Previous Enrolments. Drawing as Collective Formation

[3000]

Proposition: the elements of a drawing are actors

+ L is a social scientist who argues that we are too quick to assume that humans and the realm of human action is radically distinct from everything else. Latour argues that agency, the ability to act, is not exclusively a human capacity. Saying that a glass 'holds' water, a balustrade 'prevents' falling, or a line on a page 'divides' it is not merely engaging in anthropomorphic metaphor.

"After all, there is hardly any doubt that kettles 'boil' water, knifes 'cut' meat, baskets 'hold' provisions, hammers 'hit' nails on the head, rails 'keep' kids from falling, locks 'close' rooms against uninvited visitors, soap 'takes' the dirt away, schedules 'list' class sessions, price tags 'help' people calculating, and so on." [RS 71]

L says action should not be limited in advance to "what 'intentional', 'meaningful' humans do". Instead, an action should be seen as anything that makes a difference to a state of affairs, and an actor is whatever makes that difference (a philosophy of difference; figuration of actants). Axiomatic for L that we do not try to reduce or limit the number of actors we recognise.

Without going further into argument, key proposition: actors make a difference; the elements of a drawing are actors. (a thorough definition of element won't be attempted here for fear of atomism, but for the time being a line, mark, or void)

Proposition: the drawing is a collective formation

+ Gabriel Tarde, writing in a similar vein at the end of the nineteenth century, posited sociology as a general study of collective formations. He believed there to be a kind of arrogance in the assumption that human groups are of an entirely different order of assemblage to any other groups.

A collective formation was not simply a superset of constituent elements. Theories of the crowd at the time tended to focus on the crowd subsuming the individual. The idea of substituting a unity for a complex collective formation which is continually being formed and maintained was unacceptable to T because it occluded precisely the things that mattered (eg. culture, nation, society). Such unities could only ever be accepted as provisional generalisations.

Tarde wrote of collective formations like crowds that individual elements, "soldiers of those various regiments, provisional incarnations of their laws, pertain to them by one side only, but through the other sides, they escape from the world they constitute." He describes individual elements as always having "other leanings, other instincts coming from previous enrolments" and as being comprised "only of sides and facades of beings"

The idea of previous enrolments, other instincts or leanings aligns with and compounds the idea of elements as actors. The elements of the collective lend allegiance to the drawing, but are not subsumed by it. In a sense, the drawing is a potential of the elements rather than the supplier of their significance.

[going to look at two drawings in light of these propositions]

Plan of Calle Mercaders Apartment, Miralles (1995)

[Plan of renovations to an apartment in Calle Mercaders, Barcelona, 1995. Photographs and plan. Drawing carried out after construction. Process consisted of repeated plan tracings. Importance of plan to M.]

1. the drawing lacks heirarchy.
M has no interest in establishing a clear heirarchical reading of the drawing. There is no variation in line weight (although occasionally, M doubles lines closely enough to approximate a thicker stroke).
Mobile objects: tables, doors, etc. are not accorded any status distinct from stationary objects. the swings of doors and cupboards are not given a lighter line. even the heirarchy of drawings is flattened: this drawing was not one of a set, and in it elevations are projected into the same plane, even the same paper space as the plan. indoor-outdoor are not accorded any heirarchy. the drawing spills into outdoor spaces

2. M describes the apartment as a heterogenous collection of interacting elements. "Learning how to live with a given, second-hand, structure, like rummaging through the pockets of an old coat, setting the things one finds on a clean surface". the apartment is historically layered. each element has its own allegiances. M speaks of "a profound conviction that projects are never finished, but merely enter successive phases in which we perhaps do not have direct control over them or perhaps are reincarnated in other projects of ours."
He describes this as a game of differentials like chess, in which each piece is freighted with its own regulations, capabilities.
"This house works like a chessboard. The pieces move according to the rules of each object… They must always return to the starting point to restart the game… Hence the floor, which set the existing items back in front of the windows… or the paint on the walls, which reveals the discovered fragments, are the rules of the game… Amongst them, moving in an orderly fashion, are tables, books, chairs…"
It has become common to contrast Go and Chess; Go being a game of essentially equivalent and valueless points used to create operative configurations, while chess is a game of innate properties. For M elements are not equal: each is heavily freighted, with allegiances that lie outside the game. There is a process of learning to live with givens, things drawn from the pocket of a coat, things that come from somewhere else, import their own contexts, embody their own rules.

3. This heterogenous field is not a playground of juxtaposed references; nor a chaos or an aporia

i want to distinguish this from two other types of differential field: the semantic field of early postmodernism in architecture, and the fragmentary field of deconstructivist architecture. [these are fine distinctions that need some work, because naturally there is overlap]. Unlike Moore's Piazza d'Italia, Stirling's Staatsgalerie, for example, which are Jencksian fields of reference, M's drawing of the Calle Mercaders apartment, with its high degree of abstraction, does not juxtapose references to a significant degree. Nor is there the kind of fragmentation or deformation at work that there is in Morphosis or Gehry. It is a field of differences, but without the kenotic impliation that this difference opens onto an aporia.

