversible Destiny* 258)?

“Economic priority should be given to the resolving of existential puzzles” (*Architectural Body* xxi). With this single sentence Gins and Arakawa necessitate economic revolution. They defy the inevitability of death *and* taxes:

It is admittedly costly for our species to ask questions of itself through architecture, particularly if one determines it to be necessary to devote an entire room to the posing of a single question or... if the testing of a single hypothesis might necessitate that an entire house (or a city) be constructed. But if this is how and from where the answers can come at last, why worry over the expense? (Architectural Body xxii)

I believe that such so-called absurd propositions are what we are most in need of (as if unlimited funds for the research and construction of killing machines and a socioeconomic system based on the perpetual creation of new enemies to justify the continual deployment of these killing machines isn’t absurd!).

“We believe that people closely and complexly allied with their architectural surrounds can succeed in outliving their (seemingly inevitable) death sentences!” (*Architectural Body* xvi). As Gins and Arakawa point out, the inevitability of death is so encoded within our belief systems that we define ourselves as “mortals”—but, they insist, our self-conceptions are far too limited: “The defeatists are everywhere. Within the

life sciences, they try to cure the human body... never thinking to reorder the body radically so that it might elude mortality" (*Architectural Body* xvii).

Architectural Body is dedicated "To transhumans," and *The Mechanism of Meaning* is framed as "a plan according to which posthuman entities are to be constructed" (Gins, email correspondence). Sites of Reversible Destiny offer disruptions and challenges that force bodies to adapt, in an evolutionary sense, but without having to wait thousands of years. Indeed, they are intended to bring about the creation of "an artificially derived new natural order." One might critique Arakawa and Gins's desire for the "species' taking its evolution into its own hands" and the "fundamental reordering of the body" (*Architectural Body* xvii) as an extension of the very mind-body split that they claim to overcome, that it betrays a "masters of the universe" mentality of colonization, eugenics, "rational" domination of "nature," etc.

Serious response to such criticisms are beyond the scope of this essay. However, a response might tentatively begin by claiming that entering and altering unfamiliar terrain and transforming the environment can be thought of as a defining characteristic of the human. It is the quality of, and the ethics informing such alteration that is primary. *Architectural Body* begins: "Born into a new territory, and that territory is myself as organism. There is no place to go but here. Each organism that persons finds the new territory that is itself, and, having found it, adjusts it" (*Architectural Body* 1). What is to be conquered, improved, altered, mastered, is oneself. Indeed, Arakawa and Gins seem to suggest, that we haven't gone even remotely far enough in self-colonizing, we are not nearly enough aware of the extent to which we *already do* create our environments and our own bodies.

I would claim that perhaps we even cultivate a lack of awareness, ascribing determinative power to something else—whether it be "nature," "survival of the fittest," "god," the so-called "free market"—so that we can abstain from being responsible for our own self-creation, for economic disparity, for the havoc we as a species are wreaking on our psyches and on the planet. One might conjecture that *having an impact* is a non-negotiable aspect of being alive, and that only in acknowledging and enhancing our affective powers can we more effectively create a life-affirming beneficial world/sensorium. One might argue that a value system that revolves around violence, destruction, and the uncontrollable desire to consume and dominate is reinforced when people feel powerless and alienated from their surroundings, their own bodies and their own experiences, and when they live without awareness of themselves as vitally interconnected and consequential architectural bodies. The desire to reconfigure the body might proceed from and move along the lines of the following statement from *Architectural Body*: "the more a person learns about herself as a functioning organism, and the more she takes cognizance of what she learns... incorporating it into her routine, the less likely will she be able to harm herself" (*Architectural Body* xvi).

It seems to me that an awareness of ourselves as architectural bodies and the development of self-transformative adeptness, would encourage us to think and behave with more sensitivity, more awareness, more empathy, and more responsibility.

One could say that a primary and definitive aspect of *love* is attention. The insistence, then, of an architecture that enhances our abilities to be attentive to the connections between our internal processes and our external surrounds, can only enhance our abilities to be attentive to the way we configure the world.

An architecture of enhanced ability to love.

Reversible Destiny architecture serves to ameliorate our current state of sorely underdeveloped cognitive and imaginative prowess. For example, why limit oneself to just one horizon? One of the perks of a Reversible Destiny House: “In every view, not one but two (or more!!) horizons” (*Reversible Destiny* 308). *Architectural Body* outlines one way to employ the “disperse-to-contrast” procedure: “construct multiple vantage points... build not one but two or more ground planes, giving no preference to one as main, thereby producing double and triple horizons” (*Architectural Body* 79). A site of reversible destiny in which “a person cannot determine her position simply by referring to a single horizon” (*Reversible Destiny* 249) prompts us to imagine more than one location of reference, more than one set of standards, more than one way of being. Might multiple horizons and the provision for “infinite quantities of spacetime necessary for living” (*Reversible Destiny* 302) permit and propel us to imagine existing on different levels at once, in an expansive ecstatic bountiful multivalency?

With their *Modular Labyrinth House*, Gins and Arakawa brilliantly provide ways for organism-persons to flex, generatively, their near-atrophied imaginational muscles. In the same house, a single family can live “now in one direction within one of the modules, now in another direction in the other module, constantly performing about-faces on their own living habits.” Instead of ruminating abstractly, living in the house would give inhabitants a chance to philoso-physically track the conceptual perplexities that this house generates: “When this house is used as a two-family dwelling, [...] modules [...] direct the two families’ lives along the same paths of action, but in opposite directions” (*Reversible Destiny* 279). Not only does the *Modular Labyrinth House* provide fertile philosophical ground to examine, but it also would seem to provide a perfect training ground for the cultivation of empathy.

Du- and multi-plicitous modes of existence are further encouraged in Arakawa and Gins’s *Twin House* (*Reversible Destiny* 304) in which “next to every set of rooms is a twin with identical layout but oppositely pitched terrain” (*Reversible Destiny* 270). A structure consisting of two halves in the form of identical enclosures that are juxtaposed at different angles endows its inhabitants with the knowledge “that an action performed in one part of the house might equally well have been performed in another (and this) makes the course of events seem less inevitable” (304). Such an orientation could sprout all kinds of awareness, for example: the constant possibility of always existing elsewhere. The awareness that being where you are is always a choice. A subtly reoccurring awareness of the possible ramifications *elsewhere* of one’s actions *here*. The *Twin House* would require its resident to always activate her *here* with a *there* in mind.

The doubled walls and rooms of the *Twin House* suggest a doubling of the self, and/or a dual-occupancy self, and activate a radical de-centralizing of the importance of the self: “Occasions that can be given instant bodily replay cease to appear unique” (*Reversible Destiny* 271). The *Twin House* unhinges one’s attachment to one’s notion of self, uniqueness, and the ego. Indeed, habitation in it might even lead us

to ask, as do Arakawa and Gins, “there is no doubt that it is useful to be one person at a time. But the question is, is it useful enough?” (*Architectural Body* 90-91).

Gins and Arakawa advocate fearless self-actualizing and self-surpassing, in a context of such intimate intense interactivity that:

Residents... eventually may come to rely on their houses even more than on themselves. Finally, the house might itself one day become an architectural body, the primary resident of its own premises, a ready, near-animate (or animate), and loving substitute or stand-in for a resident who, given the relative primitiveness of the times and despite all her efforts, had no choice but to vanish. (Reversible Destiny 259)

Gins and Arakawa are not sentimentally attached to the body, or the given “natural” order, in their present forms. Indeed, our self-configuring power is so strong that the salubrious effects that implementing Reversible Destiny’s directives might engender are unlimited. Not only can we defeat mortality, but we can engage the planet itself in the process:

Having subsisted for several millennia merely as supporting ground for houses, finally the planet enters a house and takes up residence within it. Once the planet... noticeably obtrudes on all movements and anticipations of movement, ethical position at last can begin to be assessed with some accuracy. (Reversible Destiny 289)

Gins and Arakawa provide an architecture of “unlimited plasticity” that promotes and reawakens us to the body’s lavish “elasticity and multivalency.” The profuse variability engendered by Reversible Destiny architecture leads to what I think may be the most necessary and affirming of outcomes: the pleasures of savoring, the delectation of nuance, the flourishing of joy. Gins and Arakawa are no strangers to these most desirable of human needs: “A creature of the post-utopian era exacts out [...] evolving to that maximum demanded by the most perspicuous of ecstasies [...] every detail must be attended to and all processes in question should be exaggerated and prolonged” (*Reversible Destiny* 241).

According to Arakawa and Gins “the full extent of the body’s scope eludes us still” (*Reversible Destiny* 12). Reversible Destiny procedures allow us to actually experience and observe the plasticity of mental states and the close casual relationship between the conceptual and the somatic. The focus on this mutuality of the mental and the corporeal, as well as the cultivation of alertness and attention, the testing of the body’s limits, and the joining of the ultra-rarified with the most praxis-oriented, links Arakawa and Gins’s work to other disciplines.

In Yoga, for example, standing on one’s head is one of the most fundamentally important poses. This position forces the organs to work double-time to compensate for being upside down and is meant to strengthen the body and ultimately to transform one’s attitudes. Perhaps we can think of Reversible Destiny architects as athletic coaches and the inhabitants of Sites of Reversible Destiny as athletes; testing and pushing one’s physical limits is a matter of mental training. Development and improvement require the re-ordering of bodily functions, discomfort, and disruption. Body-builders break down muscle fibers to strengthen and enlarge them. Gymnasts stretch their tendons to extend their limits. Athletes and martial artists willfully induce physical and mental exhaustion to further their agilities.

Perhaps we can think of Reversible Destiny “practitioners” as metaphysical trainers and adepts. The body and the mind are deeply intertwined in furthering perceptual states, for example, in the initiatory sickness of shamans, in Zen meditation, in a dervish’s holding his inner eye steady while whirling in exhaustion. Reversible Destiny “transcendence,” however, is thoroughly “here and now and can and should be constructively and crisis-ethically continually reworked—the spiritual and critical become one” (*Architectural Body* 82).

Through architectural inducements we can perhaps develop our attributes and faculties—sensorimotor, kinesthetic, cognitive, imaginative—to extraordinary levels, and redefine thresholds of endurance and extremity in sensations of pain and pleasure, volition, bodily processes, and mental acuity. Through a procedural architecture we might develop new stores of energy, enhance information processing skills and our abilities to expand into new environments. We might exponentially dilate our emotional responsiveness and empathetic capacities. We might even develop our sensory awareness to such a degree that we develop new sense organs.

The changes that Gins and Arakawa want to facilitate might be thought of as akin to alterations of adaptive capacities (fire, language) or bodily structures (specialized organs to facilitate movement and manipulate the environment: wings, legs, flippers, beaks, talons). Or, the transformations that they propose might be placed in the context of emerging technologies of gene splicing, genetic engineering, cloning, artificial intelligence, robots, cyborgs, nanotechnology, implanted neural chips, transgenic organisms, the “transhuman” and the “posthuman”—that serve to further and enhance corporeal capacity.

Gins and Arakawa, however, go much further: *they have decided not to die*.

They do make room for metaphorical application of their claims: “Another way to read reversible destiny—a less radical [...] perhaps less terrifying and therefore more inviting way—is as an open challenge to our species to invent itself and to desist from foreclosing on any possibility, even those our contemporaries judge to be impossible” (*Architectural Body* xviii). And, if in taking up this challenge, we were only to begin to be able to answer the question, *What are we?*, then we will indeed have made incredible gains. But, Arakawa and Gins, ever *sui generis*, take the pursuit of non-dying most literally. Death is simply not an acceptable limit on the human condition. And, “if you say no, or yes, to this automatically,” they ask, “who are you, then, and where does it get you?” (*Architectural Body* xx).

According to Gins and Arakawa, “an architecture that could redefine life... is within our species’ reach” (*Architectural Body* xi). In considering the feasibility of their claims, I suggest thinking about the improbability of living cells emerging from new elements created by exploding stars, the evolution of terrestrial vertebrates from fishlike ancestors, or the development of humankind from primates. Or, one might consider the seeming impossibility of transcending the bounds of inorganic patterns, the utter implausibility of the rising of organic elements from inorganic matter. Might widespread encouragement, cultivation, and realization of Reversible Destiny procedural architecture result in an evolutionary shift—perhaps similar to, perhaps not as unlikely as—the emergence of life itself?

If we can defy death, what then, is impossible?

Regarding the impossible:

[T]rans-humans, having made the decision not to die, will need and choose to specialize in the impossible, going so far as to make that word a verb. They will impossible live exits from an unavailing and unforgiving universe. (Gins and Arakawa)⁴

Since the possible can only be the not-yet, the impossible is already in our possession. (Herbert Brün)⁵

Be unrelenting when faced with the relentless. (Arakawa and Gins, Architectural Body 15)

Marianne Shaneen⁶

⁴ I quote from an e-mail Madeline Gins sent me.

⁵ This quote by the late composer Herbert Brün is from an inscription in a book he gave to me.

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FIVE SENSES TO IMMORTALITY

Since the world is not merely given but is constructed by the activity of the subject, the recoding of the I is the recreation of the world.

(Madeline Gins, *Helen Keller or Arakawa* 251)

Five senses—vision, hearing, touch, taste, smell—classically credited to human beings, continue to be widely acknowledged sources of life’s marvels and surprises as well as pleasures and pains, but these senses have many other modalities. Fascination, for example, may follow the perception of complexity—what defies description amidst the easily expressed—while boredom follows randomness—where repetition defies endlessness. Some cognitive psychologists and information theorists would reduce perception to problems of data compression, feature detection, pattern recognition, and system identification, they would also utterly stifle research on the multiplicity of the senses.¹ Cultural critics and historians have theorized on the roles of senses in provoking consciousness and affect, in deciphering nuance and detecting change. Philosophers have searched through layers of the sensorimotor apparatus for sources of the human and “all too human,” while sifting through sounds, smells and sensation for rudiments of prelinguistic memory and other roots of language. Psychoanalysts have dissected and systematized the symbolic representation of the senses in art, fantasy and dreams, and artists, especially poets and painters, have ceaselessly experimented with and interpreted the senses.

In particular, artist-poet-architect Madeline Gins and artist-poet-architect Arakawa have been analysts of the senses for more than three decades. Together and individually, they have used their art to experiment with the senses over a broad range of parameters and variables: spatial-temporal, micro-proprioception, microkinaesthetic graphicality, levels of awareness—of surroundings, dimensions, temperature, texture, periodicity, duration, of meter, rhythm, rhyme—self-organization, autopoiesis, artificial life, consciousness, intentionality, etc. Their results have been revealing, sometimes surprising and even revolutionary.

In this paper, we review some of Gins and Arakawa’s work and show how it complements that of culture critics, philosophers, and psychoanalysts. We will draw on several works but especially Gins’s *Helen Keller or Arakawa* to trace the senses (1) to their imprint on gesture, (2) in and out of the “blank” of the whole body, and (3) through mechanisms of meaning. Gins and Arakawa’s theoretical work is not without its

¹ Cognitive theorists should not be confused with other scientists. Indeed, the cosmologist, Edwin Powel Hubble, is sometimes quoted as having said, “Equipped with five senses, man explores the universe around him and calls the adventure science” (*LabReporter* 5.2 (2003), cover).

consequences for practice, and we proceed to their efforts to mobilize the senses on behalf of life—(1) to a reassessment of death, (2) to the team’s hypothesis for “reversible destiny,” or “how not to die,” and (3) through “architectural procedures” that can be used as an antidote to death.

Tracing the senses

Early in their collaboration, Gins and Arakawa turned to film—the premier visual medium—to probe sight’s impact on the intellect and affect through movement and time. They would seem to agree with twentieth-century philosopher Gilles Deleuze: “if the cinema goes beyond perception, it is in the sense that it reaches to the *genetic element* of all possible perception” (Deleuze, *Cinéma I* 83)

They were particularly drawn to the films of Japanese filmmaker Ozu which turn on human beings working out the complexities and problems of daily life as opposed to heroic portraits of agency. Ozu’s stories, which “have an amazing matter-of-factness” (Gins, *Keller or Arakawa* 41), always hearken back to the familiar, examining both permanence and change in the ceremonial character of daily life. Helen Keller catches this sense of things well and Gins catches her catching it: “Change may be the vitalizing wind blowing through the house of life, but it is not an abiding force. We need permanent things to soak peace into us as well as progress” (40).

That “house of life,” is interchangeable with Deleuze’s “*genetic element*” and with Michel Foucault’s “the life of the body” (Foucault 146), which underlies every historical analysis of discipline and punishment. “Peace” does not soak into that “house” any more than “progress” blows on the wind. The “permanent things” coming to this body from film enter through the senses and are liberated by the prepared body as peace and progress. The issue confronted by Gins and Arakawa is how does one prepare one’s body for life?

Imprinted on gesture

Cognitive theorists may consider the body merely a means to an end—whether in the name of profit or selfish genes—but Gins and Arakawa reject parallels between the human condition and labor, the production of economic and social value, and instruments of goal-directed and purposeful action. They do not reduce the body to a telephone exchange, no matter how finely tuned by evolution, and they refuse to imagine life as the routing of sensory impulses to their motor end-organ and behavioral response.

When Arakawa and Gins made their own film, they turned their insight inside out and used film to study harmony between the senses and the whole body as enacted in gesture. In Arakawa and Gins’s film, *For Example (A Critique of Never)*, (1971-74), the filmmakers tracked a young actor playing a seven-year-old homeless boy on his daily circumambulation of the Bowery and Lower East Side of New York City. Arakawa, the painter/cinematographer, and Gins, the poet/librettist, began the film with the illusion of stal-

king the boy, capturing their quarry's gestures uncorrupted by social restraints and filmic constraints. Arakawa acknowledged ambivalence about his technique—"From behind the camera, to which I clung with guilt" (12)—while Gins asked, "Would it be a mistake to use this poem here:/ Use this child as a lightning rod" (12). But they persisted, and the film succeeded in bringing the character of unadorned gesture to the surface in the all-important and oft-neglected contemplation of the whole body.

Filmically, *For Example* echoes Giorgio Agamben's portrayal of the body as a means without end. He declares, "What characterizes gesture is that in it nothing is being produced, but rather something is being endured and supported. The gesture, in other words, opens the sphere of ethos as the more proper sphere of that which is human" (Agamben, 56). And, in language reminiscent of Arakawa and Gins's film, Agamben adds,

The gesture is... communication of a communicability. It has precisely nothing to say because what it shows is the being-in-language of human beings as pure mediality. However, because being-in-language is not something that could be said in sentences, the gesture is always a gesture of not being able to figure something out in language; it is always a gag in the proper meaning of the term, indicating first of all something that could be put in your mouth to hinder speech. (58)

Gins and Arakawa's gesturing body is a "container (or generator) of a completely new area of 'consciousness'" (Arakawa and Gins, *Mechanism of Meaning* 103). This notion of body resonates with what Deleuze and the psychiatrist Félix Guattari call the "Body without Organs" (BwO), the body that is "full of gaiety, ecstasy, and dance" (*Thousand Plateaus* 150) liberated from the hypochondriacal, paranoid, schizophrenic, and masochistic body in league with death and pain. Deleuze and Guattari ask,

Is it really so sad and dangerous to be fed up with seeing with your eyes, breathing with your lungs, swallowing with your mouth, thinking with your brain, having an anus and a larynx, head and legs? Why not walk on your head, sing with your sinuses, breathe with your belly [...]? Substitute forgetting for amnesia, experimentation for interpretation. Find your body without organs. Find out how to make it. It's a question of life and death, youth and old age, sadness and joy. It's where everything is played out. (150-151)

Consonant with Gins and Arakawa's liberated senses, Deleuze and Guattari's BwO teams with life and youth, focuses on the senses, escapes the death wish, and rejects the moribund.

Gins continues to celebrate the liberation of the senses in *Helen Keller or Arakawa* where Keller, speaking for herself and through Gins, challenges blindness and confounds conceptions that equate emptiness with what is not seen. Through Keller, Gins dramatizes how "blind sight" is not to be reduced to traditional philosophic and religious conceptions of insight. Keller's blindness is placed in a context that does not reduce visibility and invisibility to a binary opposition but reconsiders them in relation to questions of memory and other norms of sensorimotor response.

"Blind sight" would seem to be an oxymoron except it is reflected by insight—if not merely insight—and discernment—though not merely discernment either. Blind sight is liberated sight, finding expression in the transvaluation of sensual form, in the Nietzschean sense of sensation that is not hierarchical, and in Gior-

gio Agamben's sense of gesture that is not alienated. It is the "becoming animal" in Deleuze's sense of "what constitutes sensation" (Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* 179).

Light and dark are the tones of Gins/Keller's poetry. Seen in chiaroscuro, they penetrate each other. In Gins/Keller's unseen world, light and dark are complicated by dimensions, largeness and smallness as well as by distance and proximity: they do not become relative so much as unfixed. Light and dark are the tropes for Gins's project to contemplate sensorimotor life and annihilate insentient death. Indeed, light and dark stand in stark contrast to the "lack," the absence of sentience, and hence death.

Sighted awareness and all forms of "sentient tentativeness"—"visual, aural, tactile, kinesthetic, and olfactory"—liberated from the senses, move through the expanding capacity "to think-feel" and, without determination, coordinate and manifest themselves at "landing sites" in gesture and knowledge²: "When it stands up to be counted and entered, this built argument or discourse will manifestly turn us inside out, imbuing [...] [the ever-receptive Bioscleave] with more of what it is like to be us [homo sapiens]" (Gins and Arakawa, *Architectural Body* 59).

In and out of the "blank"

Contemporary cognitive theorists seem to view the body as a hard-wired computer designed for receiving, transducing, and conducting sensory stimuli to behavioral motors. How the body performs these functions is unknown, and, hence, the body remains a "black box" or cipher. In contrast, Gins and Arakawa, suggest that both perception and behavior are undetermined and sensitive to artistic intervention. Instead of, or as well as, originating in impulses traveling through circuits and chips, senses have their becoming in the "blank."

The "blank" that Arakawa and Gins pursue relentlessly—their "model of thought"—is fleshed out in the third edition of *The Mechanism of Meaning*. There they identify "a Blank Prototype" as

[...] a container that will serve as Proving Ground—a proving ground for all that which constitutes a person as s/he perceives. All elements that are in play might as they fall into place upon this Proving Ground—a Blank (wide-open) Prototype—land in such a way as to be ostensibly self-defining. (7)

In their successor text to *The Mechanism of Meaning*, *To Not to Die* Arakawa and Gins explain: "Part of all doing is blank, and so too all using. No meaning without blank" (103), and later still, they clarify: "Following each reassembling, there is left a residue of blank" (153), and finally (or back to the beginning):

*Immediately following the shaping of any world,
even a suspicion of,*

² "Landing sites" are reminiscent of the language of Deleuze and Guattari (see *What Is Philosophy?*).

*the un-imaged imaging power, the blank power
to shape, to be shaped
is re-distributing. (159)*

In *Helen Keller or Arakawa*, Gins takes a text that appeared on the jacket flap of *To Not to Die* and amplifies it to come up with a fine-grained artistic and philosophical conception of blankness:

Blank is a successive set of events and a method. It is not, for example, as is Emptiness, something that people are asked to believe in or that requires a leap of faith. Although not the opposite of Emptiness, blank, in its ordinariness, stands in sharp contrast to this. Blank goes along humbly supplying itself to whatever would appear to be in need of it, whatever would seem to have something to ask of it. It is what supplies blankness to whatever has been left blank. Blank supplies neutrality. As long as an area or an interval remains (filled with) blank, it can be thought of as being open and unassigned. Certainly blank makes the tabula rasa replete with fullness. Blank may, in the end, be what fills Emptiness. Blank and the Vacuum alike field indiscernible, but always only through blank. (233-34)

Blank is a necessary move toward recognizing the potentiality of thought and of articulating its openness. Using the intertwined figures of Helen Keller and Arakawa, Gins assaults inadequate conceptions of blankness, of sight, of being, perception, and preconception. Both Helen Keller and Arakawa are avatars of blankness in that they present alternative modes for communicating indiscernible but are nonetheless real and central to the transvaluation of the senses. Blank is not emptiness: “[I]t is blank which gives a diffuse, blurring power to consciousness in conjunction with narrowly focused delineations of intentions. It provides the sense of volume out of which any intentional act arises” (209). And, as Gins explains through Helen Keller, blank is not silent: “I know even though I’m unable to hear, that movement and sound should be linked, but I am blank as to how I know this or I “hear” this connection blankly. I have forgotten or I never knew how this came to be” (184).

Blanking the senses is not superficial or casual, and Gins’s invocation of the term “deconstruction” to describe her method—especially the deconstruction of the Japanese kanji-radical “dori” in the chapter titled “The March of the Transitive”—challenges binaries and boundaries. Gins goes all the way to rethinking the very origins and limits of language. Indeed, Helen Keller’s discovery of language through her linking of water with the word for it, demonstrates that she “had language in her through and through well before this” (105).

Arakawa and Gins’s distinction between blankness and emptiness is an introduction to their undoing taken-for-granted categories through *discordia concors*, the union of seeming opposites—seeing while being blind; splitting while sticking together (cleaving); emptiness filled with form; darkness penetrating light; change and permanence; light penetrating darkness; existence of origins (must go nude) when there are no origins (post-structuralist resistance to origins). Ultimately, alliances and Sunderings resolve into “cleaving,” Arakawa and Gins’s most consistent trope for examining the language of the senses.

To cleave, as Arakawa and Gins point out, signifies both adherence and division. In a consummate use of *discordia concors*, Gins writes:

The signal from any part of body cleaves at one and the same time as both rapier slicing through the air and strip of double-sided scotch tape. How a roll of double-sided scotch tape would feel to itself, if this could feel some way to itself, has something to do with how it feels to cleave. (282)

Her exploration of “to cleave” cleaves in several directions. It points to the contradictory character of language that flies in the face of conventional tendencies toward classification. In addition, in the context of her frequent invocation of biological theory, the notion of cleavage suggests growth and movement in contrast to stasis and equilibrium.

The mechanism of meaning

Gins and Arakawa reject the cognitive theorist’s commoditization of the senses and the elevation of sight to a privileged position among the senses. Gins and Arakawa are not distracted by sight. Rather, they “see” it playing a role, as do the other senses, in imparting meaning to life. They take “meaning” to mean uncovering ambiguity in sensory perceptions and fulfilling their potential in thought and feeling. As they explain: “Meaning might be thought of as the desire to think something—anything—through; the will to make sense out of the ever-present fog of not-quite-knowing; the recognition of nonsense. As such it may be associated with any human faculty” (*The Mechanism of Meaning: Work in Progress* 5).³

Arakawa and Gins proceed to dissect “meaning” with an ample amount of humor in their endless “Work in Progress,” *The Mechanism of Meaning*. For example, in the first panel of the “Texture of Meaning” (subdivision n° 10),⁴ “Perceived texture—texture of perception; texture of cognition; texture of emotions (disposition)” are laid out as flattened, rolled or crumbled squares of photographic images of canvas that are fixed to a canvas panel, and the viewer is urged to “draw each texture further out” with the help of a removable paint brush that rests on a hook screwed into the panel (57). The first panel of the subdivision known as “Mapping of Meaning” (subdivision n° 11)⁵ begins with a panel showing “the double aspect of sign; the relation of denotation to connotation (property of meaning); the relations of signifieds to each other” as nodes and edges of a map intended “to surround and suggest the arrangements of areas of meaning” (63). “Feeling of Meaning” (subdivision n° 12)⁶ attempts “a demonstration of the affective role in cognition through an investigation of affective value as a measuring device” (68); the “Logic of Meaning” (subdivision n° 13)⁷ illustrates “the order and/or context

³ The same panels are present in *The Mechanism of Meaning* and *Reversible Destiny*; pages cited in the text refer to the 1979 edition.

⁴ See Landy and Shostak, fig. a (mech10_1.jpg).

⁵ See Landy and Shostak, fig. b (mech11_1.jpg).

⁶ See Landy and Shostak, fig. c (mech12_1.jpg).

⁷ See Landy and Shostak, fig. d (mech13_1.jpg).

in which any meaning occurs” (73); “Construction of the memory of meaning” (subdivision n° 14)⁸ includes an attempt at “the construction of a total situation in which memory can remember itself (its own operations)” (77).

Thus, in Arakawa and Gins’s work, “Meaning” moves from sensory perception to memory, touching all points along the way from precise knowledge and logic to feeling. Paradox reigns and opposites attract. If the senses are the portals to the body, meaning is the passageway to passion and thought. Words confront each other and resolve themselves in new ways: diversity and union, seeing and blindness, splitting and fusion, blankness and form, darkness and penetrating light, change and permanence, existence and origins, permanence and death. Working intensely with paradoxes, deconstructing and playing with words and images, Arakawa and Gins reinstate connections between perception and phenomena.

Helen Keller was, of course, the great campaigner for precision in language and debunker of unthinking, if conventional, usage. She employed ironies to raise the self-consciousness of her audience concerning blindness. Gins follows her, for example, in commenting on transparency, by recalling, “I’m told, the process, carried out in the see-through mode, manages to bring about a world that has to it various degrees of opacity” (*Helen Keller or Arakawa* 13). Gins then takes paradox further by developing connections between Arakawa’s paintings and Helen Keller’s visual poetry. Their observations revolve around blankness, uncovering mistakes, rethinking time, epistemology, method, taste, witticisms and criticisms. Ultimately, Gins reaches Arakawa and Keller’s attraction to the cosmos—“We are all cosmos to begin with” (209).

Mobilizing the senses for life

Gins and Arakawa clearly intend to use language to mobilize the senses for life, but they also intend to go beyond language. They, like some philosophers, find connections between language and pre-linguistic bodily memory, sounds, touch, and smell, or the randomness of memory that Henri Bergson characterized as automatism and habituation. Likewise, Arakawa and Gins’s conception of sensory experience includes the hyper-linguistic, where words expand and are redefined by the experience of the senses—where clichés are jammed, in the Deleuzian sense, through word play, aphorism, neologism, and portmanteau puns. Ultimately, however, Arakawa and Gins recognize that in order to promote the senses, they must lay siege on death.

⁸ See Landy and Shostak, fig. e (mech14_1.jpg).

Reassessing death

Gins and Arakawa are hardly alone in reassessing death. The philosopher of friendship, Jacques Derrida—in what has been called his “politics of mourning”—dives into the sensual depths of death—despair, the sense of loss and of ending, hence, of origins and uniqueness—and, while avoiding pathos and narcissism, lays out a series of aporias around “the relationship between the singularity of death and its inevitable repetition” (Brault and Naas 2) and the “mortally infinite” (Derrida, *The Work of Mourning* 107). Derrida asks directly “if death ‘is’—and *what* death ‘is’ ” (Derrida, *Aporia* 25), but he does not meditate upon death. Rather, he analyzes death indirectly through his reflection upon mourning, or, more precisely, the impossibility of mourning since, “if mourning works, it does so only to dialectize death” (*The Work of Mourning* 50), something Derrida would scarcely desire.

[W]e have a whole series of typical solutions. The worst ones—or the worst in each of them—are either base or derisory, and yet so common: still to maneuver, to speculate, to try to profit or derive some benefit, whether subtle or sublime, to draw from the death a supplementary force to be turned against the living, to denounce or insult them more or less directly to authorize and legitimate oneself, to raise oneself to the very heights where we presume death has placed the other beyond all suspicion. (The Work of Mourning 51)

Rather than something new, Derrida argues that mourning promotes or allows the continuation of processes begun while the deceased was yet alive. The dead’s name, for example, that began separating from the person in life, continues on this trajectory after death: “For even before the unqualifiable event called death, interiority (of the other in me, in you, in us) had already begun its work” (46).

Likewise, images, that were already taken from the person, are resolutely interiorized by the mourner: “And there were so many images, the most beautiful and the most terrible” (115). And sounds once heard are also interiorized: “I know that Louis [Althusser] [...] hears me only inside me, inside us (though we are only ever *ourselves* from that place within us where the other, the mortal other, resonates)” (117). And similarly the other senses leave their internalized traces, turned into thoughts and memories.

Derrida takes an especially close, analytical look at this interiorization in his memorial lecture on the philosopher Louis Marin. Derrida recalls saying

[...] to myself that, even since psychoanalysis came to mark this discourse [on mourning], the image commonly used to characterize mourning is that of an interiorization (an idealizing incorporation, introjection, consumption of the other, in effect, an experience that would have received one of its essential aspects from the Eucharist, which was, for Louis, the great Thing, the great mourning-object. (158-59)

Conspicuously, there is no “death.” This is not to say that individuals do not die, but each of us does so uniquely. Furthermore, we die at distinctive times in our lifetime. Some will live long enough for “the gravity of death [...] [to become] more and more palpable, when you reach an age, if you will, where more and more friends leave you” (108); some will die prematurely, far too early to have taken their portion of life; and the death of still others will be branded by violence, illness, accident, and suicide.

For Derrida, as for his friend, Emmanuel Levinas, death is not emptiness, nothingness, or the unknown: “Death: not, first of all, annihilation, non-being, or nothingness, but a certain experience for the survivor of the ‘without-response’” (*The Work of Mourning* 203). The death of a friend, even an anticipated death, overwhelms the spirit, much like the detonation nearby of a bomb—the blinding flash, followed by the deafening roar and the crushing shock wave—paralyzes the body. Death is sensory overload.

In a more historiographic and less philosophic vein,⁹ Philippe Ariès, the horticulturalist and sociologist of death, performed an everlasting service for students of death by documenting changes in attitudes toward death in the tombs, grave stones, sculpture and paintings of burial practices in Western culture over a millennium: “The common, ordinary death does not come as a surprise, even when it is the accidental result of a wound or the effect of too great an emotion, as was sometimes the case. Its essential characteristic is that it gives advance warning of its arrival” (*The Hour of Our Death* 8).

For Ariès, in Europe, the perception of death has changed many times over the last thousand years.

[I]n the middle of the medieval period [...] [a] new model appeared, the model of the death of the self. [...] But in the Middle Ages, death was redefined as the end and curtailment of an individual life [...]. It was then that the duality of the body and the soul began to replace the idea of the homo totus. (The Hour of Our Death 349)

As for the recent past, Ariès’s scenario is grim but hardly contentious:

First, in the late nineteenth century, there were the changes that occurred in the early stages of dying, the period of very serious illness during which the patient is kept in ignorance and isolation [...]. Then, in the twentieth century, beginning in World War I, came the taboo against mourning and everything in public life that reminded one of death, at least the so-called natural (i.e., nonviolent) death [...]. There remained only the actual moment of death [...]. But after World War II even this last survival [of the romantic model] disappeared, owing to the complete medicalization of death. (The Hour of Our Death 583)

And with medicalization have come the new

[...] classificatory and typological methods; thus, there is brain death, biological death, and cellular death. The old signs, such as cessation of heartbeat or respiration, are no longer sufficient. They have been replaced by the measurement of cerebral activity, the electroencephalogram. (585)

Of course, the medicalization of death is over-determined, and many influences may be cited as coming to bear,¹⁰ but the parallel between the medicalization of death and the industrialization of the West cannot be

⁹ Derrida cites two of Ariès’s books as “masterpieces of their genre” but raises two objections: (1) the “limits” of Ariès’s “anthropologicohistorical knowledge” of death, framed in “a very short and dense sequence in the time span of the Christian West” and (2) the “certain nonthematized closures, [...] the semantic or onto-phenomenological type of limit [...] the historian [...] grants to himself [...] of what death is” (*Aporias* 25).

¹⁰ Dare I cite Sigmund Freud? I have already mentioned Foucault, and now Ariès.

dismissed as a mere coincidence. As death “ceased to be accepted as a natural, necessary phenomenon” (586), life became the working of a machine. Indeed, the machine became the dominant metaphor for the body, equipped, of course, with sensors and, ultimately, with a computer/brain. One does not kill the “brain dead,” one “pulls the plug.”

Arakawa and Gins’s reassessment of death begins with freeing the body from its habitus in the organic world. They hammer away at thermodynamic decay and death by exposing “mistakes” and by preaching their own maxim of “never take anything for granted” (Gins, *Helen Keller* 241). We too will inevitably make “huge mistakes” by failing to appreciate what the apparent conceals, and mistakes are not entirely those of science: “The history of art supports the view that the long path through countless mistakes is itself of intrinsic interest” (Ariès, “The Reversal of Death” 135).

The danger of “losing sight” extends, of course, to other senses, but also to other faculties: to thinking, in Deleuze’s sense, and the possibility for “discovering, inventing, new possibilities of life” (Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* 101); to memory—“Memory, as all stretched out as any akimbo of body can be, holds forth in living points and their bouquets” (Gins, *Helen Keller* 42)—to reason, appetite, satisfaction, etc., all parameters of the “I” revealed or concealed by faculties.

Reversible destiny or how not to die

Artists have long struggled against the prevailing Western view of death as a stochastic accident or consequence of thermodynamic decay. Gins and Arakawa have tried to expose “mistakes” and have preached their own maxim of “never take anything for granted” (Gins, *Helen Keller* 241). They attacked consistently the cognitive theorist’s view of the senses and the consequent, widespread faith in death. They brought death itself to life in all its complexity, evoking sensation and resolving action. The experience of death was not “out of body” so much as it was reflexive. Death was not the opposite of life in a biological dialectical sense; it is not a vestige of a mind-body dualism. Death was absorbed in and acknowledged by the self. And even when death was a confrontation, a “crash,” it is a point of contact, of “touch down,” as Gins recalls: “We saw a dot crash or rather appear to touch down softly at the horizon, and we knew this, in our bones, as they say, not only to represent but to be the death of someone” (129). Thus Gins exposed the incorporeal “other” lurking behind death but does not succumb to it.

Gins and Arakawa bring all the senses to bear in order to encompass the complexity of death. Each sense reinforces the others, strengthens the other and even substitutes for it, linking, moving, and compensating—loss with gain—in the reanimation of life. Categories blur, paradoxes flourish, and language defies physical/temporal confinement. In *Pour ne pas mourir: To not to Die*, the “blank” began to take form as an alternative to death: “Blank is an event and a method. It is unlike Emptiness, for example, not something to be believed in or not” (dust jacket). And, in their recent work, *Architectural Body*, they “stand up to be counted” as architectural bodies (59), they indicate that they are willing to become something else: “Becoming increasingly adept at coordinating what needs to be coordinated equals development” (83).

