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## **From Literary Device to Architectural Procedure:**

Arakawa and Gins and the Becoming-Architecture of Literary Method

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Arakawa and Gins, Site of Reversible Destiny, Yoro, Japan. ©Madeline Gins/Reversible Destiny Foundation.

*“Excuse me, architecture, you have not been listening. Remember your job: to preserve the body. Extend life. Make the world habitable and habitants thrive. You are the best tool out there for us learning how not to die. We have to. Before you, life averaged little, today, well housed, we live to be 80 or 90. You’ve done so much. But why did you stop? Do more for the body. In fact, do everything for the body. What are you waiting for? What else have we got? What more might we?”*

### **The Challenge**

This is my paraphrase of Arakawa and Gins’ attitude to architecture today, the stance they take in practicing and theorizing what they call „procedural architecture“. The attitude is that architecture needs to get back on topic. The centuries-old thrust of industrial development has allowed architecture to advance at a tremendous rate of innovation, with stunning accomplishments in many sectors, without ever making any better on its original promise, to win shelter from what’s out there, to store forces in order to increase them, to make more life. It challenges architecture to recall that its task is something more fundamental, and radical, than the function-filling it performs (however brilliantly) as an arm of industrial urbanization. The task Arakawa and Gins challenge architecture with

would, if accepted, clearly set architecture at odds with industrial urbanization. Building for life and building to current measures of cost and profit are irreconcilable if you take building for life seriously. The procedural architecture I want to discuss with you is not a frontal attack on the political economy of urbanization in the age of biopower, but it is indirectly revolutionary, in the scale of its change in priorities, and in the radically alternate modulation it brings to being/becoming human, organisms inter-personing, architecturally embodied.



Madeline Gins and Arakawa, Reversible Destiny Office, New York, NY. 2005. Photos: Alan Prohm.

Procedural architecture is dedicated to our learning how not to die. If you have heard about Arakawa and Gins' unusual, even in the history of the avant-garde, project, then this is probably what you have heard. „We have decided not to die“ – this slab of a sentence was the title and conceptual centerpiece of their retrospective at the Guggenheim in 1997, and of the broad-ranging catalogue from that exhibition. At that time, they were already a decade or so into a career turn – their „architectural turn“ we can call it – which for much of the art world amounted to their disappearance from the scene. Today, 16 years of ceaseless work and two immensely regrettable deaths later, (Arakawa died in 2010, Madeline in 2014) the full scope and coherence of their endeavor is clear, and their central legacy even clearer – this challenge: do everything you/we can for the body. Procedures for increasing/extending life via engagement with/by/as the architectural surround are available. What Procedural Architecture calls for is a dedicated creative industry, with a deep research base and infinite funding, for developing and constructing our architectural surroundings procedurally. In this talk I will show how this architecture, and the theory and practice of its efficacy, emerged, via a radically intermedial conceptual practice with at heart, a literary method.

## **Literary | Architectural**

This paper, and the conference that precipitated it, are structured along a line - a seam or suture convened for intermedial discourse - separating and joining the literary and the architectural. The conference theme brings us to this seam with a mission and a direction: identify methods born on the one side and applied on the other, methods from literary theory and practice applied in architectural research and design. The interest in this jointed pairing, then, is directed, not symmetrical.

This is worth establishing at the outset. Because, if we are deciding to meet at the juncture of these two fields, it is important to say why. Why are we spending time, time that could otherwise be spent doing architecture, or better than architecture, exploring the literary? From a perspective that sees literature as less efficacious, less relevant than architecture, this could be seen as retrograde, flight in the wrong direction, away from the realness and import poetry envies in architecture. Unless, in going back to literature, we are doing so to recover an advance that has been lost - an aheadness literature may still have in store for architecture, which otherwise, it seems, can do so much more.

Between the literary and architecture, my concern is not so much to get the academic framing right, as it is to secure the ethical relevance. The literary, like the artistic, are in my eyes activities worthy of the utmost detachment. And yet, the history of literary practices does contain invaluable insights and principles, applicable across different fields and domains to the species-wide urgency of staying alive, which, as we shall see with Arakawa and Gins, is architecture's business.

## **Literary Effect**

The literary is known by its effects. This is an important starting point for thinking how anything literary could get into architecture in the first place. Attempts to understand the literary - that which makes something literary literary, or something poetic poetic - as an essential property inherent in the linguistic materials or in definable ways of structuring them, do not hold up. For one thing they never really answer the question of what poetry has that everyday language doesn't, since it's all the same stuff. But the recognition that „literary“ and „poetic“ are effects, i.e. cognitive phenomena, is vital. This recognition, and the focusedly cognitive study of literature, dawned already with early modernist perspectives on aesthetic experience (e.g. Schlovsky, whom I will talk about); was formalized further by reception theorists (e.g. Wolfgang Iser) in the reader response tendency of the 70's and 80's; and has now come to full maturity with cognitive-science-informed linguistics and literary theory. I will take the Relevance Theory pragmatics of Adrian Pilkington as an example of this approach.

By shifting our conception of the literary from essences to effects, we are adding a new dimension to the cognitive model we use for thinking this. Reception as an experience occupies a split horizon. Not just us with our gaze vanishing on language, but us with one gaze on language, and another on a conceptual stage where consistencies are being built from the impulses produced through the encounter with language. This addition is essential. It gives us room to manoeuvre

when explaining how, with the same linguistic materials and structuring repertoire, one text may be prosaic and another poetry. And, just as momentously, it paves the way for every kind of cross-medial hybridizing. This is the birth of intermedial poetics. The separation of the spirit of poetry from its body (language) and its coming to life in others (visuality, sound, code, architecture, events).

Once the poetic is a phenomenon of describable effects triggered in a reader by language, we see immediately the possibility of triggering the same, or similar-enough, effects in the reader via different triggers, delivered in a different medium and in different materials. This is true because the conceptual layer is common to all sense modalities. All the senses feed into, and feed off of, constructions at the conceptual level. Conceptual structures built up through exposure to language share space, as it were, with assemblies built from the input of vision or hearing. In fact, of course, input and instructions from various sense modalities flow in together, building together on common projects, in particular on the common project of perception in general, sense-making, world construction.

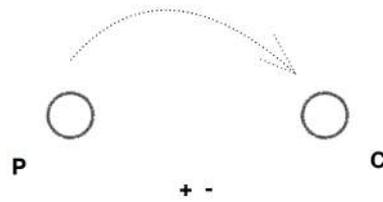
So what effects are literary? What impacts in readerly experience, and what results in the construction of meaning at the conceptual level, register as literary, or more particularly, as poetic? No single effect is definitive, and there is no total list of effects that qualify, but some effects certainly play a much more central role than others in defining what is and has been poetry or poetic in a given era.

A good place for us to start is with Viktor Schlovsky. At the moment of avant-garde opening in the field of literary/artistic practices, he applied a psychologically informed analytic formalism to theorizing the literary, and in so doing set the problem of the poetic firmly in the realm of readerly experience. His articulations retain a currency and relevance among theorists and, more significantly for our argument, among practicing experimental poets to this day.

Schlovsky approaches poetry as a certain experience of thinking, and asks what defines this experience and what produces it? He locates it first in an effect some texts have on perception, as it functions in the act of reading. The effect, which Schlovsky identifies as the end in itself of aesthetic pursuits, is the prolongation of perception, a slowing and roughening of the encounter with language, for the sake of the effects this makes in the experience of reading. For Schlovsky, methods in language that extend the duration of perception within reading are literary methods.

Poetry is work created „artistically‘ so that its perception is impeded and the greatest possible effect is produced through the slowness of the perception.

But let's be more precise. What is this effect, that it is so poetic? And how does this slowness, obstructed reception, produce it? Schlovsky's valuation here is structured according to a mental mapping implicit in the model of experience he is working with. Perception (sensation) and cognition (concepts) are valued oppositely because they lie at opposite ends of the basic movement underlying reading.



