
Evidence

Architectural Body by Accident, Destiny Reversed by Design

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Five years before I was introduced to the work of Arakawa + Gins, I was hit by a car going 40 mph. According to medical authorities, I should have been killed or severely crushed but I managed to survive numerous potential crises by improvising peculiar moves, sitings, and projections, solving problems not even being imagined, let alone addressed by medical teams. Many of these activities saved my life, organs, brain, eyes, and ability to speak and walk again.

Still on crutches five years later, I met Madeline Gins and Arakawa. Instantly clear were the similarities between my life-saving improvisations and the visionary procedural architecture they have created during their 35+ years practice. As a matter of fact, I do not think there is one activity I accomplished that does not in some way affirm their project, starting with early painting, installation, and poetry, through the abundant manifestations of procedural architecture and literary works.

Reversible Destiny reconfigures the human through transdisciplinary understanding of awareness that takes into account the interrelation of perception, proprioception, kinesthesia, emotions, consciousness, cognition, biology, phenomenology, psychology, and neurology, uniting complex processes into one expansive architectural project. Reconstructing myself during and after trauma simulated numerous “procedural” challenges posed by Arakawa and Gins. The goal of this paper is to demonstrate how becoming an “architectural

body” can help extend life and renegotiate “bioscleave,” if we manifest the organism-person-surround with vigilance.

One of the remarkable values of their work is its adaptability to the skills of each practitioner. Not just for the agile, it challenges the adventurous to invent. I believe the momentous philosophical and aesthetic implications must be viewed alongside testimonies of “accidental” architectural bodies. Let us hear from survivors of war or natural disasters. Team a philosopher with a soldier and a doctor to create a new kind of procedural dialogue. Or compare attentiveness of pain/endurance based performance artists to the attentiveness of protracted traumatic pain patients, asking questions relating to “landing sites,” “terminological junctions,” “bioscleave,” which trace the process of the body in its messy, inelegant, stuttering physicality on its way to becoming an Architectural Body.

I will compare my activities with instructions, “A Crisis Ethicist’s Direction for Use” (Arakawa and Gins 2002: 97-100), as well as various other strategies created to help encourage the “organism that persons” out of mere survival mode into observational-heuristic procedures for development and self-study.

Arakawa and Gins challenge us to reconceive the way we construct perception, to “knit, explode and weave the world’s occurrence” (Arakawa and Gins 2002: 60-1). The continuously evolving shapes, slopes, diagonals, planes, horizons and everything in-between, posed by the car smashing as it hit my moving body, compelled me to form new kinds of attentiveness. This paper will begin to suggest originative help for problems like brain injuries, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, addiction and trauma.

Landing Sites (event markers)

A landing site is but a neutral marker, a simple taking note of, nothing more... a heuristic device with which we leaf through the universe...multiple siting processes...assign volume and a host of particulars...as they mark basic positions of persons and things in

relation to the other and to the larger surround... (Arakawa and Gins 2002: 5-22).

Arakawa and Gins divide "landing sites" into three different affiliated categories:

Perceptual Landing Sites: "All designated areas of specified action (visual, aural, tactile, olfactory, proprioceptive, kinesthetic, somaesthetic (pain)... the initiating site of all sites...."

Imaging Landing Sites: "...fill in areas not captured by [Perpetual Landing Sites]...extend and diffuse surfaces and volumes of less discrete patches of world...."

Dimensionalizing Landing Sites: "Insert depth where needed,"..."register and determine the bounds and shapes of the environment..." (Arakawa and Gins 2002: 5-22).

"Landing site configurations" fade away even as they hold in place infinite states of potential one may activate or not. Mark an 'X' over a crucial "landing site" and use it to recalibrate your balance and position while remaining in motion. Or model, erase, exise configurations even as they are being dispersed. I also pre-dispersed "landing sites" in order to prevent potential harm from coming my way. (Although constantly being "dispersed," unengaged they can lay fallow.)

The compressed nature of my accident affords the opportunity to examine many small activities that allowed me to reverse the destiny of a catastrophe. I will trace the trajectory of the single accident three times as Events #1, #2 and #3, selecting specific activities to focus on. Though I will describe a series of three events, in fact they were one event experienced in different aspects of being, as I operated on various "scales of action." The sequences overlapped and relapsed, enveloped, echoed, projected, interpenetrated and reflected each other toward greater challenges of complexity as if they were accidents within accidents, procedures within procedures, "landing sites" within "landing sites." I moved

from almost no awareness through full “crisis ethics” mode, deploying more advanced strategies of “coordinology.”