Architectural Body, in particular, seems to have provoked reviewers. Aaron Kunin is mesmerized but flummoxed by the claim that “mortality is not only negotiable but even reversible” (15). Kunin recognizes that Arakawa and Gins are neither talking about the “reversal of death” as a crisis in attitudes toward death nor as a contemporary *ars moriendi*.¹¹ Rather, they have in mind a determination (expectation?) to create the antidote to death or, rather, spaces that can postpone or prevent dying.

Gins and Arakawa are not alone in this quest for immortality. They are joined by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who acknowledge that, “[I]n this respect artists are like philosophers [...]. [T]his something is also the source or breath that supports them through the illnesses of the lived (what Nietzsche called health). ‘Perhaps one day we will know that there wasn’t any art but only medicine’” (Arakawa and Gins, *Mechanism* 103).

And Arakawa and Gins do not forsake the immortal individual to a figure of speech, although poetic imagery is embedded in their program. Using a passage from Heinrich von Kleist’s “On the Puppet Theatre,” Gins links the historical Keller to the historical Arakawa:

But just as two intersecting lines, converging on one side of a point, reappear on the other side after their passage through infinity, and just as our image, as we approach a concave mirror, vanishes to infinity only to reappear before our very eyes, so will grace, having likewise traversed the infinite, return to us once more, and so appear most purely in that bodily form that has either no consciousness at all or an infinite one [...]. (Gins, Helen Keller 174-75)

Nor do Gins and Arakawa fail to recognize that biologically, immortality requires continuous self-organization and autopoiesis or artificial life (see Shostak). They do not seem to be thinking of cryonics—freezing a body or head *post mortem*, in the expectation that it can be resuscitated at some future time—although nothing excludes this possibility. And they do not dwell on cloning, although they appreciate its potential:

Because most life scientists have, along with everyone else, dismissed out of hand any thought of a possible fundamental reordering of the body, they are at a loss as to how to judge the import of human cloning, for example, a method through which the body could conceivably be reconfigured for the better. (Architectural Body xvii)

Some longevity theorists propose extending life by lengthening prepuberty indefinitely—a period of relative stability when individuals frequently think of themselves as immortal and ageless. Most theorists, however, do not have this period in mind. Rather, they gravitate toward a post-adolescent, young adult “thirty something,” for a model of someone who will never grow old. This model is also the focus for the pharmaceutical industry and for nonprofits and governmental agencies interested in extending longevity by investing in health care. Individuals in this age bracket are, after all, those who contribute most to society and pay the most to it.

¹¹ See also his “The Reversal of Death: Changes in Attitudes toward Death in Western Societies.” Ariès makes a similar point: “Changes in man’s attitude toward death either take place very slowly or else occur between long periods of immobility” (*The Hour of Our Death* xvi).

Deaths among members of this group arise from several causes but chiefly through contingency, accident and environmental hazards, many of which causes would seem preventable (including smoking, obesity, drugs and alcohol abuse, and unprotected sex). Extending the lifetime for members of this group would seem easy enough were only members of the cohort to reduce their exposure to known causes. Of course Gins and Arakawa would support the notion of individuals living healthier lives, but this is not their main concern. They are concerned with the body as a whole and not with a society or social system that seems bent on self-destruction. Their object is to “hold onto that which ought not to be allowed to disappear” (*Architectural Body* 70). Essentially (if not so simply), they declare, “That life must not be extinguished, yes, that is our teaching” (xviii), and they intend to preserve it through an “Architecture in the tentative mode [that] can envelop and define a flexible field of knowing” (70).

Architectural procedures

Gins and Arakawa have little sympathy with the cognitive theorists’ notion of individuals taking shape through the action of genes and the interaction of perception and time. They acknowledge that psychiatry, medicine, physics, mathematics, and biology all help explain the body, but they reject the materialists’ quasi-religious belief in an objective “I.” How then do Gins and Arakawa intend “to alter the untenable human lot” (*Architectural Body* xii)?

Through several editions of *The Mechanism of Meaning* and in *Architectural Body*, Arakawa and Gins “[p]ropose a recipe rather than a theory” (Gins, *Helen Keller* 89) for reshaping the “I.” They maintain that “mechanism” and “body” are concepts of person, and in *Helen Keller or Arakawa*, Gins reforms perception by transforming the “I” into the architecture of the body: “Since the world is not merely given but is constructed by the activity of the subject, the recoding of the I is the recreation of the world” (*Helen Keller* 251). The architectural procedure for shaping the “I” is alluded to in *Pour ne pas mourir: To not to Die* and developed fully later. It is the container of and for the action of life—“A container that is made of action” (22)—and procedural architecture is “a tentative constructing toward a holding in place [...]” (Gins and Arakawa, *Architectural Body* 50).

Taking their cue from “nomads [who] have held architecture to be as a matter of course tentative” (49), Gins and Arakawa offer four tentative constructions to guide procedural architecture. The first two constructions are combined in the Architectural Body/Sited Awareness hypothesis: what stems from the body, by way of awareness, should be held to be of it. The third construction is the Insufficiently-Procedural-Bioscleave hypothesis: the human lot remains untenable because we generally lack the wherewithal and requisite skill to figure out and engineer alternatives. Finally, the Closely-Argued Built-Discourse hypothesis suggests that supposed inevitabilities can be reconfigured by adding carefully sequenced sets of architectural procedures.

Here is how architectural procedures should unfold: “Architectural surround[ing]s stage architectural procedures [...] and as soon as someone sets foot into an architectural surround[ing] that constrains action, the architectural procedure it stages gets going” (55).

And here are the proposed consequences:

In a world in which processes and procedures naturally compound, it is hardly a far reach to think of architectural procedures responding to and expanding on the consequences of other constructed procedures. At such time [...] life will have come to be lived on a new basis.

[...] Can it be, then, that in architecture [devised for transforming bodies and reconfiguring environments] we have the means to construct awareness on a new basis? Oh yes, that is what we have begun to believe. (55-56)

Architectural procedures are filled out, on the one hand, by “blank” and, on the other, by consciousness of action. They are not fantasies, and Gins and Arakawa provide a sampling in the catalog for their Guggenheim retrospective, *Reversible Destiny: We Have Decided not to Die*, including photographs of the incredible “Site of Reversible Destiny—Yoro (Gifu Prefecture, Japan, 1993-95),” models for Sensorium City (Tokyo Bay, 1993-94) as well as models for Antimortality Fractal Zipper City, Architectural Body Configuring Farm City, Isle of Reversible Destiny—Venice and a host of reversible destiny homes (Critical Resemblances House, Arcade House, Infancy House and Infancy House—Light Chaos, Twin House, Cleaving Wave House, Iteration House, Modular Labyrinth House, Morphed Twist House, Rotation House, Gravitational Ethics House, Amorphous Interpenetration House, Indeterminacy House, Knotted Passage House, Revisitable/Nonrevisitable Chaos House, Ubiquitous Site House).¹²

The antidote to death

In much of contemporary Western society, the machine is the dominant metaphor for living things and their sensory modalities are nothing more than parts. Our engineers and scientists drill us in the catechism of physics, instruct us in the laws of thermodynamics, inculcate in us the belief that all dynamic systems—i.e., machines including us—break down or approach asymptotically an endpoint of thermodynamic equilibrium. While acknowledging tacitly that human beings are not machines and that machine metaphors are “just so” stories (see Shostak), our tutors nevertheless propose death as the ultimate state into which each of us progresses. Our engineers and scientists’ faith in a statistically prescribed destiny is not dented by the fact that we are not self-designed, that our interactions with our environment are open and not even remotely closed, and that few organisms live long enough to die as a consequence of thermodynamic decay.

Gins and Arakawa are utterly sympathetic to the person nurtured in this milieu of decomposition, where impermanence is worshipped and extinction venerated. Moreover, these artist-poet-architects appreciate wholly the difficulty faced by anyone attempting to find alternatives that neutralize the concepts of disease as stochastic breakdown and equilibrium as thermodynamic death. Consequently, Gins and Arakawa have assigned them-

¹² See Arakawa and M. Gins, *Reversible Destiny: We Have Decided not to Die*.

selves the task of demolishing the machine metaphor, if not the engineers who create it, and undermining the mortal “I” of Western society. Only then could they hope to use the senses for reshaping the “I” around life.

From their point of view, “[a]ll things, both what was thought and what was done, are inscribed on the whole body, and appear as if read in a book when they are called forth from the memory, and as if presented to sight” (Gins, *Helen Keller* 85). Similarly, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari explore the molecular as opposed to the molar and the rhizomatic as opposed to the arborescent. In contrast to the molar mode of reduction, they see complexity, multiplicity, and heterogeneity replacing simplicity, generality, and homogeneity. And in contrast to the notion of arborescence, which stresses a single origin and linear development, the rhizomatic is a notion of change with maximum latitude, allowing fusion as well as splitting, decentering and shattering the false sense of unity, of origins, and singular acts.

Gins and Arakawa’s vision, thus, is part of the greater vision, shared by some culture critics, historians, philosophers, psychoanalysts, and artists, stretching back to the neutrality and “matter-of-factness” (Gins, *Helen Keller* 41) of Ozu’s films and to the notion of blankness which strips away the value-laden categories associated with the epic view of the individual struggling against and then succumbing to death. In place of conventional sources of incentive and dread, of reward and punishment promulgated by cognitive theorists, Arakawa and Gins locate the senses in an “ambiguous zone of alternate possibilities” (*The Mechanism of Meaning* 15) where the senses are not means to ends, and the human condition is not a commodity linked to labor, to producing economic and social value—where the highest goal is not serving as an instrument of goal-directed and purposeful action, whether in the name of adaptation or selfish genes. Rather, architectural procedures vanquish death by prodding the body to know all that it is capable of and to become alive to its senses and to the tacit knowledge of immortal life in the infinite world that frames the human. Hopefully, we will all live long enough to applaud their prescience.

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OF SELF-MARMOTS AND HUMANSNAILS: ARAKAWA AND GINS AND THE ARCHITECTURAL BODY

Architecture is the greatest tool available to our species both for figuring itself out and for constructing itself differently.

(Arakawa and Madeline Gins, *Architectural Body* xx)

Beginning in 1998 and for the following two years, I was an *architectural body* “apprentice,” though I admit that, at the outset, I had scant idea of what the architectural body actually was, or whose it was, for that matter. Before I began working for Arakawa and Madeline Gins Architectural Body Research Foundation, I was asked over the telephone by Gins to consider the phrase *reversible destiny*. I thought, “a person can’t rightly reverse one’s destiny, it doesn’t seem possible.” To Gins I replied: “Well, if one *is* in control of one’s destiny, then to reverse that would mean that one has *no* control over one’s destiny.” This was, I gathered from Gins’s reaction, a not uncommon reply, nor was my reply even remotely close to what the term “reversible destiny” means. But then, reversible destiny (like its integral agent, the architectural body) is a counterintuitive notion, one born of pragmatic necessity and invented in response to centuries of accepting the world as it is given to us.

Gins went on to explain that both she and her collaborator, Arakawa, contended that a reversible destiny (that is, life lived without the possibility of death) could be achieved through a type of architecture that would reconfigure the way human beings organize themselves. This was, in a nutshell, the research they were carrying out. I was intrigued (to say the least) and worked for them as an assistant in their office, where I was privy to: on the one hand, the drafting and rendering of their architectural proposals (apartments, homes, parks, mini-cities); and on the other hand, the writing of their most recent philosophical treatise, *Architectural Body*. For Arakawa and Gins, the two pursuits were (and still are) inextricably linked. Both in their prose and in their building designs, Arakawa and Gins attempt to answer similar questions: “what can be built?” and “what can be said?” Their architectural proposals, built structures, and philosophical discourses speak directly and poetically to the need for humans to construct their lives (and so also this world) in experimentally novel ways. But how, the reader asks, are we to achieve this: through a home, a procedure, a method? The trick, if there is one, is realizing who you are at this moment...

The office of the Architectural Body Research Foundation is on the third floor of a building on Houston Street in Greenwich Village. Contained in this loft is a long wooden table where Arakawa and Gins work. Built-in floor-to-ceiling bookshelves (perhaps fifteen feet high) line one length (perhaps seventy feet) of the space. Their books and journals, which overflow the shelves, are arranged more or less by discipline: poetry, philosophy, psychology, science, theory, reference, art, architecture, fiction, drama, history. Their ongoing research in diverse fields and their relationships with psychologists, poets, artists, architects, philosophers, linguists, and scientists establish them as polymaths intent on reinventing the world. They have, over the years, counted Marcel Duchamp, John Cage, Italo Calvino, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Jean-Francois

Lyotard, George Lakoff, Bernhard Waldenfels, Robert Creeley, Stephen Jay Gould, Arthur Danto, Mark C. Taylor, Charles Bernstein, and Steven Holl among their friends and supporters, and—it is important to point out—their ideas are taken seriously (if not always literally) by all manner of artists, philosophers, and scientists. Their highly influential *Mechanism of Meaning* (the book version of their philosophical treatise on canvas) has become an informal textbook for aspiring physicists, philosophers, artists, and poets alike. At the most fundamental level, the work of Arakawa and Gins asks simply, “What is it to be alive?” On a more ambitious, complex level, their combined creative and critical intellect seeks to bring about actual, elemental change in the human condition.

On the walls of the Foundation office is a sampling of large animated renderings of their Reversible Destiny homes, a visual reminder (for themselves, their employees, and visitors) of what such homes might do for the humans who would live in them. The office itself is practical, if not also conventional. There are several computer work areas, one for writing and day-to-day business, another for design and production, and another for more complicated image processing and rendering. There are also traditional drafting tables and work areas where the architects and/or architecture students assist in applying Arakawa and Gins’s designs and theories. The atmosphere is part research library, part laboratory, part atelier. In the middle of it all are Arakawa and Gins: youthful, ruminative, inquisitive, and intense in both spirit and demeanor. The nature of their collaboration is, like most collaborations, a never-ending conversation in which knowledge and the *possibilities* for knowledge are examined, argued, dissected, and conferred about.

In discussing the work of Arakawa and Gins, then, I do confess up front to being biased as regards any criticism and/or panegyric of their work, though I do not feel that this firsthand experience precludes my discussing their book and ideas; the curiosity, shock, and revelation brought about by Arakawa and Gins’s work likely mirrors that of others who have encountered their philosophical plans and tenets. Even now, many years after my first conversation with Gins, the term “reversible destiny” still connotes micro-worlds of possibilities: conundrums to be solved, paradoxes to be maintained, and the givens of life to be newly defined. Of the newly codified “architectural body” then—part theory, part promise, part praxis, all wrapped up together as one—I endeavor to ask, not only *can* such an ontological and epistemological architecture, concertedly and consciously imagined and applied, be the means to extend human life indefinitely but also, more importantly, *how*?

* * *

In their introduction to *Architectural Body*, the authors state the intentions contained in their theories on being and architecture:

Lives should be lived as case studies [...]. No one should consider herself a finished product or a non-puzzle; everyone should live as a self-marmot (self-guinea pig). Self-marmots will act as coordinators that keep discoveries from all fields of research activity in the arena [...]. Where one lives needs to become a

laboratory for researching, for mapping directly, the living body itself, oneself as a world-forming inhabitant. (xx-xi)

In such a residence, an inhabitant/self-marmot may dwell in a house in which every room contains a “twin” of itself, alike in every respect to the other room except for its floor, the length of which is tilted at the opposite angle to the other room (in a kind of displaced see-saw effect). When moving from, say, living room A to living room B, the self-marmot is able to contrast the dispersal of her *landing sites* (all that presents itself as existing) in the one room with the quite differently dispersed *landing sites* of the room’s “twin,” as evidenced by her bodily movements. This is an example of the *disperse-to-contrast procedure*, one of two such procedures explained in *Architectural Body*. This house, which Arakawa and Gins designed and call the *Twin House* (a specimen of *procedural architecture*), generates a set of procedures that allow a person (a body proper) to study her actions in a controlled environment (a tactically posed surround). Here the self-marmot and her dwelling together compose an *architectural body*.

Let’s say, for example, that the self-marmot were not aware which room she was in at a particular moment; she might not know where (and when) to anticipate a particular gradient in the floor and, as a result, might lose her balance and fall. Ideally, the self-marmot will learn from this mishandling of her landing sites and in time gain mastery over her architectural surround. It would, of course, be of great benefit to her, not to mention a boon to her personal safety, to recognize which room in her dual dwelling contains which angle of floor tilt. Were she continually to fall or bump her head, then she would not have made full use of her surround. But were she to take command of her home, then this heightened coordination *might* very well contribute to the re-forming (and reforming) of herself as a person (physiologically and in every other respect).

In the chapter “Building, Dwelling, Thinking” from *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Martin Heidegger wrote:

To be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell [...]. We do not dwell because we have built, but we build and have built because we are dwellers [...]. To say that mortals are is to say that in dwelling they persist through spaces by virtue of their stay among things and locations [...]. Man’s relation to locations, and through locations to spaces, inheres in dwellings. (146, 147, 157)

While as surely as Arakawa and Gins might like to recast the first of Heidegger’s sentences quoted above, I would think that they would agree with the notion that humans are, by nature, dwellers. For Arakawa and Gins, a dwelling is a unit or structure in which one’s life (i.e. meaning) can be studied. And as dwellers, humans must, according to Arakawa and Gins, live within homes that are specially designed to put dying on hold. Is such a thing possible? As Henri Michaux wrote in *Tent Posts*: “A new obstacle requires new knowledge” (27). Here, the great obstacle is our own mortality and the new knowledge that is required is procedural architecture.

* * *

Consider, if you will, a house in which the roof and walls are pliable and loose (though constructed from fully fire-resistant and waterproof material), and one in which the roof even touches the ground. From a distance, this house might look like a huge, (more or less) flat pile of laundry. Finding the “front door”—really a handle and horizontal slit—you enter the structure. Once inside, you are, for the moment, wearing the house as you would a hooded raincoat. If you like, you can select from among several “settings,” using a remote control to adjust the height of the roof (or parts thereof) and thereby raise the house’s ceiling, like a tent. The floors slope irregularly here and there, intentionally keeping the ground uneven and bodily movement constantly on guard. Initially, you have to hold up the house as you find it and vice versa. The house is equipped with a kitchen, bedrooms, bathrooms, plumbing, windows, and electricity: in short, all the features of a regular house. This house has a name, the *Ubiquitous Site House* (the house is everywhere around you, dispersing/engaging discrete actions at every bend, every fold). This house does not, however, exist except in idea and plan.¹

Naturally, questions arise for organisms living in such homes: if the world is created wherever the organism goes and is, then what will such a house allow for its resident? What will it disallow? Arakawa and Gins have designed numerous homes like this with similar attributes and functions. *Architectural Body* investigates the way humans exist within the built world or, put more precisely, how the world *might* be more concertedly built around humans in order to catalyze a restructuring of the mind/body relation and thus a restructuring of human life. But how exactly is this to be accomplished through architecture? How, *exactly*, to allow for the prolonging of life, or at best, the death of death?

The book contains the almost-answers to these questions. Contained within this slim tome’s (an oxymoron of sorts, yes, but only slightly so) 100-plus pages is a startling, vast, sometimes difficult supposition as to what might be, if only such architectural direction were possible and in place. Arakawa and Gins’s book is purposive in its urgency, if at times deeply ironic and paradoxical at heart. It is not, to my mind, an exercise in rhetoric, semantics, mythmaking, linguistic bluster, or science fiction. It is, ultimately, an invaluable work of investigative ethics, in which Arakawa and Gins present their arguments straightforwardly, imaginatively, and even entertainingly (their style of writing may appear dense and syntactically disorienting at first, but Arakawa and Gins spell out their declarations and hypotheses succinctly). *Architectural Body* is the result of four decades of research carried out by Arakawa and Gins since the two started collaborating in the early 1960s. Their work has always been *sui generis*, in whatever medium they have chosen individually or in tandem, whether film, painting, sculpture, or writing. Their forays into architecture have been no exception (these began in the early 1970s and continued with their controversial *Reversible Destiny/We Have Decided Not To Die* project, which forms the basis for many of the claims/theories contained in their current book); their ideas have never ceased to incite and alarm.

¹ See Pardo, fig. a (critical_house_plan.jpg).

Arakawa and Gins's theoretical premise is that humans, if offered appropriately reconfigured places to dwell, *might* be able to rethink and reconstitute their body and self and in the process evade death. For them, this is an exhilarating conjectural gamble worth the attendant arrows of scorn, apathy, and misreading (to interpret any religious undercurrents in their efforts, for example, would be one such gross misreading; the spiritual notions of "faith" and/or "belief" are nowhere to be found in their work). Despite their frustration with the way humans have lived and made architecture until now, Arakawa and Gins are nonetheless optimistic about the possibility for sustained—and sustainable—existence.

The *Ubiquitous Site House* is an example of what Arakawa and Gins call procedural architecture, through which to test specific hypotheses within, and by means of, the design of rooms, apartments, houses, towns, and cities, all springing forth from the notion that embedding daily procedures within one's living space will put an end to death, literally and otherwise. As described in the book, such a house would—throughout the course of a day, week, month, or year—encourage the occupant to make certain bodily and perceptual shifts in the way he or she sees, hears, smells, touches, moves (using, of course, muscles, joints, tissue; i.e., kinaesthesia), and reacts neurologically to stimuli (proprioception) within the house. In Arakawa and Gins's terms, the manifestations or markers (either animate or inanimate) that prompt the human senses are called *landing sites*, of which there are three types: *perceptual*, *imaging*, and *dimensionalizing*. These different types of landing sites correspond to each sense (*visual*, *auditory*, *olfactory*, *tactile*, *kinaesthetic*, and *proprioceptive*). According to Arakawa and Gins, how one responds to these sites will alter how one conceives of the world.

The occupant (or, again, using Arakawa and Gins's terms, *the body proper* or *the organism that persons* or *a human being* or *a person*, all of whom are defined by the authors as the "intermittent and transitory outcomes of coordinated forming rather than honest-to-goodness entities") and her environment (her architectural surround or her tactically posed surrounds, a type of architectural surround) define and compose her architectural body. Landing sites, which contribute fully to a person's architectural surround, happen at all times everywhere. This is to say that anywhere you go, you carry with you your body and architectural body simultaneously, with the world existing *as* landing sites/architectural surrounds occurring everywhere around you wherever you go.

In the chapter entitled "Architecture as Hypothesis" (which also contains a droll tour of the *Ubiquitous Site House* in the form of a dialogue), Arakawa and Gins adapt the French poet Francis Ponge's poem "Escargots," which points out that the snail, its shell, and the earth are, for the snail, inseparable; Arakawa and Gins demonstrate in their reworked poem "Humansnails" that, analogously, the organism that persons, his/her architectural surround, and his/her architectural body (i.e., the world, the earth) cannot, for the person, be separated: "Note too that you cannot conceive of a humansnail/emerging from its shell and not moving./The moment it stops to rest/it pulls back into its next pair of shells." Here the authors, by characterizing human bodily action (and thus human life, being the aggregate of such actions) as a constant response to an always shifting set of stimuli, suggest that persons are (1) never *not* sense-perceivers; (2) never *not* living within a larger sensorium; and (3) persistently striving to locate themselves, in a certain way necessarily, though not always lucidly, within the architectural body.

Arakawa and Gins take the shell trope a step further in describing the primary and secondary levels. For the sake of comparison, the final stanza of the Ponge poem reads as follows:

*Snails go along glued bodily to first and second shells.
Clumped earth: second shell.
They carry it with them, they eat it, they excrete it.
They go through it. It goes through them. (qtd. in Architectural Body 26)*

Here is Arakawa and Gins's adapted version of the stanza:

*Humansnails go along glued bodily to second skins or shells (architectural surrounds).
First shells: Shaped volumes of the beloved medium of humansnails.
First shells: shaped volumes that form by virtue of actions humansnails
take within second shells (architectural surrounds).
First shells: relatively large atmospheric globular samples of the
beloved medium—medium as oneself??—that wraps around humansnails.
First shell: on-the-spot humansnail-made wrappings of sited awareness.
Have the man-made become as to the point as the snail-made. (31)*

In Arakawa and Gins's adaptation, the first shell for the humansnail becomes his or her natural "medium" (i.e., the body/its sensors) in addition to the body and its sensors (its ubiquitous site) as they react to world-forming (landing sites dispersing every which way) while in the *bioscleave* (Arakawa and Gins's re-naming of the biosphere). First shells inscribe the external physical/sensory happenings of the body-person within the body-person. Second shells are the architectural surrounds in which the body-person is ideally able to sense, judge, and decipher what exists at that moment for that person, in a mode of "sited awareness" (to use an Arakawa and Gins term). First and second shells combined constitute the architectural body, wherein a person living in a tactically posed architectural surround is able to record and study his or her bodily and mental actions in an effort to extend both body and mind. As the snail in its shell creeps along gathering and extruding the earth and carrying its architectural surround wherever it moves, it is forever at home in the architectural body (even going so far as to leave a record of its perambulations every inch of its life, so to speak). For humans, such an everyday reality would entail living within a home (a second shell) built specifically to articulate the configurations of landing sites as they alight on the person whose body is helping to generate and render these very same sites, and then grasping the meaning of their trajectories.

Architectural surrounds, such as the aforementioned *Ubiquitous Site House*, are to be created with the explicit purpose of siting human awareness (that is, were I to move this way, the landing sites will disperse themselves that way, and I, as an architectural body, will accordingly be altered). The experience of such a dispersion is to make possible a new self-understanding. Arakawa and Gins are interested in whether or not the self-marmot/humansnail would know what to do when faced with the possibility of this new self-understanding.

* * *

Architectural Body, while wholly idiosyncratic (read *inimitable, original*) in its language and syntax, is also compassionate, humane, and pragmatic, even as it criticizes humans for not trying hard enough in the past to reverse their destiny. Like all other revolutionary books of their time, *Architectural Body* is a book written in advance of itself, arguing for inclusion in the world, lobbying for the architectural surrounds to come. This may soon change, for Arakawa and Gins have recently been hired to design a master plan for a small reversible-destiny city on an expansive (roughly 500-acre) site in southern Japan, an island off the coast of Fukaoka City.

Much of the delight in reading descriptions of their designs and proofs is imagining these works built, imagining what it would be like to walk through, experience, and live within these houses, guessing how all of the pieces/components fit together. Explaining to someone else what these houses or buildings are—and what they might be and function as—is perhaps another story, but navigating an Arakawa and Gins structure using one’s imaginative processes is, I think, crucial to understanding their terms and objectives. As artists-poets-philosophers, it would seem to be a logical progression for Arakawa and Gins to approach architecture as their desired form of expression. Together and apart, Arakawa and Gins are rigorous thinkers who have blended together poetry (in their sometimes precise, reflective, often abstract, world-describing, probing, and metaphorical uses of language) and the visual (representational schemes that are artistic in a way that most architectural plans are not) in their research. Their plans meet in a curious philosophical junction. A Reversible Destiny Home is not simply given to us. In either event or as a combined phenomenon, there is room for interpretation.

In both their written and architectural works, there is also a certain level of irony and playfulness, certainly within the proposed architectural works and built works as well (see Arakawa and Gins’s *Site of Reversible Destiny—Yoro*).² Consider the *Ubiquitous Site House*’s physical look and appearance, its circus-tent-like quality. Imagine coming home late after a long day’s work and struggling to find the front door, but this is, after all, part of the overall design. This disregard for the conventions of architecture recalls the definition of “architects” in Gustave Flaubert’s irony-inflected *Dictionary of Accepted Ideas*: “*Architects*. All idiots: they always forget to put in the stairs” (15). In an Arakawa and Gins home, these are usually left out on purpose, or else might show up everywhere within the house except on the ground floor. Arakawa and Gins, however, intentionally leave out the stairs, for example, to force inhabitants of one of their dwellings to re-imagine what it means to live in one. Here, the dwelling is not to be taken for granted, but instead poses its own challenges. Many of the panels in Arakawa and Gins’s epic philosophical/poetic painting *The Mechanism of Meaning* (1963-96) are wickedly funny, and that ambiguity (the viewer asks: do I laugh or take their instructions seriously?) carries over in a similar fashion to the architectural and written works. This humor is, however, laced with a genuine hopefulness for what is possible, paradoxically derived in part from a non-defeatist position directed at how architects have envisioned and constructed architecture until now (which has suffered, according to Arakawa and Gins, for not providing the necessary heuristic tools).

² See Pardo, fig. b (site_of_rev_d.jpg).

Both Arakawa and Gins have spoken of how decidedly untenable the life of the human is. *Architectural Body* is dedicated in part to “those who have wanted to go on/living and been unable to” (*Architectural Body* 97). For Arakawa and Gins, humans are born into a deeply flawed, infected world. They argue, though, that even if *baby organisms that person* are born into the bioscleave in this fashion, they are not destined to die this way. Living, in the best possible world, is a kind of lifelong (and so infinite) rehabilitation. This can be done, Arakawa and Gins describe, in *critical holders*, which seize upon another concept that they put forth, namely that architecture can be considered a *tentative constructing toward a holding in place*. If everything living in/on the world is marked by tentativeness (the world itself is, people and animals are, things are), then what would it mean to isolate, highlight, and perpetuate this tentativeness? This is not necessarily to say that all things last forever or that they cannot potentially last forever. Rather, all that exists as the world is merely uncertain; this uncertain state of being by its progression holds a stake in its future permanence. Architecture is an example of not just a tentative structure—but an example of a tool for enhancing human tentativeness as long as humans dwell within it. The body-person too is but the tentative constructing of the world as a holding in place—and what better way to extend this tentativeness than through procedures embedded within built structures (or *critical holders*)?

The other architectural procedure, in addition to the *disperse-to-contrast procedure* mentioned earlier, spelled out by Arakawa and Gins in *Architectural Body*, is called the *tentativeness-cradling procedure*, in which tentativeness stays the course for itself, and through which the *organism that persons* can test just how tentative he or she can be. Here is a procedure (or a series of procedures) that calls into question one’s assumptions about an object or activity. A tentativeness-cradling procedure might entail, as it does in Arakawa and Gins’s *Infancy House*, a shifting of scales (the design here calls for three different scales of varying sizes to be arrayed differently in the fixtures of the house’s two bathrooms). As a result, the self-marmot/humansnail is to be placed always on alert. A similar case is the *Critical Resemblances House*. This house has multiple entrances and a maze-like construction of curvilinear and rectilinear wall structures that point you in who-knows-which-part-of-your-house?! Daily life becomes a labyrinth. How could one assume where in one’s house one was, were it not for keeping the body always actively on edge as to where it was and is—a constant figuring out of where one is and why.

With reference to Jonathan Swift’s *Guilliver’s Travels*, Arakawa and Gins offer examples of both of the procedures listed above (the *tentativeness-cradling* and *disperse-to-contrast* procedures). Arakawa and Gins alter Swift’s fictional scenario. In doubling Swift’s numerical description of the size of Mildendo (the miniature metropolis), Arakawa and Gins create a different scale, one designed for humans twice the size of the original inhabitants (but still one-fifth the size of average adult humans). Now, the authors provide an opportunity to imagine a piece of procedural architecture: by replacing Swift’s figures with scaled-up (or scaled-down) ones, different scales of reality are produced (these naturally engender different scales of action). Envision traversing Mildendo’s main thoroughfares (each of which, in Swiftian terms, measures five feet wide), but here the measurements are altered. Side by side, we find the same street two-and-a-half-feet wide (half-scale for the Lilliputians, 1/20th scale for humans), also twenty-five-feet wide for humans (half-scale for humans), and fifty-feet wide (roughly human proportions). The time it would take to navigate the

models would shift with each version, as would vary the different bodily coordinating functions needed for the inhabitant of the various Mildendos. As in the *Infancy House*, organisms that person would need not only to cradle their tentativeness but also recognize how their landing sites are dispersed within contrastive tactically posed surrounds (in this case, presented three times as event-actions that allow the organism to observe how landing sites bend and bounce as the organism moves through the work of procedural architecture). Both procedures are in this case interwoven and contribute to the extension of tentativeness and active self-learning and the reconstitution of both the physiological and psychological states.

In Arakawa and Gins's reckoning, in order for critical holders—as a great many of their architectural designs are—to be effective, they must allow for the attainment of a certain level of neutrality in order for them to help their inhabitants fully examine themselves as organism-persons not separated from their environs, but organism-persons firmly implanted in them. The organism-person is situated within tactically posed surrounds carefully constructed to carry out the built-in procedures. How will this differ if one person or two people or a family or a community were to live in a critical holder? In such a case of multiple residents within a critical holder, landing sites, architectural bodies, tentative constructings towards a holding place, and self-marmots and humansnails would of course proliferate, bouncing off one another in multiply coordinated actions that would fundamentally alter individual life but also communal life as well. Organisms would be as much critical holders as the critical holders in which they live, with inhabitants learning from one another as much as from themselves. Critical holders, then, test hypotheses, embody procedures, and function as places wherein directions for use can be followed.

How do we arrive at this end? In *A Crisis Ethicist's Directions for Use #6* (in the chapter “Daily Research”) Arakawa and Gins write: “Strive to maintain your extended body as more than a single subsuming tentativeness; that is, cast your landing sites out and about to form several extended domains of indeterminacy” (*Architectural Body* 50). Proposed in advance of tactically posed surrounds, this direction can be undertaken right now in order to train the organism-person (you, if you choose) to reconsider the body as a multiply arrayed generator of, and receptacle for, landing sites. So then, consider the physical body not as an all-enveloping indeterminate entity but rather as a multi-perceiving, multi-imaging, multi-dimensionalizing hydra, a series of independent sensors (that gauge smell, touch, hearing, vision, bodily movement, proprioception) working in concert to create a representation of the world for the organism-person, a world that exists here and now as a result of these sensors.

For example, I might say in my kitchen (in my freezer to be exact) that an ice cream sandwich exists. I might open the wrapper (while simultaneously sensing kinaesthetically my fingers, hands, arms, and shoulders gripping in close concert), visually survey the ice cream sandwich (perforated brown wafers book-ending a vanilla-white center), and eat the sandwich (milk-derived sweetness primarily, with an initial cookie sweetness). I am aware of these acts as unfolding-shifting landing sites of the moment, sited (captured and noted) as definite/indefinite events that contribute to both myself (my body proper) and my kitchen (my architectural surround). Together, these events compose a world (the architectural body) different from the one I had just been occupying.

Though I do not live in a tactically posed surround, if given the opportunity, I would. I would like to live as an always-conscious-of-my-surroundings-and-bodily-dispersal organism that persons and be offered a world (not just a home or dwelling, though it would certainly be both of these)—a procedural world, no less—that as yet only exists in plan and theory, but one that posits the possibility of a future, however tenuous. Whether or not humans can live forever given this architectural opportunity, I cannot say. I have no doubt, however, that Arakawa and Gins's discovery and explanation of the architectural body is but the first phase in the elucidating and the correcting of this always untimely eventuality. More significantly perhaps, with an understanding of their premise any fair-minded reader ought to ask of herself: What do I have to lose in *not* letting them try? The answer: *only life itself*.

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EVERY WHICH WAY BUT LOOSE¹

Art media emerge from culture and from the activities of the producers of culture; they are not intrinsic projections of materials or technologies. Pigment and canvas (or cave walls) do not necessitate the invention of painting as an art medium, any more than the alphabet prescribes the emergence of writing as a medium of art.

As a poet interested in the material and social dimension (you might also say social material) of writing, I find many of the most exciting ideas suggested by the new explorers of hypertext well worked out in the radically paratactic explorations of both modernist and contemporary work that have been aversive to the “humanist” ideology dominant within the university and also in the mass media. To be reductive about it: on the level of mass culture, humanist values emphasize mimesis of human presence and conventional modes of “realistic” representation as a means of maximizing the audience for cultural products by maximizing consumer passivity. On the level of high culture, humanist ideology works to maintain control of those free-floating value sectors not determined by market dominance. In this sense, the radical art of the modernist and contemporary periods is both anti-mass consumer art—trying instead to create works that require the active participation and critical reflection of viewers and readers—and anti-high art, critiquing the ideological assumptions and cultural biases behind the valuation of the Great Books, the Core Curriculums, Cultural Literacy, and the like.

A continuing value of Blake’s work is the anxiety it has caused over issues like this, issues we are just now, it sometimes seems, confronting for the first time. Swinburne’s book on Blake was instrumental in gaining recognition of Blake’s significance and, as a result, preserving his work. Morris Eaves, in his essay on Blake in *Reimagining Textuality*, has another story to tell, one that in many ways brings to mind Harold Bloom’s thesis in *The Anxiety of Influence*. For Blake’s work is designed to be misread, but its singular value is manifest only when we come to recognize the misreading, albeit with yet another misreading. Eaves’s discussion of Blake points to our culture’s need to assimilate an artist’s work into a well established art medium: painter or poet but not, as Blake insisted, painter and poet. Swinburne the poet claimed Blake for poetry, inducting him into an insurgent literary tradition at the apparent expense of adequately acknowledging the graphical body of his work. The burden of Swinburne’s *Critical Essay* was to associate Blake with Whitman and Baudelaire, and implicitly with Swinburne’s own poetry—all aesthetically revolutionary projects marked by a refusal to be absorbed into the norms of the contemporary moral order. Blake’s verbo-visual excess is Swinburne’s exalted example of a visionary art unconstrained by the shackles of propriety (including the constraints of genre). Yet because Blake’s project involves redundancy and contradiction, both

¹ Adapted from “Every Which Way but Loose” (Bergmann Loizeaux and Fraistat 178-85).

within and between the layers of his work, much of the force of his aesthetic is evident even in monodimensional samplings. Nonetheless, the full complexity of his work can be experienced only cross-sectionally—not as a synthesis or flattening of levels but, on the contrary, in the clash of levels. Blake's work is not a singular whole, a totality, but a complex of incommensurable layers.

It's not that words exist prior to or independently from the world but rather that we know the world through the words that initiate us into it. Just as we know words through the world in which we learned them. Poets actualize these potentialities: the worldness of words, the wordness of the world. This is why poetry is not a matter of "understanding": one does not wish to stand under, and in that sense outside, but to move into, within; or perhaps move back and forth: under, inside, on top.

Translation implies a conversion from one set of terms to another. This is a process that is continuous within one's own language and its many layers as well as between different languages. The process is less atomic than contextual: not a matter of identifying individual words or even individual meanings but a matter of attuning oneself to systems of meaning, clusters of signs, contexts of utterances: to scale and shape as much as format and configuration; to sounds and sights as much as lexicon.