Perceived word material (a live visual experience) arcs across and dies into fixed meaning, concept. What was spontaneous emergent becomes fit for automaticity. The cognitive principle Schlovsky invokes to first establish his theorizing on the poetic effect is this, that „as perception becomes habitual, it becomes automatic“, and the concept, as a phenomenon, is precisely this hardening of perceptions into a form for automating process. At the core of experience, there is this rhythm, understood as a kind of entropy, even a law of mortality, the infinitely reiterative arc of decay of everything from percept to concept. Reading at every point, like experience, requires the whole process, but its two basic stages exhibit an inherent antagonism, and they are valued differently. In Schlovsky’s language, percepts come out as more real, more alive, and more free than concepts, and more poetic by virtue of the human drama implied in the situation this depicts.

The effect of obstructing reception, then, is to delay readerly awareness up at the early, perceptual end of the arc of reception, attention straying distracted among its own first acts of discernment and sensing, winning us as readers more time in the undecided state, before the irrevocable projects of construal and consistency-building complete. This time is inherently poetic for Schlovsky. More real, more alive, more free, more potential, more possible. And poetic is any writing that manages by its methods to give us this more.

The intuition Schlovsky captures at the start of the 20th Century gets cyclically rediscovered by generation after generation of poets and artists through into the 21<sup>st</sup>. The avant-gardness LANGUAGE poetry could claim at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century was based quite centrally on indeterminacy as a special means and end, and it was LANGUAGE poetry that recovered Schlovsky for literary discourse. But movements from Cubo-Futurism to Dada to Imagism to Surrealism to Fluxus to any contemporary trends that follow similar instincts in their experimentalism with language and media return to the concept, and the practices that trigger the effect.

Through this cycling, which is a lot of repetition, acuity also grew, as did the theoretical grounding. Formalist linguistics supplied Schlovsky and his generation conceptual framework for formalising their articulations on the mechanisms for producing literary effects. LANGUAGE poetry rediscovered formalist linguistics, but also grew with the great blossoming in the cognitive sciences, and of a new cognitive linguistics that could do ground empirically what formalism could only ever advance propositionally. The scientific study of experience had come of age.

Relevance theory is one trend in linguistics, from the pragmatist heritage, that embraced the new explanatory resources of cognitive science, returning to many of the same articulations as the linguists of the early avant-garde, but now with a new empirically grounded analysis, and so the ability put experience in the center

of study. Distinctive of this new orientation is the view, anticipated by Schlovsky, by which literary properties are seen, "not as properties of texts, but as cognitive properties, resulting from the effects of texts upon readers" (189).

Adrian Pilkington, in his *Poetic Effects: a relevance theory perspective*, writes:

I have argued that, theoretically, literariness should be defined in terms of cognitive events triggered in minds/brains by linguistic stimuli. (Pilkington 189)

What this approach to language and thought offers, which ... [formalist, structuralist, and poststructuralist] approaches ... do not, is the possibility of characterizing poetic thoughts as distinct kinds of thoughts (or poetic thinking as a distinct kind of thinking).(45) Poetic thinking "can be characterized in terms of a distinctive kind of mental process involving extensive guided exploration of encyclopaedic entries, which results in the marginally increased salience of a wide range of assumptions.... (189)

Pilkington's description here relies heavily on the pragmatic linguistic notion of "weak implicature", which for him helps differentiate the poetic meaning experience from a prosaic one. "I have characterized poetic metaphor here in terms of complex thoughts communicated as a wide range of weak implicatures." (106)

The "art of creating a successful creative metaphor (or other rhetorical device used for poetic effects)" (109), according to Pilkington in a formulation Schlovsky would have recognized, consists in providing direction in the reading, along paths that provoke "intense subtly discriminated and precise qualitative states" (191), without allowing the field of implicature to consolidate into simple, prosaic thoughts.

### **Literary Device**

Literary effects are produced by literary devices. The study of literary method comes down to what devices can be employed to produce what effects, and how does this work? What produces this more that means so much?

The device Schlovsky made famous with his 1917 article „Art as Technique“ he called „defamiliarization“, estrangement, ostrananie, elaborated mainly on examples from Tolstoy. This is a device (defamiliarization and estrangement are of course effects; devices in general are named after their effects and may have the same name, leading sometimes to confusion), that do precisely the poetic thing Schlovsky describes: „attenuating“ „roughing“ or „torturing“ the verbal delivery, making it difficult, slowing down the process of reading to delay construction of clear understandings, definite grasps or specification. Schlovsky's first example from Tolstoy is the technique of simply not naming or referring directly to a thing you're writing about; writing literally „about“ a topic while deferring establishment of a focus on it. Khlebnikov is also mentioned in the article, though just in closing, representing a whole other stage of the modern experimentation with literary method, one closer to the experimental tradition were are ultimately concerned with here. Schlovsky mentions him as working on a „new and properly poetic language“; properly poetic, no doubt he meant, because of the special resources it

musters for estrangement, the cubo-futurist repertoire of what the poet called „Zaum“. Between the revolutionary avant-gardist Khlebnikov and the landed anarchist Tolstoy, we see Schlovsky sketching an account of „defamiliarization“ in the literature of the great modern Russian masters.

The idea of poetry as an art of techniques for producing effects, and the characterization of these effects in cognitive terms, came of age in the experimental modernism of Schlovsky and the constructivists. Later in the 20th Century, the experimental agenda set forth by newer generations of writers remained occupied with many of the same problems.

The L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets of the 1970's and 80's, for example, staked their claims to a new avant-gardism (highly self-theorized, with Schlovsky-era formalist linguistics as an important underpinning) on techniques for achieving much the same effects. Ron Silliman's *The New Sentence* (1987), Charles Bernstein's *Artifice of Absorption* (1987), and Lyn Hejinian's „The Rejection of Closure“ (1984) all located the experimental front edge of language art in developing techniques, devices, for delaying grasp and construal in the language experience. Indeterminacy emerged as a focal value for identifying the added something a poetic text seeks to achieve, that quasi-magic effect. A decade earlier, Umberto Eco's *The Open Work* (1962) had traced this same theme through 20th Century culture from a semiotic perspective; and appeared in English translation in 1989. For Marjorie Perloff, a chief recuperator of the experimental avant-garde at the end of the last Century (*The Poetics of Indeterminacy*, 1981), this was nothing less than THE defining ambition of 20th Century poetry and experimental art. A generalization she returns to again in her latest writings.

Lyn Hejinian explains:

We can say that a „closed text“ is one in which all the elements of the work are directed toward a single reading of it. Each element confirms that reading and delivers the text from any lurking ambiguity. In the „open text“, meanwhile, all the elements of the work are maximally excited; here it is because ideas and things exceed (without deserting) argument that they have been taken into the dimension of the work. (*Rejection of Closure*, Hejinian 1984, 28)

Hejinian takes up the cognitive assessment of literary effects from a similar perspective as Schlovsky, but with an articulation advanced since his times. Schlovsky's mechanical dichotomy of percept and concept, with its implicit tragedy of experiential entropy and informational collapse, is reinflected in the post-modern, more rigorously cognitive, poetics of the LANGUAGE writer, as a nuanced cosmogonic variable, an as-if-eternal emergency tipping, like gravity or balance, between total order and total openness. In her exploration of the question of openness/closure, Hejinian lays out not a morality, manichean distinction, but more neutrally, if still epiphanic, a field of play with hidden invariables and dynamic constraints. Poetic is not perception's trumping of an inevitable concept-formation, but rather the degree of tension (and twist) achieved and maintained in the invisible physics of this field, the holding that keeps tense the line bridling acts of sensing to the constructions of knowing they are used to assemble.

She makes clear openness is not itself the value-point, but rather the balance, the improbable middle between collapse determination and total openness where meaning dissolves, a middle she finds in devices for managing dynamic form.