I could have experienced Event #1 only, and not moved into Events #2 and #3 and I might have died or sustained much worse injuries. On the other hand, if I had been a more highly functional “architectural body,” I might have sustained fewer injuries or even walked away unscathed.

EVENT #1

- A. Crossing a street on foot.
- B. Hit by a car going about 40 mph in a 25 mph zone.
- C. Thrown up the hood.
- D. Crashed into and bounced off the windshield.
- E. Hit the hood and front fender.
- F. Thrown back down to the street.
- G. Hit again by the car which rolled onto my right leg.
- H. Car backed off. Laying in the street.

Blur

B. Suddenly out of nowhere: Sensory input obliterated. Body-wide pandemonium to the core of being. Universal disorder and dread.

B.-E. Something traumatic is/is not happening? Forces are/are not breaking my body? I am (not) experiencing excruciating pain?

B.-G. No cognitive scales of action. Scale has “lost its traction on sited awareness and the process of venturing forth has completely blurred nearground, middleground and farground” (Arakawa and Gins 2002: 76). Almost no perceptive and/or proprioceptive skills. Barely functioning on a cellular level of awareness.

C.-E. No sense of body separate from world – boundaries permeable. Everything as everything undifferentiated. Sensory, spatial, temporal, material, spiritual input twists, fuses, leaks, bashes together creating a nauseating supra/hyper animate sensory blur periodically interrupted by a solid black void. Event-field intense, very small and close to body, the most contracted space imaginable. No dimension or depth of field. All near-near ground.

F.-H. Circling pain as empathy with suffering of the earth, deep to its core. Terror for self and universe. “Tentativeness” overtook – utterly obliterated – that which was needed to recover self/world. (“Bioscleave/procedural bioscleave” collapsed.)

Death-Pull

H. Kabbalists define death as “the inability to overcome inner inertia.” If that is the case, I knew I was dying or perhaps already dead. I discovered that the “division” between “life” and “death” is much more ephemeral, even more malleable than I ever knew. Oddly, like remembering, dying is an activity, a verb, something people *do*. As I lost ability to form world (myself in the world and the world itself,) death-pull was the first “landing site” I greeted – by resisting it. I repeatedly decided to try not to die. I fought to manifest the organism-person-surround, even when it seemed there was no self (organism-person) to engage surround and/or too much or too little surround (world/“bioscleave”) around.

A Crisis Ethicist’s Directions For Use #17: “...disperse your “landing sites” of a moment in such a way as to prevent the coming into existence of a world for you...”

A Crisis Ethicist’s Directions For Use #14: “Attempt a massive unholding. Have your tactically posed surround’s hold on you loosen even as you loosen your hold on it.” (I was attempting a massive holding/unholding.)

While boundaries remained permeable, resistance meant attempting two complicated maneuvers: 1) fill-in as world that which was uncleaving and/or hold at bay that which was overcleaving and 2) fill-in body and extend its

borders while maintaining the separation between organism-person and surround. Cleaving, the “approximative-rigorous abstraction,” had lost its traction on almost all scales of action as I strove to link and relink, separate and differentiate body and world, realizing “I” was not the absence of space that I occupied but the extent of surround with which I could engage.

“Article Seventeen” of the “Declaration of the Rights of Persons and Their Architectural Bodies” in *Making Dying Illegal* states:

Persons are far larger domains than is generally believed. They should be considered as extending to the limits of that which surrounds them...architectural bodies...are the extended domains of persons (Arakawa and Gins 2006: 33).

A Crisis Ethicist’s Directions For Use #16: “Observe how your body adjusts to enclosures of different sizes....”

I quickly came to realize I needed to reconceive death, its advance, its very definition, in order to continue living. Death: All world or “bioscleave” rushes in to take over / “bioscleave” overcleaves. Death: Body cannot manifest world on its own / “bioscleave” undercleaves. These experiences confirm, “The Three Hypotheses of Procedural Architecture,” from *Making Dying Illegal*, including:

Architectural Body Hypothesis or Sited Awareness Hypothesis: What stems from the body by way of awareness should be held to be of it.