In his *Critical Essay*, Swinburne writes, "All that was accepted for art, all that was taken for poetry, [Blake] rejected as barren symbols, and would fain have broken up as mendacious idols" (3). Arakawa and Gins have resisted, with increasing scale, the ability of readers/viewers to absorb their work as painting or poetry—or indeed as art. While they may be described as architects of the "Reversible Destiny" projects, the point is not to make aesthetic objects to be appreciated but to construct "stations" that will transform perception. Caws details the temporal modeling of Arakawa and Gins's visual and architectural projects, showing how they are configured to warp and reform the space-time continuum. Language is embedded into these works not as something to be read, as on a page or even a screen, but as something to interact with in an unfolding/enfolding web. The constructed "landing sites" of *Reversible Destiny* challenge rote perceptual patterns and activate underutilized cognitive paths.

The idea that genres, if not the aesthetic itself, are a barrier to perceptual transformation connects the projects of Arakawa and Gins and Blake to a range of practitioners from Mallarmé and Williams to Duchamp and Cage, all of whose antifoundational investigations have a visual and verbal component. In retrospect, we might say that these artists do not so much abolish the aesthetic as extend and transform it, partly because the boundaries of the aesthetic—our willingness or ability to see something as a work of art—are surprisingly mobile. But if the aesthetic is not a static category, then it may be possible for the "same" object to be viewed, alternately, as aesthetic and not aesthetic. Indeed, aesthetic oscillation is potentially a rhythmic dynamic in a work; that is, a work may be configured in a way that pops out of the aesthetic and then is sucked back in, creating a "hyperaesthetic" environment, to extend an idea of Misko Suvakovic. Such a work would be as far from the heightened aestheticism of Mallarmé as from the post-aesthetic of Conceptualism. In the case of *Reversible Destiny*, the goal is neither to aestheticize the nonaesthetic nor to deaestheticize the aesthetic but rather to create a zone that is no longer subject to this oscillation.

We used to say the artist would drop away and there would just be the work. With *Reversible Destiny*, can we go further and say the work drops away and there is just the station, a nonplace or point blank of radical metamorphosis? Only when we experience this as an emplacement of textuality into concrete sensory-perceptual fields—turning ever further away from ideality in the pursuit of an ultimate concretion.

Art is made not of essences but of husks. Hazard will never be abolished by a declaration of independence from causality. But such a declaration, as of reversible destiny, may change how hazard is inscribed in our everyday lives.

Arakawa and Gins create not texts but pictures, not pictures but textures, not textures but models, not models but plans, not plans but landing sites, not landing sites but perceptual encounters, not perceptual encounters but live experience, not live experience but three-dimensional conundrums, not three-dimensional conundrums but philosophical buildings, not philosophical buildings but blank writing, not blank writing but virtual structures, not virtual structures but impossible necessities, not impossible necessities but pitchers, not pitchers but moldings, not moldings but pageants, not pageants but straddling heights, not straddling heights but conceptual rejoinders, not conceptual rejoinders but livid exponents, not livid exponents but cross-interventional convocations, not cross-interventional convocations but philosomatic trillings, not philosomatic trillings but blinking sensors, not blinking sensors but curtained encapsulations, not curtained encapsulations but plausibly deniable links, not plausibly deniable links but pillars, not pillars but mouthings, not mouthings but plasma, not plasma but branding lights, not branding lights but invented enclosures, not invented enclosures but sifting exposés, not sifting exposés but torque-topped initiations, not torque-topped initiations but philanderous moorings, not philanderous moorings but blurted secrets, not blurted secrets but curling capacities, not curling capacities but prismatic illocutions, not prismatic illocutions but pantomime, not pantomime but mourning, not mourning but placebos, not placebos but blistered ratiocination, not blistered ratiocination but inverting domination, not inverting domination but shifting fabrications, not shifting fabrications but tongue-tooled emanations, not tongue-tooled emanations but philogenerative groundings, not philogenerative groundings but blanket riveting, not blanket riveting but invested *détournement*, not invested *détournement* but...

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SECTION III

VITA NUOVA—LIFE ON NEW TERMS

SOME CRITICAL STEPS TOWARDS LIFE ON NEW TERMS

*There is that which prompts (architectural surround)
and that which gets prompted (organism person).*

(Arakawa and Gins, *Architectural Body* 64)¹

Three functions

The goal of extending the possibility of continuity into reversible destiny has always been articulated physically and in language through three functions by Arakawa and Gins:² (a) a discursive, descriptive, architectural-epistemological function, (b) sites of AG architecture (built, or presented visually in two or three dimensions), (c) what happens to the person coming in contact with an AG site (either as AG's description or in the experience of a viewer, visitor, or resident). In *Architectural Body*, AG tend to concentrate on the last of these, but as in previous works doing so requires articulating the other two as well. "There is that which prompts (architectural surround) and that which gets prompted (organism person)" and, importantly, there is exposition on how these happen and advance together.

While it is obvious enough that architects disclosing their work in language would account for what is (to be) built and its effects on those who enter it, *Architectural Body* unfolds in a particular way, with particular finesse. This paper looks at the processes through which this finesse is expressed and the distinctive ways AG's writing in *Architectural Body* critically elaborates the interdependence of the three functions in the book's shift from sites of Reversible Destiny to *sites* of critical elaboration, discursively, in a person's experience of an AG site, in the concepts underlying the built.

In this case, what the architects disclose is not a project to be built but the architectural body, which is a concept, an experience, and a mode of being. The "architectural body" is a continually emerging composite of architecture and body. As an experience it forever requires the meeting of the two, "think of the body-proper as lending some of its body to the architectural surround, which, in turn, lends some of what characterizes it as architectural to the body-proper" (68). As the exposition of *Architectural Body* describes this conjunction it emphasizes the interplay between body and surround in the "critical" experience of an architectural body: "An architectural body critically—ever examining and always assessing—holds possibilities

¹ All other citations from *Architectural Body* are simply indicated with page numbers in parentheses.

² "Arakawa and Gins" is indicated as AG throughout the rest of this article.

in place. The architectural body consists of two *tentative constructings toward a holding in place*: body-proper and architectural surround” (69). The critical experience is not only the application of one set of perspectives on an another, it results from the inextricable and necessary intrication of the two. The concept, the experience, and the mode of being only exist as an unfolding union, as revealed in the exposition of the *Architectural Body* to characterize the encounter between the person and physical space.

Being in the world as an architectural body is thus an always moving, examining, assessing and holding process, described by AG as a critical activity. AG always ally their own critical activity with the “spirit of always taking things further” (xix). This has enabled their elaborations of concepts deriving from linguistics, philosophy, or the cognitive sciences, their critical appropriations, their capacity to convert concepts from one domain or discipline to another, and from the conceptual or discursive to the concrete and rhetorical. Reversible Destiny’s not dying is compelled by this spirit. In *Architectural Body*, “taking things further” takes place through the specific task of “crisis ethics,” and AG call Reversible Destiny their “first step into crisis ethics” (xvii). As the ideological and rhetorical basis of *Architectural Body*, or perhaps its genre, crisis ethics is the latest expression of the means and urgency of combating mortality, complacency, and ignorance through the ostensible capacities of being in space. It takes place through *Architectural Body* in language, that is, with no attendant architectural plans or constructions (although verbal accounts of these, for example through dialog or description, are included in the book among thought experiments, concepts, and exposition). Written portions have always accompanied AG plans for houses, parks, housing projects, sites, etc, in the form of explanatory, prescriptive, or interrogative text or captions. In *Architectural Body*, language alone must bear and expose the roles of the three functions which need to express the AG project.

An outer limit

Criticism strives to mark the line between inside and outside, filling a discursive space between “original” and “gloss,” prior and latter, precedent and modification or interpretation. AG seem not only to want to extend the function of architecture by capitalizing on what they understand its inherent characteristics to be, and they not only see the possibility of extending a person’s life qualitatively and quantitatively by gauging the site of contact between architecture and person, they also expand the domain of the critical beyond a metaphorical “inside” and “outside” of “critical space” to apply it to the person’s experience of space. Locating ways of prolonging the potential of the prior/latter relation (by being “automatically enlisted in thoroughgoing architectural questioning of the purpose of the species” (xx), or by “fill[ing] an organism that persons with questions by enabling it to move within and between its own modes of sensing” (58), etc.), AG architecture seeks to extend the limits of persons by taking advantage of the continual tentative and almost inseparable inside-outside movements (for instance as landing sites) which comprise experience.

They frequently use variants of the terms “critical” and “hold” together to indicate where a critical capacity is exercised in relation to contact through being in space: “Above all an organism-person critically holds in place its assembled ‘behaviors as a person’ as a located tentativeness on the move” (65). An AG

space will provide a “flexible field of knowing” (70) through the given, mobile contact between person and site, as AG architecture solicits reactions bearing upon essential (also “critical”) potentials for life/experience/destiny. But since “each instant, a person has the ability to handle only a limited amount of critical holding and only a certain amount of symbolizing,” AG’s project, as a crisis ethics, endeavors to provide answers to the question, “How to hold onto that which ought not to be allowed to disappear?” (70). Answers will only be found through a person’s encounter with space, whether through physical contact between the person and the built or such discursive elucidations on the experience as those provided in *Architectural Body*.

The extent of the critical activity of the person might be understood through a comparison of *Architectural Body*’s “critical holder” which is exposed wholly through language in *Architectural Body* (even when it relates to a multilayer labyrinth), and a Reversible Destiny example, the Critical Resemblances House (even though the Critical Resemblances House has several versions). The dynamics of a “critical holder” can be seen in all the verbs and verb derivatives: “Critical holders provide their users with an activated and held and holding and activating field set up to coordinate and track landing-site dispersal and to depict and augment a person’s coordinating skills” (82). This dynamics is matched by the Critical Resemblances House which “consists primarily of entrances [...] the body is invited to move through composite passageways [...] often in two directions at once” (*Reversible Destiny* 258). The person comes up incessantly against limits as the experience of contact between inside and outside makes him or her continually aware of the impetus and nexus of personal position in relation to the physical alterity he or she is always participating in defining/converting as the encounter which is architectural body.

Where a critical holder in *Architectural Body* is explicitly conceived to “augment a person’s coordinating skills,” the Critical Resemblances House, clearly exercising AG’s “spirit of always taking things further,” and invoking a conditional modality, which AG writing makes no pretense of avoiding and Reversible Destiny architecture has as a goal, may eventually take on a life of its own, dropping the person: “Finally, the house might itself one day become an architectural body, the primary resident of its own premises, a ready near-animate (or animate), and loving substitute or stand-in for a resident who, given the relative primitiveness of the times and despite her efforts, had no choice but to vanish” (*Reversible Destiny* 259).

The potential of Reversible Destiny architecture and the continued possibility of death in our rudimental pre-Reversible Destiny times are suggested in the passage as the brief exposition continues and the house is left standing (in). In the articulation of the Critical Resemblances House’s functioning, the language accompanying an image of the layout potentially allows the built to take over all of the person’s function to get the Reversible Destiny message across. In its goal of finding ways of describing how the organism-person can flourish by culled and applied interpretations of reactions to, and being in, AG sites, *Architectural Body* highlights two sorts of architectural body encounters, as critical effects on the person: “observational heuristic” procedures elicited from contact may lead to increased awareness, and encounters with sites may “provide a transformational critical edge.” For the presentation of the Critical Resemblances House, the language of the accompanying text, as an articulation of the built function’s potential, has the last critical word. The

writing of *Architectural Body* shows how the critical encounter with AG-organized space must be actualizing for the person.

Which came first?

If there is a consistent relationship in the presentation of AG projects between the three functions of the built, the person, and the writing, their consistent deployment and interaction seem to beg the question of primacy and contingency, dependence and subordination—another essentially critical question. The architectural body, as we have seen, is the meeting of prompter and prompted. AG architecture, as “built discourse,” (especially 55 and *ff.*) is the meeting of language and architecture. On the one hand, the activity of the person in contact with the site enacts a parallelism between movement and language: “Walking along will be discursing along through an argument of strategic allocations and reallocations” (59). On the other, these arguments of allocations themselves will have been made to be encountered in an architecture which is, to coin a phrase, structured like a language: “Modularly constructed areas and the architectural procedures they engender will be the juxtaposed repeatable and re-combinable items of a built discourse” (57). “If architectural procedures serve as the words of a built discourse, then tactfully posed surrounds, combining these procedures as they do, are the phrases, sentences, paragraphs and texts” (57).

If a fundamental characteristic of discursive systems is the synchronic and diachronic playing out of the prior and the subsequent, is there any useful way to discuss this characteristic in the work of AG? Or, to ground the recirculations of the prior and the subsequent in the terms of critical discourse, can we find a genealogical or historically hierarchizable order? Is the architecture the “prior” with the performative potential of the person a gloss or commentary? To what extent is *Architectural Body* the commentary on or the condition for the built (discourse) and the movements of a person within it? If a gloss to varying extents both repeats and reveals, how understand AG architecture, so dependent on other discursive domains, including discourse itself, for its principles? The *Architectural Body*’s very finesse is based on how in its deployment of the three functions most of these questions will be answered differently at different points because of the overall interdependence of the three for the articulation of the message.

Coming together

Of course it should be recalled that AG’s visual layouts, for instance for Reversible Destiny projects, are accompanied with text, and AG work from *The Mechanism of Meaning* on typically includes captions, descriptions or mottoes, from various sorts of “directions for use” to the dispersal of language on and through physical surfaces (obviously in *The Mechanism of Meaning*, and see some of the terrain studies in *Architecture*, as one AG technique toward expanding time-space continua). In other words, in AG works, language can appear visibly “as language” almost in the Piercian indexical sense of pointing to itself by stan-

ding out on a surface of another medium such as walls or surfaces in Gifu Park,³ and in the iconic sense of being part of a diagrammatic superposition of another location's plan. Meanwhile the physical architecture is said to be comprised of the cooptation of a symbolizing code (*the* symbolizing code of discourse itself), and so it is implicitly and explicitly demonstrated to be: implicitly through the effects of cooptation of concepts as much as being at least partly or at least for now dependent on presentations in language; explicitly, in its answers following the header questions on page 56, "What counts as a closely argued built-discourse?" and "What counts as an Architectural Procedure?"

Yes, cooptation takes place not only on the level of the code, that is, as the architecture functions like a language. It also informs the processes and notions that an AG work put into effect, which is why AG projects provide ample opportunities for critical responses on philosophical and linguistic grounds to all that resonates through them. My approach to describing the three functions is less in the seasoned critical sense of making judgements of appurtenance to one set of processes or traditions or another, or in endeavoring to locate underlying causes, but rather it is in responding to the processes that *Architectural Body* puts forward as writing and using these to explain how *Architectural Body* deploys exposition requiring an intrication of the built, the discursive, and the person in relation to one another. My critical position is that the best way to approach these questions is by looking at *Architectural Body* as writing and looking at how this writing works.

Writing movement

The following brief passages almost taken at random (in that AG writing consistently presents such characteristics—as can be discerned from the citations already made in this paper) serve as examples for indicating what I mean by "how the writing works": "One's living room is and isn't one's own sensorium. All that is tentative is in the realm of sensoria; all that appears to be definite has been physically constructed" (42); "[o]rganisms that person need to *construct* their hypotheses and enter them, surrounding themselves with ordered presentations of their suppositions. Our claim: architecture can help a person figure herself out" (44).

AG's essential conception of "the tentative" is here described with a "toggle switch" motion between is and isn't, own and not, in a mixture of straightforward assertion and modifications of assertion. The language explicitly gives and takes away in order to express what it is after. In stating that the tentative is connected to sensoria, we find that it is "in the realm" which, as it is first read, suggests being taken as a sort of metaphor for "concerns" or "relates to" but then as a sort of metonymy for physical location, and then, perhaps, as both. A similar process occurs with the word "appear." Rather than being a simple marker of uncertainty, it must be understood both as "appears in its definiteness" and "seems to be definite" because as

³ See Wiener, fig. a (Gifu.jpg) and fig. b (Close_up_Resemblance_House.jpg).

an element of the architectural surround or the sensorium, or in fact any site or place, the experience of sensoria entails both what appears and the fact that whatever appears has always been transitory or transitional to whatever appears next. The writing recognizes the ambivalent multiplicity of modes of being part of the sensorium and manifests a willingness to offer what are apparent contradictions on some discursive levels in order to describe what it will incessantly assert, the relation between the functions of the built and the person as architectural body.

In the next sentence, the first characteristic to be remarked is probably the novelty of making person into a verb, illustrative of the AG process of giving the elucidation of the message precedence over generic (in the broadest sense of the term) constraints. The writing itself (like a Kantian *Critique* but willing to cross boundaries) manifests the ultimate critical capacity of challenging supposed determinant and necessary limits. Then the activity of *constructing* is said to be more than only an architect's province—even if “constructed hypotheses” are one of AG's discurso-architectural building blocks. Since the requirement of constructing hypotheses is species-wide and benefits each individual, the modality where the “organism that persons” and the Reversible Destiny architect meet is on the crisis ethicist's level of moral imperatives—what “needs” to be done—even as a prerogative separation is suggested through the use of “their,” “our,” and then “herself.” Just as there is a degree of ambiguity about whether those who construct and those who enter are the same, there seems to be a degree of intrication concerning who does the surrounding and who does the ordering of suppositions, and the extent to which the answers to these questions are the same.

Most of all the sentence exemplifies an essential productive imbalance within the writing of *Architectural Body*; how the writing relies on movement, deploying apparent contradictions and ambiguities which are made into non-contradictions or different sorts of ambiguities in swift changes (or changes in the perception or interpretation) of discursive function or ground. Meaning is asserted through an imbalance among the denotations of pronouns, the kind of participation they have within the project, and the relationship of part to whole among individual, architecture, and species, while suggesting that the Reversible Destiny architects have been studying the question and are therefore in position to set up the first architectural surrounds for the benefit of those of their species and that organisms that person, individually and collectively, can contribute to defining surrounds. Although a “claim,” the phrase “can help a person figure herself out” reinforces the sense that we are dealing with hypotheses, as the pairing and disparity of the almost oxymoronic or at least genre mixing “construct their hypotheses” is (a) indicative of what the combining of discourse and architecture moves to achieve, (b) one of innumerable instances where AG writing puts such combinations into motion, (c) a sort of premise of AG architecture. The term “figure out” in the *Architectural Body*'s discursive context refers to a process of self-understanding but also to figure in the sense of physically draw or schematize, or to make or become a figure in space. Ending the sentence with the projective adverb “out,” and the potentializing power of “can,” along with “figure out,” exemplifies the projective relation into AG space of the essential “tentative constructing toward” motivating the discursive, experiential, and architectural functions.

Scales of action

Considering this work is published in the University of Alabama Modern and Contemporary Poetics series, how read AG's subversions of figurative expectations, neologisms, conversions of nouns to verbs, compound structures, and more or less oxymoronic aggregations or phrases? In other words, is a critical comparison to literary language, poetry or, on the other hand, the pressures Heidegger puts on language legitimate? Perhaps the essential experience of literature or plastic arts lies in the encounter with what the work does and how it does it. *The Mechanism of Meaning* certainly consistently places the people encountering its pieces in the position of working through the grounds and processes of what the work wants of them. After the mental, physical, and language activity aroused by *The Mechanism of Meaning*, an encounter with AG works, on the level of language or architecture, has included prognosticative aspects about what is supposed to happen: the reversing of destiny and crisis ethics. While *Architectural Body* demands that the reader take it on its own terms, AG sites are provisioned with cues for critical readings by a person in the "built-discourse." For instance, AG "tactfully posed surrounds" may be conceived to enhance awareness and potential through the posing of different "scales of action."⁴

With the potentials of crisis ethics built into a such a surround or critical holder, the persons in(teracting with) it will be able to supplement the range of actions heretofore performed as physical critics of what they encounter and of their own limitations.

An implement for examining and assessing what holds as what, a critical holder forwards the poetics and the architectonics of cognition and action [...]. This critical apparatus, an add-on to one's own critical apparatus, provides a context in which the body can produce an answer[...]. (81)

In the poetical-architectonic encounter of the mental and physical experience of an architectural body, the person's critique may begin by gauging repetitions of the same items or layouts in different scales or positions, or different superimposed terrains or textures to be more or less simultaneously dealt with. The goal is to prevent the conscious or unconscious preclusion of events and to garner the effects of what has been prevented from abating:

A person, a critical holder in her own right, but one in need of assistance, upon giving herself over (read lending her all to) that critical holder known as the multilevel labyrinth, begins an exegesis of the nearnear and the farfar and everything in between; critiquing her surroundings, she expands on both the rationally and irrationally "closed down" so as to be able to figure out urgent matters of crisis ethical import; interpreting and exposing within and between automatisms as she goes, she examines how many scales of action she is in

⁴ The text accompanying *Outposts/Landing Sites of the Architectural Body no.3* asks, "How are transitions from one scale of action to another effected? How are transitions from one scale of articulation to another effected" (*Reversible Destiny* 174-5)? And *Outposts/Landing Sites of the Architectural Body*, no. 4, asks, "An architectural body articulates across how many different scales of action at once" (*Reversible Destiny* 176-7)?

need of for holding herself in place or for holding herself to a path or for holding an image or a thought [...] she proceeds to bring many scales of action to bear at once. (92)

Previously, the message, what the AG works wanted from and promised the person coalesced into *To Not To Die* and *Reversible Destiny*. In *Architectural Body*'s merging of the critical holder as person with the critical holder as architecture, what the work wants of you becomes the latest crisis ethical articulation of what you can get from the work. In an architectural site this is the process through which the person can profit from the physical work. At this point the prognostic gain is projected in language, not yet in built discourse.

Communal devising

We have seen how the members of the continuum species-person-architects are involved in and affected by the AG project, as exposed through the architects' critical position, the person's critical experience and the description of AG sites and their intended purposes. Crisis ethics is one frame through which the conjoint goals of the three functions of person, architect, and building are brought into synch and projected into an improved future. A look at AG's notion of the "communal" to express a certain potential provided by the person for future building reveals another.

Crisis ethics, in architecture or in language, essentializes the AG project's moral aim or end, the ultimate good of reversible destiny. This ultimate good is also presented as responding to an imperative germane to all members of the species. For AG (at least for now?), all persons (who become architectural bodies in any surround or bioscleave) are *in need*: "Within an insufficiently procedural bisoscleave, members of the human species have neither the wherewithal to figure out the nature of their agency nor the requisite skill to engineer for themselves what would amount to a reversible destiny" (54).

Because humans comprise architectural bodies, the very definition of the human is contingent upon space, and therefore the future of humans can rely upon the devising of well-planned environments: "A built world designed with foresight peering through forethought and that will have been with great deliberation arrayed as a communal project will frame the formulation of the human" (60).⁵

The sources of forethought and the processes of deliberation remain necessarily forthcoming, and settings for communal impetus and input are explicitly provided for in some *Reversible Destiny* projects where community centers and design teams "pursue reversible destiny" (see especially "Notes for Reversible Des-

⁵ See also the introduction: "The species has not yet learned how to have its members pull together to work communally at the same time they continue to form themselves as separate individuals. The species is in need of a common purpose, fueled by a sharp sense of shared plight, and a concerted communal effort to address this purpose. And this is so, despite the fact that every individual has been formed communally, that therefore all actions have communal echoes and repercussions (this is easily proven)" (xxi).

tiny/Sensorium City-Tokyo Bay, *Reversible Destiny* 241). The introduction to *Architectural Body* provides that,

*for members of our species to arrive at having a great many more than the paltry sum of possibilities that is usually their due, there needs to be a communal devising, selecting, and combining of techniques that will strengthen organism persons and help them regenerate themselves; results need to be pooled and compared. (xxi)*⁶

But, while the mechanisms and results of communal devising will be known in the future, the ways in which the communal is formed in an AG space occurs, because of how the writing develops the architectural body's double appurtenance to architecture and body, in an interesting modification of standard subject-object relations. This can best be explained through recourse to the Kantian model of aesthetic experience.

The experience of entering an AG architectural site becomes a step towards the highest good for the individual and the species through its Reversible Destiny and crisis-ethical ends. It still allows, however, for the person's relatively free and subjective encounter, as aesthetic experience should. But what would correspond to "the ground for delight" in Kantian aesthetic experience is *built in* for the person's experience of the space with the purposive exigencies and expectations of crisis ethics. It is as if the objective-conceptual which is supposed to be excluded from subjective aesthetic experience has been physicalized for the person once and for all as the surround.⁷

Conceptual elements are thus consigned not to the person's representations but remain in the object as physical invitations to action. At the same time, the *Architectural Body*'s description of AG architecture is wholly conceived and constructed discursively. Concepts are clearly apportioned to the two discursive functions (the written and the built) as each person, with its body as critical apparatus, encounters the "added on critical apparatus" of the surround, thereby partaking of the same generalized experience as others in the space through that encounter.

Thus the logic is built, the person experiences, the built embodies out of or is concepts, and the person's critical contact leads "to not to die," an ultimate pleasure or good. AG make claims and hypotheses, articulate them and make them the shared basis for providing now universalized conditions for all who enter the space. Meanwhile a built universality, as the condition for the experience each person has, like the experience of the aesthetic in Kant, demands the same activating conditions of all.

⁶ See also page 61.

⁷ Or, at most, the experience of the architectural body "provides a context in which the body can produce an answer" where the experience, as an answer, is no longer free and non-conceptual, and the body, not the subjective representation, is involved (81). Still, the body's experience, as we shall see, has taken over the role of the representation in the Kantian scheme.

Communal pooling is obviously a secondary stage to the experience of an AG space. In Kant, there are necessarily subjective aspects to any conceptual representation, and in aesthetic experience, although not partaking of concepts, the representations of aesthetic experience, as part of cognition, are universally communicable. When people pool “results” they will have passed from the initial experience—where concepts are consigned to the built as they move within the determined crisis-ethical context—to another context for the conceptual provisioning of new ideas. The initial experience is based on “reciprocal subjective common accord of the powers of cognition” (*Critique of Judgement*, ss 9). Under this condition individual experience has a role analogous to the subjective representation in Kant. Yet it is subject to the powers of cognition as defined by the built discourse. In the second stage, something like the potential for universal communication of aesthetic representations is exercised for the end of contributing to the next step.

It seems that the future of reversible destiny will be enacted according to the following schema, perhaps having less need of the language function (or having it derive from people other than or in addition to AG) which until now has been aimed at those of us who have not lived in an AG space: after having been projected from the surround onto the experience of the person, the “reciprocal subjective common accord of the powers of cognition” is then extended and reasserted through the pooling where individual subjective experience is communicated and fed back into the next possible architectural container. Critical experience is put to use.

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HELPING SOCIOLOGY TO REINVENT ITSELF: ANOTHER GINS/ARAKAWA POSSIBILITY

Spending any time in the world of Gins and Arakawa calls to mind a line of Rilke: “The point of life is to fail at greater and greater things.” We live so as to explore farther each time, and Gins/Arakawa (G/A) invite us to go still farther. While they would move us closer than ever to the edge, the reach is exhilarating.

One gleans a sense of what G/A’s work is about from a tale in the *New York Times* edition of May 7, 2003. The story concerns a hapless five million dollar New York City construction, the new Irish Hunger Memorial, and the headline reads: “Memorial to Irish Fortitude Comes Undone in America.” Shoddy materials, poor planning, and other weaknesses led to the embarrassing shutdown of what had been hailed on its opening—only six months earlier—as possibly the New York equivalent of Washington’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial. When asked about the situation, one that would require over \$250,000 in repairs, the top public official in the situation mused—“This was not built as a building, but as a piece of living art” (Dwyer B7)—a line so evocative as to suggest G/A themselves wrote it.¹

A similar thought was featured in the May, 2003 issue of *Catalyst*, an aptly titled magazine for educational reformers. Called on to explain the role of mixed-use facilities, a new educational reform, a leading proponent carefully explained: “People are often mistaken in the notion that community learning centers are buildings. They’re not. They are the set of relationships and partnerships that have been created to support student achievement and family development” (Reed 14).

If these two word-pictures hint at what I think G/A are about, I can now borrow a humbling yet healthy construction from a fellow contributor to this issue of *Interfaces*, philosopher Jean-Jacques Lecercle. Like him, but from the point of view of my own profession, I ask: *What can a sociologist possibly have to say about the work of Gins and Arakawa?*

For openers, bravo! Seldom before in my 40-plus years of trying to learn from G/A types—from mind-stretching giants like Jacques Attali, Manuel Castells, Joe Coates, R. Buckminster Fuller, Hazel Henderson, Jane Jacobs, Gerald K. O’Neill, Richard Sennett, Paolo Solari, William Irwin Thompson, Alvin Toffler, and Allan Watts—have I found so much intellect and spirit with which to wrestle and hopefully to grow (or, in their special language, to “reverse destiny”). To be sure, like these other giants, our friends G/A feel the need to invent an esoteric vocabulary of words and motives, some of which vexes me and often weakens my conviction that I have possibly “gotten it.” This notwithstanding, a read of one of their works is well-worth a second read, and then a third, and even a fourth—the better to further translate and savor a bit more.

¹ The official cited was Timothy Carey, the president and chief executive of the Battery Park City Authority.

For example, on re-reading *Architectural Body*, I came to appreciate a tangential but highly valuable theme. While not an explicit focus of theirs, G/A succeed indirectly—and most appropriately—in skewering sociology: my first (professional) love, the focus of my entire adult life, the youngest of the social sciences, and arguably the most forlorn and under-developed of them all. To spend any time in the mental and spiritual company of G/A is to be reminded anew of the comparative cowardice and insufficiency of much of contemporary sociology. One scans the firmaments for any sign of creative life in the discipline, and regularly ends with only eyestrain and a neck ache to show for the effort.

Take, for example, the matter of aging, dying, and death. G/A shout from the rooftop the most astonishing and empowering of declarations—“We have decided not to die”—and they then proceed to make unique and enticing sense of that seemingly outlandish notion. They offer physical and artistic designs that hold out alluring possibilities, designs that just might help us re-define our relationship to our mortality and thereby remake our universe.

Sociology can only shy away from such explorations, as the discipline has long ago been desacralized, denuded, and primarily ceded to sociologists-cum-gerontologists. They specialize in unexceptional, quaintly helpful advice for life-prolongation, and/or mainstream advocacy for more caring social policies, and/or statistical chart-making mystification. While the various approaches and tools of gerontologists have merit, and we would be poorer off without them, they pale alongside G/A notions of how we might reinvent what they call the “architectural body,” our deep-reaching relationship to space, time, and life. As Lecercle points out in his mind-stretching essay on G/A thinking, they would have the tense of architecture be not a statement—“This is this” or “Here is this”—as in much of sociology, but instead a question: “What’s going on?”

Where sociology treads cautiously, G/A contend boldly that “the effort to counter mortality must be constant, persistent, and total” (*Architectural Body* xv). Where sociology settles for ethnologies of the Cancer Ward and esoteric analysis of the semiotics of funeral services, G/A assert daringly that, “people closely and completely allied with their architectural surrounds can succeed in outliving their (seemingly inevitable) death sentences” (xvi). Where sociology remains defensively conventional, G/A declare forcefully that mortality is “fundamentally unethical” (44). They hold out hope for individuals who would employ architecture as an aid in figuring them-selves out, or better, to even supersede themselves (47).

If sociology is soon to learn from this daring-do, this verve and vista, it can re-read the now-forgotten counsel of one of its greatest humanists and theorists, Ernest Becker. He called for a New Science of man that would enable us again to “feel a sense of intimacy with the cosmic process, to marvel at the rich miracle of creation” (*Angel in Armor* 15). He maintained that, “the mission of both science and art, as the highest human strivings, is to create new objects and to reveal facets of old objects that we did not know existed” (15). And he urged us to muster “the ultimate courage, the courage to affirm a dream mankind has collectively been spinning and mellowing for over 2,500 years... the conceptions needed to help him survive... the new birth [of meaning] that defies oblivion” (*Lost Science of Man* 57).

If sociology is to somehow soon join G/A in exploring the farthest frontiers of aging, dying, and death, it need only look around, for the equivalent of instructive case studies are everywhere. I experienced one while wor-

king on this essay in July, 2003, watching with wide-eyed amazement while scores of colorful marchers paraded about, each with a child's pacifier either in their mouth or worn proudly around their neck. These were lifelong residents of one of fifteen competing neighborhoods (*Contrades*) in the ancient Italian city of Siena. Garbed artfully in wonderful medieval costumes, they were wending their way around their small city—all day long, back and forth—behind loud drums and talented banner wavers.

My parading revelers were celebrating the previous day's victory of their neighborhood's horse in a race (the *Palio*) which is run only twice a year, but continuously so for the last seven hundred years. Having partied all night since the race, they were VERY joyous and were as free of earthly "weights" as it is possible to be. They proudly employed infant pacifiers to signal the ability of a *Palio* victory to grant each of them the miracle of a personal rebirth: They were "infants" anew, and their victory had earned them a wonderful new grant on life!

G/A, I suspect, would salute the rites and mythology here (winners experience rebirth; a pacifier signals acceptance of a second infancy). As well, they would probably applaud the fact that the city completely re-engineers Siena's large Piazza for a day dedicated to horse-racing (dirt is laid over bricks; stands are built; etc.), and it does so expertly, thereby creating a new life-celebrating place for many thousands of wildly-enthusiastic viewers.

As if this is not enough, the city removes the entire *Palio* setting over night, restoring the Piazza by the next morning to its original 1,000-year old ambience. G/A would probably smile broadly at it all: a striking example of quasi-religious emotionality, primitive rivalry, high-order artistry and craft, and above all, a centuries-old rite that rewards mere humans with a glorious sense of "rebirth" (infant pacifiers and all). Having "decided," in their own unique way not to die, Siensans turn instead to the *Palio* to live anew—annually!

Still another path a reinvented sociology might travel were it to take G/A lessons to heart would have the discipline wrestle with ideas from what is arguably the leading source at present of "pop" philosophy musings, the *Matrix* movies of the Wachowski brothers. The *Matrix* films offer a unique perspective on aging, dying, and death, all of which may be illusory if we are in fact captive inside a hellish virtual existence that even Dante might find overwhelming. The films raise the possibility that death reduces only to a mere flicker in an inconsequential shadow show a deception planted in our brains.

The very same films raise the opposite possibility: death may be a precious gift, one that spurs us on to achieve what we value as our humanity. These films challenge G/A's faith in our alleged desire to achieve some sort of victory over death. Instead, the script contends we humans cannot abide a world without pain and death because we define our reality through suffering and misery. In the first film, the audience learns that prior to the current matrix, humans were actually given a perfect utopian death-less world, which their "primitive cerebrum[s]" rejected (*The Matrix*).

This line of thought maintains that we crave insurmountable obstacles, the ultimate of which is our own death, because they offer something worth resisting. Or, to paraphrase Trinity, a major character, it is the questions that drive us, the endless friction caused by our daring to ask that finally warms us. Questioning, as in asking WHY do we have to die, raises transformational possibilities, not so much from "victory" (answers here may never satisfy) as from the nobility possible only in "golden" defiance. We must press for relief from thoughts that, as explained by Morpheus, another major character, feel like "splinter[s] in the mind [...] driving us mad." In the

artfulness of our resistance we can surmount, we can reach great heights, we can dare to look death in the eye, and spit! (Irwin).

A twenty-first-century sociology animated by such musings, strong in the craft necessary to explore and augment such ideas, would be a sociology G/A would recognize, would aid, and would in turn profit from—as would we all. Finally, were sociology to soon learn from G/A to dare to go, Star Trek-like, where “no man has gone before,” the discipline might engage in the high quality of post-death speculation exemplified by the writings of biologist Stanley Shostak, a brother of mine. He has set out the strengths and weaknesses (my evaluative terms, not his) of our world if and when it becomes inhabited by old-style mortals (you and me, at present) and new style immortals (who can live forever).

Immortals would resemble preadolescent humans of about eleven years of age. They would never mature or age, as “degenerative changes would not yet have taken the upper hand in the balance with growth, differentiation, and sculpturing” (245). Shostak expects ever-greater successes in cloning to spur unrelenting pressure for employ of the immortalization process: it would appear to be a highly probable part of humankind’s future.

With G/A-like boldness, Shostak raises the sort of questions a far-sighted sociology should now be wrestling with, but is not. He warns that “initially the immortals’ problems will seem endless” (247). How, he asks,

[w]ould immortals deal with the death of mortal loved ones? Denied the comfort of going to paradise themselves, where loved ones are reunited, what comfort could be offered to immortals doomed to live forever bereft of parents, mortal siblings, and friends—even immortals killed by accident? Moreover, how will ordinary mortals react to immortals? (247)

And, how will immortals understand reality, for “when the present is no longer pierced by the arrow of time, by the coming future and the receding past, then perception will implode and time will disintegrate” (249).

In sum, and to return again to Rilke, we live under a mandate: “You must change your life.” Thanks to the likes of Gins and Arakawa, Becker, the *Palio* creators of seven hundred years ago, the Wachowski brothers, and to my own brother—among scores of other like provocateurs—sociologists, and all to whom sociology as a discipline beckons, have our work cut out for us. We must continue to work at rescuing it from itself. We must challenge it to think the unthinkable. And we must charge it with daring to explore transcendence... or, as G/A might put it, with finding itself and achieving its own death-denying architectural body.

Art Shostak²

² Arthur B. Shostak was a professor of sociology from 1961 through 2004, when he retired from Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA (1967 to 2004). His thirty-one books include explorations of utopian thinking, solutions for urban problems, guidelines for achieving planned change, prescriptions for better use of computer power for the transformation of organizations, renewal of the Labor Movement, insights into the lives of blue-collarites, campus culture, and most recently, the impact of 9/11 and the Iraq War, the likely future for American teenagers, and the ability of movie moments to help film goers change their lives.

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THE ARCHITECTURE OF A PERSON

Everyone educated in the United States “knows” that Thomas Edison invented the light bulb. It isn’t true. What he actually invented was a system for using electricity to light buildings: outlets, light sockets, insulated double-stranded wire, parallel wiring, and high-voltage electric generators to produce electricity in a form that could be delivered over long distances. The light bulb, which Edison improved but did not invent, was not the point, nor was merely letting some people see at night in a convenient way. What Edison did was to design the components, the building blocks, the vocabulary of a lighting system that permitted tentative, adaptable designs with the flexibility to permit evolutionary improvements.

To think that Gins and Arakawa create books and paintings and sculptures and buildings and bridges and parks is to make a similar mistake. Those creations are just components in a system directed at a single purpose: shedding light on how people structure their perceived environment and doing so in a flexible way that permits evolutionary improvements. They are drafting a new vocabulary for an architecture of consciousness.