I want to say this at the outset and most emphatically, in order to prevent any misunderstanding. Indeed, the conjunction of form with radical openness may provide a version of the „paradise“ for which the poem yearns – a flowering focus on a distinct infinity. (Rejection, 27)

At stake in this game, we discover, is a „paradise“. The poem yearns for this, and achieves it only through the subtle risk acrobatics of keeping its focus flowering/its flowering focused, infinities distinct in a non-excluding grasp. This field of play, realm of the poetic, Hejinian articulates through formulations always tending to the state of landscape, meaning assessed in a space of effects and construction, a world through which language ranges. In the poetics she defines and practices, abstracted, disjunctive, serial but not narrative, we see that the ambition here is bigger than it was in Schlovsky. The motivation not just for inducing „effects“, but, more, for realizing a state, (state of knowledge/of things), effecting a world:

The mind, said Keats, should be a „thoroughfare for all thoughts.“ My intention (I don't mean to suggest I succeeded) in a later work, „Resistance“ (now subsumed into „The Green“), was to write a lyric poem in a long form – that is, achieve maximum vertical intensity (the single moment into which the idea rushes) and maximum horizontal extensivity (ideas cross the landscape and become the horizon and weather). To myself I proposed the paragraph as a unit representing a single moment of time, a single moment in the mind, its content all the thoughts, thought particles, impressions, impulses – all the diverse, particular, and contradictory elements that are included in an active and emotional mind at any given instant. For the moment, as a writer, the poem is a mind. (Rejection, 29)

The method this speaks to involves an almost athletic exertion, an effortful coordinating of opposed exertions, vertical, or better said, „saggital“, forward intensity (diachronic/narrative) and horizontal (synchronic/parallel) extensivity. The competence it demands lies in the sensing of effects along the axes of these differentials, and the modulation of expressions using the viable resources. The goal it shows the poet theorist pursuing, a little surprisingly, comes down to creating a space, called a mind, almost architecture, certainly a landscape, in which this world can take place. Writing about Getrude Stein, as a mentor in the arts of balancing openness with form, it was inevitable that Hejinian's should come to formulations the questions of poetics this spatially:

...although the synchronic is obviously a temporal concept, it projects a spatial figure – one could say a landscape – „a moment of time that has gotten into position“ ...

This, because of Stein's use of simultaneity and parallelism, of devices for slowing the intensive rush of diachronic argument and opening the moment extensively for perception to explore, while avoiding a dispersal of the energies of interest for reading on. This is slowing-for-perception in just the way Schlovsky meant it, but here in a poetics where the devices themselves, the technicity itself, has become the content of the writing:

The „going slower“ becomes obsessive. The movement, if one can put it this way, becomes a fixation. The activity that maintains between events is arrested and detail is flattened out, becoming monumental. It is in this sense that Stein could observe, as she put it in „Plays,“ „A landscape does not move nothing really moves in a landscape but things are there.“ (2SteinTalks 128)

## Literary Method

And the purpose of all this?

Hejinian's poetics is not cognitive for the sake of commenting on work done for other reasons, expression or narrative. It is at heart a cognitive pursuit, working the same field of observation, if within a different culture of questioning, as cognitive psychology or laboratory neuroscience. In tracing her modernist inheritance to Gertrude Stein, Hejinian sets Stein beside William James as natural fellow bedrock for supporting an advanced, experimental, what she calls „phenomenological“ literature. She reveals Stein's abstraction for a kind of „realism“, a devotional, inquisitive meticulousness in depiction – but of cognitive phenomena. Hejinian inherits this realism and pursues it, not as a style, but as a research agenda. Literature is a mode of knowledge production for Hejinian and the LANGUAGE poets more generally, first-person inquiry, and poetics is the development and application of devices for conducting this inquiry in the field of meaning experience.

For Hejinian's generation, though, and not only for Schlovsky's, this world, whose forming poetics has a special hand in, is not only mental. The poem's yearning extends out into the social and political, their underlying philosophies of language tacitly ambitioning big impacts in the concrete, real world. In the revolutionary moment of Russian modernism, this world-view gave some poets confidence that their texts, through sense or non-sense, could effect the revolution. Others, under the same value regime of efficacy, lost confidence in poetry, limited to language, and came to favor architecture and engineering in their hopes of having an impact. At work in the revived avant-gardism of LANGUAGE writing, in its more politicized aspects, is a post-formalist, but pre-revolutionary ideology of the power of language. The linguistic turn in philosophy and criticism, persisting in all kinds of code and systems theories, as well as in their critical deconstruction, gave credence around this time to the idea that language in some way constitutes everything that we are, think and do. The poet, therefore, in handling language, is seen as handling the fundamental principles and forces behind the ordering of experience, consciousness and reality. Literary method and the use of literary devices, viewed this way, engage the promise not just of having effects, but of transforming situations and shaping the world. Hejinian connects explicitly to this current of belief, and this earnest of potential efficacy, when she quotes Benjamin Whorf, identifying the ordering principle language embodies:

„Every language is a vast pattern-system, different from others, in which are culturally ordained the forms and categories by which the personality not only communicates, but also analyses nature, notices or neglects types of relationship and phenomena, challenges his reasoning, and builds the house of his consciousness.“ (Whorf, in Hejinian, Rejection 36).

How might the house of consciousness get built differently, through a different practice in language? What change would a poetry practically strive for that thought it could impact world- and consciousness-building at these levels? This is often left rather vague by proponents of the efficacy in principle. What impact can a poetry have on the world? This is an old question. We're still looking for evidence. What impact can a text, observed to effect readers in this or that way, traceable in the language to this or that device, be imagined to have on language as such, in its purported capacity as structurer of mind and world? This is the speculation underlying 20th Century experimental poetics as we can trace it through these authors and beyond, the dream of efficacy underwriting ongoing experimentalism in Hejinian's late, not-really revolutionary age. and still for us a fundamental question demanding attention. It is a question of the fundamental goal of a poetics with this sort of research agenda: development and deployment of (these poetic) devices for what, ultimately? It's a question we can't necessarily expect a definite answer to from everyone, but I think there is a radical simplification available in both Schlovsky and Hejinian's cases, as to how their underlying valuations are anchored, what poetics is for.

In one statement of the great research aim (with reference to Stein's Tender Buttons), Hejinian sees her as questioning

the nature of knowledge relative to meaning, in an attempt to discover, in so far as possible, the nature of poetic language as a locus of meaning and of primary being, lest, in mediating between us (thought) and the world (things) language become instead a barrier. (2SteinTalks 131)

The terrain is ontological, but what is at stake is a contact, and what comes through it, a wager at „reaching a direct and primitive contact with the world,“ as Hejinian quotes Merleau-Ponty, defining phenomenology under a thinly veiled vitalism. Ultimately what this notion of realism seems to come down to, the value underlying its exertions, is life, the value of life firing in real time. Hejinian ascribes this, aliveness, to Stein as a fundamental value and aim of her aesthetics. She cites it as an explanation of Stein's critique of theater, which Stein sees as „devalizing“, obstructing our ability to be engaged and emotionally in-time with events.

In blocking participation, [conventional theater] is devitalizing, where for Stein vitality is a moral category. She had expressed in innumerable ways her position that the value of anyone (or anything) lay in their „being completely living ... (2SteinTalks, 135)

So, vitality, at least vaguely. It's not a key term for Hejinian, but as with perhaps every poet, it's this that seems, when you boil down the language, to underlie the moral universe her poetics projects. What else ultimately can underlie an aesthetics of any sort? Her opening definition of „openness“, in "Rejection of Closure" zeroed in first on this: excitement.

In the „open text“, meanwhile, all the elements of the work are maximally excited.

And this precisely what is at risk in writing, at stake in the venture of finding and giving form:

Can form make the primary chaos..., articulate without depriving it of its capacious vitality, its generative power?

Schlovsky's implicit paradise, time and place of „deautomated perception“, is also a vitalist vision, conceived in a more concretely utopian climate, where questions of open or closing form, of power realized or deprived, were of daily real-world urgency. Valuing perception over conception comes down to the measure of literal nervous aliveness, we might say „excitation“, and in a political reading to concrete potentials for human life. Accomplishment in a poetics with these commitments, to say nothing of heroism, would then come down to managing aliveness in language, or by one's devices increasing vitality in experiencing readers. This, it is perhaps neither too simple nor too far-fetched to state based on a review of these texts, is as much as anything else the end of literary method and practice.