Insufficiently Procedural Bioscleave Hypothesis: It is because we are creatures of insufficiently procedural bioscleave that the human lot remains untenable.

Closely Argued Built Discourse Hypothesis: Adding carefully sequenced sets of architectural procedures...to bioscleave will...reconfigure supposed inevitability (Arakawa and Gins 2006: Appendix A 195).

Aural-Imaging Landing Sites/Dissolution of Self

G.-H. Loosing my grip on life, I also lost my ability to make words. Screams seemingly arose from somewhere deep within both my body and the earth. With all the force I could muster, I hurled myself (“audible landing sites”) out, far out, to whomever might hear me on “the other side” of wherever to come help.

All perceptual landing sites have corresponding imaging landing sites...aural landing sites have corresponding sets of aural-imaging landing sites... (Arakawa and Gins 2002: 13).

Were there no perceptual landing sites there could be no organism-person that is a body... (Arakawa and Gins 2002: 11).

A Crisis Ethicist’s Directions For Use #6: “...cast your landing sites out and about to form several extended domains of indeterminacy.”

Further explanation: An “architectural body” expresses and materializes through a relentless drive...to disperse landing site configurations....

Screaming forced me to bypass all familiar modes of functioning, not only establishing “new relationships between agency and activity” but creating new event configurations on-the-spot in newly discovered (to me) fields with which I might eventually partner to reunite self with world. The screams created “audial landing sites” in-waiting, holding open not only points of contact but, “approximative-rigorous abstractions,” which “continuously keep posing the question of what it is that in its name has been and is still being abstracted” (Arakawa and Gins 2006: 57) and “terminological junctions”: “places where language itself might again be possible while keeping vivid the multiple scales of action that are in operation as the world” (74).

A Crisis Ethicist’s Directions For Use #6: “...What permutations of sited awareness best sketch into existence non-collapsing lucidity?”

These first attempts at dispersing “landing sites” allowed me to create a wide range of contingencies that did keep me alive for the time. I “resuscitated an underused ‘X’”(2006: 147). My vague sense of the production of perception, or

traces of perceptions, offered hope that I might eventually manifest myself as organism-person-surround.

Some Corresponding "Tutelary Abodes:" *Infancy House, Iteration House, Critical Resemblances House, Revisitable/Nonrevisitable Chaos House, Ubiquitous Site House* (Arakawa and Gins 1997: 258-303).

Event #2:

- A. Crossing a street on foot.
- B. Hit by a car going about 40 mph in a 25 mph zone.
- C. Thrown up the hood.
- D. Crashed into and bounced off the windshield.
- E. Hit the hood and front fender.
- F. Thrown back down to the street.
- G. Hit again by the car which rolled onto my right leg.
- H. Car backed off. Laying in the street.

Blur

A.-D. Constant blurs, pandemonium continues.

Pain

A.-F. Pain has landed everywhere. Layering and summing up of surroundings does not offer useful information. Potential "landing sites" arrive strangely because of synesthesia, personification, muddled up senses, constant motion; I cannot count on their veracity. Without sited awareness, I make many failed attempts to "link up with a feature or element" to form "landing sites."

Death Pull

G.-H. Early attempts to organize world congregate around: Something is happening. Therefore I am not dead. Things slowly become differentiated, body from world. Not being here becomes being not here. Move into more figural scales of action.

Pain

B.-H. Barely holds as world but does. (Later providing numerous types of “landing sites,” but the subject is far too vast for this paper.)

Blur into Blank (Blank within Blur)

D.-F. A very potent concept in the work of Arakawa and Gins is, “the blank...” which they characterize as: “a preverbal state that precedes creation...an event preceding language...Blank is not emptiness, it is what fills emptiness...it gives a diffuse, blurring power to consciousness in conjunction with narrowly focused delineations of intentions” (Arakawa and Gins 1997: 134).

C.-F. My sense of sight first separated from the blur. I “watched” my ability to see break through, clearing a tiny point (“perceptual landing site”) of blank in minute fluctuation within the blur. For me, the blank forming was associated *TzimTzum*, one of the most important concepts in Kaballah, the originating blank, also called, *Vacated Space*, an impossible spatial concept. From *The Book of Formation*, an ancient text of Kaballah, “There was no empty space which would be space, emptiness or void...no category of beginning and no category of end...”