It is at present a ubiquitous Cartesian habit to impute an act-object structure to attention, to conscious activity, that is, to divide it into attender, the active conscious subject, and the passive object of attention. Once that boundary is erected, the notion of conscious experience becomes one of subjectivity alone, and that is how it is usually conceived and studied, in isolation from the world.

Gins and Arakawa see consciousness not as a border crossing between subject and object but as what fuses us to the world, and it is that fusion, the experienced world, embodied consciousness, that is the “architectural body” of Gins and Arakawa. Why architectural? There are supports—the “perceptual landing sites” that are the foci of our contact with the world, the primary sources of informational and perceptual data; and there are walls and ceilings and floors built between those supports—the “imaging landing sites” that fill in the blanks to create an integrated surround. The structure of landing sites is the structure of the experience of being a person: it not only maps how one is in the world at a moment, it maps the possibilities of how one enters the next moment.

Philosophers of language distinguish between narrow and wide content, between meanings as they are just in the head and meanings as constrained by the rest of the world as well: the word water picks out that familiar stuff not only through the way in which we internally picture it, but also because of the external way the world is.

Consciousness is ordinarily conceived of narrowly, but the structure of your consciousness is in large part the structure of your surroundings, how it is dispersed between the chair you sit in, your image of what may be going on in the next room, the book sitting unopened on the table, and so forth. The conscious experience of a person is wide, not just in the head but in the world. That does not go far enough: the very di-

chotomy between head and world misleads, because we don't usually passively experience an environment that structures, in part, our experience; we structure the world we experience as the architects, designers, and builders of our environment. The structure of our surroundings is as much the result as the cause of the structure of our awareness.

Nothing less than the amalgam of the internal structured experience of the world and the external world experienced as structured, the unit Gins and Arakawa call the architectural body, is the embodiment of an organism functioning as a person. To be a person is to be an architect. As a person moves and changes, not only the body but the architectural body moves and changes. We are snails, either at rest in the shell of our architectural body or in motion, pulling and being pulled by our architectural body, changing, growing, and adapting in concert with it as we go.

Reconceiving of architecture as part of the embodiment of human awareness opens up new tasks for the architect. Architecture can lay bare and then reconstruct the foundations of consciousness. That is the project for which *Architectural Body* is a manifesto: not books and paintings and sculptures and buildings and bridges and parks, but a system for directing awareness. The system is designed for two purposes: first, bringing to the fore a part of what it is to be a person that has remained obscure, namely, what processes structure and shift attention, what processes lead us on the paths we take, and, second, to show us those processes as cultural artifacts, to be recorded, criticized, varied, and improved.

My description so far has been wholly abstract. What does it mean in practice? There is an implicit recommendation to philosophers: Philosophers of mind, of consciousness, of perception, and of allied studies for the most part only consider how consciousness, as a result of perception, is structured by the environment, omitting the other direction: they omit the ways in which we manipulate our environment to manipulate our awareness, the ways in which perception and consciousness are active, transforming activities rather than inert states.

There is also an implicit recommendation to cognitive psychologists: Studies involving looking at a screen or filling in blanks on a form miss fundamental aspects of cognition. It is necessary to do experiments on the scale of entire modified environments to even begin to explore many fundamental phenomena.

The most immediate recommendation, though, is for architects: Architecture has always shaped and educated where we look and how we navigate. The challenge is to develop a vocabulary of architectural procedures that calls attention to that function. Gins and Arakawa propose a variety of architectural parts of speech (and they have constructed far more), but they give the most explicit abstract characterization of two: the "disperse to contrast procedure" and the "tentativeness-cradling procedure."

The disperse to contrast procedure explores the way in which landing sites are distributed—what aspects of the environment are actually observed, which filled in, how they are integrated—by constructing different but nearly identical environments, differing in some few details, or with respect, for example, to scale or global orientation. The similarities in the environments bring to the fore the differences in how they are experienced. Scale is a familiar case: we impose a global structure on arrays of small things in a way we do not, or do only with great difficulty, on arrays of large things. That is one of the reasons maps are useful.

Global orientation is less familiar. We are asked, for example, to compare the experiences of walking on two distinct but apparently identical paths, one near home and familiar, the other far from home.

The tentativeness-cradling procedure is designed to let us feel how we get our bearings, something normally so automatic that it never reaches consciousness. The technique is to make ordinary cues, like those of scale and horizon, fail to work in the ordinary way, prolonging the period of tentativeness before orientation sets in. The procedure carries into the study of the roots of awareness a process begun, perhaps, by Duchamp's Standard Stoppages, each obtained by dropping a one-meter-long piece of thread from a height of one meter and fixing the resulting tangle into place to yield a piece of "canned chance" used in subsequent works as a kind of standard (see Sheridan). Contrast the tentativeness of Duchamp's standard with the definiteness, the precision, of the standard meter.

There are, as I see it, three main goals of the project. They are (1) demonstration—producing architectural artifacts that bring the architectural body into view, (2) systematization—developing a vocabulary for architecture that enables us to create tactically posed surrounds directed at exhibiting or developing various aspects of the architectural body as routinely as we now create kitchens and living rooms, and (3) development—using the newly gained ability to attend to and modify the pattern of how attention structures the world to improve the human condition. Bringing the architecture of consciousness under control promises all sorts of possibilities. Some are mundane—while writing this I keep forgetting my coffee and having to reheat it. Others, intellectual—how many new insights will be obtained how much more quickly by people who can become aware of, and systematically break out of, the usual channels of thought? Finally, there are the social and cultural—how many differences of viewpoint, attitude, and taste will turn out to be traceable to cultural variations in the construction of the architectural body?

Gins and Arakawa wish to use their new techniques in the service of a more radical goal: immortality. Despite many attempts to read that metaphorically, it is meant to be taken quite literally. They say that an ethical system that values life must see mortality as unethical and that since the goal of architecture is to serve the body then immortality is a goal of architecture. I admire the courage of their "crisis ethics," their refusal to accept death, their willingness to confront the possibility, let alone the certainty, of death as a crisis. I grant that the expectation of immortality may be a prerequisite for a tentative changeable architecture to displace a monumental one seeking to preserve the remembrance of those who built it. It may even be a prerequisite for a certain sort of consciousness, a willingness to dwell in tentativeness. Without the pressure to progress, to use each moment as a stepping stone to the next, a moment, an architectural body, can be experienced atemporally, as an eternal present. But the eternal, what is outside of time, is not the immortal, that which, within time, succeeds at every moment in not dying.

I am willing to go along with the idea that architecture can produce fundamental changes in our health—modern sewage systems show that. And an improved understanding of architectural body could improve our lives and also our ability to concentrate and innovate in many ways, perhaps even in ways related to the process of endeavors like medical research on increasing longevity. But I fail to see any more direct connection between architectural body and immortality or even longevity. For longevity, exercise, and

drinking a glass of Pinot Noir a day seem a better bet than any form of architecture. I'll consider changing my mind when those living in houses designed according the precepts of *Architectural Body* live longer than most, or when Gins or Arakawa celebrate their 110th birthdays in good health. But for now, while exercising or drinking my Pinot Noir, I would like to understand myself and my surroundings better, and maybe to even get better at coming to understand myself and my surroundings. For that, I shall turn to Gins and Arakawa.

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¹ Shaughan Lavine works primarily in the philosophy of mathematics. His interest in how perception of the world influences our mathematical intuitions (and vice versa) connects that with the work of Arakawa and Gins. In *Understanding the Infinite* (Harvard University Press, 1994), he argues that the idea of the mathematical infinite arises as a result of taking the horizon of our available landing sites to be fixed, rather than changing with the changing architectural body.

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THE ARCHITECTURAL BODY: RECONFIGURATIONS OF SPACE IN POSTHUMAN CULTURE

[...] *la forme d'une ville*
Change plus vite, hélas! Que le cœur d'un mortel.

(Charles Baudelaire, "Le Cygne" lines 7-8)

Architecture, as we newly conceive it, actively
participates in life and death matters.

(Arakawa and Gins, *Architectural Body* xi)

If we look at the history of modern societies we find a striking disjunction in the evaluation and treatment of time and space. While technical and economic progress engage in the annihilation of space through time, that is, the shrinking of geographical spaces through improved means of transportation, distribution, and communication, the concomitant systems of aesthetic representation such as writing, film, photography, architecture and the visual arts in general are based on what can be called the *spatialization* of time: by freezing human experience in an aesthetic space (the spatial line of written text, the painted tableau on the canvas, the domesticated space of architecture or the framing of a "passing" moment in photography and film), the artist tries to arrest the inexorable flux of time thereby providing an antidote for the ongoing change in modern society.¹ Moving from modern to postmodern conditions, from largely mechanical to postindustrial, electronic modes of production, it seems as if the widening gap between the technological emphasis on time (significantly, the processing capacity of a computer is measured by its "memory" rather than actual size) and the spatial grounding of aesthetic representations has given way to a far-reaching decline of considerations of space in cultural debates. Not only have spatial forms such as film, photography, painting, and even literature become increasingly digitalized (and, therefore, better attuned to the dominant paradigm of time), but artists, writers, and philosophers have turned away from the contested issue of "real" spaces and, instead,

¹ Nietzsche thus conceives of writing as a repository of being, of everything that deserves to be saved from the grasp of time. As he remarks in the autobiographical *Ecce Homo*: "It was not for nothing that I buried my forty-fourth year today, I had the *right* to bury it; whatever was life in it has been saved, is immortal. The first book of the *Revaluation of All Values*, the *Songs of Zarathustra*, the *Twilight of the Idols*, my attempt to philosophize with a hammer—all presents of this year, indeed of its last quarter." Later he comments on the shifting modern identity that follows from the doubling into a *public* and *fictional* self: "This *dual* series of experiences, this access to apparently separate worlds, is repeated in my nature in every respect: I am a *Doppelgänger*, I have a "second" face in addition to the first. *And* perhaps also a third" (221-225).

explored the ramifications of virtual reality and electronic simulations. Just note the bleak, apocalyptic representations of the city in contemporary film and fiction: from *Blade Runner* to *Matrix*, from cyperepunk novels to *American Psycho* or *City of Glass*, we are confronted with an urban environment that is anarchic, violent and intrinsically in—or rather posthuman. Suspicious of the modernists' restructuring of the city as urban utopia, postmodern artists often avoid the challenge of recoding the growing tension between real and virtual spaces, between the local and the global, between the public and the private sphere. Read against the lack of spatial concern in posthuman society, the "architectural-body" project of New York based artists-architects-poets Arakawa and Madeline Gins signals an important effort at reestablishing space as a fundamental philosophical and socio-cultural category.

In what follows I will first briefly trace the shifting axis of time-space relations in modern and post-modern societies and, secondly, I will try to outline Arakawa's and Gins's re-conceptualization of space with respect to discourses on the body in posthuman society. If the ongoing "cyborgization" of contemporary culture through bio-engineering and genetic manipulation provided an imaginary foil, as Donna Haraway claims, for the transgression of boundaries (between the human and the non-human, male and female, black and white, etc.), Arakawa's and Gins's project to reverse human destiny by reconfiguring both our perception of the world and the spatial matrix that connects us to this world opens up new avenues of insight into the interrelatedness of bodies, space, and time.² At a crucial moment in history when the situatedness of human life in space is undermined, Arakawa and Gins lend new meaning to the dis-located posthuman body by making it the center of an architectural network of "landing sites." An important tool for understanding the complex, multi-layered relations between humans and spaces (perceptual, imaginative, and architectural), their concept of landing-sites calls for a renewed attention to the body (as "architectural body") in posthuman culture.

Modern aesthetics of space

As Joseph Frank argued in an influential essay, modern literature followed the plastic arts by shifting from a preoccupation with time to the preoccupation with space. Modern art, according to Frank, sought to escape the tyranny of time by replacing historical depth with a temporal continuum "in which distinctions

² "By the late twentieth century," Haraway writes in her "Cyborg Manifesto," "we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short we are cyborgs" (*Simians, Cyborgs, and Women* 150). Spawned by a flourishing industry of what Gabriele Schwab called "imaginary *cyborgization*," the cybernetic, artificially manipulated body has invaded practically all social spheres. As leading characters in blockbuster productions such as *Robocop*, digitalized techno-mutants in avant-garde performances (Laurie Anderson), executive cybernauts doing business in the world wide web of electronic marketing, or as the distorted bodies of cosmetic surgery, cyborgs simultaneously represent and interrogate the dwindling boundaries of postmodern identity (Schwab 193-95; Haraway, "The Promises of Monsters" 297).

between past and present are wiped out. [...] [P]ast and present are apprehended *spatially*, locked in a timeless unity that [...] eliminates any feeling of sequence by the very act of juxtaposition" (59). The shift from an aesthetics of time to an aesthetics of space was caused, Frank believed, by the "insecurity, instability, the feeling of loss of control over the meaning and purpose of life amidst the continuing triumphs of science and technics" in the modern world (55). By making space rather than time the realm in which literary works unfold, modern authors tried to escape and, ultimately, transcend the "wasteland" of technological society.

Though quite a contested construct in itself, space in modern literature thus often functions as a site of aesthetic relief and regeneration. Kafka's unfinished debut novel *Amerika* (originally titled "Der Verschollene") is a good case in point. In this exemplary modernist text Kafka, who had been a secretary and lawyer at an accident insurance company for industrial workers, juxtaposes the restlessness and fast-paced rhythm of the modern bureaucratic state with an imaginary natural counter-space opaquely called the "The Nature Theatre of Oklahoma." Riding on a crowded train through the American west, the novel's picaresque hero conjures up a pristine fairyland untainted by both time and civilization, against which "everything [...] faded into comparative insignificance before the grandeur of the scene outside" (297). Kafka's naïve vision of the American west as "virgin" land clearly shares an effort of many writers to reverse the changing meaning of time and space in modern society.³ If the juxtaposition of natural spaces of "being" (outside of time) vs. the cultural spaces of "becoming" (i.e., geared to historical progress) cuts through much of Western thought from Rousseau to Heidegger, there is also, however, a counter-current to the metaphysical tradition of writing nature off as the other of culture and society. As Cecelia Tichi pointed out, modern art could as well be seen as an effort to formally adopt and incorporate technological progress. According to this view much of modernist writing is marked by the author's attempt to become himself an "engineer" of words and the new emphasis on space and spatial forms was but "a collaborative effort of the engineer, the architect, the fiction writer, and the poet" (16). Rather than avoiding the time-bound efficiency and functionalism of contemporary society, the machine-art of the Futurists, Dos Passos's urban novels or the minimalist poetry of Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams translated the dynamic potential of the modern cityscape into the abstract, kinetic design of verbal construction. In doing so, these writers gleaned as much from the history of modern architecture, the introduction of high-speed trains, or Frederick Winslow Taylor's "Principles of Scientific Management" as from a literary tradition that privileged the search for ahistorical, immutable truths outside the sphere of cultural activity.

How, then, can we conceptualize the shifting experience of time-space relations in modern and post-modern societies? Obviously, we have to move away from the idea of a world "out there," a sense of space

³ The "myth" of the frontier as counter-image to American progress during the nineteenth century is well documented (Smith, Slotkin). That it even served the fledgling writer from Prague, who never went to America nor, for that matter, traveled much in Europe either, as a foil onto which he could project his anxiety about the pressures of bureaucratic time lends ample proof to both the mythopoeic power of space and the role of myth in the cultural construction of ideal spaces. Kafka's idiosyncratic writing style as a literary response to the modern recoding of social space and time by accelerated technological innovation is discussed in Benesch and, more recently, Kwinter (104-211).

that is extrinsic and independent of the structure of our own thinking and perception. Because we live not only *in* but also *through* and *with* space, it affects every area of human existence. Living space, the German "Lebensraum," has always been a space of action, communication, and discourse; how we perceive it, appropriate it, or exploit it as resource is constantly being transformed by the progress of technology and science and the concomitant erosion of traditional worldviews. From this perspective, one can argue that time and space are no objective conceptions but are created by material conditions and social practices.⁴ Put another way, under changed economic and technological conditions, our definitions of time and space change accordingly.

Postmodern architectures of time

There is little doubt that today, while physical space is shrinking, virtual spaces proliferate. After the era of "spatiality," that is, the imperialist exploration, usurpation and exploitation of geo-physical spaces during the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century (both on earth and in outer space), it seems as if we had entered a new stage where space is finally replaced by time, or rather "real" time. With the advent of the personal computer and the widespread establishment of electronic mass media, space, time, and movement have acquired a new meaning. If real space has become a limited resource, cyberspace, the World Wide Web and other global electronic networks, at once expands and subverts our traditional sense of space. While we exchange data via email, explore the ever-proliferating sites of the Internet, or do business online, as cybernauts we are everywhere and nowhere at the same time. As the German art historian Bernd Meurer recently observed in an essay on "The Future of Space," "the place which we perceive as telereality and the place where we do the perceiving are synchronous. Real proximity is replaced by the image of closeness. [...] Space and time disconnect" (15).

What are the consequences of this far-reaching switch from space to time? While modern architecture opened up a multitude of new spaces by reorganizing the urban centers of nineteenth-century industrial cities, the postmodern transformation of space into cyberspace seemed to have reduced architectural design and city planning to merely ornamental functions of global electronic networks. Advocates of the new electronic paradigm often argue on merely practical grounds. Thus, architect Martin Pawley points out, that "the traffic density of a conventional urban street system is limited by its intersections. The traffic density of an optical [or electronic] road network would be unaffected by its intersections" (41). For Pawley, the arrival of the global city network marks a "catastrophic diminution of the cultural status of architecture." Similar to the fate of painting at the hands of photography, and the fate of cinema at the hands of television and video, urban space has become "no more than the detritus of consumption [...]. In the new global city system, the old

⁴ A comprehensive assessment of social practices and their impact on the changing role of space in modern and postmodern society can be found in Harvey (201-323).

static arts, literature, painting, music, sculpture and architecture, would have no place" (39). And yet, if we consider the fact that with the constant expansion of the World Wide Web both access time and the time necessary to navigate and exploit its rhizomatic structures have also increased (and thus limited the available cyberspatial options), not to speak of aggressive commercialization (disk space cluttered with advertising and Spam mail) and widespread electronic totalitarianism (surveillance, control, and manipulation of individual choices and movements), one may contend the glib assertion that space has now been superseded by time as the dominant cultural category.

Significantly, if also somewhat paradoxically, the most striking blow yet to the current tendency of annihilating space has been wielded by the Muslim fundamentalists who attacked the World Trade Center on September 11th, 2001. I will keep my comments brief here on the obvious and tragic repercussions of these events with regard to the topic of space and spatiality. What turned 9/11 into a powerful statement against the ongoing downgrading of "real" space versus the "virtual" spaces of electronic networks has been pointed out many times. "A small group of men have literally altered our skyline," novelist Don DeLillo wrote in an editorial of *Harper's Magazine*, now "we have fallen back in time and space" (38). Apart and beyond the inherent iconoclasm of the events, however, the physical destruction of the world's most important concentration of economic power made visible in a cataclysmic *mise-en-scène* what Saskia Sassen described in her work on globalization and global cities as the spatial grounding of postindustrial capitalism: namely, that there is still a "place" or real space attached to the international centers of economic and political power. We now know that these powers are both located and locked in space; rather than entirely made of bits and bites or run by administrators identifiable only through their email-addresses or account numbers, the global marketplace bustles with human capital. The thousands who died in the attacks had real names and were "real" people. What is more, there were not just representatives of power but also of what Sassen calls "the amalgamated other": lower-tier secretaries, the countless members of maintenance crews, service and technical staff or the Chinese street vendor and immigrant caterer who tend to be excluded from corporate culture and the dominant economic narratives.⁵ If the "neutralization of distance through telematics," as Sassen convincingly argues, "has as its correlate a new type of central place" ("Economy and Culture in the Global City" 75), we can no longer neglect the social-spatial implications of the emerging global megalopolis.

What 9/11 thus has brought home with utmost clarity is that "a house," as architectural critic Mark Wigley noted, "is never innocent of the violence inside it" (qtd. in Sassen, "Economy and Culture" 83). Architecture may be an effort to arrest time by wresting and shaping a liveable place from space, yet its specific design is always shaped by particular cultural values and social norms. It is here that a central paradox arises, a paradox that can be traced throughout the history of modern aesthetics and, to my mind, is also an impor-

⁵ For a more detailed analysis of this issue, see Sassen, *The Global City*.

tant driving force in the works of Arakawa and Madeline Gins.⁶ The dilemma is generic with artistic representations in general but has special relevance with regard to architectural space as a contact zone of both aesthetic and social concerns. In its simplest form, it can be formulated as follows: since architectural designs are by their very nature spatializations of time, how can they adequately convey new ideas and insights vis-à-vis the flow of human experience and the change of social processes? As spatial constructs, how can they transcend their solid grounding in matter and engage in an organic relationship with their human environment? More specifically, how can architecture, as Arakawa and Madeline Gins claim in their latest book *Architectural Body*, “actively participate in life and death matters” (1)? It is to these issues, and in particular to their articulation in the conceptual architectures of Arakawa and Gins, that I will now turn for the rest of this paper.

The architectural body

If the reorganization of space, as David Harvey suggests in *The Condition of Postmodernity*, has been a primary concern of mid-twentieth century culture, the ongoing collaboration of Arakawa and Madeline Gins, that culminated in 1994 in the construction of a seven acre “Reversible Destiny” site in Yoro, central Japan, added to and, simultaneously, extended this concern about space into the realm of philosophy, psychology, and cognitive science.⁷ Arakawa and Gins have long been relentless thinkers and re-thinkers of concepts of space and its numerous aesthetic and philosophical ramifications. Their monumental work clearly testifies to the need for a spatial reconfiguring of the human body in postmodern, posthuman society. Rather than merely creating works of art, Arakawa and Gins have worked outside the often narrowly construed definitions of art production, exploring instead existential issues such as the “mechanism of meaning,” the decoding and recoding of different types of signs, or the spatial conditioning of human perception, as exemplified in the architectural concept of “landing sites.”

Arakawa’s and Gins’s re-conceptualization of space as a fundamental parameter of subjectivity, an idea that can be traced throughout their artistic and written work, is rooted in the belief that to say “I” is already an architectural assertion, because it creates spatial relations and establishes “a fiction of place.” “To reform perception,” as one critic succinctly summarizes their architectural project, “is to transform the architecture of the I. Since the world is not merely a given but is constructed by the activity of the subject, the recoding of the I is the recreation of the world” (Arakawa and Gins, *Reversible Destiny* 32). Spatial relations, according to this logic, are seen as the driving agents of human perception. When a person enters a symme-

⁶ I here follow in part Harvey’s discussion of time-space relations in postmodern society (206-7). His main concern, how different forms of spatialization inhibit or facilitate processes of social change, may also be applied to the spatial experiments of Arakawa and Gins.

⁷ See Benesch, fig. b (yorosideview.jpg).

trical octagonal structure, s/he confronts an array of what Arakawa and Gins have come to call “landing sites,” that is, visual, tactile, aural, olfactory, kinesthetic, and imaging spaces that allow for the establishing and maintaining of distance, volume, and a sense of place. Arakawa and Gins distinguish between three levels of landing sites: perceptual, imaging, and dimensionalizing; taken together these levels mark the place or, to use Heidegger’s term, the *Urgrund* where space is formed and the world is created. “A heuristic device for mapping how a person forms the world and situates herself within” (Arakawa and Gins, *Architecture* 19), the tripartite concept of landing sites reconfigures the subject-object relation as essentially anchored in and determined by space.⁸

“If the basic unit of concern is the body,” Arakawa and Gins write in an open letter to François Lyotard, “then will not the concepts most central to the living of a life be those formed—no matter how fleetingly—through architectural encounters?” (*Reversible Destiny* 12). It is important to note, however, that their view of the world and the way in which we perceive it, though largely informed by architectural surrounds, does not give in to either postmodern solipsism (that it is us who shape the world around us) or materialist determinism (that we are “made” by and through our surrounds); rather it conceives of the human mind and body as continually engaged by and, at the same time, engaging the creation and contestation of new spaces. One could also say that we experience space by “using” it as a landing site for the self’s physical interacting with the world.

In a very literal sense, then, architecture is instrumental in achieving what Arakawa and Gins think is a primary purpose of life in our time, that is, “to not to die.” A paradoxical contention that, at first sight, seems to run counter to common sense and established views of the human condition, the proclaimed wish “to not to die” expresses, at one level, simply a desire to not to acquiesce in regard to the abysmal fate of human life in posthuman society. It is a call to arm oneself with the perceptual tools to figure out the existential linking between the body and the world outside. On yet another level, it is also an attempt to reverse human destiny not by changing the world, but rather by asking questions, architectural questions, about the positioning of the “I” in space: “How does the human body—together with its environment—accomplish what it manages to? How is it possible that she who is a body walks and talks? How much does the body avail itself of its environment [...]” (*Architectural Body* xv). Architecture, Arakawa and Gins argue, is a tool that can be used as writing has been, except that it can have a far more extensive range of application. It teaches us that the bodily and mental processes it has set in motion within the beholder or inhabitant of an architectural construct are more important than the structure itself. “Might not an architectural surround set up to cooperate with the gathering of intelligence,” they ask, “increase, at the very least, one’s feeling of connection with and sense of responsibility to the world?” (*Reversible Destiny* 12).

It should have become sufficiently clear by now that Arakawa’s and Gins’s project of the “architectural body” emphasizes the solid grounding of human life in real spaces. If the investigative work necessary to

⁸ See the illustration: “Landing Site Study” (1994), in *Reversible Destiny* (150), and fig. a (Landing_sites_study.jpg).

solve the puzzle of human life has to be focused on architectural surrounds, that is, the relations between the subject and the environment in which it quite literally “comes” to life, this cannot be done in the abstract: “it must, on the contrary, be done on-site where living happens” (*Architectural Body* xv). I would like to conclude by referring to another, programmatic statement from *Architectural Body* that makes apparent the degree to which procedural architecture, as realized in the “Site of Reversible Destiny” at Yoro, reconfigures the human body as physically rooted in and constantly imaging new spatial surrounds of its own making:

We speak of an architectural body, rather than an architectural field or an architectural context simply because, to begin with, what we want to describe originates from and joins up with the physical body. Think of the body-proper as lending some of its body to the architectural surround, which, in turn, lends some of what characterizes it as architectural to the body-proper. In addition the word body, used to indicate a collection or quantity of information (as in the expression “a body of evidence”), is descriptively apt for indicating the amassing of landing-site configurations formative of an architectural body. We also find the denoting by the word body of a mass of matter that is distinct from other masses (as in the expression “a body of water”) useful for conveying all of what belongs to that which we wish to describe, that is, all of what fills an architectural surround as “thin air” or “sited awareness.” (68)

If the testing of the “architectural body” as a powerful statement against the down-grading of body-space relations in posthuman society necessitates, to retool Arakawa’s and Gins’s own conclusion to their “Introduction” of *Architectural Body*, that “an entire house (or a city) be constructed, why worry over the expense?” (XXII).

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TENTATIVELY DEDICATED TO OUR TRANSHUMAN DESTINY

1

Now nanotechnology had made nearly anything possible, and so the cultural role in deciding what should be done with it had become far more important than imagining what could be done with it.

(Neal Stephenson, *The Diamond Age* 31)

The dedication of Arakawa and Gins's 2002 book *Architectural Body* is "To transhumans" (*Architectural Body* ix; henceforth referred to as *AB*). How do we read this? A first reading recalls their theory of "reversible destiny," pursued single-mindedly since 1981, a belief "that through radical forms of architecture mortality itself can be undone" (*AB* 101). The first lines of the full dedication read: "To those who have wanted to go on/living and been unable to" (*AB* vii). The break after "go on" reinforces the reversal of destiny, not simply living long and healthy but going on even if we cannot go on, beyond life and death. Reversible destiny is easily the most controversial aspect of Arakawa and Gins's work. The quickest reactions find it silly and even wasteful to seek an end to mortality. They cite the existential fact of our being-towards-death and insist on the more pressing need to address social or ecological conditions. Other reactions bide their time, recouping reversible destiny as a critical call to theorize forms of subjectivity and thought appropriate to a newly globalized, posthuman world. Arakawa and Gins welcome this view as a safer, "perhaps less terrifying and more inviting way" (*AB* xvii). The sympathetic readers miss the point but aid the cause. In fact, the claim is quite clear: "What if it turned out that to be mortal was not an essential condition of our species?" (*AB* xviii).

"And so/even more so," the dedication continues, concluding: "To transhumans" (*AB* vii). Second reading: either transhumans already want to go on and are unable to, or transhumans are already going on. Either there already are transhumans (all of us or some of us?); or, we are not yet transhuman, and we humans face a crisis, a need to become transhuman. The alternatives are clear but the answer is not. The cumulative "so" and "even more so" weighs in on these transhumans. Who are they? Possibly all of us, each one, as we follow reversible destiny to undo, loosen, widen, and recast the concept of person (*AB* xi-xii).

But there are already transhumans, or at least so the transhumans claim. In fact, there is even a World Transhumanist Organization. And yes, they want to live forever. Transhumans are fascinated, among other things, with longevity research, which currently combines nutrition and cryogenics with innovative biotechnology. For example: the Advanced Cell Technology company plans to grow transplantable human tissue that would replace aging tissue. The result is "no limit on the life span of human beings by 2099," according

to one scientist (Alexander, "Don't Die, Stay Pretty"). At the same time, NASA-funded research at Stanford creates computer simulations of radical plastic surgery and body restructuring, including tissue replacement. The target is the recasting of the human body required for extended space travel, but the research will be available closer to home, for transhumanist-minded folks wanting a new look. If such speculative claims lead to the label of "science porn," in the words of *Wired* magazine, they are welcomed by the transhumanists as a reasonable emphasis on ends over means, a forcing of method and technique towards the necessary ends of the human race (Alexander). Transhumanism posits a near future of limited resources and ecological disaster, with technology the only solution. Transhumanism is a grab bag of disciplines, mixing a heady cocktail of nanotechnology, VR, mind uploading, complexity theory, ubiquitous computing, and whatever else contributes to the goal of becoming immortal, augmented, or completely uploaded to machines. These goals are seen as ends in themselves—both a right and an imperative.

And so, third reading: Arakawa and Gins dedicate their book to affinities between reversible destiny and the speculative movements in technoscience that come together under the rubric of transhumanism or "transitional humans." As set out in "The Transhumanist Declaration," transhumans believe in the boundless transformative power of technology, including the "feasibility of redesigning the human condition." It is easy to dismiss transhumanism. Critics point to its insistence on controversial technologies and position transhumanism dangerously close the scientific fringe. It belongs to the long history of futurism and extrapolation, to "future shock" theories that too often repeat nostalgic tropes from the present. Transhumanism relies almost entirely on speculative futures rather than the measured pace of normal scientific development, and yet its supporters and fans include respected and highly placed scientists. In fact, transhumanism is at both the periphery and center. Transhumanism is an irritation, a provocation, and a site of tremendous cultural excitement. The boundless optimism in perpetual progress extracts a momentum of questioning and change. By exactly inhabiting the leading edge of scientific possibility, transhumanism gathers and directs, or at least points out, where research should—must—lead us. "There's been nothing like this movement," Ed Regis declared in a *Wired* magazine article on the Extropians, the most well-known branch of the transhumanist movement, "nothing this wild and extravagant—since way back in those bygone ages when people believed in things like progress, knowledge, and—let's all shout it out, now—Growth!". It is all too easy and at the same time not easy at all to dismiss such claims. Transhumanism dreams the hidden and silent dream at the center of all technoscience.

Exactly this makes transhumanism unsettling within and against scientific culture. For transhumanism, humans and the world we inhabit are not the background against which science and technology should work but rather the raw material for "overcoming human biological and psychological limits" (More, "Extropian Principles"). Humanity is not the agent but the target of research. Transhumanism jump-starts scientific teleology precisely by displacing epistemological concerns with moral imperatives, by dissolving ends into means. Transhumanism frees up the purpose of science. The message is something like: we must transform ourselves into posthumans, and the seemingly irreducible problems of defining and symbolizing human consciousness, for a start and among other problems, are dissolved by simply being leapt over, the problem solved by a presumed solution to come. In short: we must solve these problems, or else. The "or else" is in this

case the finite prospects of a species on a planet of finite resources and a finite lifespan. We limit ourselves by taking for granted our mortal parameters—death, brain capacity, mobility, and so on—and limit ourselves by focusing on short-term problems such as curing world hunger or AIDS.

Of course, this historical situation, this set of limitations, exactly delimits our scientific institutions, with their cycles of grants and experiments, publications and testing. Transhumanism is no scientific movement but rather a shift in the background assumptions of scientific institutions. By insisting that science must have an end, transhumanism brings this end about. Given the ultimate horizon of the earth's extinction, it becomes rhetorically easier to agree that such problems must be solved. Transhumanism treats the future as if it had already come about, positing a completion and overleaping the present towards it. The future is simply the present worked through to its ends. Transhumanism's extravagant hopes are situated in the future but dictated by the imaginary repertoire of the present. All future materials are built from what is lying around already. One transhumanist declares that "our future bodies will have streamlined muscles in all sorts of interesting shapes," a dream both charmingly narcissistic and dismayingly modest (Alexander). The transhuman future will be like the present but supersized.

Nonetheless, the tremendous conceptual advantage of the transhuman overleaping is the flexibility afforded to think, once again, of humanity in terms of transcendence. If this is a rhetorical act, it nonetheless situates rhetoric as a basic mode of acting for any scientific thought.¹ Can we ask, rhetorically and without sounding ridiculous, what the responsibility of science is? Not the responsibility for rigor and verification, nor the responsibility for continual improvement—making better peanut butter and toothpaste—but a responsibility to the future of humanity, that is, what should we expect from science? To ask this question and insist on our response is the reading of Arakawa and Gins's dedication. I want to insist, beyond all the odds, on the transhuman claim of Arakawa and Gins's work. Moreover, this claim turns out to read and occur in reading at the limits of any possible rhetoric and science. Arakawa and Gins propose a "crisis ethics" as the only mode of action suitable to a culture that can no longer think its relation to the world. They ask, "how to hold onto that which ought not to be allowed to disappear?" (*AB* 70). In the end, it is the force of this "ought not" that interests me.

Phenomenology remains the background condition for the modern notion of "normal science" and its more radical extensions. In particular, Edmund Husserl's late diagnosis of a "crisis of European Science" offers a precise and problematic departure point. For Husserl, the mathematical and technical processes of science throw a "garb of ideas" over the world, an appearance that takes the place of the "concretely intuited shapes of the life-world" (51). Mastery of phenomena replaces an orientation towards experiencing phenomena themselves. Method delivers the world in the carrying out of its operations, and science comes to understand the world in terms of quanta and physical formulae subject to formalization and calculation. Galileo's claim to read

¹ Here I follow the "anthropological rhetoric" outline in Hans Blumenberg's "An Anthropological Approach to the Contemporary Significance of Rhetoric."

“the great book of nature” deposits all that perception might offer in the mediacy of mathematical formulae. Husserl writes: “It is through the garb of ideas that we take for *true being* what is actually a *method*” (51).²

Husserl’s formulation identifies science as “technoscience,” science in the service of technology, and precisely, for that reason, no longer a science. Turned into method, science no longer means anything specific for humanity, nothing beyond newer and ever more efficient technologies, ever more precise measurements and improvements with no apparent end. The aim of science as technology replaces any possible end for science. Science abdicates any claim of finalizing the knowledge it produces (it turns out that butter is good for you after all.) Scientific knowledge is ever susceptible to revision, re-testing, and refutation. Indeed, this is the purported worldliness of critically-aware scientific practice. The irreducible debates on realism, instrumentalism, and constructivism maintain their freshness by focusing on means towards an end that is always approached and never arrived at. If we attempt to reduce such debates by declaring that the purpose of science is the “modest realism” to “discover (some aspects) of how things really are,” we still cannot declare the end of science (Sokal and Bricmont 183). Culture no longer dreams of a completed scientific purpose (for this reason, it seems both overly fantastic and overly literal when Stephan Wolfram declares that the entire universe can be explained by an as yet undiscovered four lines of computer code. Only four? Which four? He’s not telling.) Thomas Kuhn’s “structure” of development based on revolution rather than teleological progress or Lyotard’s description of “postmodern science” as a language game between competing descriptions of phenomena confirms rather than creates this goal-lessness in the history of science. At the level of epistemologies of scientific practice, the Quinean underdetermination of evidence, forcing an ever renewed and vigilant verification and testing, is countered, or rather shored up, by the strong “research program” of Imre Lakatos. In any case, the emphasis on means rather than ends specifies the logic of experimentation but not the end of all such experiments. The plurality of views announced by Werner Heisenberg builds a physical theory on this open situation: “Science no longer confronts nature as an objective observer, but sees itself as an actor in this interplay between man and nature” (15). We remain disappointed in ever arriving at the final methodological purity of a completed physics as promised in the early modern science of Descartes, just as we remain firmly in the path of the methodological approach to science Descartes set out on the way to this completed science. In fact, we no longer even know what it is science might have offered, what might appear beyond the stand-in mediacy of the “readability” of nature. “Can we live in this world,” asks Husserl, “where historical occurrence is nothing but an unending concatenation of illusory progress and bitter disappointment?” (7).

No doubt the critical response to such aggressive technoscience is clear. The almost mythic status of “embodiment” in critical and philosophical science studies arrives to highlight the disembodiment of information and technology. Having exorcised that well-known ghost from the machine, both technoscience and its constructivist critics describe the mutual embedding of subjectivities and technologies. N. Katherine Hayles, for example, employs embodiment to describe the specific material and historical “instantiations” (one of her favo-

² Here I am indebted to Hans Blumenberg’s discussion of Husserl and Galileo in *The Genesis of the Copernican World* (402-5).

rite words) articulating the concreteness of a cognizing subject and the “messy” complexity of contexts (*How We Became Posthuman* 12-13).³ Similarly, Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch’s *The Embodied Mind* offers a theory of “enaction” or “embodied cognition” rooted in the assumption of “a body with various sensorimotor capacities” and, secondly, the embedding of these individual capacities in “a more encompassing biological, psychological, and cultural context” (173). Embodiment is a kind of destabilizing event that tremors through all subsequent cognitive activity.