The liveliness of anything recurs artistically within the scope of a radical force of attention. (2SteinTalks, 131)

### **Literary's Limit**

The study of literary method in experimental modernism and its continuances shows us, among other things, an art (literature) yearning beyond what its own medium can achieve, or has yet been used to attempt. Both the Constructivist desertion of poetry in favor of industrial arts, and the LANGUAGE-era overstatement of poetry's import as tantamount to world-making, challenge poetics and the activities of literary inquiry to assume spatial dimensionality. Poetry at one experimental and theoretical extreme comes to reveal an underlying architecture envy.

...In Stein's work...both space and time are primarily psychological and interior, and structural when triangulated with language, which remains exterior, as the site. Time is jammed into and spread over the imagined spatial plane, and it is in language that details, and especially temporal details, are specified and, as it were, made physical. Distinctions must occur - activity takes place - across the language plane itself. In terms of spatial syntax, configuration and relationships occur in sets rather than in sequence, so that the perceptual activity, which has taken the form of writing, makes essential comparisons, oppositions and distinctions.

...

Language generates sentences, which taken as forms of frontal grammar, are the verbal planes from which consciousness constructs that of which it is conscious. That is, one realizes consciousness by positioning sentences in the landscape of consciousness... (2SteinTalks, 137,139)

Poetics comes to a point where it needs architecture to think itself, yet still has only words to pursue the discoveries it makes when doing so. Here we come, I think, to a limit in Hejinian's ambitions as a poet, and of LANGUAGE practice as an artistic program. The sustained exploration of poetic effects, experimentation with devices and definition of a method, performed with the sensitivity & (flowering) focus of someone of Hejinian's abilities, comes in the end to involve the whole body.

The progress of a line or sentence, or a series of lines or sentences, has spatial properties as well as temporal properties. The meaning of a word in its place derives both from the word's lateral reach, its contacts with its neighbors in a statement, and from its reach through and out of the text into the outer world, the matrix of its contemporary and historical reference. The very idea of reference is spatial.... Getting from the beginning to the end of a statement is simple movement. Following the connotative by-ways (on what Umberto Eco calls "inferential walks") is complex or compound movement. (RoC 34)

But the ideology or craft bias tying Hejinian, like most poets, to her medium blocks her from following vital directions these discoveries might suggest. Another way of saying this is that there exists such a thing as artistic genres, and Hejinian is a poet. But there is another sense of poet, already made available by the avant-gardists of the 1910's, in which the pursuit of certain (poetic) effects is free to break with generic boundaries, or the purism of perfecting in a single medium.

I think we can see the tug of this limitation in a very interesting sentence from Hejinian's essay on indeterminacy, where she quotes Ponge on an interesting point and then overstates him, with reductive consequences:

Language is one of the principal forms our curiosity takes. It makes us restless. As Francis Ponge puts it, "Man is a curious body whose center of gravity is not in himself" (47). Instead it seems to be located in language, by virtue of which we negotiate our mentalities and the world; off-balance, heavy at the mouth, we are pulled forward. (My emphasis) (RoC 33)

That we as creatures are not centered is a certainty, as it is that language in particular pulls us off-balance. But to then locate our center of gravity in language is to carry on a fallacy, one natural to the LANGUAGE moment, still not entirely overcome. Language's ubiquity in our experience of the world obscures the clear fact that it is not the totality of either experience or world. Vagueness on this point allows the bias to go unchallenged, the assumption within poetry that literary means are the best for achieving poetic ends.

Hejinian expresses this sense of sufficiency with language in what amounts to an explanation of why Stein was or anyone might be an artist in language. She says of Stein that she was:

directed toward the study of reality and of our perceptions of reality ... and the study of language which, on the one hand, apparently mediates between us and reality and, on the other hand, is for most of us the constant, ready, everyday, and natural medium for discovering, defining, and asserting reality - making use of it, expressing it, and perhaps creating it. (2ST 129).

But not every poet will agree with the view of language as primary, or even most convenient, constitutor of reality. In fact, importantly, the opposite has also been asserted:

Architecture is the simplest means of articulating time and space, of modulating reality, of engendering dreams. It is a matter not only of plastic articulation and modulation expressing an ephemeral beauty, but of a modulation producing influences in accordance with the eternal spectrum of human desires and the progress in realizing them. (Ivan Chtcheglov, "Formulary for a new Urbanism", my emphasis)

This is Ivain Chtcheglov, poet, latter-day surrealist, who in 1952 co-ignited with Guy Debord the life adventure destined to become the Situationist International, thriving on a rejection of literary means in favor of architecture, and then ultimately on a rejection of even architecture as still not effectual enough for realizing the true poetry, which only activism and the direct practical alteration of everyday life can achieve. For him, and the early situationist project, it was precisely because

literature cannot change the world, really, that poetry must be entrusted to architecture.

“Whereas surrealism in the heyday of its assault against the oppressive order of culture and daily life could rightly define its arsenal as ‘poetry without poems if necessary, it is now a matter for the SI of a poetry necessarily without poems.” (Guy Debord, “All the Kings Men”)

The other principal form our curiosity takes, our other, probably even primary, source of restlessness, is space - exploring, making, making sense of and living space. Another term for this is having a body. The claim to primacy here, to space and body being even more fundamental than language as factors/engines of world-constituting, can be substantiated in the fact that without them, Hejinian would have no way of conceiving language or its action, even in language. “Off-balance, heavy at the mouth, we are pulled forward.” The sense of this articulation is entirely indebted to bodily and spatial articulations that pre-date their metaphoric use in any statement. In other words, the emerging embodiment we are discovering with Hejinian’s help in poetics is actually already primary and latent there. Architectural poetics, we may find out, has always been already there in language, just waiting to come out.

### **Extra-Literary Devices**

It would have been ridiculous to ask why Hejinian, if she sees language the way she does, didn’t become an architect, were it not for Madeline Gins, her contemporary, who, seeing it that way, became one.

With Madeline Gins, we see 20<sup>th</sup> Century experimental poetics take a turn available before but not taken, a turn in pursuit of poetic efficacy, but out of the bounds of literary genre and medium, into architecture. Gins’s starting point, as a poet and student of literature (and painting and physics) at the beginning of the 60’s, is similar to Hejinian’s, a language-centered, experimental writer with strong cognitive grasp, also in the LANGUAGE moment and circles, but never as centrally identified there. Gins’ first book, *Word Rain* (1969), is in my opinion one of the great works of 20<sup>th</sup> Century experimental writing, and more precisely of the kind of “phenomenological literature” Hejinian proposes, on the model of Stein’s *Tender Buttons* (1914). *Word Rain* is a masterpiece of self-referential, language-centered, experimental fiction, and at the same time a poetic/philosophical inquiry yielding tremendous evidence towards a cognitive theory of reading, perceiving and meaning. Like *Tender Buttons*, or a *Ponge* poem, it is an intensive object study, only where here the object is the act of reading itself. Like in Stein’s work, and true to Schlovsky’s definition of the poetic, the reading experience is highly defracted by an estranged, non-transparent use of language conventions and literary devices, producing a highly altered economy of attention and process of construal. In *Word Rain* we see Gins arriving at that same limit Hejinian reaches, the medial limit poetics hits in the becoming-architecture of its own articulations. Then we see her stepping over.

Let’s just look at the opening paragraphs for an example:

I induce a sly birth with my eyes the lines of creases. (Delete) I massage geometry with a scented oil. The maintenance of lips. The battles of containers. I speak in the midst of a sifted reticence. 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.

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. (Word Rain, unpaginated)

The first device that confronts us in the text is a defamiliarizing technique very close to Schlovsky's first example from Tolstoy. The book starts up in obsessive first-person address, with a very forward "I" talking straight to the reader. Paradoxically this insistence has the effect, after a while, of anonymizing the speaker even further, progressively destabilizing the assumptions that come up as to who this "I" might be, if there is one in particular. The voice, playing on this variable in how determinately or indeterminately it may be construed, toys with and teases the reader who is thus drawn into a game of guessing, and thinking through the clues, by now spreading out "a wide range of weak implicatures":

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. I give you this book as 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.

