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# A Snailspace

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Oh to have the opportunities of a snail!!!  
(Gins and Arakawa 2002: 32)

Toward the middle of the *Architectural Body*, in a chapter titled “Architecture as Hypothesis,” Arakawa and Gins state that for them architecture means *a tentative constructing toward a holding in place* (23, emphasis in original). “Walk into this building,” they continue in leading the way, “and you walk into a purposeful guess. The built world floats a hypothesis or two as to how and by what the apportioned out comes to be everywhere, the everywhere” (23). It is hard to tell what the *guess* might be until, in the dialogue that follows, two *guests*, two stand-ins for the readers, pay the authors a visit. Arakawa welcomes “Angela” and “Robert” not with the appropriate sign that mediates the rush of doubt or strangeness that comes with the arrival of a stranger—“hello, be my guest,” words spoken to dispel disquiet—but with a spatial marker, a deictic that locates the presence of what seems to be an absent dwelling. “Here is the house we were telling you about,” he says, to which Angela responds with a deictic that mirrors his own, “I don’t see any house here.” The house that she comes to see becomes, it is hoped to be shown in this recorded lecture, an event of the first magnitude.

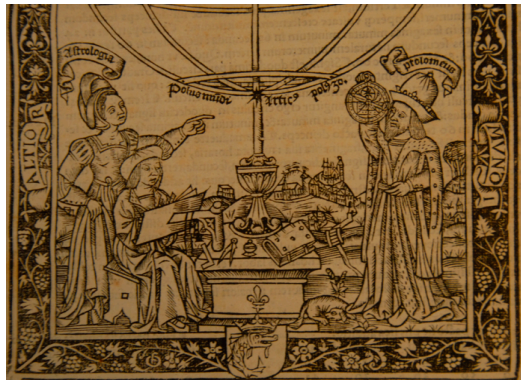
The words of the exchange between the guests and the hosts appear to invent the space and place of the “house” Gins and Arakawa purport to be at once somewhere and everywhere. What they call the *apportioned* out happens to be *in* and *into* a space that moves *out*, outside, perhaps onto anywhere out of this

world. The architectural body of their house begins from a place, that is clearly what Angela and Robert perceived and what in French goes by the name of a *terrain vague*—both a sort of “non-place” [non-lieu] or an “any-place-whatsoever” [lieu quelconque] and an abstract point of origin—where perception and the imagination come together. The dialogue at once rehearses and stages the sensation of a space, felt “here”, that moves forward and about until there is gained a sense of an open totality of the world at large, “out there”. The syntax (and Gins and Arakawa’s syntax and diction is of a signature that would be the topic worth pursuing) indicates that a local area, which is perhaps a site where sensation and perception project into the world extramissively, gives out or onto somewhere else. The *out* of their “apportioned out” turns an adverb into a noun bearing spatial virtue. It “comes to be” or in other words, it *becomes* itself, intransitively and ubiquitously, intramissively too, before it is qualified nominatively as the entirety of the world, “*the everywhere*.” The hypothesis that they call a *purposeful guess* engages the tactile movement of perception goes into the world such that a locale and an open whole are felt to be as much within and without.

*A tentative constructing toward a holding in place* appears to share uncommon affinity with at least two related issues that bear on the theory and practice of space. One, belonging to inherited axioms of cosmography and topography, deals with the conundrum that any perception of a “whole” or of the place that the world in which we live occupies in the heavens cannot be felt without a more immediate and heightened sense of somewhere *here*, local, without which a containing (or in a theological context, at once an originary and a redemptive) matrix cannot be discerned. When Arakawa and Gins write of a movement toward a “holding in place” what they call the place would be a sort of topographical umbilicus, the area from which any and everyone of us feels that he or she has been separated or divided in order to *be* located and registered in a greater world. In an early modern sphere of thinking it is the astrologer, accompanying the midwife at the moment of the birth of a child of royal lineage (or here who accompanies the cartographer who heeds Ptolemy), who determines *exactly* the relation between the birthplace and the forces of the