With all the intent I could muster, I focused upon that point of blank, as if following more instructions from *Architectural Body*:

A Crisis Ethicist’s Directions For Use #12: “Embracing and cradling the tentativeness that precedes and accompanies action and sympathizing with and emulating the mutability inherent to a moving body...your tactically posed surround...reaching out to you...before you find yourself reaching to it....”

A Crisis Ethicist’s Directions For Use #13: “Ally yourself that closely with your tactically posed surround that it reads as the perimeter of your extended body....”

Greeting the expanding blank, I was able to fully greet “imaging” and “dimensionalizing landing sites” for the first time. As blur yielded blank, I

realized again that self and world are inextricably linked together; therefore, by controlling the expansion of the letter, I allowed world / “bioscleave” to form at its own rate, engaging its malleability.

I also knew I needed to begin to pin myself back on world, to find points at which I could attach myself before being swallowed up, the first step would be simple adhesion. Just as blur yielded blank, blank was pierced by a point that read as a Hebrew letter, *Yud*, the tiniest letter, said to expand the force of compassion; associated with building space and dimension. [1]

The letter *Yud* expanded its force and drew me back to the “landing sites” I had marked with my voice when I screamed. *Yud*, becoming all three types of “landing sites,” as it grew and I latched on and drew it into my body. Later, with other letters I “sculpted sited awareness,” as I sculpted language/my body with language, extending my perimeters, gestural drawing on air with language “architecting awareness.”

Naming

E.-H. A two stage process, beginning with the attempt to remember / mark / “land” certain body parts as a siting activity.

Part by part, organ by organ I tried to name myself back into my body, to make real, body and world, each manifesting each, naming was landing. By naming (thinking names, later pronouncing) I continued to manifest world, a continuous vigil, spotting, sensing and saying to preserve life: naming “landing sites” as affirmations of organism-person-surround, fanning out farther and then suddenly retracting into blackness for indeterminate periods of time, building on *leg, eye, etc.*, thereby landing/manifesting body in world.

B. - H. Other Significant Activities:

1. Communication with “Bioscleve” (extending borders and fields)
2. See or Anticipate What Comes Next

3. Formed Body into Letters, Visualizing their Forms: *Bet* (house, duality) and *Peh* (mouth, the power of speech) *Yud*, (Preforming Spoken Language)

Some Corresponding "Tutelary Abodes:" *Antimortality Fractal Zipper House*, *Cleaving Wave House*, *Iteration House* (Arakawa and Gins 1997: 258-303).

EVENT #3

- A. Crossing a street on foot.
- B. Hit by a car going about 40 mph in a 25 mph zone.
- C. Thrown up the hood.
- D. Crashed into and bounced off the windshield.
- E. Hit the hood and front fender.
- F. Thrown back down to the street.
- G. Hit again by the car which rolled onto my right leg.
- H. Car backed off. Lying in the street.

A.-C. More "unspecified" material begins to hold as world. Letters and language have coaxed pain into "visibility." More separation of body and world / "bioscleave."

H. Body pinned down to street, broken. Cannot move.

Death-Pull

G.-H. Conscious/unconscious in a bath of my own warm blood, freezing and burning up at the same time, skin ripped open, cold rain pouring into my bloodstream, broken bones jutting out skin, slapped by icy air. Head broken, face crushed.

"During" Events #1 and #2, neither my body nor the site was ever "situated." Distance, depth of field, all particulars were in constant flux. Other than what I gleaned to be "true enough," I had no reliable "truth" to work with. Unlike the "truth" of procedural constructs designed to, for example, make shallow space

appear deep—as in Bioscleave House— there was no “true” truth no “known” on any scale of awareness. The goal was always to site myself using whatever means I could, but in Events #1 and #2, indirect perception, imagination and attention, such as it was, had to fill in for direct perception such as “perceptual landing sites.”

Double / Multiply / Neutralization of Self

B.-H. Hurlled out of “myself” out and/or I/we simply lifted oneself out, twinned, multiplied and became numerous. (The twinning state had its own narrative, connected with duality represented by the letter *bet*, house, which I describe elsewhere.)