Following the clues, we are led to detailed, if indeterminate and repeatedly destabilized, awareness of things, ideas and an environment, in a book that is also a room that is also our room, in a time and weather that is also our time and weather, hosting a narrative that is also the actuality of our present awareness, here, holding this book in our hands with things happening, both in the book and around us. The phenomenological situation has rarely been so adequately and complexly, because immersively, portraited. And in her investigation, the language Gins is compelled to, like Hejiniian's, projects landscape and architecture almost necessarily, even, or especially, where it is most abstract and non-representational.

As I directed the centering axis of my being according to the cryptic instructions for my operations through at least three different platforms, levels, in a matter of ten minutes, the phenomenon of parallax took place somewhere between myself and the page in front of me. Within and without a pause there was always room for one thing in place of another.

The self-narration of the "I" of attention, in the act of reading, gives voice to what Wolfgang Iser, echoing Kandinsky, calls the "wandering viewpoint" (Iser, *The Act of Reading*), as it shifts in a text across horizons and along zooming vector arcs from "chunk" to "chunk", making up the basic cognitive pulse of reading: intake then act of construal, intake then act of construal. The "I" comes up with ever new metaphors for explaining what and how she is making us see and think the things we then see ourselves seeing and thinking, and some of these metaphors stay, get established as concept/object protagonists in the text, framed through repeated use and in some cases defined explicitly into a sort of lexicon, conceptual

construction materials: platform, quay, rostrum, mist, cyst, waft, ropy gas shaving, ropy gas fiber.

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.

As we try to receive this text, and the thought-experiences it affords us, Word Rain concretises in an amazing way Hejinian's principle that "for a moment, as a writer, the poem is a mind", with the extended implication from the rest of the writing that the mind is also a room, actually a suite of rooms, and by now certainly it must also be clear, a body.

The other key device we encounter straight from the beginning in Word Rain is the confusion of planes, the frequent doubt as to whether what is being described obtains in the "real" world of the fiction, in the "inner" mental world of the narrator, or the real world of the reader reading. This strengthens the dynamic identity that develops between the experience of reading (understanding) and its spatialization in theory or self-reflection. Objects are ideas, or less than ideas, objects taking position in thought, about which ideas form. The poem is a mind is a room, and at the core of all this there is the body.

When the speaker speaks at the rostrum, enunciated words are made to fly. They bounce off her, stream forward and fall back to her face and body.

Gins not only draws this conclusion, encounters the immanence of the body and its space in language, as Hejinian will later, she also, unlike Hejinian, follows the full thrust of the implications into new territory and new practices.

Already in Word Rain there are gestures to externalize the architecture of the narrative and its thematic structure; the inside front cover-spread gives a floorplan of the apartment in which the narration of the book takes place, and inside the back cover is a concept diagram showing key terms in an elastic grid of reference. The visual and material design of the book show in practice how Gins' literary effort to defamiliarize her content and extend exploration of the text reaches beyond strictly literary means to all other available materialities useful for extending the efficacy of its (now intermedial) poetics. The white dust jacket consists of a slightly scaled-down photo image of the same book in a white dust jacket, building the self-referentiality of its literary style into the cover design, making this book of all books one it is safe to judge by its cover. Similarly, in her exhaustless effort to involve the reader in this narrative of involved, delayed, obstructed reading, Gins goes so far as to include the hand of the reader, photographically, on the page. In two places the left gutter margin, i.e. in the fold of the book, features in black and white the photo image of a hand's thumb holding the page, right there in the middle of the book, suddenly rupturing our technical expectations as to the nature of these pages, and flagrantly contradicting the materiality of how the pages are actually bound. Between these two incidences, we notice, the thumb (our thumb?) has twitched or shifted slightly up-page. If we compare the pages, we can feel how

much. Literally, in addition to symbolically, the body of the reader, the reader's experience of body, is inserted into the text.

Pursuing certain (poetic) effects of meaning, Gins exploits signifying resources beyond the material limits of a strictly literary practice. Gearing for more poetic effect, in this sense, means turning to less literary tricks. In *Word Rain* we see the author's signifying gestures jump the fence, so to say, into graphic and material fields, with minimalist visual devices discretely integrated in a still very literary printing style. Later we will see the devices fully externalized, the main tools of her evolving (poetic) craft and method shifting through graphic, to haptic, to gestural, to built devices, all the way to a full-blown architectural practice, by now long-established.

### **Architectural Device**

Decisive for Gins not adhering more to the limits of a literary identity and practice, of course, was the lifelong creative partnership with painter Arakawa. Together they pursued the intuition that not language is the prime constitutor of meaning and world, but rather principles of unreduced world-constituting as integral process – language a dimension and a force, but within a body-wide cognition involving all perception, all modes of decoding and cognition. An other way of saying this is that they, as a team, embodied early on the intention to radically reverse the reductionisms (incl. body-mind dualism) we inherit from the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, the kind that support a literary tradition with such strong genre-fidelity and tendencies to overestimate language's centrality to things.

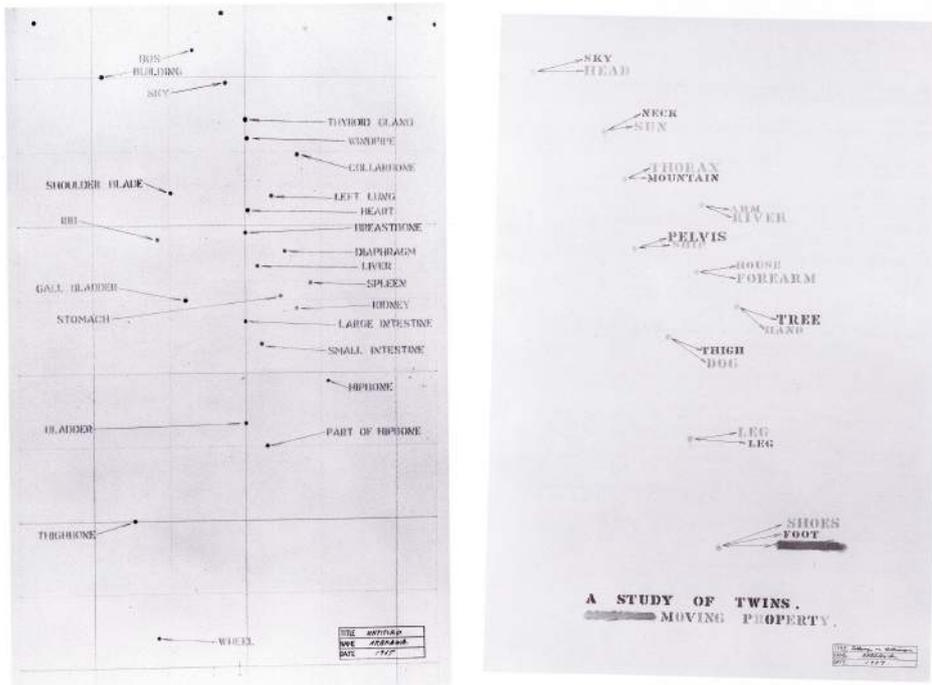
We contend that philosophical puzzles cannot be solved short of a thorough architectural reworking. It is necessary to track how a world comes to be organized in the vicinity of the human organism. Questions need to be asked in a three-hundred-and-sixty-degree way. Context is all, and all contexts lead to the architectural context, newly conceived. (Body xiv)

And set on solving puzzles they were, the puzzles of our humanity and our mortality. Architecturally.

Who or what are we as this species? Puzzle creatures to ourselves, we are visitations of inexplicability. What is in fact the case? (Body xiv)

During the late 60's Arakawa, with already a decade of painting behind him, in a style extremely reduced, abstract, conceptual and focused on "blank", was intensively investigating precisely this hinging between modalities, image and word, space and language. Emblematic is his 1967 piece reading "A LINE IS A CRACK", which he entitled "Landscape". Koan-like it pins down the irresolvable coincidence, like a seam in the möbius strip, between space as world and space as representation, triangulating that further via a doubling of the planes of representation, word and image, image and thing, the word that means the mark that means a fissure that might really open. This intermedial thinking and obsession to understand the mechanisms of constitution underlying meaning and reality, are there from the start for Arakawa, as a neo-Dadaist in Tokyo, then as an acolyte of the elder Duchamp in New York, with examples such as Magritte, Klee, De Chirico, Man Ray and Mallarmé for orientation. As it advances, we see more and more clearly that the body is at the core of his investigations, and how deep

the commitment is to techniques of semic and perceptual destabilization, fully in the legacy of defamiliarization and indeterminacy poetics, but with a more extreme vision of the efficacies available in these techniques.