heavens that bear on the infant as it moves out of the mother's womb and enters into the world. The astrologer accounts for the tensions of the planets that affect the character of the baby when it is born into *that* place—and not another—at a determined point in this world, at a given time, the coordinates of which bear upon and even shape the character of the infant. Implied is that the infant is situated and somewhat pre-destined; that its psychic and physical geography begins from where it first is in respect to a fabulously extensive and limitless world; that its being can only be felt on the basis of the point whence it begins or begins to become. Implied too, is that “constructing toward a holding in place” carries a highly psychogenetic force for the reason that the expression requires us to think of the fate of place which we might wish to believe determines how we happen to be where we are and, perhaps less immediately, what and how we do with our ongoing spatial psychogenesis. In glossing Arakawa and Gins' words, the matter of *constructing toward* could be both psychical and embryonic, a continual growth of perception of place by way of motion or motor force allowing, *chemin faisant*, as it goes, a greater sense, first, of the distinction between *here* and *there*, and then, in continual process, of their common identity—and vice-versa.



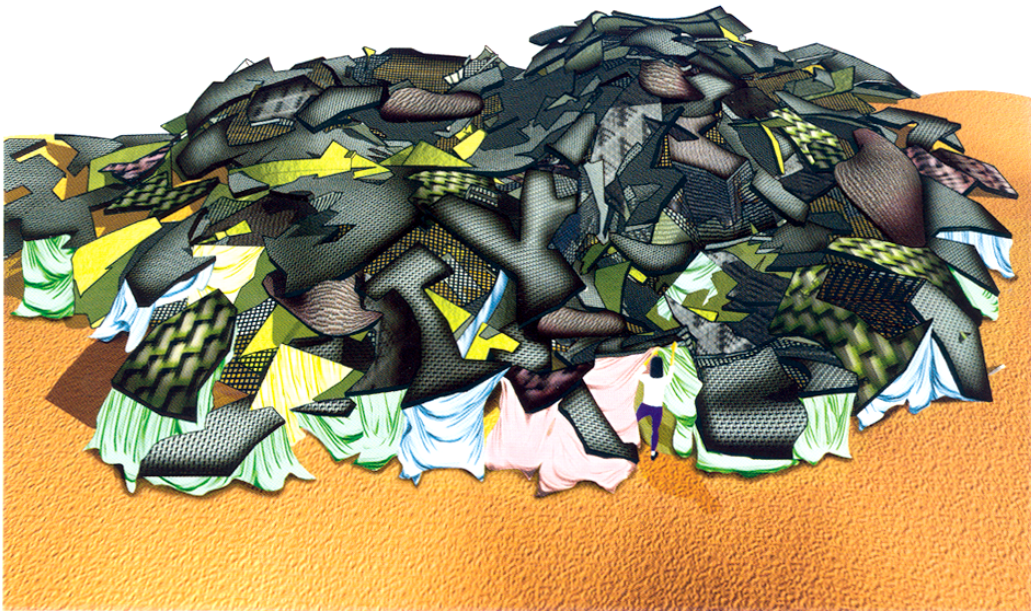
**Fig. 1:** In early modern thinking the astrologer accompanies the cartographer to account for the affects of place.

If *constructing toward* is as psychogenetic as the gerund implies it emerges from a paradox on which geographers and theorists of space have shared for centuries: that the construction of an “everywhere” depends on that of a “now here” that

denies or even must disavow its own sense of itself as being “nowhere.” [1] As a first point, it can be said that Arakawa and Gins build on a deeply embedded paradox in which a growing sentience of space and place gives rise to perpetual doubt about where one is whenever and wherever one moves. The feeling of being “here” that goes with troping toward something “there” is discerned when architecture, that is, what is sense to be before and about our sentient faculties, is already in the movement that the gerund makes clear: when we are *constructing toward* a space that is located by its architecture the very architecture is being built within us, when building—always in the gerundive—is happening within us.