But do you have a thing even if you identify it structurally? Embodiment is a series of effects that are presumed and described, mobilized and built upon, but embodiment itself is quite delimited and prohibited, in precise and theoretically rigorous terms; that is, embodiment is an event, a destabilization, an articulation, and so on. The loss of interest in the ends of science does not come simply through giving up the interminable phenomenological task of reducing to the things themselves but rather through displacing the unsolvability of this question onto the irreducibility of embodiment. Through the enabling myth of embodiment, both technoscience and its critics end up describing the same epistemological problematic of the methodological construction of the world. True enough, the descriptions move in opposite directions: one away from embodiment towards smoothly functioning systems, the other again returning to the narrative of embodiment. Reinserting the body means foregrounding the methodological linkages and quantifications technoscience achieved. This reverse achievement leaves in place the notion of embodiment as the disruptive departure point. In either case, the differentiating momentum of embodiment is an irreducible ground articulating subjectivities and technologies. (The neologism “techniques of embodiment” is something like the theoretical compromise involved).

Consider *ubiquitous computing*. In a 1991 *Scientific American*, Mark Weiser of Xerox PARC declared that “the most profound technologies are those that disappear. They weave themselves into the fabric of everyday life until they are indistinguishable from it” (94). Unlike the theatrical showings of virtual reality, which “focuses an enormous apparatus on simulating the world,” Weiser proposes “invisibly enhancing the world that already exists” through an “embodied virtuality” making use of hidden telematics communicating with prosthetic body-attachments via microwave (98). Offering the example of writing (“perhaps the first information technology”) as a disappearing technology, Weiser adds that such a “disappearance is a fundamental consequence not of technology but of human psychology,” and cites the example of the phenomenological “horizon,” which says, “in essence,” according to Weiser, “that only when things disappear in this way are we freed to use them without thinking and so to focus beyond them on new goals” (97). The automatically cited horizon-reference cannot conceal its translation: no longer a shared precondition of appearances but now a topology for disappearances as the basis of preprogrammed environments.

The short-term success of ubicomp is evident in the current “pervasive computing” of handheld and mobile technologies. In fact, these devices still require a level of action and attention that makes the invisible strata

³ I am not considering more recent work by Hayles that suggests a differently nuanced reading of the materiality. For example, see the shift away from *How We Became Posthuman* in “Flesh and Metal: Reconfiguring the Mindbody in Virtual Environments.”

of technology all too visible. We should rather dream of the ubiquity of wearables or embedded circuitry, like the chip currently in cyberneticist Kevin Warwick's arm, triggering and responding to data streams beyond the speed and awareness of our consciousness ("Cyborg 1.0."). A better example than the PDAs we lug uncomfortably around are the advanced "augmented cognition" programs of the military's DARPA research agency. The DARPA "Exoskeletons for Human Performance Augmentation" program announcement declares that funded projects will extend "the information management capacity of the human-computer warfighting integral by developing and demonstrating quantifiable enhancements to human cognitive ability in diverse, stressful, operational environments" (DARPA, EHPA 1). Ongoing projects in "body augmentation" seek to create exoskeletal devices with a range of haptic and sensory augmentation, and such useful abilities as increased speed, increased strength, and the ability to "leap extraordinary heights and/or distances." The targeted "anthropomorphic architecture" augments all motor and sensory interactions into a "combat environment" for a time measured by "military significance" (DARPA, EHPA 2).⁴ These formulas nicely capture theorization of space and time and subsequent disappearance into a new military space of appearance. Thought and action become purely tactical issues.

Ubiquitous computing takes advantage of embodied practices, building on our haptic, proprioceptive, sensorimotor habitus. Embodiment is differentiated into series of effects that can be systematized and programmed. Weiser's insistence that "profound technologies are those that disappear" is significant. Ubicomp builds on embodied practices and takes them for granted. Habit is systematized, while "disappearance" takes on a specific, strategic meaning: the takeover and programming of the visible world as a computational result. Appearances are the profound result of ubicomp's disappearance. Ubicomp is a method that succeeds precisely by turning method into habit, by producing *faux* plausibility and prefab coarticulation. Indeed, this is the correlate of profound disappearance. Weiser's goal of offloading our habituation of things into technology is predicated on a kind of actualization of context, where everydayness is delimited, made visible in its invisibility, no different but renewed in precisely this. Appearances must gain a profile, be made subject to variables and programs. Technology is woven into and disappears into everyday life only as the systematicity of what appears for the aggregate of the "human-computer warfighting integral." At the same time, it no longer matters what is thought or acted out where all cognition is already spoken for in the formality of a system of quanta and programming. Said otherwise: prefabricated environments disaggregate and functionalize action and intention precisely because they are systematically built on precisely the distinction between action and intention. In systematizing immediacy, method grasps only systematicity. Ubicomp and augmented cognition do not build on the immediacy of perception but on a systematicity that remains a metaphor for this immediacy.

Science means nothing more than new technologies. The inevitability of this end within the means of scientific method results in something that offers a shape in time, a consistent schema of technoscientific progress and its resulting critique. Technoscience and its critical analysis fall within the same schema. The ethical "know-how" of Varela's enacted cognition turns on the shared realization of the simultaneous groundlessness

⁴ Compare the DARPA "augmented cognition" program or AUGCOG.

and mindfulness of cognition (17-19). Hayles's discussion of embodiment invokes but can never present the background "fragility of a material world that cannot be replaced" (*How We Became Posthuman* 49). The resulting awareness is a self-reflection on the way cognition arises from embodied experience. In the more comprehensive claim of Niklas Luhmann's systems theory, such self-reflexivity forms the blind spot and basis of all systems, whether selves or nations, micro-organisms or computer networks (*Social Systems* 437-77). There is no questioning the critical worth of showing the disembodiment of technoscience, and Hayles and Varela stand in here for an entire paradigm of critical science studies. I have no wish to debate the importance of this paradigm. My goal is simply to underline the difference made by Arakawa and Gins's architectural body, a difference, however slight, that makes all the difference. Indeed, both the cover and preface of *Architectural Body* announce affinities but important differences from "fields of self-organization, autopoiesis, artificial life, and consciousness studies" (I will return to this point below). Crucially, Arakawa and Gins show that it is not that we are embodied first and then situated in a world, a world oriented around our embodiment. It is not that embodiment enables experience, but rather that embodiment presupposes an immediacy of experience, a minimum of perception.⁵ We are "organisms that person" (*AB* 1). This minimum or *punctum* is the object of Arakawa and Gins's architecture.⁶ By building the paradoxical object of experience itself, they offer the almost transcendental evidence of a world that remains contingent but always immediate to the body. Rather than the schematic means-end relation of "techniques of embodiment," architectural body is a pure medium that jams any immediate ends. In doing so, Arakawa and Gins once again can ask after the ends of science—not after any specific end but after the question of "ends" in itself. The pure medium of the body posits an absolute and transcendental end, against which presupposed background schemes such as techniques of embodiment can appear.

⁵ Here I am indebted to the metaphorological analysis of scientific paradigms in Anselm Haverkamp's "Chaos by Design."

⁶ Here I assume Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida* as the best account of such a paradoxical perceptual point.

2

[...] [T]he problems of knowing what is the subject of the State, of war, etc., are exactly of the same type as the problems of knowing what is the subject of perception: one will not clear up the philosophy of history except by working out the problem of perception.

(Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible* 196)

Much of what passes for transhumanism remains within the closure described by Husserl. Take as a contrast the living room of Arakawa and Gins's *Critical Resemblance House*,⁷ filled with bars and layers, a labyrinth impeding any possible movement where "it could take several hours to go from the living room to the kitchen" (Arakawa and Gins, *Architecture* 99). What appears as a result is a sheer swarm of perception. The imposing labyrinth images "immediate and direct response to a probably existent" (*AB* 7). Perception is a labyrinth. The probable existent remains quasi-visible, translucent within the architecture of "perceptual landing sites," suspended within masses of response, aggregates of irritation. The possible resemblance of this house to perception is the construction of an almost transcendental object. If life receives its "plausibility" through the "co-articulations" of body and environment (*AB* 64), Arakawa and Gins give us a paradoxical appearance whose plausibility remains suspended. It must be negotiated, fallen into, dis-habituated and un-comforted. It is "tentative."⁸

Do we see an image of the world or an image produced by the world? The exaggerated, over-supply of perception made evident in this work is the emblem and extension of the body as "architectural body." Arakawa and Gins state that architectural body signals the inseparability of body proper and architectural surround (*AB* 2). The crucial notion of "contingency" describes the "linking and re-linking of the body and world to one another" (*AB* xiv). The *Critical Resemblance House* is the outside of the inside of the cognitive apparatus of the body itself. The body is no ground of perception but the contingent partner of the world. Or rather: no cognition within a body (no ghost in the machine) but through a body as a medium for the dance of the world. In the immediacy of this medium we experience the contingent relation of body and world.

"Landing sites" are the basis of Arakawa and Gins's theory of the architectural body's kinesthetic and proprioceptive cognition. A "landing site configuration," defined as "every instance of the world," always involves all three ways of landing as a site (*AB* 7). Landing sites explain how persons form a world through "thinking-feeling." This schema offers an abstract throughput for how cognition arises through a body sited in the world. The movement is from perceptual, to imaging, and finally to dimensionalizing landing sites. This

⁷ See Baldwin, fig. a (GIFU1.jpg).

⁸ For a different account of Arakawa and Gins's landing sites, see Hansen (330-342).

schema seems familiar enough, moving from direct perception to imaging or imitative perception, to the composite structure or dimensions. Through landing sites we are situated, embodied. But also, *through and through* the landing site runs a trembling, a perception that is neither embodied nor disembodied.

The first landing site is named “perceptual” but is more simply defined as “any immediate and direct response to a probable existent” (AB 7). The basic model is the concept of “pure sensation,” as described in Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s *The Phenomenology of Perception*: “the experience of an undifferentiated, instantaneous, dotlike impact” (3). Perceptual landing sites are hazy swarms of impact.

The image in our thinking-feeling is abstracted from the swarm (AB 7). The image is noticeably “wide” and “un-pinpointed.” The image is not the point of sensation but a filling in of the gaps in perception. Since perceptual landing sites are nothing but immediacy and gaps, the resulting image is not an image of perception but its result—this is no mimetic image but a trigger following the initial trembling. Imaging landing site creates an image in place of perception, “dancing attendance” and “aping” the perceptual landing site’s direct response” (AB 7). The image is a “stand-in,” an “amorphous according of more information than is actually supplied” (AB 12). The mechanism of perception works perfectly without anything at all to perceive. The image is always too much or too little. The image fills in the world, generalizes it.⁹

The medial schema of landing sites insists both on the fact of cognition and the gap-like non-occurrence of this fact.¹⁰ Sensation is both the precondition and the content of the architectural body. By emphasizing the fact of kinesthetic and proprioceptive interaction with a world, and by foregrounding the architectural schema or figuration involved, Arakawa and Gins show the non-conceptual folding that both contains and excludes sensation within the concept of architectural body. The concept of architectural body offers an explanation that works beyond the paradox of perception. The paradox is suspended in the mediality of the architectural body.

The image produced by the irritation of perception is described graphically: it involves a kind of “quasi-registering” (AB 12). This theory of registering is the correlate of the folded, paradoxical structure of the body. The registration is a medial mark of perceptual throughput. “Quasi” allows neither the appearance of mental images (*imagines*) nor the semiotic conventionality of a code of images. The registered mark trembles, both part of the “schematic domain of *landing sites*” and an experience of our thinking-feeling the world.

It would be easy to turn to a convenient semiotics and pin down this image. Rather, I wish to defend the paradoxical crux of perception involved. Refusing either the conventionality of the sign or the relative motivation of other forms of marking, quasi-registering is the singularity of the imaging landing site. The crucial point here is the mediality of the mark formed through quasi-registering. We are told that landing sites form “when symbolizing is put on hold”; instead, the particular “on hold” mark is described as a “muted symbol” (AB 22).

⁹ Aristotle writes: “The soul never thinks without an image.”

¹⁰ In another context, Derrida writes: “Writing supplements perception before perception even appears to itself [is conscious of itself]” (224).

The muteness of perception within our imaging of thinking-feeling forces an abstract, schematic account. The quasi-registering of perception requires an architectural body. Only in this way can the paradoxicality of perception be addressed.

We are offered a partial answer: what the muted symbol captures is time, the “split second of muting whose instantaneous time span lasts only long enough for basic positionings to be registered” (AB 22). This time difference is an openness to an environment that is always present with and through the architectural body. Time may be a metaphor for what is contained in the muted symbol, perhaps the best and oldest metaphor available. Arakawa and Gins describe this relation as “tentative,” a word that pivots on time. The notion of hesitancy and care it invokes is oriented to a past as yet unresolved, not worked out, and a future that must equally remain cared for and in balance. Here, with all this invocation of time and of contingent proximity to the world, we are close to the Heideggerian thematic of care (*Sorge*). But Arakawa and Gins’s tentativeness means the world is contained *and* excluded in the architectural body. If the Husserlian “crisis” departs from the dominance of technoscientific method over intuited immediacy, what Arakawa and Gins offer as a corrective is a tentative non-departure suspended between method and intuition. There is no return to a pure origin of direct intuition, nor a lapsarian acceptance of the constructability of intuition from method, but a singular exposure of the fundamental phenomenological crux.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s unfinished work on *The Visible and the Invisible* elaborates a paradoxical phenomenology of *nothing*, a limit-phenomenology of “the imaginary and the hidden” (229). Let me argue, all too briefly, that this work remains the final phenomenological knot tying theory to perception, and, for that reason, provides the proper reference for Arakawa and Gins’s architecture *qua* technoscience and embodiment. In its most pointed formulation, Merleau-Ponty arrived at a central crux of the *punctum caecum*, a blind spot within consciousness that enables rather than excludes the invisible within the visible. To see “is always to see more than one sees” (247), but also, as already set out in the earlier *Phenomenology of Perception*: “It is not seen in itself, but causes us to see the rest” (309). The point here is not the internal dynamics of theoretical blind spots and subsequent recursive self-reflection. Such a focus remains within the closure of the visible and the constraints of theoretical reflection, that is, within the problematic of technoscience departing from Husserl. To the contrary: Merleau-Ponty’s point is the implied absolutely invisible that forces into profile the amount of perception contained within any theory.¹¹ The result is a phenomenology of theory rather than a theory of phenomenology. The notion of “hyperreflection” describes a reflection on the unavailable and excluded transcendental of perception as the basis for all reflection. The limit and failure of reflection is the starting point for architectural body. For Arakawa and Gins, “reflection alone represents too drastic a reduction, one that unnecessarily distorts the picture” (AB xv). In short, hyperreflection is the phenomenological take-down Arakawa and Gins apply to technoscience.

¹¹ Merleau-Ponty writes: “The invisible is *there* without being an *object*, it is pure transcendence, without an ontic mask” (*Visible and Invisible* 229).

Architectural body unsettles and unbalances the too easy assimilation of perception to image. When Arakawa and Gins describe a house made of NASA-designed synthetic materials (“flexible, durable, and, to our delight, it happens to provide great insulation as well”), a house that “floats the Sited Awareness Hypothesis,” the goal is not awareness of the putative outside of the structure but awareness of the way the body “lands” on the structure. The house is a “procedural tool” that “reorders the sensorium.”¹² This is a meta-medial rather than metaphysical explanation. The evidence offered up in the “architectural body” is no longer technoscientific know-how, not even ethical know-how (in Varela’s sense of an awareness of my own and others’ mindfulness and groundlessness). The ethical importance of architectural body is not because of the knowledge that others, too, enact and construct their cognitive surrounds, and thus produce descriptions of systems just as we produce similar descriptions, as Niklas Luhmann ultimately concludes, following Varela (*Theories of Distinction* 33-75). By contrast, and pointedly so, the crisis ethical demand of architectural body comes from the inaccessible yet insistent perception within cognition. The almost transcendental proof offered by their architecture is nothing else.

Arakawa and Gins’s work is finally not about a particular scientific aim. It invokes no particular future—these are always banal, in any case, like some fantasy world of well-muscled and tanned transhumans. Architectural body works on the mythic residue of technoscience and embodiment to extract the claims of myth *itself*, extracting the singularity of this claim only. Reversible destiny does mean that some part of us, held tentatively, can only be accounted for in terms of this claim. Only by thinking the beyond already in the here and now can we assess the claims and demands of science (*AB* xvi). Going beyond the rhetoric of technoscience, Arakawa and Gins operate at the border of what rhetoric can say. The muted symbol contains within perception an extra perception beyond all perception, a perception of the imperceptible and a saying of the mute, an experience we all share without being able to say or show.

¹² Arakawa and Gins write: “Tactically posed surrounds should be designed for the purpose of making landing-site dispersal (disposition/placement of sited awareness) readily noticeable,” and “Tactically posed surrounds should be designed for the purpose of altering the proportions in which different types of landing sites are dispersed,” with the conclusion that “How the body gets, how it disperses, and how it replenishes its energy – these are all questions with enormous crisis ethical import” (*AB* 96).

3

Unreadability of this/world. All things doubled.

(Paul Celan, *Schneepart* 332; translation modified)

No doubt, the insistence on this crisis call—the insistence that we all hear the demand of the architectural body—is the burden of proof for reversible destiny. I will not try to adjudicate the critics or proponents of theories of reversible destiny. My aim has been to respect and not resolve the paradox involved, that is, to read the theory of architectural body. It is important, however, to show how Arakawa and Gins themselves explain such a reading; that is, given the paradox of embodied perception, and given the impossibility of experiencing the mediality of the architectural body, how is a theory of reversible destiny possible? In conclusion, let me note that the medial, non-self-reflexivity of the architectural body still requires some reflection.

The cover of *Architectural Body* presents stark lines of text that declare the “connection between what we do and work being done in the fields of self-organization, autopoiesis, artificial life, and consciousness studies.” The text is all in quotations, a dialogue, with the reply: “The direction is the same. We’re on the same avenue. Even so, we’re doing something quite different.” Offered in lieu of a cover image, simply white text against a black background, these paragraphs are repeated again as the “Preface” to the volume. Here they are dated “New York 2002” (*AB* ix). A particular moment of conversation then, a final debate on the title of the book—this is what starts the dialogue—catalyzed in a moment of decision. What is dated gains the specificity of an event, an epiphany, made evident in the text at hand. And yet, having acknowledged the connection of reversible destiny to a range of constructivist scientific approaches to epistemology and life, this dated preface continues: “Should we spell out the differences?” Reply: “Not this time around” (*AB* ix). Both cover and preface, wrapping the text doubly tight as it were, “signal” connections only to conceal differences. The preface falls under the rubric of “not this time around.”

The differences from technoscience are not spelled out but read. The text is dated, but also remains indifferent to its dating, an indifference to the event of titling and publishing, a muteness of the text that acknowledges differences but refuses to spell them out. The text gestures to another event, another time and place where differences may be spelled out. Instead, Arakawa and Gins declare that the “whole of this text” will be proof of their claim (*AB* xxi). At various points, they suggest the equivalence of the architectural surround to a discourse, the equation of buildings to an aggregate of words into readable sentences. The reading of the text is the exact negotiation of the built discourse of architecture, and exactly this is the spelling out of the differences between their work and technoscientific embodiment. Reading is the best experience and explanation of the architectural body. At the same time, but not in contradiction, this reading is understood only as “blockage” (*AB* 86). Reading architectural body is a reading of unreadability. The built sentences vanish, like “poems that have ever eluded poets” (*AB* 57). They conclude, about their own book: “The device we will construct here with you will not do what we say it will do” (87). This is a text that disappears as we read it.

In suspending direct symbolization and in enforcing the paradoxical foldedness of the architectural body, in short, by enforcing an immediacy beyond any theory of embodiment or technoscientific method, Arakawa and Gins arrive at a need for reading. The mediality of the architectural body is like a graphical and linguistic system, but precisely its mutedness requires that it be read elsewhere. The text *Architectural Body* is the architectural body's "mode of disappearance," as Jean Baudrillard puts it about poetry (213). The nonliteral, figural hyperreflection on the almost transcendent mediality of architectural body is the still rhetorical requirement of our posthuman destiny.

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OH PIONEERS! BODILY REFORMATION AMID DAILY LIFE

Arakawa and Gins have been fomenting revolution for a long time. In the last twenty years their attention has turned more and more towards architecture and urban planning as a way of reforming our bodily existence. Their proposals enter daily life rather than staying in the isolated sphere of the museum or gallery. These constructions are to be lived in, not contemplated. Will daily life then blunt or sharpen Arakawa and Gins's power to educate and revise our "architectural bodies"?

The task of reform

Architectural traces appeared early in Arakawa's paintings.¹ Works from the sixties and seventies often include outlines of enclosures, connecting spaces, and room and street plans. In the eighties the inclined planes one climbed to see his paintings began the spatial manipulation of the viewer.² This led eventually to the collaborative construction of experimental mini-environments such as the Ubiquitous Site series and the Nagi Museum's recreations of the Ryoanji garden. In addition to these projects, Arakawa and Gins created plans and models of houses and parks, then of whole residential quarters.

In theorizing their architectural proposals, Arakawa and Gins analyze the perceptual and bodily world as a dispersed assemblage of different kinds of "landing sites" for perception and imagination. Our architectural body is formed by the "cleavings" (holdings together and keepings apart) within this assemblage of landing sites. These landing sites create signification with features of the environment, which are themselves ongoing "cleavings" of other energetic centers (so that ultimately Arakawa and Gins can describe the living environment as "bioscleave").

A person parses the world at any given instant into particular distributions of landing sites, or better, an organism-person-environment can be parsed into these distributions. (Architectural Body 6)

If persons can never be extricated from surroundings, then what must be looked at is the extent to which they are bound to and influenced by them. In what respects and how variegatedly do physical surroundings invite bodily action. How far out into the environment does an organism that persons extend? (Architectural Body 40)

Being "in" a place is not a passive being-located in the way a pencil is in a drawer. Being-in is an ongoing activity, changeable and never completed. In that sense it is always tentative, not being-in-place but holding-in-

¹ See Kolb, fig. a (Stretchable_Labyrinth_1962.jpg).

² See Kolb, fig. b (Abrupt_Resemblances.jpg).

place, holding ourselves and holding the place together. At the same time, architecture is no passive container for our being-in: “Architectural works can direct the body’s tentative constructing toward a holding in place, its forming in place. But it is also the case that how the body moves determines what turns out to hold together as architecture for it” (*Architectural Body* 50). Arakawa and Gins want architecture to take advantage of that interaction to re-form our lives.

We find ourselves within an already on-going process that by its nature remains mostly habitual.

People interact with bioscleave largely through what has come to be called procedural knowing, a term covering both instinctual sequences and encoded knowing, that is, habitual patterns of activity. [...] Acquiring a skill involves integrating all steps needed for skillfully performing a task and then reducing them to a procedure. [...] The many activities and considerations that subsist as procedural knowing within or to one side of sited awareness, taking up fewer of its sites now than they had need of before they were thus reduced, free it to be active elsewhere. With steps and nuances of coordinating skills handled apart from awareness, a person can go on to acquire still other coordinating skills. (Architectural Body 52-3)

Through carefully designed spatial tactics our habitual world perception-construction/action processes can be made more self-aware. Once that happens they can be reviewed and perhaps revised. Arakawa and Gins propose constructing architectural surrounds that will accomplish this task:

That which counts as procedural will need to be enlarged and made to exist so that it can be entered wittingly. Only once the procedural can on its own account be entered, only when procedural has been writ large, [...] a constructed world that has, with great forethought, been tactically posed and thus been given its procedural due will instruct people in brand-new coordinating skills and in the compounding of skills attained. Ability to coordinate a greater number of skills leads to a freer and wider-ranging and more perspicacious intellect. (Architectural Body 53-4)

The first citation suggests that freedom to acquire new coordinating skills increases when we let some processes drop out of focal awareness. The second suggests that freedom will increase when we have more focused self-awareness of already existing processes and can consciously change them. The two claims can both be true, but there is a tension in how architecture can help them to be realized together, and it is this tension that I explore in this essay.

The task of re-forming is imperative for Arakawa and Gins because they believe we are victims of long established processes that lead to personal and social harms, and ultimately to the grave. Such processes may be social, causing environmental degradation, or they may be individual habits such as improper diet. Arakawa and Gins further hypothesize, though, that harmful yet alterable processes also occur at the level of our perceptual-physical world-formation. Arakawa and Gins’s gamble is that by creating architectural environments that constrain and disrupt habitual processes, we could be brought to re-vision and re-form ourselves and our world on this basic level. By intervening to alter fundamental actions and cleavings we might be able to take charge of our destiny in unforeseeable ways. By joining such alterations (and the knowledge of human possibilities they could bring) to the scientific work on life extension, even the grave might be avoidable.

It is because we are creatures of an insufficiently procedural bioscience that the human lot remains untenable. [...] [M]embers of the human species have neither the wherewithal to figure out the nature of their agency nor the requisite skill to engineer for themselves [...] procedures through which we could sustain ourselves indefinitely. (Architectural Body 54)

The urgency of this task is evident from our widespread acceptance of limited possibilities, not just the grave but patterns of bodily and social functioning that are not open to the full—and presently unknown—range of human creativity.

Architectural procedures

As their part in meeting this crisis, Arakawa and Gins propose a “procedural architecture” that both guides and frustrates habitual actions. An architectural procedure is not just “a fixed set of called-for actions” but an ongoing “spatiotemporal collaboration between a moving body and a tactically posed surround” (*Architectural Body* 73). The architecture is designed to embody specific procedures which will “slow down the automatic dispersal [of perceptual-bodily landing sites, and] enter the dispersing itself” (46). “A surround constructed to constrain a sequence of actions presents a procedure to be followed; and as soon as someone sets foot into an architectural surround that constrains action, the architectural procedure it stages gets going” (55). An architectural procedure constructs the possibility for bodies and buildings to cooperate in the creation of new modes of phenomena. In particular, Arakawa and Gins want architectural procedures to build tentativeness into our lives and bodies, so that the processes of bodily world-formation remain open and revisable.

In *Architectural Body* Arakawa and Gins describe two such architectural procedures. The first is the Disperse-to-Contrast procedure, which works by providing contrasts to a current space. As we move through a house or a neighborhood or a city we find ourselves within repeating modules. The contrasting modules might be twins of one another, or they might be similar but not identical. A module might be a room, an apartment or house, or a city quarter. The identity or variation might show up in the overall volume, or in the terrain levels and pattern, or in orientation, scale, and surface textures. The effect would be to sharpen the process of locating ourselves within the current place, as we distinguish it from its twins or similars. The aim is that “this continual series of assessments and comparisons naturally brings about in residents a greater degree of alertness and a far sharper than ordinary sense of the architectural surround” (*Reversible Destiny* 283).

The second procedure is the Tentativeness-Cradling procedure. Here, instead of contrasting a set of clear and definite spaces, a single space is made indefinite and difficult. A room might have sections built to different scales, or a house might have twenty entrances, or an open prospect have multiple ground planes and horizons. Arakawa and Gins superimpose different orders “to generate conditions for a multiplicity of sitings” (Knesl, *Reversible Destiny* 221). The aim is that “it will not be possible to take an unambiguous step” (*Reversible Destiny* 263). The person is to be “forever getting her bearings only tentatively,” and “continually in start-again mode” (*Architectural Body* 77).

When scale loses its traction on sited awareness, the tentativeness of the forming moment—raw process, the raw process of venturing forth as existing all up in the air within nearground, middle ground, and farground simultaneously—will be seen, heard, and smelled to as-if flutter in the breeze. (Architectural Body 76)

In both procedures, the inhabitant is brought to explicit and focused awareness of perceptual and bodily world-construction. Altering or improving that process, she is aided to “pull together an otherwise all-over-the-map sited awareness” into a “surefooted rightful hesitation” (*Architectural Body* 60, 50). “Architectural procedures disclose, highlight, and explicate the tentative steps by which an organism maintains herself as a person” (73). Habitual processes are thus brought into clear awareness so that they can be examined and reformed.

Mediating for a person much of what hitherto existed for her as procedural or unconscious, movements and the sited awareness they modulate turn groups of walls and room features, lifeless material, into a more focused, higher level of the procedural. [...] the procedural having thus been brought into palpable view, its fixed sequence of actions can be altered. (Architectural Body 56, my emphases)

*Activating an architectural procedure, a person comes alive to her own tacit knowing; body-wide and wider, occurrent tacit knowing goes explicit. [...] A person stays alive to how she is dispersed and then to how she is again and again dispersed through and into that dispersal. (Architectural Body 60, my emphases)*³

Procedural architectural surrounds are intended to affect the way the body organizes itself and forms its world. They are to force us to reexamine and reform our basic processes of world-construction. The reforms Arakawa and Gins are seeking cannot be accomplished unconsciously, as if someone were to substitute a more powerful engine in your car while you slept, and you discovered to your surprise the next day that the car now operated better. The active process of inhabitation is to be made more conscious and controllable, “*staying focused on the elusiveness as such of this tenuous event-fabric or event-matrix*” (*Architectural Body* 49, my emphasis). The question is how that investigation can stay focused.⁴

So far, Arakawa and Gins have described in detail only two architectural procedures. The two are, however, general enough to encompass many different variations. Because the two work in opposed ways, using either definite or indefinite spaces, they cover a wide field of possibilities. Still, over time Arakawa and Gins can and will make explicit more architectural procedures.

In their series of panels, “The Mechanism of Meaning,” Arakawa and Gins investigate the processes by which visual and perceptual meaning is established. The procedures employed in this piece indicate new architec-

³ Describing his experience at an exhibit that modeled and partly embodied some of these elements, a visitor to one of their installations remarked that “Feeling dynamic, I made my way out of that space.” (Kisaragi Koharu, “A Walk through the Arakawa-Gins Exhibition.” http://www.nttcc.or.jp/public/ic_mag/ic025/html/173-175e.html)

⁴ Does talk of focused awareness impose some centered controlling self, such as has been attacked in recent psychology and philosophy? Not necessarily. We could speak with Arakawa and Gins of the “organism that persons” rather than a centered self. We could have an ontology of the self that is Nietzschean or Deleuzean or Parfitian, with momentary selves and sub-individual processes and no central “I.” However, even so, the issue of the togetherness of different processes would still remain, because Arakawa and Gins want to reform processes, not just have them coexist in parallel.

tural analogies. I wonder if another heuristic for finding more architectural procedures might consider the ways we “inhabit” the “architecture” of written texts. The analogy is imperfect, since textual inhabitation is not so bodily, but reading a text does involve perceptual and imaginative landing sites as well as bringing together a dispersed multiplicity of signifiers and signifieds. In addition, reading as a process includes a long history of attempts by authors to turn the process back on itself, making us aware of what we are doing as we make sense in and of a text. Literary authors have tried to make textual inhabitation into a process that is self-aware, complicated, and self-reflexive of its own process, thereby changing the way we read. Such textual procedures might provide clues for architectural procedures.

Gins’s own writings are full of textual maneuvers that might be translatable into more architectural procedures, but we could just as easily consider other authors. In fact, if we were to take architectural procedures to be the architectural equivalents of repeatable words—as Arakawa and Gins at one point suggest—then we might look at how words can be worked on and changed, for instance in James Joyce and Lewis Carroll. What would be the architectural equivalents of portmanteau words,⁵ such as those Carroll invented in “Jabberwocky,” or of Joyce’s multilingual puns and creations in *Finnegans Wake*? Or, how might we find architectural equivalents of using deliberately archaic or artificial spellings, or Elizabethan irregular spellings, or tabun mixing Wörter från linguae différentes?

If, on the other hand, we were to take the sequence of experiences in an architectural procedure to be something like a sequence of sentences and paragraphs, then what would be the architectural equivalents of walking among the different rhetorics of the chapters of Joyce’s *Ulysses*? Are there spatial equivalents for Italo Calvino’s self-enveloping narrative in *If on a Winter’s Night a Traveler...*? Of Pynchon’s overloaded narratives? Of Whitman’s stringing-togethers or Eliot’s excerpts, or Pound’s relentlessly allusive *Cantos*?

Indeed, there could be spatial analogues to such textual maneuvers, and such textual tactics suggest the expansion of existing architectural procedures. To date Arakawa and Gins’s designs ignore historical styles and culturally specific meanings. Rather, the variations and contrasts they manipulate are bodily-geometric-perceptual features such as scale, volume, and ground plane. Their procedures do not involve decorative styles or cultural purposes, but they could: imagine the Tentativeness-Cradling procedure providing working bathroom fixtures on living room sofas, or a room that is both Empire and Bauhaus, or even a room whose indicated use(s) reach to-

⁵ “This term for ‘blend word’ comes from ‘portmanteau,’ ‘a leather traveling case that opens into two hinged compartments’ (from the French for ‘carry cloak’), by way of Humpty Dumpty in Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking-Glass*: ‘You see it’s like a portmanteau—there are two meanings packed up into one word.’ Although most modern blends are simply the first part of one word plus the last part of another (e.g., ‘brunch’ = ‘breakfast’ + ‘lunch;’ ‘smog’ = ‘smoke’ + ‘fog;’ ‘Chunnel’ = ‘Channel’ + ‘tunnel’), Carroll himself formed his portmanteau words in a more subtle manner: ‘slithy’ = ‘lithe’ + ‘slimy;’ ‘mimsy’ = ‘miserable’ + ‘flimsy;’ ‘frumious’ = ‘fuming’ + ‘furious.’ Carroll’s coinages ‘chortle’ (which is now in most dictionaries) and ‘galumph’ (which is in the OED) are generally understood as ‘chuckle’ + ‘snort’ and ‘gallop’ + ‘triumph’ respectively, although Carroll himself never explained them.” (<http://alt-usage-english.org/excerpts/foxportma.html>)

ward five different cultural horizons at once. There are many variables that procedures could manipulate, and many dimensions of contrast and definition to work with.

Of course, to treat such aspects procedurally risks descending into the kind of dull pastiche found in bad postmodern design. The austerity of Arakawa and Gins's designs successfully avoids this peril. Nonetheless, their spaces are pure, and, if actually lived in from day to day, they would surely acquire decorations and culturally specific assignments. Those might overpower the intended procedural effects, so perhaps decor and cultural readings of the purpose of a room could also be subject to procedural manipulations.⁶ So far Arakawa and Gins have built only isolated examples, the largest of which is the Site of Reversible Destiny, located in the town of Yoro, in Japan. It was designed before the notion of architectural procedures was fully developed, but it contains many objects and features meant to provoke the user/visitor into new bodily and perceptual spaces.

Working out Yoro

In the summer of 2000 my wife and I visited the site at Yoro park, and the theme of this essay was triggered by my experiences there.⁷ We rode a Japan Rail medium-sized train from the large city of Nagoya to the town of Ogaki, then a Kintetsu private railroad diesel putt-putt from Ogaki to the village of Yoro, passing farm fields and clusters of houses. We arrived at Yoro station just after lunch; no one was around. From a tourist map on a billboard, I plotted what I hoped would be the shortest route to the park. It turned out to be the long way around and included a steep hill, but perhaps that put us in the mood for the park's own slopes. The proper shorter route would have brought us to the northeast corner, where the looming bulk of the park's construction would not have been so obvious at first.

A sign located where we paid the entry fee offered us, free of charge, bicycle helmets and rubber-soled shoes to wear while in the park. We did not take them, but we could imagine that some stylish Japanese, especially women in fashionable heels, might need such equipment. Still, the emphasis on safety created a distracting undertone that suggested holding back full commitment to the terrain. There were only a few other people at the site that day, plus two or three wardens patrolling along the upper part of the rim. They were keeping an eye out for accidents, but their presence against the skyline distorted the scale and interfered with the interaction of the rim and the nearby mountains.

The entry path wound up onto the tipped concrete rim of the bowl, where we looked over the city street maps filling the surface. The maps did not work on us, perhaps because we were not familiar enough with the street patterns of the Japanese cities being referred to. Nor was I observant enough; during our whole visit I never

⁶ Such manipulations would magnify the concerns about central control that are discussed briefly later.

⁷ See Kolb, fig. c (yoro.jpg).

registered the ochre and green outline of the Japanese islands that sprawled across the bowl, though perhaps the high grass made it less visible.

We hiked further along the rim and then descended into the bowl. My first reaction was that the bowl was both steeper and smaller than I had expected from photographs. My second reaction was that the design was as exciting and challenging as I had hoped. We walked and climbed all over the park, from one striking vista or object to another. We also made probes into the Critical Resemblance House. I was most taken by the recently constructed “office building” near the entry. Unlike the other constructions in the park it featured bright exterior and interior colors in striking combinations. It had usable rooms, yet their strange shapes, uneven terrain, and the half-height partitions that interrupted the path created interesting effects. It was not exactly disorienting, but it demanded a heightened bodily attention to the surroundings and to my maneuvering within the paths I chose. The changes in floor level and steepness were particularly effective because even though I could see the whole room, the small partitions that interrupted any straight path also prevented me from seeing the floor as a whole. Consequently, as I walked I was continually surprised and needed to readjust my body at each turn.⁸

The instruction sheets for the Yoro site suggested exercises in movement and perception:

If accidentally thrown completely off-balance, try to note the number, and also the type and the placement, of the landing sites essential to reconstituting a world.

Try to incorporate two or more horizons into every view.

Associate each of the extreme forms your body is forced to assume in traversing the field with both a nearby and a distant form.

I found these difficult to carry out. In the end, the Yoro site did not have its full effects on me. Perhaps this was my failure, like the failure of the person who “just does not get” a Jackson Pollock painting. Should we then take the Yoro site as a work of art that needs to be approached in some special way? Since there is a set of instructions for the park, perhaps so. But is it as “a work of art” that the site should be approached? Was my problem akin to the philistine who cannot appreciate Pollock, or more akin to the person who wanders into a gym but does not use the exercise machines? It was clear from the structure that the double horizons were built into the park. I could see how they were supposed to work, but I could not make the effort because other goals interfered. This gym-explanation avoids the aesthetic elitism of the original objection, but at the same time it raises concerns about Arakawa and Gins’s goals in relation to those of daily life.

My first reflection on the experience at Yoro was that while we were there we were too busy taking in the novelty—“look at that!” and “over there!” I thought that more time would have helped the park to work on or with us. More specifically, we needed enough familiarity with the park to be more fully affected by the multiple

⁸ When we were finished exploring the site, we walked to Yoro station to once again ride the little train, but this time when we arrived at Ogaki, we impulsively continued on to Kyoto. We ended up at that city’s Maruyama Park, a pleasant, standard collection of recreational and display areas. I imagined it strewn with Yoro-type constructions that interfered with its casual flow and easy progression of horizons.

horizons and other features, allowing us to experience movement through the terrain without being focused on getting to the next remarkable space or artifact. If we had enjoyed a picnic lunch, or conversed with friends as we strolled about, or walked a dog or tried to throw a Frisbee, there would have been less touristic demand to see each item. But later reflection evinced a different analysis, one that sees the park not as a site for daily activities subliminally influenced by architecture, but rather as a site for concentrated exercises and strenuous efforts. Once the novelty had worn off, we should have devoted ourselves more to following the instructions.