Arakawa, "Untitled" 1967, and "A Study of Twins – Talking and Walking" 1969, in *Constructing the Perceiver*, pp. 129, 136.

From 1963 to 2010, Arakawa and Gins, in parallel then increasingly together, conducted a highly persistent inquiry into the processes of making/unmaking meaning, and into artistic/poetic techniques for challenging, disrupting, and possibly reordering those processes. They applied, as media learned at various stages for use in a rigorous practice, language, visual language, touch, gesture and, progressively, installation and construction, ultimately engaging "readers" at the scale of full-bodied movement and habitation. At each stage of this investigation, and today in the architecture they have since arrived at and that Gins and her team are still vigorously forwarding, they have pursued a single, sustained artistic program with radical ambitions, based on an idea of efficacy based in the body and in devices for engaging it architecturally. The program has both a heuristic aspect, as a mode of knowledge production, and a transformational aspect. The latter in particular involves an architectural method, evolved through literary and painterly practices, employing precisely the kind of devices Schlovsky identified as defining poetry, devices for delaying perception and postponing closure within a process of reading and construal. But here, an architectural process of reading and construal, a process conducted as/towards becoming "architectural bodies".

The aim of these techniques is, as it was for Schlovsky, to supply more perception, but here perception is understood more fully in its functional intermeshing with cognition and all the processes of embodiment, subject- and world-formation. The benefits Schlovsky sees in a delayed perception, more freedom (because less

automaticity), more openness, more possibility, and more vitality, are multiplied exponentially by the greater contact and access architectural devices achieve in the interface with how we think and are. The shift in medial degree achieved by the move from literary method to architectural method compounds poetry's potential to serve humanity in the ways it has said. Both humanity and mortality here are in question, and radically at play.

Think of what it would mean to elementary school children to be greeted thus by their new teacher at the beginning of the school year:

Children, I can fairly well promise you that if you study hard and always strive to know the full range of the body's capabilities, you will in all probability not have to die.

This, hugely proleptic, hypothetical, is their claim for the field of knowledge a full-bodied puzzling of what is in fact the case with humanity promises. What we would be right to call their architectural poetics, although it's unlikely they would ever use such a term, is presented as a mode of knowledge production with transformational consequences, which can be opened to children from a very young age. The efficacy this optimism banks on, to be unlocked through experimentation with and application of embodied, architectural devices, starts just where the ambitious formulations of the linguists and LANGUAGE poets started, in the principle of a code-determined reality-plasticity:

... a way to reverse the seemingly irreversible destiny of the modern subject. The structures through which we create worlds are not our eternal destiny. Though we are thrown into existence in such a way that conformity to a previously constituted symbolic order is unavoidable, the codes that condition perception and cognition are open to deliberate transformation. (HkoA 250-251)

The phrasing in that last line sounds very close to Whorf's, only "codes" here is plural, and holds no special bias for language. The codes that condition perception and cognition, what A + G call summatively the "code of automaticity", are not primarily linguistic, in fact vital sections are necessarily infra-linguistical, and only engageable below, or around, the activation states of language. On the other hand, so much of what transpires as us transpires precisely in the hand-off back and forth between language and somatics (including perception and the steps of thinking that happen in perception and affect). From this perspective, a serious engagement with the challenge of overturning automaticity, of radically thwarting closure, necessarily forces a critical appraisal of the medium employed. Certainly remaining a poet is less important in this game, as it is in most, than staying on top of the devices and the efficacy that may allow you to achieve your ends.

What is needed? First of all a mode of presentation capable of addressing the whole body, in which size, or at least volume, matters. The writer thinks:

"Jottings and memos having to do with what anything in the world consists of should be made large, even enterable." (HkoA)

I would prefer not to have to go down at all in scale to enter a notebook.

It would be best to have notebook pages that were no smaller than a wall of an average-sized room. (HkoA 232)

Another crucial step in the expansion arc of Gins and Arakawa's poetics is the employment of devices, at the body-scale, that reach out to the reader/viewer for

interaction; we can call these gestural. The extended project of large panels, *The Mechanism of Meaning*, crucial in the cementing of their collaboration and in the discovery of their method, involves an impressive exploration of the intermedial, intra-linguistic function of gestural signs and meanings in a mixed medium of text, image, object and interaction gesture. This brings not only an expansion in the amount or kind of perception employed in the “reading”, the way simply adding texture does, or sound would. It up-shifts the modality of perception altogether. Once perception is engaged in active gestural processes, functioning as full-loop, sensory-motor sub-routines in the act of reading, reading becomes a bodily construction.

The next step in their path toward a full-blown methodology of architectural devices, sketched here schematically rather than biographically, can be seen in their first installation concepts and constructions, and most emblematically in their extensive terrain studies. More than adding walls, engaging the floor represents the step all the way into architecture, “throwing” (in the Heideggerian sense) the body all the way into its dependence on the built for its own possibilities of posture, balance and movement. At this point, we have a properly architectural device, and can begin to observe its use in a method for producing effects, architectural, capable of the old traditional poetic effect, now on another level.



Arakawa and Gins, *Ubiquitous Site X*, 1987-91. ©Madeline Gins/Reversible Destiny Foundation

In their *Ubiquitous Site X*, we see the body drawn out, by architecture, into architecture, toward becoming architecture. The architecturality of the devices is so insistently the point in this effort, that they went to the length of inventing the drape ceiling, to curtain off sight except where it is near-at-hand, or directly under foot, undercutting vision’s habitual way of “seeing” space ahead of things. We now

read Ponge, whom Arakawa and Gins quote too, and in connection with just such devices, differently, concerning the “curious body whose center of gravity is not in himself”. Now this center would seem rather, even in its language-like aspects, to be located in space, and the underlying, world-constituting perception/cognition dynamics “by virtue of which we negotiate our mentalities and the world; off-balance, heavy at the [foot], we are pulled forward”.

### **Architectural Procedure**

The architectural device is neither a new invention, nor a new adoption by poets or literary-minded architects. There are architectural discourses for discerning and assessing devices in buildings and on plans. In the hands of certain architects, the conscious, artistic use of devices may also be said to have led to “poetic” constructions, so called on one basis or another. The basis for calling the use of an architectural device “poetic” is not well established. The theory of how architectural devices have poetic effects is far less developed than visual poetics, where an indisputable body of “visual poetry” exists in connection with literary tradition. The idea of a built, architectural poem, or poetry, meets with a lot of skepticism, and I think it should. But even short of that, there are plenty of examples of literary impulses embodied in architectural forms. Dali comes to mind with his castle(\*), which imports elements (imagery) of a surrealist poetics in its ornamentation. Another type would be poetic importations at a more structural level (syntax), where we can more properly speak of architectural devices having architectural effects, or their poetic effects architecturally. In an understanding of architectural poetics at this level, as conventions of building bent poetically, we could even include Eisenmann with his deconstructed grids, if we wanted to, or, in a contrarily directed poetics, Hundertwasser. This leaves unanswered the question of how anything built could be called poetry, or poetic in a rigorous sense. But, remember, this has not been our question here. In tracing the fate of this quintessential poetic device into architecture, I have not been concerned to show the survival of literature in new forms, but rather to trace the progress of action on this impulse, the impulse to oppose closure, and root out the efficacy for doing so effectively.