Now, as a first point, what we understand by a *constructing toward a holding in place* figures in an almost timeless field of tension between sentience that is by nature *topographical* and intellect, which leans toward the *cosmological*. When we are constructing toward we touch upon what is immediate and in our vicinity. When, coextensively, we reflect on touching we wonder about how a “holding in place” can be held in a greater and even infinite extension without grounding. Reflection turns on the very traction of attraction. Arakawa and Gins invite their guests to heed the ways that that a sense of proximity comes from within and without the body, and how that proximity gives way to an anchoring in space for reason that the latter is indefinite and often inscrutable. They force us to reconsider the grounding principles of geography as they have been inherited from Ptolemy. As a second point, which will be treated in the first place, their architectural body is one in which the built form constructs itself within the sentient being as it moves in the world. The body draws at once from itself what it encounters at the same time it gains awareness of its environment in what it senses in its midst. In doing so it creates, in a strong philosophical sense, an *event* of itself. To see how it suffices to see how and why Gins and Arakawa ask the guests who visit their garden to *become snails*. For them the snail’s pace is the snail’s space and the snail’s place. The snail becomes the emblem of the event, which they call the tentative constructing toward a holding in place.

When Angela (whose name carries inflections of angularity, of angles in the stenography of geometers that are emblems of eyes seen in profile) opens herself to her host's space, cognizant of some kind of "handle" she is holding, that Arakawa deftly tells her, "you need to slide it to the left at the same time you push it upwards" (2002: 25). Angela suddenly remarks, "If I push it to one side...It is as if *I am that snail*...How does that song go again?" (25, emphasis added). Gins responds that she easily recalls "that song whose lyrics are the parent text to this house's theme song" which is titled *Snails*. A note following lyrics indicates that the verse of four stanzas is taken from *Escargots*, a poem in Francis Ponge's *Parti pris des choses*, whose musings "adumbrate our concept of an architectural body" (26). In accord with analogy and relativity, and in playing on the quasi-identity of things infinite and things intimate, of the identity of things organic and things inorganic, the authors note that the snails' architectural heritage is of stature equal to that of the human species and, "far more intimate," indeed "prefigures the concept of an architectural body, a concept that, for us, has been decades in the making" (27).



Ubiquitous Site House, 1994-95

**Fig. 2:** Ubiquitous Site House, 1994-95.

The theme song extracts certain elements from Ponge's otherwise loquacious poem, of greater girth than "Le Mollusque" that seems to announce its coming and "Le Papillon" and "La Mousse" that follow (Ponge 1999: 24-27). Much of the lyric is extracted from the opening lines:

Au contraire des escarbilles qui sont les hôtes des cendres chaudes, les escargots aiment la terre humide. *Go on*, ils avancent collées à elle de tout leur corps. Ils en emportent, ils en mangent, ils en excrémentent. Elle les traverse. Ils la traversent. C'est une interpénétration du meilleur goût parce que pour ainsi dire ton sur ton—avec un élément actif, le passif baignant à la fois et nourrissant l'actif, le passif baignant à la fois et nourrissant l'actif—qui se déplace en même temps qu'il mange.

[To the contrary of the pieces of grit that are the hosts of hot cinders, snails love humid earth. *Vas-y*, they advance with it stuck all over their body. They carry it off, they eat it, they excrement it. It goes through them. They go through it. It's an interpenetration of the best taste because, so to speak, tone on tone—with an active element the passive at once coddling and nourishing the active—which moves at the same time it eats.]

The gloss jumps ahead to take note of what the poem states about the gastropod's chastity. "The moment it displays its nudity,/reveals its vulnerable form,/its modesty compels it to move on./No sooner does it expose itself than it's on the go," which translates

[s]a pudeur l'oblige à se mouvoir dès qu'il montre sa nudité, qu'il livre sa forme vulnérable. Dès qu'il s'expose, il marche....

Then returning to the beginning of the same paragraph,

A remarquer d'ailleurs que l'on ne conçoit pas un escargot sorti de sa coquille et ne se mouvant pas. Dès qu'il repose, il rentre aussitôt au fond de lui-même. Au contraire, sa pudeur.... (25)

Thus having the song make clear, to the contrary of the order of Ponge's poem, the authors show that the physical movement into space precedes its reflection on its own movement. The speaker of Ponge's lines remarks that when it is at rest the snail immediately retracts [*rentre*, a verb that has much to do with the

refrain of a *rondeau*, a late-medieval poem whose architecture is as round and inwardly turning as the shell of the snail] into itself, as if in inner cogitation until, to the contrary, it begins to move when it exposes its nudity to the world. [2] It streaks. But it streaks in a space, at a place and in a pace of its own. For Ponge the snail at rest gets going, and for Arakawa and Gins it goes, it stops to consider itself, it goes on, and then possibly thinks about where it is moving while holding itself in place. They insist that the snail is glued “bodily” to a first shell, its own, and to a second, the “clumped earth” that they eat and excrete so deliciously that they go through it as much as it goes through them. The snail’s body is what attaches the constructed space of its own to what it assimilates.