Pioneer life

Arakawa and Gins intend their constructions to do more than influence people indirectly in the way architecture usually does. Accordingly, theirs is to be a special zone of exercise. But if it is the latter, then we still have to ask how these sites will relate to the daily activities that will also be carried out there. For Arakawa and Gins have gone beyond designing specialized equipment such as the Yoro park and are designing procedural architecture for residences and towns.

Architecture is always an impure art: even the most artistically designed building is not just contemplated but lived in. Walter Benjamin pointed out long ago that most architecture has its effects through distraction rather than concentration:

Distraction and concentration form polar opposites which may be stated as follows: A man who concentrates before a work of art is absorbed by it. He enters into this work of art the way legend tells of the Chinese painter when he viewed his finished painting. In contrast, the distracted mass absorbs the work of art. This is most obvious with regard to buildings. Architecture has always represented the prototype of a work of art the reception of which is consummated by a collectivity in a state of distraction. The laws of its reception are most instructive. [...] Architecture has never been idle. Its history is more ancient than that of any other art, and its claim to being a living force has significance in every attempt to comprehend the relationship of the masses to art. Buildings are appropriated in a twofold manner: by use and by perception—or rather, by touch and sight. Such appropriation cannot be understood in terms of the attentive concentration of a tourist before a famous building. On the tactile side there is no counterpart to contemplation on the optical side. Tactile appropriation is accomplished not so much by attention as by habit. As regards architecture, habit determines to a large extent even optical reception. The latter, too, occurs much less through rapt attention than by noticing the object in incidental fashion. This mode of appropriation, developed with reference to architecture, in certain circumstances acquires canonical value. For the tasks which face the human apparatus of perception at the turning points of history cannot be solved by optical means, that is, by contemplation, alone. They are mastered gradually by habit, under the guidance of tactile appropriation.⁹

⁹ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." The essay is reprinted in many anthologies. This excerpt is from a translation found at <http://www.student.math.uwaterloo.ca/~cs492/Benjamin.html>

Standard non-procedural architecture already shapes bodies and actions. It is not accidental that so many civic buildings have a solemn Roman form: our body changes upon entering a courthouse or a capitol or a cathedral. Entering a home or a nightclub, it changes in other ways. Even though there are social norms for different spaces—a home or a nightclub change the body in different ways than a courthouse—the architecture of the space on its own also alters our comportment, our bodily extension and possibilities.¹⁰

People notice architectural objects “in incidental fashion” because they are in the building or on the street with a purpose or goal that they glimpse across the architectural landscape. They are not concentrating on the landscape itself. Otherwise how could they change the baby’s diaper or get to the grocery store? But do Arakawa and Gins intend us to go to the grocery store? Certainly not at Yoro, which is a special experience. At Yoro, Arakawa and Gins constructed a “philosophical garden” (*Reversible Destiny* 195), but they also want to build philosophical towns and cities. These would provide the means for long-term experiments and pervasive influences: “It would be better not only to construct the procedural but also to have it become one’s home ground, one’s training ground” (*Architectural Body* 55). Such training grounds will require inhabitants to be more directly involved with the local architecture than in the distracted way described by Benjamin. These inhabitants are to concentrate on the phenomena and the processes of world-and-body-formation that movements in these surroundings will reveal.

But these training grounds are also houses, which are not just gyms but places to carry on daily activities. The directions for the use of the Yoro site say “Try to incorporate two or more horizons into every view.” How are the two “horizons” of body-world reformation and daily life activities to be combined? Is being with-in a piece of procedural architecture to be an all-consuming occupation meant to occupy our total awareness? If the housing and city quarters Arakawa and Gins design are meant to be environments in which inhabitants carry out daily activities in a new self-aware way, what kind of awareness is involved?

Arakawa and Gins’s rhetoric often expresses uncompromising rejection of daily activities in favor of self-investigation. In Arakawa and Gins’s earlier, rasher years, before they worked out the full notion of an architectural procedure, they might have been heard to say: “imbalance, life-threatening danger, and absolute chaos are needed to enable us to realize how our lives are constructed [...] and so to begin to reverse our destiny” (*Reversible Destiny* 217). This would make it hard to keep an eye on the children. In this uncompromising mood, Arakawa and Gins can maintain that “[c]omfort is no longer a factor. That it might take several hours to go from one room to another in a reversible destiny house is of no importance as long as the sensibility of the person traversing the room flowers and catches onto itself in transit” (*Reversible Destiny* 241). Such a house would make urgent operations impossible when they are needed. If my body is to be “so greatly and so persistently thrown off balance that the majority of its efforts have to go entirely towards the righting of itself, leaving no energy for the routine assembling of the socio-historical matrix of the familiar or, for that matter, for the ‘being of a person’”

¹⁰ The social norms are powerful enough, though, that they may counteract the architectural effects: imagine a courtroom turned into a nightclub. Arakawa and Gins need to give more attention to the potential tension between social norms and architectural forms, since it could affect their constructions.

(*Reversible Destiny* 33), then this would not help me go to the library or buy a loaf of bread. In instances such as these, I need social conventions and smooth negotiations.

Arakawa and Gins's willingness to be disruptive stems from the worry that daily activities might be part of the crisis of humanity. They seek inhabitants for their constructions who will be pioneers. They will be experimenters, taking nothing for granted and willing to develop new ways of being and acting rather than passively accepting the fate of death and mediocrity. The motto of these pioneers seems to be: let ordinary functions be suspended if necessary while we come to know who we are and what we can be, and invent new ways to live. There is an elitism here, but it does not come from the usual avant-garde aesthetic or political elite.¹¹

However, the issue of daily activity cuts deeper than whether or not we go to the grocery store. Ordinary life doings are part of a net of practices that rely on other practices. For instance, to take a bath I have to know how to use the faucets, soap, and a towel. Handling soap requires a familiarity with what kind of thing a bar of soap is, what it is "for," and how that fits into a network of activities concerning hygiene, which in turn get their meaning and direction from fitting into a broader network of bodily practices which in turn fit into yet broader networks. The linkages never come to an edge where they stop. The net cannot be seen as a whole and it cannot be disassembled, though any part of it can be examined and reformed. Insertion into the network is the condition of the possibility of any purposeful activity. Both practical and cognitive meaning requires a horizon of absent practices, "know-hows" and goals that can never be made totally present.¹²

Gins asks "what would a hat be for you if you had never seen one before? Let every act of perceiving be unique to itself" (qtd. in Haxthausen 321). But life would be impossible if we had to negotiate unexpected novelty for every action and social transaction.¹³ Without the background absences, objects and actions would have no meaning. It is true we need to perceive things afresh, but without the taken-for-granted (but questionable later) background we could not perceive at all.

¹¹ It might seem that these pioneers would have to be supremely willful and controlled, but in fact their powers of concentration would be put at the service of a program of desubjectification aimed at cracking open standard self-unities.

¹² The most thorough analysis of these conditions on everyday activity is found in the first part of Heidegger's *Being and Time*.

¹³ In a similar vein Lyotard asks of one of their constructions, "Would its space begin anew each day?" (*Reversible Destiny* 11). He does not say that it should begin anew each moment. He dreams that "instantaneous habits would come and go." Yet an instantaneous habit is not a habit. Presumably what he means is that a novel act could contain its own projection of a future of similar acts and a way of living them, then be replaced by another unique act projecting a new future. But this pushes up to a second level the question of the active unity of the self through time as these horizons and habits change. Romantic paeans to total fluidity and constant change make forceful rhetoric but questionable philosophy, risky policy, and weak architecture. Habituation and routinization are inevitable, yet so is resistance to them and change within them. There is no arrival at total freedom, yet it can still make sense to ask for "[a] fluid teleology in service of a transgressive ethics. Not in service of a reintegrative strategy, either socially or on the level of the individual, but in a quest to invent new selves constantly" (Keller, qtd. in *Reversible Destiny* 217)—as long as that "constantly" is not "every five minutes," or there would be no life at all.

Arakawa and Gins's designs for regions and cities involve varying terrains and disrupted ground planes, modular repetitions of many kinds, and other scale effects within their architectural procedures. For example, they describe their proposal for a new city sector in Tokyo Bay as including "layers of artificial terrain, multiple horizons, winding roads, numerous pocket parks, module-based, paired and contrasted neighborhoods, panoramic views at regular intervals" (*Reversible Destiny* 232).¹⁴ Even though their proposals so far have been single-use residential districts including parks, there is no reason their constructions could not be multiple-use. These would be locales where people will carry out the activities of daily living. How do we live and act within their constructions in a way that is both efficient for daily purposes (posting letters, caring for the children, etc.), yet also mindful and investigatory?

For instance, Arakawa and Gins propose a whimsical baseball field with a wildly varying terrain (*Reversible Destiny* 228). Its wonderful twists certainly defamiliarize the ordinary, but suppose you had to play baseball on that field, and your team was in a league that played games on other fields. Suddenly the field seems impractical; its self-awareness function obstructs its ordinary function. Its odd terrain becomes a barrier to getting on with the game. "So," you might respond, "let's have all the league fields be distorted in different ways, each a different kind of experience. Even today variations in size and lighting and wind are taken as acceptable challenges and hazards as a team moves from field to field. We could add a dimension to all the games with more extreme new fields." But then the specific design of each extreme field would become a strategic maneuver to enhance home field advantage; there would be complaints that this or that field was designed to favor excessively a home team that had practiced its slopes and twists; regulations would soon limit the procedural possibilities. In short, the daily function—playing the game—would end up overpowering and restricting the procedural self-awareness function.

Arakawa and Gins intended their twisty ball field for some new, yet-to-be created game. But my point is that if the field were to be a place for playing any game that had its own built-in rules (rather than being a place where one played at playing a game while concentrating on examining the architectural body), then the field will be enmeshed in a network of activities and goals that go beyond self-examination and self-reformation and will limit the effect of their manipulations.

Again, could a heavy industry factory be designed with an undulating terrain or other features that made workers self-conscious of their world-forming perceptual cleavings as they moved within the building? If the workers' attention were so distracted, it could endanger their safety and the efficiency of production. Could someone come up with features that introduce architectural procedures without compromising the function of the factory? Architects with less radical goals have had some success introducing new moods and social interactions into office buildings and light industry, but heavy industry resists such maneuvers. Of course, there are a few striking exceptions, such as Gropius's turbine factory and some automobile plants, but there the innovations were mostly limited to exterior appearance and symbolism.

¹⁴ See Kolb, fig. b (tokyobay.jpg).

Life has other goals than self-examination, and no sense of crisis will make those goals disappear. On our home ground we bathe, prepare meals, call our business associates, make love, play with the children, dust the furniture, solve math problems, read novels, write poetry. How could Arakawa and Gins's architectural procedures keep their strength while such daily functions absorb attention? The answer to this must lie in the bodily nature of their investigations. We should not have to choose between focused self-examination and Benjamin's distracted attention. The activities of our lives take place within what Arakawa and Gins call our architectural body, that dimension created by the dispersal and joining (cleaving) of perceptual landing sites, imagination, spatial construction, and features of the environment. This creation is not a separate goal or process within the mesh of goals and meaning; it opens space for that mesh. While Arakawa and Gins want their pioneers to engage in a specific process of bodily self-examination, what they are examining is not one process among others within the net that is the condition of possibility for meaningful actions. It is the bodily reweaving of that net. Furthermore, the horizon of meanings and goals is not totally created by our bodily activities; the architectural body is within a social and historical surround. Nevertheless, the presencing of that net happens within the architectural body, and thus it should be possible for self-examination of that presencing to accompany other activities. Even though Arakawa and Gins's rhetoric often uses images of total concentration, their investigation is meant to continue even while we move about our daily rounds.

The Buddhist meditator sits on a cushion becoming aware of her breathing and thinking. In slow walking meditation she tries to be aware of the most subtle movements of her legs and muscles. Outside the meditation hall she faces the problem of keeping that awareness active in daily life. An awareness that can only be achieved in the protected environment of the meditation hall is not yet full mindfulness. She must learn how to keep that mindfulness while going about her daily activities, such as balancing the checkbook or directing a large office. The Christian tradition calls this the problem of contemplation in action.

In performing her daily activities mindfully, the meditator is not being asked to divide her attention between two separate goals. Mindfulness is not multitasking. Rather she is being mindful of the *how*, the manner in which she accomplishes her ordinary activities. That *how* is both bodily and psychological, as she stays aware of how she performs her movements and of her desires and attachments. Such an ongoing awareness of the bodily *how* of our actions provides an analogue to what Arakawa and Gins are proposing. Their architectural surrounds could provoke an accompanying mindfulness rather than constant focal awareness.

And yet there is a further twist to the problem of daily life. Arakawa and Gins claim that "[p]erforming an architectural procedure, a person launches an inquiry-on-the-go into her own constituent factors. As long as that inquiry-on-the-go continues, the procedure has not gone dormant" (*Architectural Body* 73). But how long can it be kept awake? Won't we become habituated to the surrounding contours so that they no longer challenge us? The most contorted piece of procedural architecture might become routinized. I could eventually treat its odd terrain just as something to be dealt with as I go about my business. No self-investigation, just perception and moving, as I might navigate a difficult rocky path in the rain and wind on the way to the house of a friend. I cope with the surroundings but they do not change me. A procedural house could soon become a background that would influence me in the indirect way Benjamin describes, but it would not continue to provoke special investi-

gation or awareness. The wardens at the Yoro site probably receive no lasting effects from its design, simply because they must be there all the time and are busy with their tasks.

If this routinization poses a problem, one response could be to fight to keep the architectural procedures always active. Arakawa and Gins hope that they have built in “enough self-subverting elements” to prevent their procedures from ever becoming “de-radicalized.” In fact, there is a temptation to see routinization as a failure of the user’s attention, akin to my failure at Yoro, and so to demand constant attention from the devoted pioneers. However, routinization is a necessity, not a danger to be avoided. The know-how that a practice relies on has to have a habitual component in order to be available.

Aristotle argues that activities are perfected when they become habitual; the best craftsman does not need to deduce from theory what to do with a particular piece of material. Heidegger may write polemics against “*das Man*” and the stifling averageness of life, but he knows that what he calls “everydayness” and “fallenness” are structurally necessary. There can be no total self-awareness or self-control. Nor can all world-constituting activities be made present at the same time. Some of what Husserl calls the “passive syntheses” that bring about our unified experience of the world can be made conscious by reflection, but they cannot all be kept actively self-aware. Husserl urged that the layers of constitution and passive synthesis be made available, but his interest was in evidence, not reform. In what they seek, Arakawa and Gins are closer to Deleuze’s desire for new modes of bodily self-awareness.

Arakawa and Gins address the problem of habituation when they employ images from athletics rather than from scientific investigation: at the “training ground” the formation of new habits is not a problem, but is part of the solution. What happens on a training ground? Athletes practice by concentrating on individual movements in order to perfect them. The batter examines her swing. The martial artist develops a new maneuver. But later they concentrate not on the moves but on the game. There is a rhythm of training and life: practice intensely, then play “in the zone,” effortlessly, without focusing on your movements or tactics. Catch the ball, react fully in the moment. Arakawa and Gins gamble that this rhythm could apply to the deeper level of world-body-formation itself.

We can envision architectural procedures influencing people through a rhythm of focal self-examination that leads to the formation of new habits, but Arakawa and Gins envision a still larger rhythm. They propose multiple and different procedural architectural constructions and movements from one to another. They imagine environments that include a great many “tactically posed architectural surrounds.” Some would aim at increasing self-awareness, others would aim more at transforming our bodily world-formation. Some would do both at the same time.¹⁵ An architectural procedure might change us and we could let its adjustments and changes become a new habit. There would be many architectural surrounds enacting different procedures and provoking different revisions. When we have learned or been transformed by one, we could move on to another. As we relocate our residence, or our workplace, or our leisure, we learn. What we gain would not be an accumulation of facts about

¹⁵ This would, of course, “exponentially increase the tremendous amount of forethought that is needed for town planning” (*Architectural Body* 61).

ourselves, but new ways of being our bodied self. Some of this learning would be in new habits, some would be in new tentativeness.

Arakawa and Gins see multiple locations and procedures combining into spatial discourses of discovery. Different areas might invoke the same procedure, but concretize it in varying ways. A town might combine procedures into an architectural rhetoric that encouraged different self-discoveries: "It is hardly a far reach to think of architectural procedures responding to and expanding on the consequences of other constructed procedures" (*Architectural Body* 56). Even today,

Los Angeles has a lot to say to your body about what Chicago or Paris or Singapore has led it to become. [...] She contrasts in slow motion, or in odd motion, her intricate sitings of herself in terms of this town and the previous one, examining effect and upshot of landing-site dispersal, savvy to the need to identify constituent factors that knit, explode, and weave the world's occurrence. (Architectural Body 60-1)

At one point Arakawa and Gins compare architectural procedures to words, and combinations of procedures to paragraphs and discourses with "three-dimensional THEREFORES, BUTS, ORS, ANDS" (*Architectural Body* 59). As yet they have no grammar or rhetorical rules for these combinations. Perhaps these cannot be developed until the repertory of architectural procedures is expanded. Here again, though, the textual analogy might be helpful, considering the ways in which rhetoric and sequence have been used and deliberately abused by experimental writers.¹⁶

To create a world of such elaborated spaces would demand great expense and control: "We ask only that enormous sums of money be spent on constructing the world as a tactically posed surrounding for the benefit of the body" (*Architectural Body* xix). This is reminiscent of the dreams of the great modernist architects such as Le Corbusier, who thought that greater architectural control and planning on many scales could improve cities that suffered from unhealthy and disorderly nineteenth-century conditions. With the appropriate translations, Arakawa and Gins are arguing something similar. As Knesl says, "[t]heir modernist hubris is invulnerable to accommodating temptations" (*Reversible Destiny* 215). Individual projects obviously require great planning and control (although procedural control does not extend to the level of style and decoration, I argued above that their ends

¹⁶ Arakawa and Gins want architecture to take up many of the tasks traditionally assigned to science and philosophy: the discovery of new bodily and social phenomena, the creation of new kinds of personal and social unity, the experiential validation of hypotheses about how we ought to live. We can even imagine "arguments" and "dialogues" among differently posed procedural sites, leading to informed choices and rejections. It seems right that new kinds of sites could reform us and open us, so that the self-re-making side of Socrates' quest could be enriched. But Socrates does more. The testing of general principles, precise arguments in logical form, questions of consistency and basis, these demand discourse and explicit linguistic concept creation to provide a thought-space within which experiential effects can be questioned. Still, philosophy always seriously underestimates what kinds of self-reflection can be possible without explicit language. Underlying this is the worry of Plato and the philosophical tradition generally about allowing art and rhetoric to have the last word and the desire for reflective distance from immediate experience. But the expanded possibilities from the arts do not disprove that linguistic discourse is needed for some important kinds of self-reflection. An argument about the necessity of discourse could not be conducted in painting or architecture.

might be enhanced if their procedures did extend that far). To create dialogue among their multiple projects would demand yet further control.¹⁷

Despite their modernist tone, unlike the high-modernist planners Arakawa and Gins do not work with a limited palette of functions that they think architecture and city planning should allocate. Rather they want to open up experimentation and the creation of new functions and values. Their planning is very directive, but this is to clear away old directives that are giving us bad messages. It does not replace the old with new definitive messages, but rather with a space for new discoveries.¹⁸

The proposal for multiple procedural architectures introduces a further element of complexity, and a new kind of space. This becomes evident by asking whether if the result is what Deleuze would call a *striated* or a *smooth* space. For Deleuze the archetypal striated space is a centrally controlled agricultural society such as existed on the edges of Eurasia. The archetypal smooth space is the central Asian steppes inhabited by nomads. In the striated agricultural society, space is striped and cut up into parcels tied by ownership to specific groups or individuals. People, too, are separated into groups tied to bits of land and/or to particular social roles. The society is administered from a center that has a view of the whole and orders it by separations and assignments. A smooth space lacks such divisions. It is far from empty, but its texture comes from small variations in natural conditions. The nomad does not own any land and is assigned nowhere, but in his wandering he observes micro-environments and determines where best to pasture his animals and when to move on. It is not that the nomad is free to wander without any constraints, but the constraints come from the environment and from dispersed attention to detail, rather than from central decrees.

At first glance, the spaces of the multiple tactically posed surrounds Arakawa and Gins suggest seem prime examples of striated space. Each area would have a task and each would be highly designed and divided into modules that resemble tightly striated fields. A given area would control how you can walk and what you can build there. You have your space; your neighbor has hers. Neither in the ordinary sense nor in Deleuze's special sense are these spaces smooth. Still, what Arakawa and Gins are proposing is a new hybrid space. It is like striated space

¹⁷ Arakawa and Gins argue the necessity for such control when they point out that, “[f]or those who have no choice but to be contingent, the engineering of contingency is all that is the case” (*Architectural Body* xii).

¹⁸ Learning from different architectural procedures resembles the process of incremental criticism of beliefs and values proposed by Habermas, and earlier by pragmatists such as Peirce, Dewey, and Quine. However, Arakawa and Gins's aim is more directly bodily than the kinds of criticism proposed by such thinkers, though without denying the formation of social meaning by other processes. Arakawa and Gins need to say more about the connection between architectural and social meaning. It is not enough to say that “By creating a second horizon, or better yet many more, we can be released from the out-of-date moral values or obsolete structures of common sense that accumulate on the ground-surface we normally exist on. We'd be truly free to develop potentially more fruitful and expansive moral values” (*Reversible Destiny* 32). Values are rooted in social and communal structures that need their own critique, since the linguistic and the cultural cannot be fully reduced to the level of architectural body formation, though they are active on that level. It is not yet clear how the kind of self-criticism they propose relates to other modes of criticism and to the reformation of explicit and implicit beliefs, leading on to the criticism of ideological formations and political-social systems.

in that it is defined and assigned with a high degree of imposed organization. However, there are multiple horizons and ground planes, and multiple and competing, perhaps incommensurable, definitions running at angles to one another. Places are indicated, but you seldom are unambiguously in only one of them. Navigating such spaces would demand the kind of micro-attention to the local environment that Deleuze's nomads need in their smooth spaces. What you might learn from living in such spaces would not be a centrally distributed lesson or role; indeed it would try to uproot you from such roles. An inner nomadism is being created, and an outer as well, if you move from one such learning space to another. In the new spaces there could be new selves.

Arakawa and Gins's exciting discussion of perceptual landing sites provides another way of questioning the dominance of the subject-object relation. They offer an approach to architecture beyond the usual discussions of social meaning and symbolism. Their proposals for procedural architecture seek to reform our bodily space and time. In this they are akin to Deleuze, who urges such reformations and analyzes artistic modes that reflect such changes, for instance in his discussion of space and time in modern cinema (*Cinema I and II*).

As Benjamin said, "the tasks which face the human apparatus of perception at the turning points of history cannot be solved by optical means, that is, by contemplation, alone. They are mastered gradually by habit, under the guidance of tactile appropriation" (section 15). As Arakawa and Gins say, "[t]he tense of architecture should be not that of 'This is this' or 'Here is this' but instead that of 'What's going on?'" (*Architectural Body* 49). We go back to the twisty ball field, we practice and then play.

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BODY EXPERIMENTS

We see architecture not merely as that which stands by and gets linked up with, as structures that life lightly avails itself of in passing; not passive, not passively merely hanging around to provide shelter or monumentality, architecture as we conceive it actively participates in life and death matters.

(Arakawa and Gins, *Architectural Body XI*)

Many sciences, disciplines, and practices perform experiments on the human body. From medical, biological, and pharmacological sciences to sports, space, and somatic sciences, to practices that involve pleasure, pain, and punishment, there is no end to the prodding, poking, and invasive slicing of the body. In all such cases, the body in question is the objective body that scientists, surgeons, and specialists objectify by means of mathematical measurement, technical imaging, and intrusive instrumentation. The body is quantified, mapped, measured, and positioned among the various things of the universe. The same body, however, can be experimented *with*, and in a way that allows the very same body to appear in a very different perspective. The word “experiment” can be exploited to capture this different sense of experimentation. The meaning of “experiment” comes from the same root as the term “experience,” and both terms are related to the English word “peril”—to try, to test, to put at risk. It is something of an experiment and an experience and, specifically, a trial and a challenge to think of the body differently from the way the objective sciences think of the body.

One obvious alternative is to think of the body as art thinks of it. The visual and plastic arts have addressed and undressed the body in attempts to transcend its purely objective representation. Artists have tried to capture the body in ecstasies that are physical or spiritual (if there is such a distinction to be made). And yet, as representation (or even as non-representation) the beautiful body, the pained body, the pleased body, the sensual body, or the sublime body has been presented as and reduced to an image to appear in front of us, an object for our inspection or inspiration.

Philosophers, for the most part, have fared no better. From Plato to Descartes, the body is something that occupies mundane space, or at least Euclidian space, and is hardly essential to the essence and substance of human spirit or subjectivity. A certain minority of philosophers (among them Spinoza and Merleau-Ponty) have suggested something different. In place of the objective body positioned in physical space, they have suggested that we consider the body as it is lived and experienced. If I *am* my body, then my body is not *simply* a thing that appears in the world amongst other things. It is the thing that allows for all other things to appear for examination, for expropriation, and for experiment.

Is it possible to experiment on this experienced, lived (living) personal body that I *am* (and that you *are*)? Is it possible to try, and to test, and to challenge the lived body? And what are the results. Along with science,

and artistic representation, and theory, let's think of movement, and action, and practice. When we do so, we might think about things like athletics and dance. Surely the lived body is challenged in such contexts. What we might not think of is the absolutely normal, everyday experience of movement through the configured spaces of our natural and constructed worlds. In regard to the latter, we simply do not think of architecture as an experimental science or art or practice. Perhaps we are justified in thinking this of the usual buildings and physical developments that surround us. And perhaps we are not. This is a point to which I will return. But architecture in its true sense is an experiment, and for the most part, an experiment on the human body. The *one* body which is both objective and, more primordially, lived. Undoubtedly we could have a behavioral science that studied the effects of design on the human body. Design a broomstick that is too short, and we can measure the effects of its long-term use on the objective body. Ergo, ergonomics. But the body that is treated objectively is also, and primarily, the lived body. What are the effects of a poorly designed (or well-designed) tool, or piece of furniture, or work environment on the way that we experience and move our bodies, where movement is not simply change of position in space, but adopting a posture in lived space—something that involves feeling our way about the world?

Architects design space. But truly, architecture as an artistic practice is not meant to produce just any kind of tectonics. Architecture is meant to produce *arche*-tectonics. It is the productive art that concerns the principled origins (*archai*), and, on one interpretation, the *arche* is the primordial source of individual experience, the body. Let us think of architecture, to the extent that it is interested in knowledge, as, among other things, an experimental science and practice which takes as its experimental object, not the buildings positioned in the spaces of an environment, nor the objective bodies that could be pictured occupying such constructions and spaces, but the lived body as it dwells in such places. An *experimental* science, in as much as it tests and tries and challenges, and perhaps even puts in peril, the experiential body. Not for the sake of athletic achievement, nor for aesthetic performance, but for the sake of understanding, realization, and perhaps enlightenment.

I take this to be one of the aims of Arakawa and Gins. In constructing their architecture they construct both real experiments and thought experiments that are directed at the human lived body as it constructs its surrounding world.

Features of the architectural surround prompt the body to act. Actions and maneuvers secure a general taking shape of the surroundings, determining for the body the structure and characteristic features of an architectural surround. [...] [A] person assembles and takes on an architectural body, half-knowingly piecing it together into a flowing whole. The harkening to any feature or element of the architectural surround, bodily stirrings and promptings included: an articulation of the architectural body. (Architectural Body 64)

To flesh out the vocabulary needed to speak of the lived body, consider the distinction between the *body image* and the *body schema*. Body image can be defined as “a system of perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs pertaining to one's own body” (Gallagher and Cole 371). In contrast, the body schema is “a system of sensory-motor capacities that function without awareness or the necessity of perceptual monitoring” (371). This distinction can be seen in the patient, IW, that Arakawa and Gins discuss in *Reversible Destiny* (163). IW is a middle-aged man who, at the age of 19, lost proprioceptive awareness and touch below his neckline. Proprioception is

the sense of body position. So, if IW cannot see his body, he does not know where his body is. Despite this loss, IW has learned to move around the world in a very efficient way, albeit, different from normal (Cole). An experimenter may ask IW to close his eyes. If the experimenter then moves IW's left arm and asks him to point to where his arm is with his right hand, IW will use his memory of where his right hand is to point to where he remembers his left arm is. Of course, he will be pointing to where his left arm *was*, since without vision he has no way of updating his position, or knowing his current posture. One way to characterize IW's living body is to say that IW depends on an enhanced body image (driven by vision and cognition), and that he lacks a body schema—he lacks those mechanisms that, without thinking of it, most of us use to move around the world (Gallagher and Cole).

Most of us move around the world using body schemas that we take so much for granted that we are more or less unconscious of how our body moves, and how we depend on our body for gearing into our environment and perceptually focusing on precisely those targets on which we want to focus. Arakawa and Gins experiment with the lived body by challenging the body schema, that is, by challenging our habitual and taken-for-granted postures and movements. They design spaces that throw us off balance; they manipulate us by means of architectural surroundings that interfere with the normal workings of our body schemas. In some sense, their aim is to put us into a position similar to IW so that we can come to appreciate our bodies as the living perceiving agents that they are. They force us to confront and question our body images.

When someone enters into a landscape or “landing site” designed by Arakawa and Gins, they are thrown off balance. To the extent that they need to motorically remember how to move normally, they are disabled. They are suddenly confronted by a fact that escaped Descartes and that disrupts the mind-body dualism that often covertly infects even the most contemporary theories of who we are. Descartes thought of his body as a thing located in space. In some objective sense, it is just this. But in a more primordial sense, the perceiver's body is the perceiver (not just a perceived thing); the moving subject's body is the moving subject (not just the thing that happens to be moving). In Arakawian/Ginsian designs, we are forced to confront the moving subjects that we are; we are forced to reflect on our body schematic performance and to take on a new and enhanced body image.

Changing posture changes perception. A painting, on its own, can force slight adjustments of the perceiver's posture. But an Arakawian/Ginsian installation can force more major adjustments of body schematic postures and cause us to see the painting in a different way. At the same time, a painting viewed under the influence of a challenging posture can force us to experience our own bodies in a different way. I take this to be at least part of what is meant to happen in *Paintings for CLosed Eyes* and *Abrupt Resemblances (Reversible Destiny 30-1)*.¹ In the case of an installation surrounding our body, we do not simply perceive the architecture, our bodies become part of it, as in *Bottomless III (Communal Body)* (40).² Such installations reveal that the

¹ See Gallagher, fig. a (feldman_closedeyes.jpg) and fig. b (Abrupt_Resemblances.jpg).

² See Gallagher, fig. c (Bottomless3.jpg)

structure of perceptual awareness is intricately tied to the structure of our bodies and to our body schemas. Thus, in *Landing Site Study*, the architects-experimenters write: “What generates landing sites? The movement and power of the body. Through where does the body fall? Not through spacetime but through landing sites. In what does architecture have its origin? In the movements and exertions of the body” (150).

In this sense, the *Living Body Museum*, to the extent that it tests and experiments with the living body, is not a *museum* of the living body, if we take a museum to be a place where we hang finished art. The idea that the living body is finished would be a category mistake, a genuine contradiction. A finished living body would be a dead body. But the living body is not still-life, not a piece of *nature morte*, and the museum is not a mausoleum. So I suggest that the best translation for the term *Museum* is “experimental laboratory”—a laboratory in which architects perform experiments on living bodies. We know that medical technicians are capable of inserting prosthetic devices into the human body to enhance or assist with movement—a technologically assisted movement—or even to maintain life. Let us think of the *Museum* as one large prosthetic device into which we insert ourselves as living bodies. The experienced movements and rests that come with this insertion will involve transformations and challenges to our body images and body schemas and thus to our very lives.

What we have to learn from this kind of experiment is that even our habitual everyday taken-for-granted postures are not neutral with respect to how we live in the world. That is, gaining a novel posture and perspective in an experiment is not just for the sake of showing that one can gain a novel posture and perspective. Rather, it is for the sake of showing that all postures and perspectives, even those we take for granted, shape our experience, and shape our world. Or to put the point in a different way, it is to show us that all architectures—natural and artificial—common and extraordinary—shape our experience and shape the meaning of our world, “always in conjunction with the body, always formed by the body, always in the service of the body [...]. Human beings are born into architecture and are from then on conditioned by it” (*Reversible Destiny* 169).

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THE MULTIMODAL CONSEQUENCES OF COORDINOLOGY

Arakawa and Gins have worked together for over 35 years. In that time the fluency of their exchange has produced a host of possible positions that they can occupy, from which they may move and to which they return. These include speaking and perceiving positions, positions within and among regimes of thought, building and occupying positions, and a myriad of organizing and coordinating positions. Practicing these positions has evolved from the practice of the individual arts of painting and poetry to the collaborative ventures of writing, installation, built environment, large-scale site works, housing communities and small cities. As artists and architects conducting experimental research, Arakawa and Gins position themselves as test subjects, technicians, theorists, control-group, test pilots, students, human snails, autodidacts, and teachers. Their work highlights the direct connection between forms of research and forms of life. They see the future of art as residing in the coordinological ability of the architectural body and as crucial to the future of the species. The multimodal consequences of experience provide evidence that every action and event specifies selection both in the individual organism and the environment. The multimodal consequences of coordinology act upon that evidence to deliberately select particular experiences.

This essay will make a case for the importance of coordinology, not only as the process by which architectural procedures and the architectural body emerge, but also primarily as the practice of our attention and personal agency. Unlike methodology, in coordinology every attempt is an enactment that involves more than one scale of action and event. Because many of us lack the practice of moving across modes of perception and scales of action, our need to address more than one scale risks causing disorientation where clarity might be gleaned from exclusion. It is important therefore to write as a coordinologist with the aim of achieving precise configurations, rather than isolating knowledge (clarity of objects) from our surroundings.

Coordinology

Coordinology is the term Arakawa and Gins hold in reserve for speaking about the ongoing process of assessment, enacted on all scales of action, which constitutes the daily practice of their procedural architecture. This essay will discuss the expressed purpose of coordinology—how we may invent ourselves further—by exploring the calculus of indications available to us for the realization of living. In any discussion of coordinology we must take into account the following key aspects: tentativeness (quality of interaction), landing sites (the barest noticings of which we are capable), scales of action (complexity over isolation), and current research (approaches and outcomes of deliberate personal, discursive, social, and cultural interaction). “No one should consider herself a finished product or a non-puzzle,” explain Arakawa and Gins in *Architectural Body* (xx). The puzzling out of the body through tentative body-wide questioning is crucial to how coordinology makes it possible for an architectural body to emerge from an “organism that persons:”

“The body can yield answers through that which it subsists as, through the whole of itself, inclusive of its sequences of actions and the surroundings into which, in a variety of ways, it extends itself” (xv).

Coordinology initiates pointing, selecting, and considering, along with many other ways to land as a site. Arakawa and Gins suggest that we come to know ourselves through “sited awareness” consisting of many sites that co-originate all sites (5). From the barest noticings of landing sites we coordinate the quality and structure of relationships into configurations and sets of configurations through two key procedures: a) disperse-to-contrast and b) tentative constructing towards a holding in place. A sited body coordinates these multi-levelled and multi-scaled sets of landing sites into “the mechanism of meaning”—the body itself. A result of the value and consequences of these same acts of coordination, a sited body can only come about if we observe and study the relationships between coordinology and tentativeness. How, as Arakawa and Gins suggest, can tentative landing and coordinating open a neutral zone? It is the heuristic aspect of landing sites—which, for a moment, suspends the habitual reception and categorization of information and puts the making of metaphors on hold—that enables:

[...] the symbolising creature [to become] a landing-site creature. The tense of landing sites holds as that split-second of muting whose instantaneous time span lasts only long enough for basic positionings to be registered. Providing a neutral zone of emphasis, landing sites simply bypass subject-object distinctions. (22)

Of course it is not a simple matter to bypass the symbolic nature we inhabit. A practice, coordinology, is needed. The muting of symbol would help bypass well-worn traditions of becoming by allowing adjustments based on our precise interaction with, and re-configuring of, the forms and formal relationships that are in operation as the world. Coordinology emphasizes an ethical, versus an aesthetic, value for forms themselves. What is important is not what a thing (architecture or any form) looks like, or how it references signifiers within the history of forms, but precisely how it does not resemble inherited habits, habitats and “habitus” (Bourdieu) and instead designates or shows its relationship to otherness. At stake is the direction of co-origination of the organism, forms, and environment. Arakawa and Gins’s entire undertaking focuses on establishing different relationships between agency and activity—“architecting” rather than architecture—pro-finding rather than the pro-(already)-found, coordinology rather than methodology.

The contrast between coordinology and methodology is the difference between the practice of conditioning emergent possibilities and the execution of pre-figured events in pre-configured fields. One of the first tasks of coordinology and architectural procedures lies in asking how language is configured with and into other body-wide systems. The notion of a pre-linguistic state needs to be distinguished from non-linguistic activities in order to address the possibility of coordinating observation and learning toward transformation.

At this point in time, coordinology is to the embodied mind what the Cartesian third house problem was for language and thought in the Enlightenment. Descartes proposes a “provisional morality” that would organize a third interim house, “another house in which to live comfortably while the rebuilding is taking place” in the interval between the old and the new house of knowledge (19). The situation has changed but the interval remains. Arakawa and Gins propose a “crisis ethics” in place of a provisional morality because

there is no comfortable site from which to oversee the building of one's life (xviii). It will take more than linguistic analysis and a new house of language to allow the architectural body to emerge from our modern conceptions of subjectivity. Arakawa and Gins propose that this can happen only through integrated body-wide awareness in an "ever-on-the-move body," as opposed to agency conceived as structure, idea, image, or fixed relation (49).