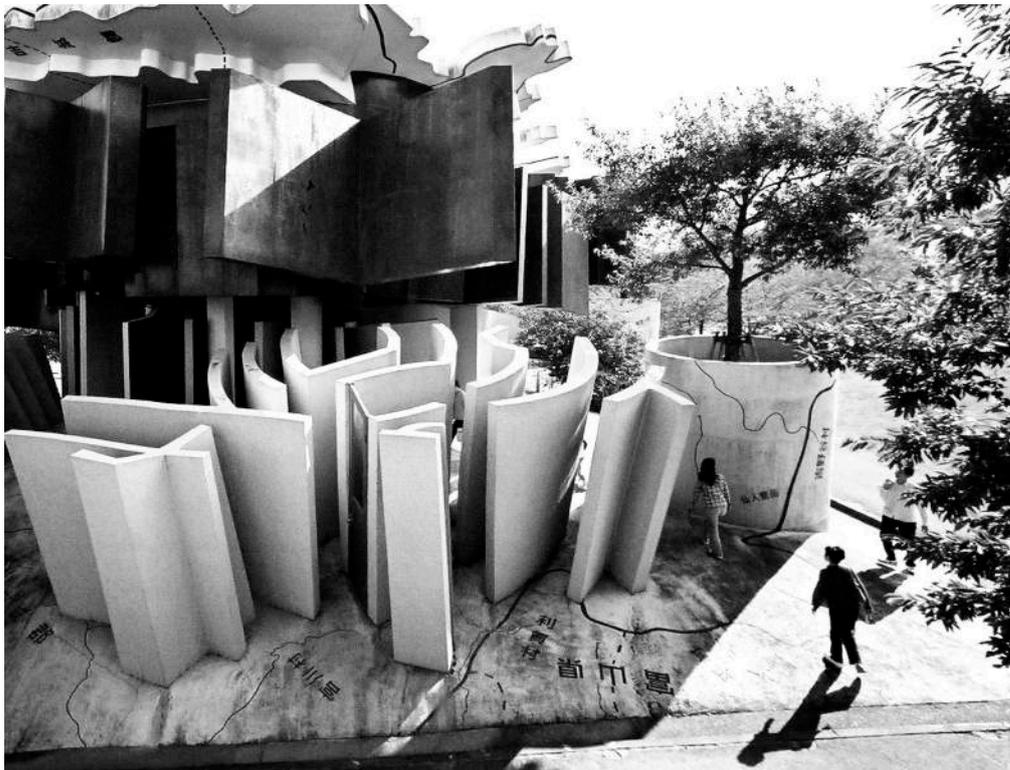
With Arakawa and Gins, what we see is an artistic program with a serious grounding in experimental literary method and tradition, setting up shop in architecture, building a method of applying architectural devices in built surrounds. Their “procedural architecture” announces the full, successful, rigorous transmission arrival of an age-old poetic program into architectural practice, and has produced highly original works with strong claims to be read, and lived, seriously. But this project, remember, had promised to do more than poetry. So, how do we evaluate this method of devices in relation to its claims to efficacy? What makes the rejection of closure, waged by architectural means, more effective than waged in words?

The answer comes down to the defining term for this architectural method, procedurality. If in a first degree the Reversible Destiny project remediates the program of experimental poetics into architectural terms, in a second it extends the program, and poetics altogether, based on its new resources for realizing the transformative efficacies literature has always dreamed of. The procedure is, in its

formulation here, new to poetics, neither impossible nor unknown in literary work<sup>1</sup>, but realized only in a remediation that ups the ante of the aesthetic encounter through full-body, active engagement, i.e. architecture.

An architectural surround that is functional, such as a space capsule, and such as the greater part of the built world of our day, facilitates an organism that persons in its actions, extending the senses no questions asked, whereas an architectural surround that is procedural, a tactically posed surround, fills an organism that persons with questions by enabling it to move within and between its own modes of sensing. (AB ...)

The efficacy of the device is two-step, device-effect. A procedure coordinates devices, and builds complex perception-action cycles by joining and sequencing them, in a field filled by the embodied conscious dynamics of an architected subject with presence, sense and action. More steps are built in to the poetics, and the efficacy penetrates. In a procedure it goes device-effect-action-effect. The impact becomes a process, and one actively engaged in by the "reader" body. The ordering of devices to a) reflect awareness onto the process and the devices themselves, and b) destabilize our habitual ways of (per-)forming in that process and in relation to those constraints, makes of the devices a procedure. Devices + processual action = procedure. Process + awareness because action = procedurality. And procedurality, applied to counter closure in exercises of construal = a new wager of poetic efficacy.



"Critical Resemblance House" Site of Reversible Destiny, Yoro, Japan, Arakawa and Gins, 1995.

<sup>1</sup> In fact, it would seem the whole tradition of thinking the literary device will need to be re-sorted in light of these new articulations. Certainly there are many articulations writers have made in terms of devices, that in view of the complexity and reflexivity of the strategies they employ ought rightly to be put forth in terms of procedures. Mallarmé, in the full version of his ambitions, would certainly be a candidate, for the genre of a possible procedural, at least proto-procedural literature. Oulipo's "operations" dedicated to generating chance meaning are probably proto-procedures, certainly missing a vital step or three. Procedurality or proto-procedurality could also no doubt be analyzed out of the writings and behavior of the College of Pataphysics.

Steps four and five of eight from the "Directions for Architectural Procedure Invention and Assembly":

STEP FOUR

Strive throughout your body to imagine sequences of actions (also, if need be, [provisionally] isolated actions) that might lead to or in some way be constitutive of what you seek to put in place, which is to say, assemble a list of bodily actions that could directly get you to your hoped-for outcome even before you have begun to manage the situation architecturally; which is furthermore to say, have at the ready all those actions that could nudge events in the direction of your nascent architectural procedure's hoped-for outcome....

STEP FIVE

Think of how to structure into a built surround the capacity to call forth precisely what it is you seek. Devise architectural elements and features, and various juxtapositions of them, that will help call this forth...(MDI 150)

...

Building a work of procedural architecture has everything to do with positioning architectural features and elements so as to give physical shape to architectural procedures... (MDI 115)

The agencying (agencement) of features and detail into devices, and of those devices into procedures with transformative efficacy, this is the work of the procedural architect. What the procedural architect with hisr method constructs is an architecture, but not one defined by service in a functional/visual/aesthetic integration for comfort and utility, but rather by its service in a procedural, complexly somaesthetic integration for enactment by the user as/towards being an architectural body. Architecture's ability to do this, consciously and effectively, relies on the systematicity of means procedural architecture identifies and exploits, their leveragability in a system of expressions linking tightly to action potentials within the body, a body that understands itself and produces world as sited awareness. Interestingly, this extra accomplishment, this overcoming of the limits of the literary that also shows up architecture on some of its own turf, comes down precisely to the last trace of the literariness procedural architecture as a practice has otherwise left behind. The complexity and possible precision of the architectural procedure hangs on its inherence in a system of assembly with functional parallels to language.

It is by relying on juxtaposed repeatable and re-combinable items that verbal discourse, with great sleight of mouth (or hand), encompasses and presents sequentially considered events. Modularly constructed areas and the architectural procedures they engender will be the juxtaposed repeatable and re-combinable items of a built discourse.

...Discursive sequences of tactically posed surrounds, constructed as built propositions, marshal existing logical connectives and position newly invented ones into the "real," steering, regulating, and guiding interactions between body and bioscleave through three-dimensional THEREFORES, BUTS, ORS, ANDS, and built-up WHATEVERS.

...Walking along will be discoursing along through an argument of strategic allocations and reallocations. 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.

Viewed this way, and given what it is given to doing with this built discourse, procedural architecture can be seen as a culmination of poetics also rigorously understood. While in general Arakawa and Gins have no use for the word poetry, they do say this explicitly:

...tactically posed surrounds, combining ... procedures as they do, are ... the phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and texts...[of a "built discourse"]. Surely, as well, 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, poems that could only heretofore be intimidated by an insufficiently procedural bioscleave. (Body 57)

Though it's not a remark they have spent any time repeating, there is material for substantiating the explicit match, between formulations of their procedural architecture and of "classic" 20<sup>th</sup> Century experimental poetics - for example between "a flowering focus on a distinct infinity", Hejinian's description of the "conjunction of form with radical openness," and this description of what procedurality does/allows the body to do:

The body moves through a tactically posed town puzzling itself out of focus and then back into it, now with a wider yet sharper focus. (Body 56-59)

All of Schlovsky's promises for what estrangement and a slowed reception can do in literary devices seem finally realized, and all of Hejinian's spatial metaphors for the poetic literalized, when Gins and Arakawa explain:

Comfort 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 on itself in transit. Reversible destiny houses consist primarily of entrances. One entry having been achieved, another situation of entering commences. The sensorium enters its own signals. (WHDNTD 241)

The body must either escape or "reenter" habitual patterns of action - habitual actions that have customized life into only a few standard patterns. Upon the body's mastering new patterns of action, bioscleave emerges reconfigured. (AB 62)

## **Reversible Destiny**

Architecture will come into its own when it becomes thoroughly associated and aligned with the body, that active other tentative constructing towards a holding in place, the ever-on-the-move body.