They excise Ponge’s distinction between the gastropod’s “active” and “passive” elements to have the creature be one with and of the world at large, and they leave aside the phrases where the voice of the poem becomes that of the snail itself, assimilated into that of Louis XVI, in his famous remark about the end of the *ancien régime*, inspired by the pun on being glued to the ground [collé] and being guillotined [décollé], becomes the shifter that allows the snail to think and to move through the writer and reader:

A la fois si *collé* au sol, si touchant et si lent, si progressif et si capable de me *décoller* du sol pour rentrer en moi-même et alors *après moi le deluge* un coup de pied peut me faire rouler n’importe où. Je suis bien sûr de me rétablir sur pied et de *recoller* au sol où le sort m’aura relegué et d’y trouver ma pâture: la terre, le plus commun des aliments. (26, emphasis added)

[At once so glued to the ground, so touching and so slow, so progressive and so capable of taking off or detaching from the ground in order to go back into myself and then *après moi le deluge* a good kick can make roll anywhere, I’ll surely land footfirst and then reattach myself to the ground on which fate will have relegated me and therein find my pasture: the earth, the common of all foods.]

When the snail is kicked, like the king, his head falls and rolls (and is perhaps held aloft to the world in the Place de la Concorde), but unlike the monarch when he falls, hardly decapitated, his head snug in his shell, his helmet

protecting him from the shock of landing, he reglues himself to the *terra firma*, the common ground whence he came.

The implied political history of the snail's two bodies is left aside, and so also is what the poem makes of the snail's solitude, its discretion, the eyes of its antennae and its spittle. With these traits the snail bears a king's demeanor. "Seul, évidemment l'escargot est bien seul" [Alone, obviously, the snail is indeed solitary]. Like a regent, "[i]l n'a pas beaucoup d'amis" (26) [he doesn't have many friends]. Perhaps, notes the poem, his majesty owes to an inherently self-contained—indeed discreet—quality that ennobles the earth when the one creature becomes a collective body." "Rien n'est si beau comme cette façon d'avancer si lente et si sûre et si discrete, au pris de quels efforts ce glissement parfait dont ils honorent la terre" [Nothing could be more handsome than this way of moving ahead so slowly and so surely and so discreetly, and at the cost of what efforts this perfect slippage with which they honor the earth]. And if the snail succumbs to anger it translates into drool—*bave*—rather than cackle, noise or yacking—*bavardage*. Because the snail cannot spread its arms as does Angela when she moves into space, it lets its excretion become its best of mode expression. "La colure des escargots est-elle perceptible? Y en a-t-il des exemples? Comme elle est sans aucun geste, sans doute se manifeste-t-elle par une secretion de bave plus floculente et plus rapide. Cette bave d'orgueil. L'on voit ici que l'expression de leur colère est la même que celle de leur orgueil" (26), which becomes their "trace," a form of writing that becomes "brilliant when drying" (27). And any and every reader who touches the words of the poem as might the snail that moves over them quickly notes that in Francis Ponge is the very presence of the *escargot*. [3]

Certain features comport the sentient body while others, such as Ponge's historical inflections, do not. That certain composite traits are left aside in Gins and Arakawa's appreciation of the snail indicates that they refuse to personify the architectural body in an anthropomorphic fantasy but, rather, for the ends of their study of the relation of space and sentience, to *gastropodize* the human that had traditionally been an origin and center of architectural measure. Such is why

they write of *humansnails* in the pages that follow. In positing an architecture of *what if* (2002: 29), something intentionally (and, with a Cartesian echo), *provisional*, tentative and adaptive form, Arakawa and Gins lead Angela and Robert into their living room that is equipped with a Honeywell-like spatial thermostat (that calibrates distances, much as lines of latitudes on topographical or hemispheric projections distinguish climes to the north and south of the Equator) for which the zero degree is the *snail setting* in which furnishings are close to each other, and then a *close-to-snail setting* where things are at “a slight remove from those within it,” prior to a *roomy* degree that, contrary to the world of invertebrates, marks a space where “spine-deploying mechanisms are fully engaged” (30).