Our attempts to work on all systems of attention and "affordance"—from the basics of what neurons and interneurons afford us, to the intermediary systems of perception, communication, research, and action, to larger physical and social constructs and grand narratives of Time, History, and Culture—are always susceptible to normalization and habituation. The deficiencies of previous forms of continuity stem from internal systemic conflicts that have required docile bodies. Arakawa and Gins explain that "the species has not yet learned how to have its members pull together to work communally at the same time they continue to form themselves as separate individuals" (xxi). The purpose of coordinology is to address the problem of being simultaneously "one and many" by actively linking the discoveries from all fields of research with the deliberate forms of perception and interaction from first-person research.

The premise of coordinology is to "keep discoveries from all fields of research actively in the arena," neither separating them from other discourses nor isolating them from everyday life: "Research should no longer be done off to one side, in a school, a library or a laboratory. Where one lives needs to become the laboratory for researching, for mapping directly, the living body itself, oneself as world-forming inhabitant" (xxi). There can be, therefore, no example of coordinology or of coordinating a procedure. Every act of coordination re-enters the system and affects/effects the quality and structure of its configurations. No instance can be extracted and isolated for viewing. There are no rehearsals, only a continuous following-through in the midst of things.

Scales of action

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of coordinology, in terms of developing it into a daily practice, is the task of operating on all scales of action. The naming and recognition of scales of action, from the perspective of our limited and figural scale, affects the form and content of our perception and, consequently, our capacity for observation and learning. These in turn determine the extent to which we may reconfigure and potentially transform ourselves. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche notes the "tempo of discourse" which, I suspect, closely follows the tempo of perception (40). The tempo of perception focused by the tempo of discourse accounts for the appearance of various forms of persistence and change. Ecological psychologist James J. Gibson asserts that the scale of perception and action, and hence the appropriate scale of study for humans and animals, ranges from millimeters to kilometers in conditions where humans, animals, and the environment are comparable (20-21). While this is very useful, it does not explain the dominance of this figural scale, or the benefits of realizing that the scale at which an action is initiated is not the scale upon which it remains an event.

Rather, it is our own tempo of perception and discourse that is the mechanism for producing the figural scale of events. If we acknowledge this, then we may also become aware of the necessity to practice coordinology as the refusal to obey the borderlines between the scales of action. Coordinology is not a law-enforcement system. It is an ongoing tentative assessment of landing sites and collective arrangements of knowledge, which occurs within and across all scales of action.

There are at least four scales of action, established from our biased figural perspective, which we should consider. The first scale of action includes events from the atomic, molecular, and cellular levels to the level of organs and integrated systems. At this level selection determines meaningful consequences in terms of how it designates and deals with persistence and change. It determines as well how this is implemented in terms of homeostasis, maintenance and the self-identity of the system. Traditionally this form of selection is thought to remain below the threshold of awareness. However, if landed upon and thereby taken into account, acts of selection would agitate the system enough to affect systems of attention, motivation, and emotion. In *Freedom Evolves*, Daniel Dennett suggests that free will enters the equation at this scale of atomic uncertainty. By inserting free will at this point, Dennett only succeeds in isolating reality, yet again, in hidden places and secret operations, out of sight and inaccessible. Arakawa and Gins propose that through the interconnectedness and implied organization of all scales of action the operation of the world is always in plain sight and can be entered at any level of analysis.

The second scale of action begins at the threshold of awareness on the level of activity that Arakawa and Gins call the “organism that persons.” This scale of events indicates the organizational level at which an organism behaves as a person (1-2). This is where landing sites and landing-site configurations become systems of attention, modes of perception and action. In turn, these modes of operation determine meaningful consequences and puzzle out the criteria of our values. The form that the organism takes on results from the enactment of this constant measuring, which the “organism that persons” then takes on. Arakawa and Gins have called this level of development “the mechanism of meaning” because it is at this point that the act of making a distinction becomes the way humans contribute to the co-production of the world. This is the case whether a person distinguishes a form by molding materials, by perceiving similarity or difference, or by expressing distinction through the act of naming.

The third scale of action grows out of the individual and into the communal structures of belonging. As Probyn finds in *Outside Belongings*, whether the boundaries of belonging are defined traditionally by locale, blood, race, religion, and country, or fluidly connected by affinity, activity, and interest, this scale of events requires a world of objects in relation to an environment. The factors that distinguish events are discursive and socially constructed. Cultures and sub-cultures ritualize and mythologize their own symbolic forms of differentiation by which certain consequences and meanings attain currency. If the first and second scales of action play out the habitual between the organism and the person, this third scale of action plays out the habitual among the individual, the group and the surrounding environment.

The fourth scale would begin at the level of environmental background—the forest and not the trees, as it were—the continent, and geological and evolutionary time. Yet it also includes human constructs of

history and knowledge. This scale is either so physically large that it operates below the threshold of awareness or so conceptually and informationally encompassing as to lie beyond human computation, memory, or direct perception. At this level events are thought to be invariant or contain invariant properties, which we persist in monitoring.

The middle two scales, which comprise the figural scales of apprehension, are where we live and try to obtain a modicum of control mirrored by every object and action. The largest and smallest scales are below our threshold of conscious awareness but not out of our range of detection. The figural is a level of engagement that produces our habitual scale of perception by settling upon a set of invariant features. Rodowick's discussion of *Discours, figure* outlines Lyotard's argument that the figural is behind representation making representation possible, which leads Lyotard to characterize the figural as the "fugitive at the heart of discourse and perception, as that which troubles them" (Lyotard 135, qtd. in Rodowick 8). It is because the effort to reinforce the world at this level, and at this figural scale, is so large that we deny or ignore that the "blinding energy of desire flows" (Rodowick 8-9). This self-enclosed system is the source of figural beauty and lived desperation because it is a false contour, costly in human terms.

Coordinology deliberately attempts to activate awareness and interconnection of the excluded scales and, in doing so, to increase the size and reach of landing-site configurations as well as the range of meaningful consequences that would arise. The aim of Arakawa and Gins's process is to coordinate forms for the actions they invite. The body of this extended set of actions would be the "architectural body," or the organism behaving as organism-person-environment.

Poet and theorist Don Byrd, in his manuscript *Abstraction*, characterizes the process of interacting with various orders of abstraction as the formation of a distinction and re-entering of the space of that distinction with the purpose of increasing the number of possibilities for next time. While abstraction assumes an autonomous agent, coordinology questions the status of autonomy because coordinology requires that the "unit of consideration, that which is to be measured and assessed, should be the body taken together with its surroundings" (*Architectural Body* xx).

The consequence of terms

"Organism-person-environment," "organism that persons," "bioscleaveconfiguration," "proceduralism," and "architecting" are all terms that have preceded coordinology in attempts to carve out the event-site that indicates both inclusion and distinction (a process Arakawa and Gins have called "cleaving" in *To Not To Die*). From the many manuscript drafts of *Architectural Body*, only one and a half of these terms has survived: "the organism that persons" and "bioscleave." A tour of the development of these terms will be useful in our unpacking of coordinology.

Though the term "organism-person-environment" indicates inseparability of the elements, it also implies a static structure. While this triple term delivers a sense of the problematic effects of boundaries and

order, it smacks of order nonetheless. Thus, the term “organism that persons” has taken its place in order to reflect the conditional nature of the relationship and a process-oriented dynamic. “Organism that persons” sets into motion the previously fixed relationships and provides the tentative conditions that Arakawa and Gins deem necessary for optimal observation and learning by portrayal:

[...] “organism that persons” portrays persons as being intermittent and transitory outcomes of coordinated forming rather than as honest-to-goodness entities. [...] When studying what goes on between the body-proper and the surroundings, it will be necessary to consider the extent to which persons are behavioural subsets of the organisms from which they emanate and out of which they compose themselves as agents of action. The organism that persons is the first step on the path to an architectural body. (2)

“Bioscleaveconfiguration” is a term combined from biosphere, cleaving, configuration, and architecture. Biosphere describes a self-sustaining, self-regulating dynamic of world environment. Cleaving is the operation that both divides and brings together, and configuration refers to armature resulting from the complex process of establishing the structural and functional relationships for the elements being divided and merged. The compression of these terms attempts to implement architecture in a more encompassing and symbiotic sense. Only one part of the compound term, “bioscleave,” remains in the chapter “Procedural Architecture” in order to inflect the static container of biosphere by emphasizing “its dynamic nature” (48).

The term “proceduralism” indicates a systematic approach for which the term “proceduralists” indicates those who would enact it. Both descriptions have given way to “procedural knowing,” “a term covering both instinctual sequences and encoded knowing, that is, habitual patterns of activity” (52). A procedure must always be performed and must resist being considered as either an idea or method. Procedural architecture, conceived as a process, breaks with the tradition of form as function. The important shift from function to procedure, from amplification and extension of the body and the senses to the movement “within and between its own sensing,” defuses the tendency to monumentalize in architecture (58). Architecture often “speaks” to history and historically constructed bodies, as if they were always already formed, like mausoleums enshrining the interactions they reinforce. Procedures bring fixed sequences of action into view and, in doing so, allow us to work upon and alter them (56).

“Architecting” is a term that puts the “ing” into stagnant nouns and rigid structures of architecture. Gins and Arakawa’s book was at one point to be called *Architectural Body, Architecting Organism*, making the most of the cross multiplications in a quadratic equation. Architecting is the description of a practice that is initiated from the part of the configuration and dynamic system of feedback located in the environment. Environment could also be described as “world,” or the “background setting or field for all our experience, but one that cannot be found apart from our structure” (Varela, Thompson, and Rosch 142). Arakawa and Gins use the term “surround” instead of environment to neutralize the tendency to categorize events or structures as either nature or culture. Perhaps in the last evaluation the term architecting is too heavily weighted toward the effects of architectural processes, making it seem that action initiated by the “organism that persons” intervenes in the surroundings as if from a source external to the organism.

Even so, the basis of architecting is ecological. If the organism and its surroundings are inseparable, and if one's surroundings trigger changes in the organism, then the organism can deliberately interact with its own process of selection by building environments that trigger "other" selections. The first goal of "procedural architecture" is to dismantle the inherited body we perceive as reinforced by environments constructed in the history of architecture. A "tactically posed surround" works to a great extent on habitual, automatic, or unconscious functions in the organism. The degree to which the "person" becomes aware of the interaction (historical subjectivity) is the point at which new procedures can intervene at any or all points in the configuration—from feedback structures in agency to aspects of objecthood and structures in the surroundings: "Architecture is the greatest tool available to our species, both for figuring itself out and for constructing itself differently" (xx).

Finally, the term "coordinology" indicates a practice that is initiated from that part of the configuration located within the tentatively acquired autonomy of agency. The term coordinology does not appear in the final text of the book *Architectural Body* and was omitted in the last draft, perhaps because the term too readily accommodates our tendency to make grasping at straws into a bona fide system. Or perhaps the suffix "ology" implies too much separation from the everyday, implying that coordinating belongs in the library or laboratory. The importance of coordinating, however, is discussed in the chapter titled "Notes for an Architectural Body." Here Arakawa and Gins state their position clearly: "Not a series of actions taken on this scale of action or that but the coordinating of several scales of action makes a person able to construct a world" (63). Coordinating is the active link in agency between putting procedures into play and allowing behavior learned outside awareness to be fed back through procedurally triggered occurrences. Procedures produce behavior outside awareness, and coordinology must figure out how to bring the indications of selection and change to perceptual and symbolic learning. Behaviors or events outside of awareness can be landed next to or nearby and can be coordinated with other landing sites to make increased awareness possible. Coordinology attempts to ensure that different configurations of learning are distributed throughout the body.

Despite the term's absence in their book (it does appear on the back cover), I have chosen to focus on coordinology because it can be practiced at the level of agency. The suffix, "ology," emphasizes the procedural and heuristic aspect of their architecture which shifts the notion of study back onto personal awareness and the organism's "hunt for clarity" (Gibson 271). Clarity is problematic only when it serves the function of study and not the procedures of the body. Within the heaping pile of names and the onerous task of naming, coordinology characterizes the theory/practice nexus pervasive in Arakawa and Gins's project. Coordinology is the most neutral operative term for the actual process, or mode of forming, because there is no reference made to scale, substance, material, or structure. It implies a purposefulness of interaction without a totalizing image—a symbiotic relationship pinpointing the decisions that produces inclusion and exclusion, distinction and judgment. Coordinating this kind of tentative connectivity is the basis of Arakawa and Gins's key architectural procedures—disperse-to-contrast and tentativeness-cradling—which, as the names indicate, are not steady-states but situated enactments.

Monorails of homeostasis —three “bad” habits

Coordinology works against the socially constructed monorails of person and culture—monorails that arise from the human capacity to produce homeostasis by focusing on one scale of action and one set of structures. The three aspects of agency that have become habitual in the collective imaginary—that is, what we allow ourselves to think, do, and say—are as follows: centralizing the command post of subjectivity, dependence upon symbolic capacity (language), and the need to ground knowledge and being. Both the use of language and the administration of being serve to ground our activities at the figural scale of agency where actions and events are conceived as formal operations, drastically reducing chances for diversification and change. The far-reaching capacity of language to colonize forms of organization subsequently models the relationship of thought to social organization. The repercussions in terms of everyday practice can be seen in academic discipline, the social construction of individual bodies, and the level of analysis that privileges understanding—the preference for linguistic learning over perceptual learning, for example. In order to discuss what coordinology attempts to enact, we must unpack the monorails (of agency, language, and grounding) it attempts to dismantle.

Agency

Agency represents one of the monorails that habituate the relationship between and the movement across different scales. In *Architectural Body*, Arakawa and Gins are suspicious of the notion of agency and this is perhaps the ultimate reason they resist giving the name coordinology to the crucial activity of coordination:

Calculated measures that have distinct and purposeful steps do take shape under the aegis of some agency. But because what (if anything) authorizes agency within bioscleave lies hidden, agency, all agency remains suspect. Defining procedure as a process that is the work of an agent, or that at least implies agency, we attempt to smoke out hidden agents or agency or to grow (the basis for) new ones. (52)

Arakawa and Gins are suspicious of agency but at the same time recognize it as the basis of the activity of coordination and the performative quality of tentativeness. Certainly one problem is what the word perhaps triggers for them—a center of control and will, the secret agency of subjectivity, fallout from the cold war between body and mind, those things which have forced their way into living by making themselves available as a generic administrative form of being.

Arakawa and Gins have mixed feelings about agency. Whereas they recognize an organizing quality not attributable to structures or functional relationships that they take as being undeniably suggestive of (some degree of) agency, they are reluctant to assign agency a role within action. This is where landing sites can reconnect the subtlety of form with the quality of action. Events on the smallest and largest scales can

initiate the domino effect more easily because there is no loyalty to the contours of figural agencies (modeled on body-scaled identity) to impede flow.

In Arakawa and Gins's four-way dialogue inside the *Ubiquitous Site House*, they land upon the notion of agency in trying to tease out how a rapid succession of experienced events overreaches ubiquity:

GINS: The number of purposeful actions required of you has been suddenly greatly reduced. It becomes easier to observe yourself as an agent of action because this closed-in world exacts fewer purposive moves.

ARAKAWA: Even so, there is still a semblance of an agent and there is still a great scattering.

GINS: Yes, it becomes predominantly a world of landing sites. Down to that level of abstraction. (34)

The goal is to describe what is actually going on—the double experience of inclusion that awareness of more than one scale produces. This landing-site configuration is achieved by using what is already in place—the versatility provided by the person interacting with both the organism and its surroundings. That is to say that an “organism that persons” can simultaneously feel and be aware of belonging to all the sites that comprise it, as well as all those that surround it, and those with which it comes into contact. Another configuration arises from the person's ability to connect these two existing configurations, but also the person's ability to bring about changes that would allow unanticipated configurations to emerge. The experience of these shifts of inclusion begins and flows from the moment an “organism that persons” feels the organism-person-environment. In the dialogue cited above, Arakawa goes on to assert the benefits of dropping the centralizing habit: “[A]n everywhere evenly distributed agent—a ubiquitous site or an architectural body—will even be able to re-negotiate gravity” (34). New modes of agency would be the forms of tentative coordination and zones of neutrality established while trying to tear down the old house of agency built on one scale of action and reinforced by all the houses of language.

Whereas there is a tendency to anthropomorphize agency into little homunculi—an eating agency, a sleeping agency, a desiring agency—Arakawa and Gins bring agency back to the point of interaction, to the point where an organism unfolds as a person through landing sites and landing-site configurations. It is through sited awareness that an organism either behaves like a person or as something else, an “architectural body,” for instance, that keeps open the figural scale of forms and events and requires that we do not allow anything to congeal as figure. In this way, landing sites are less impeded by the etiquette of contour, and are therefore more likely to include events from other scales of action.

By working on multiple forms of inclusion, coordinology aspires to link multiple scales into configurations which, in turn, allow actions that attune the “organism that persons” so that “affordances,” compiled from these many scales, may become operative. As a result, the available ecological information would radically increase, and the field of configuration would become the “organism-person-environment” that Arakawa and Gins describe, rather than the binary configuration of subject-object. Arakawa and Gins have concluded that the way to deliberately evoke change in activities under the threshold of awareness is by constructing environments—tactically posed surrounds—that diminish “inattentional” blindness on a small scale and deactivate fixed sets of invariant information on a large scale. The result is the disorientation of our

relationship to the environment because we suddenly become aware of our processes of attention, selection, and decision that had previously gone unnoticed.

Breaking the monopoly that the figural scale has upon perception does not eliminate the scale of objects from millimeters to kilometers, but it does change the context. Everything is context, and Arakawa and Gins suggest that all contexts are architectural contexts. The way a person walks through a desert or forest, or the presence of a single artifact makes an environment into an architectural surrounding: "Repeatedly, incessantly, a person surrounds herself by conforming in a particular set of ways to what surrounds her. Constrained by her environment, she proceeds to piece together an architectural surround that maps onto the one within which she finds herself" (40).

Historically, we have been continually subjected to the numbing constraints of architecture. By coordinating all scales of action in relation to the architectural procedures of Arakawa and Gins these forms of subjectivity and personhood can be reconfigured into different relationships between the organism and its surrounds, bypassing the inflation of the figural scale. However, we cannot do this single-handedly or intermittently. It must instead be conducted as daily research: "[T]here needs to be a communal devising, selecting, and combining of techniques that will strengthen organism-persons and help them regenerate themselves; results need to be pooled and compared" (xxi).

Language

Arakawa and Gins have devoted a decade to working on *The Mechanism of Meaning*, a series of interactive painting-installation-puzzles which systematically dismantle the cerebral isolation of language, leading the participants to demonstrate to themselves the body-wide implications of language. Considered as the backdrop, background, or ground, language is often thought to always already contain everything we might think, say and do. Coordinology presents a problem for the autonomy of the organism protected by the influence of language in that it proposes to coordinate activities of which language is only one. The issue that must be resolved is whether language is representation and corresponds to external occurrences and internal states, or if language directly activates the mechanisms involved in perception and action.

I have chosen to consistently bring in research from ecological psychology because it focuses on studying the relation of the organism to the environment, which is in keeping with Arakawa and Gins's approach and supplies a basis for understanding the practice they propose.

Robert Verbrugge, in his essay on language and event perception, offers an ecological perspective on the biology of language. Suggesting an alternative to the adversarial roles of language and perception, he argues against the tendency to understand the relation of perception to events as parallel to the relation of words to things (162-3). He proposes to reverse this traditional analogy by combining a "redefinition of language with a broadening of the parameters of event perception, making it clear in the process how the two can be viewed as compatible and mutually supportive" (164). Better defining this relationship would help in

accounting for imaginings and experience that seem to “have little or nothing in common with the articulatory events that prompt them” (159).

His approach to language as a constraining and directing event dissolves the divide between comprehension and perception in an effort to treat comprehension as a brand of event perception where language is its specific medium. For Verbrugge, language and perception approach one another in the “quality of knowing they permit” (167). Both types of knowledge reposition the role of metaphoric language from representing correspondences to preparing a person for coordinated action. In other words, language “attunes” a person to the environment through both virtual experience and precise description. From an ecological perspective, “attuning” means directing perception toward a certain level or order of invariant features. For the architectural body, however, attuning through language means providing triggers in order to enable coordinating modes of perception that link the various levels of environmental information.

Verbrugge, more than most neo-Gibsonists, finds it necessary to include (rather than isolate) the perception of thoughts within the perception of the world and to allow them as well an ecological basis. He proposes that events in the environment (information) are pragmatically unique because they are context-dependent. Verbrugge’s notion of information expands the context of language to include its surroundings and the affordances provided by communication, imagination, and perception and considers them as equally a part of the environmental array and interactive situation. In this theory of specific interaction, both language and art act as catalysts which trigger events that “constrain the flow of imaginings,” without containing representations of their own process or results (170). Verbrugge differs from many neo-Gibsonists in his recognition of the “affordances of affordances,” something that requires that we consider the imaginative and communicative processes as part of available environmental information. In other words, Verbrugge raises the stakes by including our thoughts and imaginative perception about environmental information within the pool of available affordances, suggesting that these, too, may be directly perceived.

Expanding upon Pierce’s notion of index, which was limited to deictic expression (words existentially related to the immediate environment), Verbrugge states: “my extension of the term index to cover all language is based on what I see as an existential relation between all words and their natural occasions” (179). He argues that language is an event that is neither representative nor arbitrary, but related to some “natural” constraint as are typical indexes such as a footprint, thunder, bad cough, or pencil line, for example (177). However, Verbrugge recognizes that language seems arbitrary because scholars have understood the relation of words to things to “epitomize nonspecific relation, exhibiting neither uniqueness or physical necessity” (162). Hence, he chooses instead to address the study of language by focusing on the relationship of words to a listener’s experience and actions: “A listener’s experiences include perception for the speaker’s cognitive actions and communicative intention, and they include virtual events and cognitive actions that are regulated in part by what the speaker says” (162). Although the relation of words to things is not unique, the use of generic word tools in a specific situation is indeed. The body-wide dispersal of communication, plus the ongoing interaction of organism and environment, add up to the complex and multifarious levels of invariance in environmental information. Explains Verbrugge: “While language constraints may be abstract,

they can nonetheless be *unique*. For the seasoned listener, the catalytic effect of words can be very precise” (181).

The important point here is that an index needs an agent and not just a signifier and a referent. “[P]eople and their catalysts develop together,” writes Verbrugge, but only “if we view language as an event integral to our environment and not an arbitrary associate of it” (180-1). His argument that language is fundamentally not representational or arbitrary allows for an integration of the theory of language with other activities in the organism and accounts for the persistence of language as a reliable tool for the exploration of adaptation, learning, and coordination. He concludes that language is not a collection of descriptive surrogates estranged from the natural world, but a constituent part of natural events (183). This indexical approach is consistent with one scale of action/event that, as Arakawa and Gins suggest, is involved in coordinology. Verbrugge’s desire for a more comprehensive theory of event perception is precisely the practice that is taken up by Arakawa and Gins and implemented as a deliberate way of participating in a co-construction of the world.

Arakawa and Gins have employed naming throughout their collaborative endeavors as part of their process of critical assessment and coordination of diverse modes of presentation. By dimensionalizing the sign—that is, coordinating it with both direct and indirect perception and action—Arakawa and Gins bring it into close proximity with lived experience and the concerns of the organism. Within a coordinating system, critical naming has the ability to undo, or unmake, and gives life and weight to the tentative richness that names hold in reserve. The human organism, so committed to closure, recognizes that reality is effectuated through oneself as “the mechanism of meaning” because the role of language in coordinology is to afford for “play” in the body-environment interaction and to allow room for directing change. The duplicitous nature of naming as imaginative designation, and as both an unwitting and deliberate trigger, makes it a specialized tool for planting seeds or tearing down walls.

Verbrugge, writing in 1987, stresses the importance of a body-wide consideration of language. Arakawa and Gins had already come to a similar conclusion a decade earlier reflected by a shift in their creative practice. From 1963 to 1973, they worked on “ways in which our cognitive apparatus might be reconfigured—or liberated from the tyranny of “given” modes of thought” in *The Mechanism of Meaning*. They then turned their efforts, from 1973 to 1989, to enlarging the field of engagement by encompassing all the activities going on in the organism-person-environment in *Bridge of Reversible Destiny/The Process in Question*. The Bridge situates the fragmented body-wide understandings gleaned from *The Mechanism of Meaning* within in a large-scale built environment. Where *The Mechanism of Meaning* confronts participants in the highly focused surroundings of the museum, the *Bridge of Reversible Destiny* produces a complete environment that is incessant and unrelenting. *The Mechanism of Meaning* presents a sequence of body-sized puzzles while the Bridge presents a sequence of continuously transforming environments. The layered steel mesh of the Bridge construction allows no respite from the situational, or the possibility of retreating to a safe viewing distance. As one heads to the middle of the Bridge, the *Helen Keller Reading Room*, all efforts to orient oneself through language or perception of invariant features are disrupted.

In both *The Mechanism of Meaning* and *Bridge of Reversible Destiny/The Process in Question*, a reassembly ensues after the mid-way mark. But it is not a programmed reassembly. It is not the substitution of one form of sensibility or subjectivity for another towards establishing a new set of values. Instead, the possibility of reassembly has to do with following through on change to find the point at which identity no longer holds and to determine if that point, too, is moveable. Arakawa and Gins's reassembly is based on the organism and offers procedures to the participants for self-observation and instruction by moving across modes of sensing and rejecting programmatic outcomes which overdetermine form, function, and relationship. The shift that occurs from *The Mechanism of Meaning* to a notion of Reversible Destiny is a shift in scale of action and event. While *The Mechanism of Meaning* invites a bodily response, the *Bridge of Reversible Destiny* invites a person to coordinate the many modes involved in making a body-wide response. Arakawa and Gins, like Verbrugge, are dissatisfied with the segregation of language from the study and practice of bodily engagement of an organism with its environment.

Groundedness

Another "bad" habit that coordinology attempts to address is identified by Varela, Thompson, and Rosch in *Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*. They point out that both nihilism and absolutism are two forms of "grasping" which satisfy the desire for "groundedness." They describe "groundlessness" (*sunyata*) as "knowing how to negotiate our way through the world that is not fixed and pre-given but that is continually shaped by the types of actions in which we engage" (144).

Varela et al. describe the fear of groundlessness as Cartesian anxiety, as being caught between two "as-ifs:" "we seem condemned by our constitution to treat these representations as if they were the world, for our everyday experience feels as if it were a given and immediate world" (142). They point out that this anxiety only blooms if there is a pre-given, independent world and outer ground that we are unable to apprehend and, as a result, we fall back on the search for an inner ground. Scientific method is the grounding of knowledge in verification, cementing the boundaries of each discipline. Similarly, body image is the cultural grounding of subjectivity in decorum, corseting the organism and fixating it on pre-fabricated goals. On any scale, the grounding of world order or personal order is only a fictive certainty.

Varela et al. offer the "middle way" of mindful awareness from the Buddhist tradition as a system that recasts our anxious relationship to groundlessness (or the tendency to grasp) in order to lead us to the "very fabric of dependent co-origination" (144). In contrast, Arakawa and Gins offer an all-inclusive way, a contingency plan—Reversible Destiny—where mediation acts in the place of meditation. Reversible Destiny is not a religious project and thus does not offer any image or pre-stated goal, such as enlightenment, to be enjoyed elsewhere. It is important to note, however, that Arakawa and Gins's project does import ideas from Buddhism. In Zen Buddhism, for example, the ordinary body is the Zen body, and this is where Arakawa and Gins begin their articulation of "the organism that persons." Arakawa and Gins's concept of the "blank,"

moreover, owes much of its complexity to the concept of *sunyata*, translated as “groundlessness” (144), “nothingness” or “emptiness” (Nishitani 33).

There is, however, an important difference between the “middle way” described by Varela et al. and Arakawa and Gins’s “architectural body.” Varela, Thompson, and Rosch replace a failing Western ground with an Eastern tradition of groundlessness. To Western readers, it may seem as though the rug has been pulled out from under us and the ground along with it, to arrive at a groundless state. However, by virtue of a sleight of hand, instead of falling into the abyss we land on an entirely different concept of ground—the middle way—which has been inserted under our feet. What is accomplished in one fell swoop is not the erasure of “grounding” but the substitution of one rug for another, one tradition of foundation for another. Groundlessness is a concept of ground that is tied to another scale and dimension, even if it is to be found in the negative “state” of elsewhere. In establishing invariant features that govern life adjustments in that “elsewhere,” Varela et al. must still rely on an idea of the body as an instrumental means to an end.

In contrast, Arakawa and Gins ask us to remain in this world, a world which each of us co-originate and maintain. Arakawa and Gins do not provide a binding tradition or encompassing belief to aid in the task of practicing sustainability. Because “tentative constructing” neither instills an ultimate purpose nor determines the form of interaction, it greatly distances itself from the more totalized approaches of grasping for ground or embracing groundlessness. Coordinology does not prescribe what will happen next or how an architectural body must emerge. It values instead the pragmatic effect of increasing the possibility for action with each act of landing, configuring, or coordinating.

Thompson sees alternative ways of practicing mindful awareness in the artistic cultivation of Eastern poetry, calligraphy, painting, and martial arts: “The initial step in all of these disciplines is that the mind deliberately places the body in a special form or posture” (140). Whereas this might easily be confused with the architectural body, each of these forms of artistic cultivation prescribes a particular pre-established body through a given set of behaviors. Arakawa and Gins point out that, as a concept, “body” has traditionally been aligned with one scale or another, but has rarely been adequately addressed for its uniquely pragmatic character of organization. The “bad” habits of Western culture—central agency, language dependency and groundedness—are difficult to break. They continue to guide and reinforce our historical, cultural, collective and muscular memory. Conservation and prediction have brought us to the present by safeguarding the operations (homeostasis) that ensure temporal continuity. Dynamic equilibrium, however, can manage, or even gamble, under non-homeostatic conditions for periods of time. This unstable state is ecologically driven by exploration and affordance, and we should now turn our attention to how these ecological opportunities are affected by contingency.

Contingency

How, then, can we get around the figural scales of perception and action that claim information and organize understanding? As Thelen and Smith suggest, we are able to substitute one mode of perception for

another: “What turning up the microscope reveals is that individual activity—real time perceiving, moving, remembering—constitutes the driving force of change” (311). The consequences of singular events impact how we designate and interact with persistence and change. The properties of an organism emerge through interactions not scripted in genetic codes, but through interactions which can be observed in the development of embryos, such as: “[h]ow the basic processes of neuroembryology were themselves dynamic and contingent, and how these epigenetic processes built a brain wired to benefit from the time-locked properties of the input—the multimodal consequences of experience” (311).

The implication of Thelen and Smith’s study for coordinology is that selection replaces instinct as the primary developmental agency. We find additional support for this kind of replacement on the larger scale of evolutionary development in the work of Stephen Jay Gould, who argues that contingency ties unique and singular events to the evolution of biological systems. In *Eight Little Piggies*, Gould discusses the accepted notion that the development of five fingers provides evidence of an evolutionary progression towards humanity, and challenges this viewpoint of human privilege with findings that suggest our ancestors had *more*, not fewer, fingers. Gould comments that the naive “ladder of life” view depicts an ascendancy model, but notes that “ladders are culturally comfortable fictions, and copious branching is the true stuff of evolution” (67). After a thorough examination of the evidence, he states that “five was not meant to be, but just happens to be,” and that “alternative possibilities are legion, and an eventual five may be a happenstance, not a necessity” (76). In his conclusion, he notes that contingency is the key, which “embodies an exquisite tension between the power of individuals to modify history and the intelligible limits set by the laws of nature. The details of individual and species’ lives are not mere frills [...] but particulars that can alter entire futures, profoundly and forever” (77).

Arakawa and Gins’s project, and coordinology in particular, focus on the cultivation of the organism—that is, a practical education of the senses. There is not a world to which we are denied access. Co-origination of the world is available to us through the mechanisms already in place and currently in use in the organism. Leaving behind the artist, poet, or the “overman” as models, Arakawa and Gins instead use marmots and snails as the models of interaction for the architectural body. Their rule of engagement is that we become self-marmots, self-guinea pigs, and human snails to facilitate two important aims: a) to coordinate forms for the actions they invite and b) to prime, or prepare, the organism-person-environment for transformative possibilities.

Designating Triggers

A notion that continually rings out from the background research for this inquiry comes from the cognitive theories of Maturana and Varela. They conclude that “the environment can be said to trigger or select a change of state, but that it is *the structure itself that determines what can and cannot be a trigger*” (Mingers 320; emphasis added). On this point, autopoieticians who adhere to indirect perception (structural coupling) and ecological psychologists who adhere to direct perception (radical empiricists) are in agreement. The

question is how does the structure itself determine the trigger? For Maturana and Varela's "structure" is constituted by material elements that define a space "whose dimensions are the relations of production of the components that realize it" and does not imply agency or affect (88). The gap between an "environment selecting a change" and a "structure *itself* determining the trigger," however, does supply a self-reflexive moment and level of analysis requiring a process of selection (of components and scale of environmental information). In turn, this may prove useful in identifying opportunities for coordinating many different types of structure, including organizational configurations that are pragmatically attuned to the surround.

Verbrugge has suggested that our current purposeful action and our prior attunements produce the "pragmatically unique" information that ultimately becomes the structure of our relationship with the surround (161). If we consider all our capacities as part of the events of our unique surround, then the physiological basis for modes of attention, and for engagement with information, becomes the pressing issue. For an "organism that persons" and a practitioner of the architectural body, the primary concern of practice is opportunity, or how the body *might* work, as opposed to research imperatives that are concerned with how the body *is* working. The inconsistencies, paradoxes, and gaps that overlap within existing bodily activities provide the avenues which coordinology uses to inflect the criteria of selection in the organism. As Ralph Ellis points out in his introduction to the *Cauldron of Consciousness*, the relationship of the phenomenological experience of affect to its correlating biological processes is enactive. Understanding this correlation requires bringing together strands of thought that include self-organization and biochemistry (S. Kauffman and P. Monod), philosophy and psychology (M. Merleau-Ponty), and neuroscience (W. Freeman and A. Damasio) (Ellis 3).

Ellis observes that the entire organism mobilizes itself around a chosen plan of action: "Living means to organise and maintain. The study of living is no longer connected to elements or substances, oxygen, nitrogen, silicon, steel" (3). A self-organizing system can actively appropriate, replace, and reproduce the physical substratum elements needed to maintain its multiply realizable patterns of activity. Emotion, one aspect of affect, becomes part of this loop after perception takes place, which in turn takes place after the stimulus has already been categorized and evaluated. This process to a great extent determines the appearance of the object by attending to aspects of the object (affordances) that are emotionally important to the organism. As seen in Gibson, Varela et al, and Ellis, these qualities thus permeate the experience of the object and its surroundings. Emotion helps distinguish between conscious and unconscious processes, and can therefore account for the role of agency as active rather than reactive.

We must avoid an "appendage theory" of consciousness where it is just another layer of processes or processing. The neurophysiology of becoming conscious of something means that the physiological structure of the emotion would change. In this way the "moveable feast" of triggers is an opportunity for coordinology to practice its ability, through adjustment to necessity and meaningful consequences alike, to vary how the triggers for change are designated.

Coordinating modes of perception.

Arakawa and Gins bring together a range of convergent concerns across the arts and sciences, and through coordinology they aim to engage all scales of action. It will be useful at this point to identify and coordinate some of these convergent concerns at the scale of disciplinary research for which Arakawa and Gins have developed the practice of coordinology. For the purposes of this project, I have decided to focus on biologist Stuart Kauffman in relation to his inquiry into self-organization and emergence, along with experimental psychologist James J. Gibson for his work on the uses of perception and perceptual systems. These research projects in the life sciences provide environmental information as sites to be landed upon and coordinated by the multimodal practices of Arakawa and Gins.

A question posed by Martin Jay in the conclusion of *Downcast Eyes* will crystallize the importance of Arakawa and Gins's work. He asks: "How open is our sensual interaction with the world to radical change?" (590). Here our first task is understanding the word "radical" in Jay's question. Jay is employing a general notion of radical, one that points to sweeping or extreme change carried to the farthest limit. But the term also connotes meanings of "fundamental" or "basic," which align more closely with the kind of thorough rigor that William James tried to evoke in his notion of radical empiricism. Arakawa and Gins's approach combines both senses of "radical" by engaging with the extreme limits of change through an incremental and pragmatic process of interaction.

When Jay suggests that "the complex mix of natural and cultural phenomena called visuality defies reduction to any narrative mould based on scientific data alone," Arakawa and Gins agree with one major qualification (591). They concur that scientific data alone is insufficient for understanding vision. Their insufficiently procedural "bioscleave" hypothesis states that the human species has not the "wherewithal to figure out the nature of their agency nor the requisite skill to engineer for themselves what would amount to a reversible destiny" (54). More importantly, Arakawa and Gins's work indicates that the problem is not the reduction of visuality to narrative moulds or disciplinary data, but the reduction of body-wide perceptual coordination to the notion of complex visuality or single scales of action. Though visuality may defy narrative or discursive reduction, it cannot resist self-exploration through landing sites, which opens any site of interaction—before it can be categorically or habitually processed—to further attention. In other words the question, "What is visuality?" may be answered by researching discursive practices, while the question, "What is body-wide perception before it is vision?" may best be answered by exploring landing sites and landing-site configurations.

The same problems that apply to explaining vision as the dominant source of sense information carry over into the notion of "visuality," despite all efforts to open vision to the "complex mix" of nature and culture. Jay's notion of "visuality" still offers a single-sense, single-direction focus on perception and continues to ignore the degree of reciprocal interaction between an organism and its surround, a relationship that Arakawa and Gins pinpoint as the source of perceptual activity and fundamental change. It seems almost too obvious to say that paintings were made for the eyes, but this is precisely the assumption that an investiga-

tion of perception, rather than visuality, seeks to challenge: we do not see only with our eyes. Arakawa and Gins's daily research is radical because they find that the fundamental source of "the complex mix of natural and cultural phenomenon" must be enacted through the coordination of perceptual systems via interaction with the surround. Perhaps one way to understand Jay's use of the word "radical" would be to measure the degree to which he considers narration to be an autonomous faculty or a body-wide enactment. At the heart of Arakawa and Gins's endeavour, however, is the ongoing assessment and accessing of the connective operations and distinctions generated by our own patterns of organization. Their approach to the "complex mix" foregrounds the flexibility of human development in the processes of self-organization.