The “host body” remained “intact” yet “I” divided into many versions of myself / herself / themselves, other bodies. hovering nearer and farther, the split second drawing itself out seemingly endlessly, so that I / we / they could take the hits directly and indirectly, each landing and managing an increasing number of complex “procedures,” seeing the experience from multiple perspectives, in bodies of various shapes and sizes, both neutralizing and ironically, heightening our subjectivity as we got to know each other, together becoming one and many.

A Crisis Ethicist’s Directions For Use #8: “...an organism that persons lives as a community.”

A Crisis Ethicist’s Directions For Use #12: “Associate your bodily actions so strongly with your tactically posed surround that they become as if integral to it....”

Each body was single-tasked and the all the activities went through / were directed by the host body but it was the community of bodies that allowed “me” to survive,” intermingling senses easily for function and even pleasure. Many took pain, some did not. If one crashed, say, into the windshield, its twin acted as its “protector.” Some were responsible to field scale or distance; some managed “cleaving” and connection with “bioscleave,” some able to see what was coming next, guarding others to the best of their ability.

A Crisis Ethicist's Directions For Use #4: "reroute landing site dispersal."

A Crisis Ethicist's Directions For Use #12: "form several extended domains of indeterminacy."

We chose to see the experience as an animate shape, which also became the shape of our awareness. When we realized the surround was in constant and unpredictable motion, we also realized that we had to strive to stay in motion, as well to, for example, neutralize the (force of) windshield speeding toward me/us through space and shattering the motion and shape of its own freshly created form, "instantly" revised by the body / bodies it hit and so on.

The architect Greg Lynn, who was interviewed in the *Reversible Destiny* Exhibition catalogue, favors what he calls "animate design": "the co-presence of motion and force at the moment of formal conception...Force is an initial condition, the cause of both motion and the particular inflections of a form defined by multiple interacting vectors...unfolding in time" (Lynn 1999: 11).

Though the accident continuously stirred up many plausible (and implausible) "domains of indeterminacy," all three types of "landing sites" were cast out and greeted in many configurations, zones and fields. I / we / they were able to be as far or near as we deemed necessary, "rerouting landing site dispersal." The "raw process" of venturing forth was clarified, even in this chaotic situation, as we were able to construct multiple vantage points, tipping rather than violently rotating, spongy, pliant rather than steep and angular forms and motion. We not only saw the seeing, heard the hearing, etc., we saw the seers seeing, heard the hearers hearing.

Alternative sketches were made as the host body tightened / loosened its tenuous connection with world / "bioscleave." These experiences could be observed by other bodies as "self," even while some were being crushed, a partial dissolution of "outward" / "inward" experiences of looking. World / "bioscleave" receded or lurched forward controlled by "perceivers," in consort

with surround so that “cleaving and bioscleave both held open and ... firmly attached of one segment of massenergy to another...” helping us keep track of “where we were going and why...”(Arakawa and Gins 2006: 158). The architectural surround was surrounded and surrounded by more surround as I/we filled in more and more body as necessary. The double horizon line quickly became numerous as perceiving from many bodies allowed us to attach ourselves to clear and definite spaces—each body “seeing” different perspectives, providing compare / contrast “through” the host body.

A Crisis Ethicist’s Directions For Use #6: “Strive to maintain your extended body as more than a single subsuming tentativeness...to form several extended domains of indeterminacy....”

B.- H. Other Significant Activities:

Field “What’s Coming Next”

Create Subjective Dimensions

Defy Gravity / Flying

Some Corresponding “Tutelary Abodes:” *Twin House, Bird’s Eye View House, Rotation House, Morphed Twist House, Gravitational Ethics House, Indeterminacy House* (Arakawa and Gins 1997: 258-303).

Arakawa and Gins sum up: “This is architecture at the ready, at everyone’s disposal” (Arakawa and Gins 2002: 11). “...An architecturally imbued person will architect every manner of surrounding, even...” (Arakawa and Gins 2002: 44).

Notes

[1] In the journal *Crayon, on beauty*, poet/architect, Robert Kocik discusses Hebrew, Tiwa, Sanskrit and Rune, initiative languages, which “give users access to their origins as cosmogony acting as a knowledge system not reducible to ‘meaning’ in the sense of linguistic ‘referent’ or ‘signified’ (Kocik, 2008: 111).” In Kaballah, the building blocks of architecture are made of language.

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