A second poem titled “Humansnails,” follows and responds to the first in the manner of a palinode (2002: 30-32). A rewriting of Ponge’s *Escargots*, the verse, which Arakawa calls “solemnly merry stanzas” (30), serves a guide for those who are becoming-snails. Like the exemplary gastropod, they also glue themselves to the ground on which they move; transform the earth into themselves and the architecture of their bodies; “expel, exude, and disperse it” as well (31); go through telluric matter just as it goes through them. They ingest and excrete their architecture in symbiosis with the most immediately proximate space. Drawing, much as the gastropod moving over the page of Ponge’s poem, figures from the material not cited in the first verse, the poem reprises interpenetration of active and passive elements by suggesting that a first shell, that is the tender protoplasm of the body and “wrappings of sited [hence topographical] awareness”, is covered by a protective “second shell” or skin that is an architectural surround, perhaps snail’s own *coquille*. It ends, too, where Ponge had remarked that the humansnail cannot emerge from its shell without moving, and there when it stops to rest it retracts “into its next pair of shells” (32). This beloved creature is naturally timid, and in all likelihood, like an animal of Duchamp’s ilk, it is given more to breathing than to working. It feels how its actions grow out of it “like fingernails” (32), which would be the delicate antennae that might also be a snailfinger. It can find infinite wealth in the way, in

all modesty, it touches the world through a sense in which the eye might indeed be the gastropod's proboscis.

Toward the end of *Escargots* Ponge goes on to note that snails are fabled because, like all creatures whose home is their carapace, a part [*partie*] of their being is "at the same time a work of art, a monument" (2002: 27) that lasts longer they. They are saints for the reason that they make their lives and their beings a work of art—a work of art from their perfection" (27). "Leur sécrétion même se produit de telle manière qu'elle se met en forme. Rien d'extérieur à eux, à leur nécessité, à leur besoin n'est leur oeuvre. Rien de disproportionné—d'autre part—à leur être physique" (27) [Their very secretion is produced so as to be set into form. Nothing outside of them, of their necessity, of needs is of their work. Nothing—furthermore—is disproportionate to their physical being]. Their being is so perfect that their ejections or secretions are part of them. They are in and of the architecture of their surrounding and, furthermore, what makes them the creation they are is an inherent modesty and a tentative way of living with themselves and the spaces they build from within and without their bodies. And the letters of their name they carry with them, before the fact, the signature of the poet, which is traced through them. Any and every reader quickly notes that in *francisponge* is the very presence of the *escargot*.

They belong to a currently arcane tradition, hint Gins and Arakawa, in which natural science, fable, emblem, architecture and visual tact are of the same order. In the tradition of the blazon and especially the paradoxical encomium small creatures gain great and exemplary stature. The snail that epitomizes the architectural body has a special place in the early modern world, and it is hardly by chance that the gastropod figures prominently in works that make modest creatures figure eminently in great hieroglyphs. In poet-publisher Gilles Corrozet's *Hécatomgraphie* (1541) and in his translations of Aesop's *Fables* insignificant species often figure in the kind of architecture that Gins and Arakawa dedicate

To those who have wanted to go on  
Living and been unable to



And therefore  
Even more so

To transhumans (2002: v)

Such is the snail of the twentieth emblem of the *Hécatomgraphie*. The gastropod is set in the broken surround of frame enclosing a monolingual emblem in which a motto in superscription, *Secret est à louer* [Secrecy is praiseworthy], is set above the surround of an integral oblong frame that encloses the woodcut image of a snail that emerges from a cave or a dark lair. Below the image (or, in the idiolect of the emblem, the *inscriptio*) and within is a quatrain in *subscriptio* that “explains” or mediates between what is seen and what is read just above: “Just as the slug lives/In his shell in great secrecy/So then humans carry themselves/Enclosed & covered in discretion.