...

Architectural procedures can and should be used both to investigate and to alter prevailing conditions. (MDI ...)

...

Procedural architecture, understood as the science and skill of constructing architectural procedures, is also the design art of leveraging effects, often at a two- or three-step remove from the devices used to trigger them. This implies some

psychology. Architects who do this, procedural architecture, must not only take care of everything at the levels of form, volume, feature and program, but also at the level of how architecture gears into the human organism and the dynamics of its creating world and moving through it. As a project, reversible destiny, having invented procedural architecture, is based on a claim to efficacy that has not been claimed before.

#### The Three Hypotheses of Procedural Architecture

1) What stems from the body, by way of awareness, should be held to be of it. Any site at which a person finds an X to exist should be considered a contributing segment of her awareness. - Architectural Body / Sited Awareness Hypothesis

2) It is because we are creatures of an insufficiently procedural bioscience that the human lot remains untenable. - Insufficiently Procedural Bioscience Hypothesis

3) Adding carefully sequenced sets of architectural procedures (closely argued ones) to bioscience will, by making it more procedurally sufficient, reconfigure supposed inevitability. - Closely-Argued Built-Discourse Hypothesis (AB ...)

...

In a rephrasing of the hypothesis under discussion here, a closely-argued built discourse can foster fundamental reconfigurings of bioscience that will constitute or lead to a restructuring of viability, to be translated immediately into life on new terms. (AB 61)

The validity of this claim, any earnest of its ability to positively impact viability, in turn depends on pathways of cognitive engagement and activation that may not yet have an explanation. The psychology of embodied cognition and biological accounts of how cognitive dynamics impact processes of organic function (life), have a lot for procedural architecture to learn from, and more than a little to learn from procedural architecture.

Understanding the efficacy wagered by procedural architecture not only depends on insights emerging from cognitive science, but also itself advances an original jargon, rigorously (or as the jargon itself would specify, "approximative/rigorously") defined, which gets out ahead of the field on many important topics, to say nothing of the more-or-less cognitively informed field of architectural theorizing. Gins and Arakawa's formulations concerning the architectural body in particular represent a stage in our understanding of the interplay/codetermination between architectural and somatic dimensions that cognitive science is only catching up with slowly, (e.g. in the fields of extended cognition and radical embodied cognition; cf. Clark 2008 and Chemero 2011), and that even architects, whose central subject of study this should be, have still for the most part not reached.

A very welcome exception to this is the new book, published this year, by Angelika Jäkel, called *Gestik des Raumes: zur leiblichen Kommunikation zwischen Benutzer and Raum in der Architektur (Spatial Gesture: on the bodily communication between user and space in architecture)*. It shows up, in the slow stream of German phenomenology, suddenly strikingly near in its formulations to Arakawa and Gins' architectural body theory, and the sited awareness hypothesis of procedural architecture.

Räumliche Gesten haben also einen zweifachen Charakter: Sie sind gleichzeitig kommunikativ und mittels ihrer Bewegungen erzeugen sie Kraftfelder, Richtungen und Bezogenheiten, d.h. sie selber sind, die Raum zu gliedern vermögen und -daraus folgend - bestimmte Bewegungen der Benutzer motivieren. In dieser Charakterisierung der Geste sind parabelartig alle diejenigen Kompetenzen angesprochen, welche auch die architektonische Geste zum ersten Ausdrucksmedium des Raumes macht. (Jäkel 186)

Ich habe im Abschnitt über den Gestischen Raum: die Gestalten des Herum haben ein "Verhalten" ...von dessen Ausdruck das Subjekt ergriffen wird, mehr noch: Subjekt und Herumn'verschmelzen' im Hinblick auf Bewegungseinstellungen zu einer Ganzheit, wie Durkheim sagt. Diesen Gedanken habe ich um den dialogischen Aspekt der Geste erweitert, indem ich die Art und Weise des "Antwortens" in der möglichen und wirklichen Bewegung des Benutzers lokalisiert habe. Nicht der Körper des Benutzers allein ist der Ort dieses Dialogs, sondern sein im Raum und an den Dingen 'hängender', in Situationen verankerte Leib mit seinen vielfachen Kompetenzen des Spürens und des Agierens.

...  
Insofern wäre im Konzept der architektonischen Geste der Zwischenstatus der leiblichen Intentionalität zwischen Subject und Objekt entfaltet, der favorisierte Zugang zur Welt wäre dann das Ineinander von Spüren und Sich-Bewegen. (Jäkel, Gestik des Raumes 180)

These passages can stand to mark a state of the art in architectural theory of space today, a rigorous thinking anchored clearly in a strong personal intuition of space on the part of the author. A state of the art, however, short of procedural architecture.

What permanently distinguishes procedural architecture in its Arakawa and Gins formulation from even the best phenomenological theory, is the aim of its efficacy: the wager of parlaying more life out of the surroundings through a researched tactical shaping of them. What makes it unique as design are the devices it develops and employs, and the way it employs them in two- and three-step strategies for leveraging this newly-theorized efficacy, latent in the architectural body, "both to investigate and to alter prevailing conditions."

What distinguishes procedural architecture in its Arakawa and Gins style from anything else right now, will not permanently distinguish it. There are a million ways to approach the invention and assembly of architectural procedures, as many different scales and angles for aiming an architectural practice, via an optimization of the procedurality it builds in, at life-forwarding and -transformational effects. The hypothesis of sited awareness, and of a "closely-argued built discourse" able to "reconfigure supposed inevitability", ground a new practice and a new science, a first-person science that redoes phenomenology in new and more open, more approximative/rigorous terms. Exemplifying the immanentist approach Gins and Arakawa take to science, as rightly aimed at articulating "a complexity of within rather than one of beyond" (AB xiii), Landing Theory restarts the

Landing site theory is even more deeply in line with the body phenomenology rediscovered than phenomenology. In addition it holds a far more radical horizon, and has a concrete commitment to building.

The elaboration of procedures, and the construction of architectural surrounds tactically posed to hold them is the work of procedural architects, or of architects, you, who decide to begin designing procedurally, or think they already are.

### The method

In fielding her surroundings, she makes use of cues from the environment to assign volume and a host of particulars to world and to body, complying with what comes her way as best she can.

This theory, subsumed under the name "biotopology", supplies something new in the development path of experimental poetics, and also something long-overdue in the architectural theory of space. It is also a something that has met with serious interest among philosophers and critical theorists. To the programmatic, functional, volumetric, and visual understandings of space generally expected of architects, procedural architecture adds understanding of the architectural body and of the dynamics of sited awareness that subtend it. And to philosophy, which has generally not addressed such questions in such ways, it adds the same forms of knowledge and practice, as tools for understanding, and for resolving fundamental questions.

We contend that philosophical puzzles cannot be solved short of a thorough architectural reworking. It is necessary to track how a world comes to be organized in the vicinity of the human organism. Questions need to be asked in a three-hundred-and-sixty-degree way.

...

Only subsequent to there having been an architectural revolution, a thorough re-visioning of architecture, will difficult questions such as those above call forth answers in the bodies of our contemporaries. (AB xiv, xv)

This is the challenge procedural architecture poses to architectural practice today, especially to an architecture tempted to look back to literature for inspiration on methods. With all the knowledges of body, building and mind at our disposal, how much could we do for the body, if we were to do everything for the body? In times as serious as ours, with our viability as a society/species/planet rapidly slipping our grasp, there is not much of poetry I would say is worth reaching for right now. But this we can take, I would say, this radical upping of historical antes on the project of thwarting closure, by all means necessary, and necessarily by all means. Get to it, architecture. Thank you for listening.

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