Patterns that advance the overall goal: Stuart Kauffman

Stuart Kauffman describes self-organization as an enactive model of co-evolution and interaction "that organises component elements of conscious organisation into patterns that advance the overall goals of the organism" (Newton 92). Kauffman admits, to his own astonishment, to a "puzzled realisation that the way Newton, Einstein, and Bohr taught us to do science may be incomplete" (Kauffman ix). In following the example of physics "we are taught to pre-state the particles, forces, laws, and initial and boundary conditions, then compute the consequences" (Kauffman ix). Kauffman's work on processes of self-organization calls for "the need to rebuild evolutionary theory as a marriage of two sources of order in biology—self-organisation and selection" (xi).

One way to approach this involves looking into Darwin's pre-adaptive problem, which asks how an organism can move toward or select a direction of change, or adaptation, by selecting components it does not possess at the time. For example, how does the organism select for the component of an eye without having an eye? How indeed does an organism position itself to make those selections? Kauffman agrees with Gould and doubts that we can pre-state what he calls the "configuration space of a biosphere" (x). He goes on to say that preadaptations are "causal consequences of parts of organisms that were not of adaptive significance in the normal environment of the organism, but might come to be of adaptive significance in some new environment and end up being selected by natural selection" (x).

Those whose thought is structured by the formal habits of the figural scale rather than by dynamic interactions may find it mysterious that an eye might emerge (appear) in an organism that has not needed one. Here, however, the relation of the organism to its environment reveals itself as crucial. An organism positions itself within the evolutionary flow of selection by changing its relationship to its environment and by perceiving new opportunities. These include observations of the most basic workings of the organism's own perceptual systems—the sum of all our bodily activities—which we may now understand as "the mechanism of meaning:" "One and the same, say, brain state is a simultaneous realisation of any number of unconscious mental states. Given that brain state, various conscious states may be subsequently realised; which depends on how the agent is prompted" (Georgalis 181). Prompting and priming are two important effects of coordination.

Lawful specificity works on all scales of interaction and requires us to consider the output of affective states on equal footing with input from the environment as feedback for our dynamic systems. Kauffman argues that the interaction at the root of emergent life processes and self-organization is catalysis. Philosopher Natika Newton summarizes Kauffman's position:

He argues that the sort of interaction at the root of emergent life processes is catalysis: a molecule acts as a catalyst if it speeds up or makes more probable a reaction among other molecules that would otherwise occur more slowly. A self-organizing system that can catalyze the reactions that maintain its own existence, or reproduce its own states, Kauffman calls a "collectively autocatalytic system." A living organism is such a system. (93)

While Kauffman observes and charts the emergent possibilities of self-organization, Arakawa and Gins suggest we use this information as the basis for the practice of coordinology in an effort to more accurately observe and assess possibilities of self-intervention. These concerns and approaches to research are invitations to new forms of action and configurations of agency in an architectural body. By understanding Kauffman and Gibson in tandem, we may establish a context for the emergence of Arakawa and Gins's practices and their insistence on attending to the organism through diverse sites of investigation.

Units of anatomy are not units of function: James J. Gibson

James J. Gibson's idea of "affordances" suggests that perception is not detection of information but the awareness of meaningful consequences. Gibson's ecology of perception places the evolutionary within the contingent and pragmatic context of what the environment affords in terms of specific information, and how "individual activity is the driving force of change," as well as the extreme importance of considering the organism and environment together (Thelen and Smith 311). There is a huge amount of information that our surroundings afford us, and this should be our first consideration.

The way in which we organize and process (coordinate) information leads Gibson to discuss our misguided tendency to associate a given sense organ with a given perception, instead of considering the organs as components of a perceptual system. He summarizes the clinical data that is the basis of his ecology of perception and observes the following:

There is no correspondence between nerves thought to be specified and the senses, e.g.: the optic, auditory and olfactory nerve. And there is no distinct nerve for touch or taste. The 12 bilateral pairs of cranial nerves have mixed functions. There are not 12 corresponding senses. Incoming (afferent) and outgoing (efferent) fibers are found in each bundle. [...] The units of anatomy are not the units of function. (42)

But there is many a slip between the cup and the lip, as it were, since a simple action may involve both enabling and inhibiting processes. There is more than one meaningful consequence that determines the goals and tasks being carried out by way of more than one physiological system. Contradictory and paradoxical processes counteract each other to achieve global results. Perceptions are not traceable to specific anatomical

units because the units themselves do not configure the various anatomical functions. It is instead the “organism that persons” who inhibits, enhances, and coordinates bodily states. Such paradoxical loops can be seen at work when a person is sleeping:

In REM sleep one biochemical (the afferent acetylcholine) projection causes the motor cortex to be very active sending commands to motor neurons to act out the dream while another biochemical projection (the efferent acetylcholine areas) drastically lowers muscle tone so that the muscles do not make meaningful movements. (Faw 65)

During sleep, the priority of an organism’s safety prompts the need for measures designed to protect it. However, because the anatomy is multimodal, other situations give rise to contradictory processes, making it necessary for the organism to distinguish between different modes of activity performed by the same functional units. For example, the reason that the movement of an image on the retina does not cause sensation of motion is because the brain causes the movement differentiating this cause from intruding stimuli (Gibson 39). Gibson favors the theory suggesting that neural input, caused by self-produced action, is different from neural input caused by an intruding stimulus. In this scenario, the brain does not interpret neural input, but recognizes neural patterns.

The paradoxical interaction of internal systems and the differentiation of input to ensure continuity of perception both imply that an organizational purpose—external to the perceiving system but integral to body-wide perceptions—is being coordinated. The criteria that produce safety and the singular experience of an organism’s perception require a purposeful selection and the coordination of detection, perception, and deduction of meaningful consequence. It is clear why an organism would come to recognize these differences (eliminating constant vertigo, motion sickness, confusion of environmental events, or an inability to initiate action). It is also clear that these inconsistencies in the parallel processing allow a precise moment for coordinology to put its foot in the door and enter the site where information and material structure are inseparable. Landing sites and landing-site configurations are, however, able to re-enter sites which appear solid or atomic and can open them to further distinctions, mining these events for still more landings sites. Coordinology is room-for-play in the organization of the organism.

The important point here is that each of these inconsistencies demonstrates different forms of action and requires different cognitive configurations. Assessing the qualitative difference between self-affecting actions and intruding actions, or between initiating action and suppressing movement, provides more landing sites on more scales of action, and thereby extends a person’s coordinological practice. By proposing that different sorts of stimulus information exist within affordances, Gibson makes it possible to consider several acts of coordination. First, although information is deemed a property of the environment, affordances arise from specificity of configurations and not from properties of the environment thought to be innate. Second, attention and decision are factors that would deflect the complexity of feedback loops. Third, because in the ecology of perception we may directly interact with the environment, we are therefore not coordinating mental representations but meaningful actions. What this means for the architectural body is that there are many concurrent loops available for proprioception and control of action, some which focus upon assessing single scales of action while others specifically aim to participate in configurations involving several scales of ac-

tion. “Tentative constructing towards a holding in place” is the tactic used to notice landings sites, mark their relation to each other and ask, “What is going on here?” rather than insisting that “this is this” (Arakawa and Gins 49).

Although he is interested in the connection of all the senses, Gibson spends a lot of time debunking the relationship of vision to visual perception. His distinction between “visual field” and “visual world” describes configurations of the perceptual system similar to those that Arakawa and Gins develop into coordinology. Visual field is detached and fixated to the eyes while the visual world is ecologically intertwined with the other senses. Jay has suggested that cultures may be differentiated according to how radically they distinguish between visual field and visual world (4). It is important that we might now use this differentiation not only to describe cultural orientations but also subjective orientation to modes of perception and coordination.

Arakawa and Gins: perceptual learning and procedural architecture

If we combine information from Verbrugge, Kauffman, and Gibson, we find that language, molecular catalysis, and perceptual systems all contribute to an organism’s motivation and successful interaction with itself and its environment. Not only are these already in place, they may be observed and reintegrated into body-wide activity through perceptual learning. At this point, the link to the work of Arakawa and Gins is easily made via their efforts to emphasize the importance of coordinating modes of activity and sources of information. The value of perceptual learning becomes apparent when we acknowledge that all of our knowledge is gleaned through perception and action, both of which are activated and made operable by landing sites in an attempt to hold open the configurative links between organisms and the surround. The co-evolution of the body-environment becomes the focus of perceptual learning and the foundation of procedural architecture, supplying the impetus to use the activities that flow in both directions through body and environment as its key resource. By examining the relationship of vision to the other senses in Gibson’s research, we get a glimpse into the tasks of integration which coordinology addresses. Gibson observes that by looking at a limb a person can voluntarily control the movements of that limb. The movement sensitivity of a visual system can be substituted for the movement sensitivity of the muscular system for manipulation and locomotion.

We control the use of tools because we connect vision to our proprioception. Tightening a bolt with a wrench requires the sensitivity of our touch be controlled by the visual input. Visual input can also be used to stimulate physiological response as a conscious and deliberate self-affecting system. Self-affecting, in this instance, refers to an activity that monitors and measures bodily systems which have been opened by landing sites and which become the focus of a deliberate action as opposed to remaining an automatic function. Visualization practices have been widely used to increase accuracy, quality of movement, interconnection, rehabilitation, and motivation. Visualization works on the premise that vision is connected to the other senses, as in Gibson’s “visual world,” and also activates or primes the neural pathways involved in that activity.

Visualizing throwing a ball, imagining throwing a ball, reading about throwing, and throwing are all separate cognitive activities that, when coordinated, allow for the integration of knowledge—a kind of know-how that is activated differently in each configuration. Perhaps there is no stronger instance of the ability to visually control motor skill through vision than the “daily marathon” of Ian Waterman as described by Dr Jonathan Cole in *Pride and a Daily Marathon*. Waterman, due to a rare neurological condition, lost his sense of touch, skeletal-motor and proprioceptive sensation. Through long and arduous practice, he “taught,” or reconfigured, his modes of sensing, feedback, and action so that he literally controls his ability to walk, or reach for a spoon, through his vision. This state of affairs—ongoing and multimodal—are diagrammed by Arakawa and Gins in their chart of visual, tactile, and kinaesthetic landing sites for the body of a “deafferent” and are precisely what is recognized, assessed and practiced in the architectural body (Govan 163).

Ultimately, it comes down to landing sites and landing-site configurations. Every instance of the world involves all three ways of landing as a site (Arakawa and Gins, *Architectural Body* 7): perceptual landing sites, imaging landing sites, and dimensionalizing landing sites. Together these form heuristic devices for literally sorting out the world and determine how a person apportions it (9). Landing sites are purposefully not aligned with vision alone: “most studies of vision fail to recognize the tactile and kinaesthetic components of the “view” or take into consideration the degree to which vision is not purely visual” (Govan 153). Perceptual learning is not confined to the visual and requires the kind of innovation of observation and assessment that Helen Keller and Karl Dahlke demonstrated. In Arakawa and Gins’s discussion of what imaging landing sites entail, they recount the process of blind mathematician Karl Dahlke in solving the polyomino puzzle, a previously unsolved mapping puzzle about border territories. The point of the story is his model for visualization, which had dimension, tactility, density, thickness, and a spatiality that would enable Dahlke to work hour upon hour on the puzzle. In working through Dahlke’s landing-site innovations, Arakawa and Gins conclude:

[T]here can be no doubt that Dahlke’s picturing of the polyomino puzzle involves no visual perceptual landing sites. He is certainly not issuing direct responses to probable existents. Even so, the puzzle pieces need to be given definite shapes and precisely positioned and both of these tasks are, by definition, specific to perceptual landing sites. This leads us to conclude that imaging landing sites act, for Dahlke, as stand-ins for visual perceptual ones. (16)

Dahlke’s enactive perceptual systems are reconfigured to his purposes and practiced to yield practical results. Although Arakawa and Gins do not mention cognitive psychology or neurology biomechanics here, this passage takes up the issues worked on by Kauffman and Gibson and brings them into the cognitive configurations of our everyday engagements. Arakawa and Gins write: “Landing sites merely make explicit or highlight that which all knowing acknowledges implicitly: specific positionings or locatings prevail in all circumstances for all things and events” (22). It is from this aspect of agency—where tactics of interaction with the world are also constitutive of the world—that strategies of coordinology emerge. Coordinology is the practice of actively making, dispersing, and tentatively trying out configurations. Organism-persons “field their surroundings kinaesthetically, tactilely, visually, aurally, olfactorily, and gustatorily all at once, with each modality having a direct perceptual component and an indirect imaging one” (13).

It is within the architectural procedures, or the houses built to enact these procedures, that the coordinology of landing sites, landing-site configurations, and tentativeness come together. The houses are the result of coordinating research and experience, and they are tactically posed to open additional avenues for practice and study. The plans for proposed houses, called *Reversible Destiny Houses*, bring together the multimodal practices of constructing and assessing landing-site configurations using the “Sited Awareness Hypothesis”: “What stems from the body, by way of awareness, should be held to be part of it. Any site at which a person finds an X to exist should be considered a contributing segment of her awareness” (50). Procedural architecture puts sited awareness into evidence by drawing our attention to “the disparity that exists between the world as it happens—awareness as indeed sited—and the world reduced and distorted, made to appear as other than what it happens as—awareness abstracted out of any surroundings” (51).

The more procedural houses one sees, the easier it is to understand the way a procedure might pinpoint a particular issue of orientation or habit of disposition which needs to be dismantled. At the same time, these houses also open up the site of the body by designing alternative affordances, that is, by literally making more landing sites available than there are in the prefabricated organism-object-environment relationships we develop in most of the architecture we encounter. Arakawa and Gins work on such a large number of scales so that they may address the situations and events that cannot be translated or transposed. Each procedure must occur for the lived body: “Think of the procedural as having been enlarged to life-size and as now taking place throughout the sited awareness bounded by an architectural surround; the procedural having thus been brought into palpable view, its fixed sequence of action can be altered” (56).

The implication is that interaction with tactically posed surrounds through specific procedures can “construct awareness on a new basis” (56). These houses consist of carefully built sequences that enact procedures such as “disperse-to-contrast” and “tentative constructing.” Each house tentatively works toward constructing a holding place on many scales of action at once and requires skilful coordination and emphasis on the importance of puzzling-out. Procedural architecture allows us to become aware of our sets of measure, particularly old habits of selecting particular modes of sensing, such as vision, to dominate when establishing measure. Procedural architecture requires a measuring of measures, a sorting and sifting done in place while we continue tentatively constructing.

There are seventeen *Critical Resemblance Houses* detailed in the Guggenheim catalogue (Govan 257-301). Each surround enacts a different set of tactics, primarily to enable perceptual body-wide learning and secondarily to supply a situation for bodily de-habitation, disorientation or unlearning. The names of the houses alone indicate the scope and complexity of the tasks Arakawa and Gins have identified: *Infancy House*, *Twin House*, *Cleaving Wave House*, *Iteration House*, *Modular Labyrinth House*, *Gravitational Ethics House*, and so on. Here I will only discuss the *Ubiquitous Site House* since it is one of the initial houses conceived by Arakawa and Gins and because it provides the site of the walk-through dialogue in their recent book. The *Ubiquitous Site House* deals directly with the complexity of landing sites when determining how to realize “Architecture as Hypothesis” (23). By introducing all the sites of the house through which landing sites make available all scales of action, a person becomes able to enact different procedures by exploring reciprocal interactions that are literally giving and taking place.

The shape of the *Ubiquitous Site House* seems to prohibit entry such that one must insert oneself into a pliant structure. Room size is proportional to the energy expended. The room moves to meet the organism's movement, and every feature of the house is within touching distance. Although observing and learning are the first and primary concerns, the *Ubiquitous Site House* immediately presents the visitors with the possibility of reconfiguration and with some sensation of what that process (transformative possibility) might feel like. In *Architectural Body*, Arakawa and Gins talk with two guests as they all describe the house while walking through it (23-38). The dialogue makes the tempo of perceptual learning audible. In the same breath the visitors give voice to their disorientation while the perceptions they narrate become the dispersal of their own "landing." This is, however, an imaging landing-site exercise because the *Ubiquitous Site House* has not yet been built. It indicates how we can already start learning about our own tactics of learning by landing on/within the perceptions to which the interlocutors give voice, dimensionalizing them, and trying them out in body-wide configurations. The important moment for observation and learning comes when the body is fully engaged in all landings. The fact that all landing sites become the sites of the house makes the house a "pretext for action," and recognizing it as such speeds the process. As poet Charles Stein says, "the thing that excites the narrative hasn't happened yet" (6). The same applies to architectural surrounds which "stand as shaping molds for the *What happens next?* of life" (43). Stuart Kauffman refers to this as the "adjacent possible," suggesting that we "gate our rate of discovery" in the same manner as the biosphere: "There are many molecular species that are one reaction away from the current actual in the chemically possible adjacent to our biosphere" (22). Ubiquity is the power to compose the world and be in contact with it. The *Ubiquitous Site House* allows a person to become aware of him/herself as an architectural body in contact with all that can take shape and happen next.

A ubiquitous site, a site that is everywhere, is a concept developed by Arakawa and Gins in order to emphasize investigations within a world that is not given, nor infinite or private, but one that is contingent and constantly within reach. There are not two worlds—the world that is already formed and the world we privately perceive—nor do we simply create the world through our perception. The "ubiquity" to which Arakawa and Gins refer is not a given universal "everywhereness;" it is comprised of the literal and contiguous landing sites of our immediate vicinity. In this case ubiquity is not an abstract principle for which a person supplies examples. Instead, it emerges through a "tentative constructing toward a holding in place" (23-38). Our experience of events is often rushed or is decided upon too quickly by using a template which does not allow the tentative aspect of landing sites to hold open the "adjacent possible." Ubiquity for Arakawa and Gins is "an evenly distributed agent, dropping the centralising habit that members of our species have had for such a terribly long time" (34). This ubiquitous distribution sets up conditions of emergence, which become the focus of deliberate bodily and architectural practices—the architectural body. The world that emerges is co-evolving as a result of selective interactions, which now include the deliberate actions of "organisms-that-person."

The evolution of evolution

In the middle of her argument against Descartes' "thinking substance," Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, in an effort to reassert the Darwinian body, cannot help but parenthetically insert a historical commentary:

To start with the Darwinian body also follows the hypothesised path of the evolution of evolution. Where the latter is itself understood as a process that evolves, the present-day world is conceived as being at a particular stage [metacultural] in the biohistorical process. Within this perspective the Darwinian body, originally a product at the stage of natural selection, is viewed not as displaced in subsequent evolutionary stages, but as having undergone transformation at the hands of further selective mechanisms, namely cultural and metacultural selection. (15)

Thus, in her essay "Darwinian Bodies," she argues that Darwin was not just interested in the formal traits of animals but in the whole living creature, because it is the life of the animal that contributes to evolution where cognition, action, and environment are inseparable. Darwin believed that the division of living creatures into "mental" and "physical" generates the "partial beings" from which we have suffered the fallout (12-13).

Arakawa and Gins have understood the shift in evolutionary process and see the opportunity to advance this fact of life into a way of living. The architectural body would be an expression of the metacultural shift to which Sheets-Johnstone refers. Arakawa and Gins have conceived of a practice (procedural architecture), an operation or mode of engagement (coordinology), and a state of configuration (the architectural body)—each of which addresses the problem of how persons connect to their community and species. The implication of their project is that the organism represents the species only way through (not out and away, but in and through) the world. This moment in time coincides with punctuated development in the evolution of evolution and is the human species' opportunity to make the most of being left to its own devices. Our ability to interact with the organization of our own organism is not an anomaly but reflects the direction of development for human capacity. The interaction and production of feedback loops occurs on every scale. If we accept that manipulations of background invariants through art and architecture change the structure of the environment, then we must also consider that our agency, through perception and action, can reconfigure the structure of even the largest scales of human construction—time and history.

The human organism has an uncanny ability too circumvent, ignore, inflect, and reconfigure the rules of its own structure, systems, commitments, and projected purpose. As organisms, we are able to participate in the selection of rate and type of change. The transformation of evolution means that there is no more secret agency, no need for the mind to break into the body, no need for the organism to make the person stand in line, answer questions and declare the contents of all its baggage. Coordinology brings everything out in the open and notes how it all lands. No more mythologizing, no more poetic description, or mysterious processes. There is only attention to landing sites and learning from every act of coordinology.

The work of Arakawa and Gins represents a way to deliberately interact with perception and action by coordinating observation, analysis, critique, and the production of experience. In other words, coordinology

supports the organism's ongoing "hunt for clarity" by choosing the stimuli in the physical world to which it will be most sensitive (Gibson 271). Arakawa and Gins insist that "rearrangements of the world should be able to cause the value of the world to become apparent right here in the midst of things" (xiv). Arakawa and Gins's coordinology is what philosopher and innovative therapist Eugene Gendlin calls first-person science: "a new science of subjective experiences interconnected to third-person science by virtue of investigative approaches akin to ecology and the study of complex processes" (ix). The convergence of cognitive science and arts research (often called creative research to characterize the trans-disciplinary nature) provides one approach to the interaction of the imagined and the actual.

The challenge of coordinology is many-fold. The organism-person-surround is the complex system which is comprised of the events and things *plus* the measure continuously performed upon them. Together, events + things + measure = landing sites which form the minutiae, figures, and environments of the various scales of action. Coordinology is the conscious and deliberate interaction with the landing sites of our ongoing human development, although Arakawa and Gins suggest that we are not even close to the architectural body because we do not seriously consider our current "crisis ethics" and the severe impediments that our historically constructed surrounds have placed upon us. Eventually, those in the early development of the practice of coordinology toward an architectural body will encounter a range of immediate questions: How can we optimize the benefits and multimodal consequences that landing sites and landing-site configurations provide? When we re-enter the continuous feedback loops of the organism-person-surround to interact with the type and rate of change, how do we become wary of the potential pitfalls of reassembly and the challenges of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and communal ethics in order to keep them from being co-opted, hijacked, or simply habituated? Arakawa and Gins have anticipated these questions by devising a process, coordinology, which aims to connect every site to every other site and to maintain, at every step, an ethical process of engagement. The most important difference between a general acquisition of knowledge and the practice of coordinology is having a stated goal from the outset and keeping it operable. Arakawa and Gins propose that human development is best served by the goals of sited awareness, the architectural body and reversible destiny. The long-term answer to complex questions of practice depends not upon a plan or explanation but on a process that takes the consequences of our everyday findings seriously and works from there.

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TOWARDS A SOCIAL ECOLOGY OF LANDING SITES AND ARCHITECTURAL BODIES

The broad purpose of this analysis of the work of Gins and Arakawa (henceforth referred to as A/G) is to place their foundational constructs—landing sites and the architectural body—in the context of other ecologically-oriented approaches to specifying the nature of organism-environment interdependence. I will draw primarily from J.-J. Gibson's ecological approach to perception, particularly his concept of affordances as well as R.E. Shaw's (Shaw, Turvey, and Mace) elaboration of body scaling in terms of the concept of the organism's effectivities or sensori-motor capabilities, "which can be thought of as an affordance of the organism from the environment's point of view" (Balzano and McCabe 107). I will also draw to a limited extent on Roger Barker's concept of a behavior setting as a way of framing the relationship between landing sites and architectural bodies. Beyond these conceptual integrations, I will introduce my own extension of these ideas to a more social psychological frame of reference. In particular, I will draw upon my own work in elaborating the relationship between individuals and groups in terms of a model of complex, dynamical systems. Specifically, I introduce the concepts of groups as social architecture and people as landing sites.

Overlapping concerns

To begin, I believe there is a remarkable similarity in the deep structure that underlies Gibson's approach to ecological perception and Gins and Arakawa's exploration of the "architectural body." In particular, each approach seeks to break down the distinction between objective and subjective and each approach is concerned with how people, and animals more generally, are able to achieve a set of coordinations between their bodies and the surrounding environment. Even more productively the approaches are also complementary to each other—certain of the Gibsonian concepts involving affordances and related concepts such as effectivities flesh out aspects of Gins and Arakawa's concepts such as landing sites and the architectural body. More generally, A/G are concerned with establishing points of entry into the architectural environment, while Gibson focuses on how and why certain coordinations, rather than others, are attempted. Moreover, taken together A/G and Gibson provide a way to understand how the environment becomes meaningful in ways that are not arbitrary because such meanings are literally embodied as we navigate through the environment. In such a view, for both A/G and Gibson, relations are facts—real properties of our multi-modal journeys. Viewed thusly, the Cartesian, "I think, therefore I am" gives way to the embodied, "I act, therefore, I am" where acting is all about coordination. This state of affairs is foundational for both A/G's architectural body and Gibson's model of ecological perception. Similarly, A/G and Gibson's major focus is pre-linguistic and non-symbolic. Indeed, borrowing from Wechsler's work on Robert Irwin we could say that both landing sites and ecological perceiving do not require labeling; seeing and orienting often involve "forgetting the name of the things one sees" (2).

Affordances and landing sites

Affordances—the perceived utilities of objects, environments, and persons taken in regard to the user abilities of the perceiver (Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*)—share with landing sites the way organisms register and apportion the world so as to be able to orient their actions effectively in situ (*Architectural Body*). Specifically, they share a number of basic assumptions. First, both affordances and landing sites transcend categorizing the world into subjective and objective properties. In each case, the concepts reflect a marriage between the priorities of specific organisms and their selection of certain properties of the environment on which to focus. Specifically, landing sites and affordances are both inside and outside the organism albeit in somewhat different ways. Landing sites are inside in the sense that they can be cognitively constructed as well as perceptually scaled. For example, the blind mathematician cited by A/G in *Architectural Body* solves the puzzle by using memory based on touch to construct an internal image or schema of a maze. Affordances are internal in the sense that their detection is both motivated by organisms' need states and achieved by sensori-motor capabilities that bring the organism into appropriate contact or attunement with the environmental opportunities to satisfy their needs.

Affordances in this scenario are more constrained and require less cognitive capacity than the internal dynamics implied by landing sites. The greater epistemic flexibility of A/G's landing sites is particularly important at the cultural level where social values often override biologically-based needs. To compensate for Gibson's restricted epistemological strategy, Baron and Boudreau reinterpreted Gibson by suggesting that affordance can have a conceptual as well as perceptual foundation. Affordances can be inferred as well as perceptually detected. For example, after observing an environmental entity, be it a study group or a college campus, one can infer that it affords intellectual stimulation. Such affordances also go beyond Gibson by focusing on a collective property of a setting. To detect such global affordances likely requires what Baron refers to as dual-mode processing involving perceptual information that is cognitively elaborated ("An Ecological Framework"); that is, we both use the information given and go beyond it. It should be understood, however, that landing sites and affordances are real properties of the world that are particularized at the level of specific organisms. Thus, there are both "would-be affordances" and "would-be landing sites" waiting to be actualized. In each case, actualization is a matter of coordination between the properties of the environment and the properties of the organism. The reciprocity is as follows: the person parses the world into landing sites; the landing sites elicit or invite the parsing. Further, once a landing site registers and takes "hold," it changes the person, which in turn affects what further landing sites are to be noticed. For example, if I am sited near a window, I notice different landing sites from when I am sited near a door. Thus, we notice landing sites and where we are situated changes our subsequent parsings.

Where do affordances fit? According to Gins and Arakawa, "surroundings invite, provoke, and entice" organisms to scout the world, to apportion the environment (the surround) into landing sites (9). This idea that the environment invites, etc., perfectly fits Gibson's treatment of affordances (*The Ecological Approach*). Specifically, the affordances of the environment are "what it offers the animal, either for good or ill" (*The Ecological Approach* 127). Such affordances are reciprocal in that they are taken relative to the

perceiver's properties. The affordances become meaningful when this coordination exists—they are neither subjective or objective—they cut across the boundary. Affordances are objective in the sense they are out there—but they will not be taken advantage of unless they fit the person's "effectivities," be they width, height, or specific response capabilities. Viewed thusly, affordances help us understand why certain landing sites are noticed rather than others; points of entry may be chosen because they are perceived as bringing the animal into contact with affordances that have high adaptive value.

Architectural bodies, habitats, and cooperation

There is also a direct link in terms of how Gibson treats niches as a set of affordances describing *how* an animal lives, rather than *where* an animal lives (*The Ecological Approach* 126). Landing sites are in these terms preparatory to where the animal might live, act, etc. Gibson's description of where an animal lives is a habitat. Perhaps habitats are organizations of landing sites taken with respect to specific animals as occupants; reciprocally certain animals imply certain niches. For example, tree-dwelling animals require a treed environment. Thus viewed, habitats refer to configurations of landing sites that become a settled place to live for certain animals.

These habitat coordinations are related to but are different in certain important respects from the structure of coordinations that occur in an architectural body. First, architectural bodies refer to a more dynamical and provisional culling together of landing sites. Second, habitat and niche-type concepts are, in effect, cullings together of coordinations of affordances and effectivities that occur within the natural environment. Here, evolutionary pressures mediate the coordinations. Architectural bodies are more provisional, referring as they do to the built environment as a surround; they lack evolutionary glue for their coordinations. However, as will be discussed below, there is another kind of glue available for architectural bodies, the bonding power of communal living; cooperation becomes the engine of coordinations of different people's landing sites. That is, shared partitionings of the environment both facilitate cooperation and are the product of cooperating—people with similar landing sites are more likely to form coalitions; such collaborations are likely to induce norms of cooperation. Consider, for example, people that work at a company that has poor working conditions. Here the environment may be partitioned into work areas that are safe versus non-safe. People with similar partitioning of the environment may gravitate to the safe areas when at all possible and become mutually aware of the shared nature of their complaints. From here they may form a transient coalition to fix the unsafe areas or seek formal union help to increase their clout.

In sum, with regard to the relationship between affordances and landing site configurations, landing sites are about where we want to be; affordances are about why we want to be there in the first place. But the dividing line is not rigid, affordances are not merely the functional face of landing sites—they are at least part of the story of why landing sites come into being in the first place. Similarly, affordances are induced by the properties of landing sites and both are mediated by the effectivities of the animals that seek them out. Consider, for example, an environment in which the only food is high up on the top of trees. Such an envi-

ronment will attract tall animals such as giraffes or animals well equipped to climb trees. Trees as landing sites attract tree-capable animals which have digestive systems suitable for the food the trees provide. Similarly, at a social level, universities that want to build a successful football program build modern stadiums, which, in turn, attract both recruits and spectators. Such stadiums create a need to watch football in even previously uninterested students who happen to enjoy the sociality of tailgating parties. Create the right landing site and the people will come.

Toward a social ecology

Further, as noted above, affordances and landing sites are not just for individuals; they are also for groups. Viewed in this way, they reflect effectivities—capabilities that arise from the benefits that occur with the gathering of individuals to form groups in the first place. Thus, much of what is afforded is not for isolated individuals but for other people or other animals as a member of a group. But, again, the line is fuzzy between individuals functioning as individuals and individuals functioning in their roles as group members. Indeed, Baron has modeled this fluctuation in terms of the complementarity principle of Nils Bohr—the shift from individual to group mode or focus being analogous to the shift from wave to particle properties (“Reinterpreting Kelman’s Concept of ‘Uneasy Coalitions’”). In effect, the individual focus is latent in group functioning, and the group frame of reference is latent even when we act apart from groups. At issue is specifying the boundary conditions that constrain state transitions. For example, a student at the beginning of a semester may focus on fitting in and become a “party animal;” here, his/her groupness is salient. Around exam time, however, he/she may revert to an individual mode or focus—more particle than wave. At this juncture of time-space, personality traits are better predictors of behavior than the strengths of his/her commitment to the group or the group’s cohesiveness.

Viewed thusly, the partitioning of people into individuals and groups has a similar fluidity to what occurs for landing sites and architectural bodies in two senses. First, when functioning as an individual, the person may select different aspects of the environment as landing sites from when in a group mode—here we refer to the physical environment. But there is another issue: people may themselves be viewed as landing sites in their function as the site for social affordances. For example, just as we may select a chair as a landing site for its “sitability,” so may we choose another person because he or she affords help in moving an object. Social effectivities enter into the equation regarding who will be selected; these include reciprocal or complementary states of need, social skills, status, power, etc. For example, a high dominance person given a choice between interacting with a person low or high in dominance is likely to select a low dominance other. Furthermore, Schmidt, Christianson, Carello, Baron found that when people differing in dominance levels were paired experimentally, coordination between the high and low dominance pairs was superior to low-low dominance and high-high dominance pairs. That is, collaboration is a problem in social coordination—of fitting people together.

The importance of social coordination

More generally, I claim that although both A/G and Gibson recognize and mention the social level—for example, there are social affordances for Gibson, while A/G recognize the tension between the communal and the individual scales of coordination—the social environment is not a major focus for either. In contradistinction, I argue that the social level is not something to be worked towards but is essential to understanding the actions of the individual and his/her relation to the environment since many of our individual actions involve acting as part of a relationship or group. In A/G's terms, people are both the contexts for choosing landing sites as well as being themselves landing sites. For example, in sorting out the environment, people are likely to be highly salient landing sites. A trivial example may help—at a party, the chair we select to sit on may be chosen because it is near the person we want to talk to. Similarly, although Gibsonians study how people coordinate limbs, they often neglect the fact that limbs are part of a body, and a body belongs to a person who may belong to a relationship, a group, etc. In effect, both A/G and the Gibsonians are taking a loan on the social or collective level. Just as perceiving the world is embodied in regard to body-mediated activities, so the body is socially embedded—bodies are entrained by social groups, people's behavior at a rock concert being a good example. Further, given the concept of circular causality, just as individual interactions give rise to groups, bottom up, so collective organizations modify individual actions top down (see Campbell's concept of downward causation). That is, we shape groups and groups shape us. In such configurations, lower-order organizations need to be coordinated to higher-order organizations in which they are embedded.

I apply this principle at all scales be it the body and its limbs, the individual and the relationship he/she is in, or the relationship between groups and the higher-order organizations in which they are embedded. What is more, it is likely that level of sociality *per se* will influence points of entry into an environment, particularly a hostile one. For example, my landing site in a dangerous environment will differ if I am alone versus in a group. Indeed, I am implying that there can be a social psychology of landing sites or, to keep within the present frame, a social ecology of landing sites. Specifically, landing sites that have persistence over time may correspond to what Barker called a behavior setting, that is, landing sites when persistent over time are structured into or morphed into behavior settings. For example, successful landing sites may become behavior settings because they attract a wide range of people. They, in effect, become communal, bottom up; that is, landing sites may become self-organized into behavior settings. They become places to carry out certain communal activities. They create in-gatherings of people. Specifically, if in a given environment a number of people independently initially pick the same landing sites, they can coalesce into a behavior setting. For example, if a number of neighbors start to use an open field for a “garage sale” this place may coalesce into a site for a flea market. A flea market, if it retains stability of place and function, becomes what Barker would call a behavior setting (examples include school rooms, pharmacies, etc.). According to this view, behavior settings may be viewed as one type of instantiation of architectural bodies.

It is this stability of place and function that creates a kind of super architectural body or constellation of landing sites. When this kind of stability is achieved, we have created a kind of social architecture. Within

such structures, we have a social architectural body within which we literally locate ourselves. For example, for teenagers the shopping mall may become such a place. Here, other people, as embodied in the mall as a behavior setting, become landing sites. With even a quick glance, the knowing teenager knows where to “hang out.” The result is that place identity becomes part of their self-image.

Dynamically, such meta-landing sites are self-organized—teenagers shape them “bottom up” and in turn are shaped by them. With such a circular process, people may be said to develop or incorporate place identity as part of their self-image. A popular version of this is well captured in the aphorism “you can take the person out of the city, but you can’t take the city out of the person.”

People as landing sites: towards a social architectural body

In the preceding paragraphs, I sketched how people viewed as landing sites can become self-organized into behavior settings which then become the building blocks for a kind of social architecture. Specifically, just as physical environment can enfold and shelter us, becoming a kind of architectural body, so can people. An excellent example of this is a neighborhood, which is as much constituted by a community of people as it is a collection of dwelling places, commercial establishments, etc. Psychologically, just as we can be surrounded by a physical environment, so we can be surrounded by a social environment. Here as with a physical environment, we can think of collective-level constructs. For example, just as a physical setting may have an ambiance or climate, so may a social architecture—communities of people are friendly or hostile. During the recent NYC blackout there was a different climate or ambiance than in the 1977 blackout. The climate in 2003 was one of support and friendliness whereas in 1977 it was one of hostility and fear. Here are real world data that need to be explained. Have landing sites and architectural bodies changed? Is this an unexpected positive fallout from 9/11? Have social affordances changed?

Dynamically speaking, there appears to have been a phase state transition in climate. Perhaps 9/11 took us past a certain tipping point (see Gladwell) with external threat as it often does, creating greater cohesiveness within, at the expense of greater outgroup hostility. The “us” vs. “them” orientation of the terrorists may reciprocally spill over into the community that was attacked. We may have been developing in this polarized direction long before the attack, with 9/11 (serving as a catalyst) pushing us over the edge toward greater internal cohesion or sense of community in New York City—a new social architectural body. Reciprocally, this raises the question of whether the threat of terrorism may give rise to new physical architectural bodies—new more protective environmental surrounds that constitute a kind of “bunker mentality” as during the “cold war.”

Summary

In summary, the richness of the concepts of landing sites and architectural bodies in regard to their explanatory and integrative possibilities is best revealed when they are seen in the context of related ecological formulations such as Gibson's ecological perception construct of affordances and Barker's behavioral settings. Affordances help us understand why landing sites are selected and behavior settings, viewed as self-organized in-gatherings of landing sites, provide us a temporal stability formulation which, in effect, becomes a building block for architectural bodies. That is, landing sites are nested within behavior settings and behavior settings are nested within architectural bodies. Finally, by involving the social-communal domains as both frames and content domains we have the parallel concepts of social landing sites and social architectural bodies.

There are two direct payoffs from such conceptual moves. First, we are forced to consider issues of reciprocity between the physical and social environments: for example, relations of circular causality or co-evolution. Second, some of the critical problems we face such as the threat of terrorism and the energy crises become more tractable when viewed from these new theoretical perspectives. For example, one of the pioneer creators of conflict resolution workshops as applied to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Herbert Kelman, has independently directly used a concept, at least metaphorically, related to landing sites. In attempting to describe how it is possible to transfer change resulting from face-to-face interactions in small groups to changes at the social-political level, Kelman speaks of the "re-entry problem" in terms of how to get individuals with new insights back into their constituencies at a policy level. Indeed, Kelman specifically proposes that "the challenge here is to identify the appropriate points of entry" (2). As Kurt Lewin sagely remarked, "there is nothing as practical as a good theory."

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