The snail is the totem of diplomacy and of carefully wrought and measured speech. Yet the image that portrays these saintly virtues would seem to have little to do with the abstraction of codes of good comportment. The hatching of arcs that define its outer shell stands out against the dense lines that mark the dark background out of which the gastropod is moving. Erect, its two antennae stand (almost like the rabbit ears perched on a television set of years past) in the atmosphere as if they were touching the air and light of the landscape to the right of the cave. A pruned trunk or stock standing adjacent to the snail’s head, its four shoots resembling the two antennae, seems to be a vegetal counterpart to the snail and an element, with the elongated tree trunk on the other side of the scene, that frames the creature. It is shown seeing by means of the antennae that *touch* the atmosphere and the skin of the snail that rides over a tuft of grass that it presumably ingests. The spiral shell stands in front of—or is enclosed by—the rocky outline of the cave that soon resembles the socket in which an oculus is in orbit. In the play of figure and ground the snail and its milieu form a gigantic eye staring directly at the viewer. Yet the eye moves out of the lair and into the light as if, far beyond the meaning the text ascribes to it, it were a *tentative constructing toward a holding in place*.



Fig. 3: The snail from Janot's Hecatographie (1541).

The eye that emerges from the emblem becomes its "secret," indeed the *secretion* of a bodily architecture far from the abstraction that the surrounding text (in octosyllable, on the opposite folio) assigns to the image of the snail. [4] When the gastropod is seen in "tentative" movement into a world beyond itself it belongs to a construction in which the immediacy of ocular touch – if, expanding on Paul Claudel's formula, the "eye listens" (*l'oeil écoute*), here it could be said that "the eye touches." It touches on the decorated frame of ornately drawn animal and vegetal motifs while it take part in its own enigma. It arches forward but also inward, as if it were turning within and outside of itself in its staging of sentience.



Fig. 4: The snail as the eye that touches.

Yet, when seen as a pupil and part of an image of an isolated eye the snail indicates that it may belong, much like *Architectural Body*, to an articulation of a “roomy” or even cosmic setting upon the “snailspace” for which it serves as an embryonic emblem. In synchronous manuals of cosmography, the science devoted to the description of the world in the greater milieu of the heavens, various authors—Ptolemy, Johannes Werner, Pieter Apian, Antoine du Pinet—explain the distinction of geography and topography through the juxtaposition, on the one hand, of a world map and a portrait of a sitter, adjacent, on the other, to a city-view contiguous with the image of an isolated eye and ear. Such are the elements that are distributed in Vivant Gaultierot’s woodcut image that efficiently (if not abruptly and arrestingly) illustrates the distinction of the two sciences. Drawing on Werner’s gloss of the first sentences of Ptolemy’s *Geographia*, the author and the artist assert that the description of the world can be understand when a *mappa mundi* is juxtaposed to the head of a sitter whom a painter portrays. World and face are set adjacent to each other yet with the suggestion that the sitter seen in profile (who happens to bear strong resemblance to common images of Jesus Christ) is also looking at the *mappa mundi* to which he is being compared. Below those two woodcut images are found a city-view (in this instance a town built upon what appears, as in Thomas More’s *Utopia*, to be a floating island) to the left and to the right an isolated eye and ear. The ear seems to be the opening of a cave into which intrepid explorers can descend, while the eye stands alone and appears to stare at the city-view just as the sitter gazes upon the *imago mundi* in front of us. When examined closely the eye and its socket resemble Corrozet’s snail. When further enlarged or shown in what Arakawa and Gins call the “nearnearground” of an “architectural

surround” (71) the pupil of the eye resembles a polar projection of the earth: lines of longitude converge at the pole that is the center of the pupil just under the first fold of the upper eyelid while four distinct lines of latitude describe the Equator, Tropic of Cancer and the Arctic Circle. From this point of view the eye looks upon the cosmos that is already within or reflected it. It sees (but it cannot be known if it discerns) the entirety of the heavens on which it might be gazing. Further, the projection doubles that of others, each of a different scale, found elsewhere in the *Cosmographia*.



Fig. 5: Vivant Gaultherot’s woodcut for Ptolemy.