4. M claims his drawings operate in a non-representative register
He claims his drawings are not representations but operations. Not a static description of an idea originating elsewhere.
"I feel I am a participant in the tradition that prizes doing, manufacturing, as the source of thought... Shifts and turns make the paper lose its sheet nature. It is a working structure. Its rules are those of economics and commodity. On these planes there is no concern to represent… it is a task of multiplying a single intuition: of seeing it appear in all its possible forms… of aligning acrobatically, like a game, all the rays of lines that go in a direction… of keeping all the aspects of one's project on paper. It is not a question of accumulating data, but of multiplying them; of enabling what you had not thought of to appear"
The drawing is a kind of calculation.

5. M insists on the animate qualities of the elements of the project.
Elements have a 'life' or rules of their own. If we recall L's proposition that we should acknowledge action on the part of nonhumans, this stops sounding like anthropomorphism or psychological projection. A line across a page *divides* it. it doesn't simply represent or refer to a division. Once the line is in place, there is no preventing it from dividing. M expresses something similar:
"I would say this is not so much a line as a beam. A project consists of knowing how to tie up multiple lines, multiple ramifications that open up in different directions"

Rectangular Spiriculate, Cohen (1998)

RS is a pencil drawing showing a sequence of perspectival transformations of a blocky object. It comes from a series of formal experiments Cohen entitles *Stereotomic Permutations* (1993-1998). The series tests a hybrid projective/perspectival technique by using it to generate a group of house concepts.

1. the drawing is an open-ended trace of a process.
the drawing produces rather than represents. there is no original object, nor a final one. [in this C differs from Eisenman's similar early experiments: read back through Eisenmans to see genesis of form]

2. The drawing is not a representation, but a calculation.
C sees architecture as the resolution of predicaments, the calculation of solutions to the extent that he argues predicaments should be sought out, even introduced if necessary.

"There is little in terms of form to keep the architect's intentions from being disposed immediately, completely, and without problem."
"An architecture that is compelled to distort, and that ultimately highlights and questions norms, requires the invention of surrogate problems… Architecture could create problems, vigorously attempt to solve them, and never be able to. Architecture would thus keep itself alive by remaining an unfulfilled promise."
[setting aside C's explicit formalism (note the date of the project)...]
Architecture should be a form of calculation; but calculation, for C, is not concerned with optimisation, discovering a minimum or maximum condition.

3. The drawing oscillates between perspectival projection and stereotomic projection. There are two operations going on here.
[show Taylorian perspective apparatus: pairing uncertainty about whether anamorphosis is perspectival or a property of the object]
C also adopts an inverse procedure, based on Desargues for calculating the complex three-dimensional angles common in stone-cutting given only the standard plane figures of plan and elevation, effectively inflating a three-dimensional object from a plane figure.
In RS, each projection is treated as a plane figure which is then reprojected.
Each apparent object is simultaneously a plane projection of two others.

4. Cohen is concerned with the relationship of pairing set up by symmetry.
Symmetry is invariance under a transformation. The degree of symmetry is measured by the degree of invariance, or more precisely, the number of different types of transformation under which is remains invariant. A cube, for example, remains invariant through X,Y and Z rotations of 90, 180, 270, 360 degrees, but is changed by other rotations, while a sphere can be rotated any number of degrees without varying. The sphere has a greater degree of symmetry.
The transformations of RS are symmetry-breaking. Lengths, angles, parallels and ratios are not preserved, although co-linearity is. [in mathematical terms, this drawing is something between a projective and differential space]

5. This object is multiplicitous, defined in terms of its invariances under transformation rather than its innate properties.
Manuel Delanda writes: "Classifying geometrical objects by their degrees of symmetry represents a sharp departure from the traditional classification of geometrical figures by their essences… even though in this new approach we are still classifying entities by a property (their degree of symmetry), this property is never an intrinsic property of the entity being classified but always a property relative to a specific transformation (or group of transformations)." [ISVP]
[multiplicity is characteristic of the collective assemblages Deleuze calls 'assemblages']

+ One element can be an edge foreshortened by the viewing angle, or a the edge of an anamorphic object. This is not primarily a matter of interpreting the line (I have tried to avoid treating this hermeneutically). Geometric transformation is not essentially representative (although it can represent); it is operative.The line is both. In this simultaneity or oscillation we are cued to the multiple allegiances of the

element. This multiplicity is not necessarily heterogeneity

Hypotheses

The drawings have a flat, crowded quality.

T writes: "to exist is to differ; difference in one sense, is the substantial side of things, what they have most in common and what makes them different. One has to start from this difference and to abstain from trying to explain it, especially by starting with identity, as so many persons wrongly do. Because identity is a minimum and, hence, a type of difference, and a very rare type at that"

drawing is a differential field
L's position that difference is produced

For C as M, in spite of their very different architecture, drawing is (as M puts it) "a working structure".
this is not just a description of the work of the drawer: the physical labour of scratching the pencil across the page or panning through the file; nor the work of thinking that the drawer does (which is not to diminish either of these important aspects in drawing).
there is an interest in the work being done *in* and *by* the drawing.

+ The drawing is a place where nonhuman agency is tested. Drawing shares with building the persistent action of nonhuman agents. [something does something whether i like it or not]
a way of displacing the architect's agency, opening design to the crowded and contingent condition of the world (or at least simulating it)
architecture is not the field of a subject's autonomous action
theories of authorial expressivity kill drawing (undermined by formalism of my two examples)
the case of a drawing by many people, or by no people
a much finer-grained examination of drawing