The resemblance of the snail-as-eye in the *Hécatomgraphie* and the eye that stares upon the city-view while reflecting a portion of the cosmos indicates how the architectural body, the site of the psychogenetic process that Arakawa and Gins call a *tentative constructing toward a holding in place* is tied to an enduring and productive tension—a tension that we all carry within ourselves—of topography and cosmography. Ptolemy’s *Geographia*, the founding text of the science of the same name, begins on the ground of an analogy in which the study of the world in the heavens is shown attached to that of local places without respect to where they are within the greater matrix, if such a matrix there is. Topography is discerned through the sense of apportioned things and places, indeed by way of the snail’s journey into the world that it touches with its embryonic eye. That very eye spirals inward and outward, with equal centripetal and centrifugal charge, as it gains contact with the earth that is in and of its own bodily architecture. Put in brute and simple terms, what Gins and Arakawa describe as

the sentience of space tells why an immediate space pre-supposes anything that would be of extension beyond what the senses construct while moving and “holding in place.” The psychogenetic material of *Architectural Body* addresses a paradox—what is global is discerned only through what is local—at the basis of geography.

Such is the *event* of their work. By event is meant what “happens” when we “walk into” the “purposeful guess” (2002: 23) of Gins and Arakawa’s works that range from *Architectural Body* to *Reversible Destiny*. Their words and images cause their readers to heed, with uncommon sensitivity, the force of the experience of space. To see how it is enough to compare the way the snail encounters the immediate world to what Gilles Deleuze, a philosopher given to praise creatures as insignificant as ticks, makes of an event in *Le Pli: Leibniz et le baroque* (Deleuze 1988), a work of aesthetic philosophy where much of Gins and Arakawa’s hypotheses find common sympathies. The title of the fifth chapter poses a question that the text below seeks to answer. “What is an Event?” What is it? At first glance, in following Alfred North Whitehead’s *Concept of Nature, Process and Reality* and *Adventures in Ideas*, Deleuze argues that an event happens in a condition of chaos, when time and space, sensed as a webbing or *crible* that emerges from—while belonging to—the condition of chaos. The permeable net allows something “one” to emerge from things “many.” The component of an event is the apprehension of extension, much like that which Robert and Angela encounter when they visit *chez* Madeleine and Arakawa. Yet when “extensive series” of sensations intervene in the difference between a totality and its parts (when intensity and timbre of a sound or the tint and saturation of color are discerned) a second dimension of the event comes forward. And, as the *Architectural Body* might also posit, the sensation of these series turns extension into intension or “intensities, degrees. It’s no longer ‘something rather than nothing’ but ‘this rather than that’. No longer the indefinite article, but the demonstrative pronoun” (Deleuze 1988: 87, 88). The third component of the event comes forward with the individual, with *prehension*. In Deleuze’s words, “[e]very thing prehends its antecedents and its concomitants and gradually prehends a world. The eye is a prehension of light. Living beings prehend water,

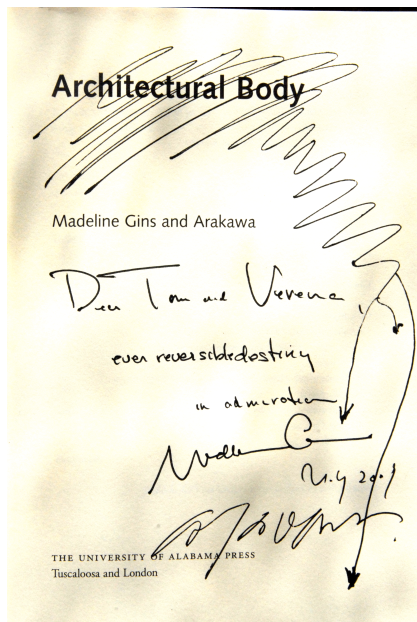


earth, carbon and salts" (104-5). Snails prehend the ground and air around them, and vice-versa. The eye and ear in Apian's cosmography prehend the city to their left that equally prehends them to the right.

When Angela and Robert bring their own bodily architecture into the landing site of their hosts *an event takes place*. When the latter encourage the former to "prehend" the space about them they infer that it is a given "datum," something prehended, that itself is "a pre-existing or co-existing prehension such that every prehension," be it for the guests or anyone whosever, "is a prehension of prehension," making the event a "nexus" of prehensions. Each new prehension becomes a datum. It becomes public, but for other prehensions that objectify it; the event is inseparably the objectivation of one prehension and the subjectivation of another. It is at once public and private, potential and actual, entering into the becoming of another event and subject of its own becoming" (106). As if he were reading *Architectural Body*, the philosopher goes on to note that prehension offers three other traits. In its subjective form it is "the manner by which the datum is expression in the subject, or by which the subject actively prehends the datum" (*ibid.*), through emotion, projection, evaluation, consciousness. It carries *feeling* or manner and moves tentatively. Its subjective aim "assures the passage of one datum to another" in going from one prehension to another in a sense of becoming that "puts the past into a present filled with [*gros de*] the future" (*ibid.*). The final phase come with satisfaction, self-enjoyment, "when prehension is filled with its own data" (107), or when the thought, say, of the snail enjoying its own future as it moves ahead, is countenanced.

When these pages of *Le Pli* are placed over the descriptions of the invention of space in *Architectural Body* it becomes clear that Gins and Arakawa draw their readers into the experience, if not the swells of prehension, that mark events in manifestations that are indifferently minuscule and majuscule. Histories of the representation of space and of geography percolate through their reflections at the same time that the same reflections are the matter of swarms of data prehended and prehending. They find an emblem in the snail, and from its body

and shell emerges the very space of the events they set forward and offer to us to taste and feel.



**Fig. 6:** Arakawa and Gins personal dedication.

As a coda it is worth seeing how the authors leave traces of their spatial forays on the pages of their own work. The dedication that the authors penned over the title page draws a broad squiggle over *architectural body* before the squiggle narrows, much like the meanders of a river flowing over a gently sloped plain, making eight bends until the line twice bifurcates, a first trait leading over the inscription of the date and place (N. Y., 2009) and then crossing the slight paraph of Arakawa's signature and ending with a directional arrowhead that suggests the line will continue its trajectory. The meandering line then turns and ends, a bent and pendant member, with an arrowhead in the crotch between the line to the left and the other, to the right, that begins traced upon the river-like line, and ends where its arrowhead points to the line flattening and extending a what would be the "ins" of Gins. Her signature, toward which the trait is drawn, becomes the horizon of a continuous landscape while Arakawa's, over which the long line carries, is sloping and accidental. The dedication could well be the line the snail leaves in its path as it invents its landscape and as the signature becomes the event of that landscape. It would be the indeterminate deictic, too,

the indication of somewhere here and somewhere there, but also a cleft or a crevice of the kind they describe in a reflection on the nature of a line: “As with a leaf, it starts with a tentative, with a rib, which splits as part of its means of continuance and then splits again along the way and, in so doing, sets up the pattern of enactment for all the subsequent drawing-throughs” (Gins 1994: 163). Given the context of the gastropod, the emblem and factotum of the architectural body, the line turns the signature of the dedication into a nexus of sensation and prehension, an area, for the sake of an arbitrary conclusion that might be a snailspace about which we continue ever to wander in wonder.

## Notes

[1] The force of the gerund recalls the great line of poet Paul Valéry’s “Cimetière marin.” “Le vent se lève: il faut tenter de vivre” [The wind arises, we must try to live], notes the speaker of the poem in a quickened sensation of wind that moves into “arising that arises.” *Le vent se lève* doubles the act of arising taking place in taking place: *levant se lève* [arising arises].

[2] See Clément Marot, “Rondeau responsive à un autre qui commençoit pas ‘Clément, mon bon amy...,’” in the *Adolescence clémentine* (1532).

[3] In *Signéponge* (1988) Jacques Derrida works on the poet’s signature, avowing, “[j]’avance lentement” (30), insisting that he hopes neither to tread too heavily nor to exchange one signature, his own, through and over that of Ponge. He must draw into his words, like a sponge, the matter of the things that the poet draws into the writing he secretes on the page. As it might be suggested below, his encounter with *Pour un Malherbe* and *La Fabrique du pré* becomes an event of the order those which Gins and Arakawa describe.

[4] Tu montres bien par ta condition,  
Que le secret sert à l’utilité,  
Au grand profit & augmentation  
De tout chascun, à dire verité:  
Comme un proverbe antique, a recité  
A plusieurs gents, *Demeure avecques* toy:



Pour desmontrer en la necessité  
Qu'il n'est si bon, que d'estre à tout par soy.

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