

# Summoning *Daena*: Drawing the Parallel

Stephen Loo

## Prologue: finding angels in leftovers

To Marco Frascari, the intersection, assimilation and transformation of influences, processes and materialities in architectural making, like cooking, contain intermediary and bifurcatory steps that frequently overturn the objective methodological authority of recipes. To Frascari, such continuing poiesis in the act of making produces not only the originary dishes and architectures, but augurs the somewhat unpredictable emergence of leftovers. Architecture, like cooking, is therefore *cosmopoietic*: “a discipline that begins in the mastery of the reuse of leftovers” (2005: 31).

In March 2004, I commenced a conversation with Frascari on the relations between gastronomy, architecture and the virtues of “plainness” when we were invited speakers at the Architecture Symposium of Adelaide Festival of Arts. I used a family recipe for steamed fish to explain the concept of plainness in Chinese cooking.

This essay commemorates and continues that conversation by picking up the concept of “leftovers” which Frascari evoked in his opening address for the 2009 *Interstices Under Construction: The traction of drawing* symposium; many papers presented there are published in this issue of *Interstices*. Our conversation on this occasion concerned finding the angelic in leftovers in the fields of cooking, and philosophical research on drawing. The recipe I presented this time around is a family recipe for leftovers.

## Ma Po Sheen Choy

(clay pot sour vegetables)

Open freezer door and remove all pre-packed leftovers (Leftovers have been selected for their suitability in being a part of this dish at various past meals. This act is also called *chap suey*, meaning to pick up bits and pieces)

Thaw ingredients

Heat 3 tbs of vegetable oil in a wok

Stir-fry all ingredients for 5 minutes until sizzling

Add 1 litre of warmed chicken stock, ½ cup of Chin Kiang (black rice) vinegar, 1 tsp of tamarind paste,

a generous splash of light soy,

and 1 tbs of crushed palm sugar

Bring to the boil  
Transfer all ingredients to a large clay pot  
Add one bunch of Chinese cabbage or 2 bunches of bok choy  
Stew for 30 minutes

Serve in clay pot with steamed rice

*Ma Po Sheen Choy* is a dish my family would have once every couple of months. As a child, the joy in the dish is a temporal one, located in the surprise of finding parts of dishes that one remembers consuming months ago, or a few weeks back, or perhaps yesterday. The gastronomic experience of the dish departs from one conventionally based on taste: while the texture of the individual morsels is identifiable and reminiscent of past meals, their taste is masked by the overarching sourness of the dish. And the poetics of the dish – its form, consistency and subtle balance of flavours – cannot be anticipated until it is cooked. Each time the dish is cooked, it tastes subtly different. The dish is at most times sublime: like finding angels in refuse. But there are times it fails to work: there are too many bones and/or inedible parts, inappropriate textures or monstrous combinations of flavours.

Like *Ma Po Sheen Choy*, in this essay on drawing is a recombination of leftovers from past and current research projects. The material originates from the lines of flight that are the expansions of somewhat unconnected marginalia of larger projects concerned with writing on architecture and public space as material poetics. These projects are interested in the literal appearance of writing *in*, and the literal practice of writing *on*, architecture and public space, and in writing *as* architecture, as a type of spatial writing or site writing. The appearance of architectural or spatial writing in this way paves the way to understanding how appearance itself is the expression of subjectivation, of faciality and the movement of becoming-subject, immanent and purely relational to material and poetic practices in which it is involved.

The following essay has not much to do with these research projects, although what I have just described is useful as its contextual frame. What I present here are two segues into a landscape of philosophical thinking and architectural constructions, with associations between concepts, places, beliefs and etymologies. The first is a footnote, and the second an endnote, both of which are lines of enquiry drawn across the topological surface of research that continually imbricates the real, the instrumental, the fictional and the symbolic. However, there is every chance that these lines drawn by the notes will not meet; they are parallel trajectories that continuously hold the desire for crossings, for connections. Although parallel lines do not connect, they are nevertheless always already held in relation: like the parallel warp yarns in weaving that never meet, but their relations, through the wefts that bridge them, create textuality.

There are nevertheless bridges in the account that I draw out in this paper; and they are quite literally bridges, as there are fields with their furrows, clefts and saw-cuts, the mountain, the night, and gates for a city. And we know very well from Frascari that, in drawings, whether those in my lines of flight, or that which is within an architectural mode of production, there will inevitably be angels. Angels are none other than the personification, the image – or “imaginals” as French Islamic scholar Henri Corbin would put it (1972: 1) – of the relations between the realm of the intelligible-instrumental and the realm of the sensible,

which may include the inarticulable and therefore requiring of imagination. But I will attempt to show that when parallel lines are drawn, the angel summoned has a quite different disposition.

### **Footnote: furrows**

First, the footnote: that which resides at the bottom of the page, but harbours the text above. The word “page” is from the Latin *pagus*, meaning field, which the farmer has ploughed. Like the field, the written page is worked surface; the implications for this will become clear in a while.

The footnote reference I am developing here relates to Heidegger and his 1959 essay, *The Way to Language*, where the philosopher resurrects an ancient kinship between the word for “saying” and the word for “showing”. This was part of my attempt to establish an account of language and, in corollary, writing, that moved beyond a technocratic definition of communication, towards language as appearance, in order to instate a specific relationship between language and image.

Heidegger’s thinking about language depends on the rejection of a traditional picture of language as the animation of dead signs with living meaning, and he does this through a critique of Aristotle’s “architectonic structure” that secures language’s capacity to speak. Aristotle once said, in *On Interpretation*, “Now, what takes place in the making of vocal sounds is a *show* of what there is in the soul in the way of passions, and what is written is the *show* of the vocal sounds.” (Quoted in Heidegger 1971: 114)

Heidegger wants us to *progress along the way* to language, in order that language *shows* its “linguistic nature”, in a manner that “language has a being ... that remains gathered in what language grants to itself, in its own idiom, as language” (1971: 119). To do this, we can begin by having language show what especially pertains to it and makes it language, that is, what is essential to itself, and not to have language conceptually grasped as something else. And for Heidegger, we do this through experiences immanent to the concerns at the very moment of speaking, which is only possible with an *a priori* relationality between speakers: a comportment to an appropriative openness or, using Heidegger’s word, dwelling. Dwelling is that to which language grants access, but it is also what grants access to language. “Everything spoken stems in a variety of ways from the unspoken, whether this is something not yet spoken, or whether it be what must remain unspoken in the sense that it remains beyond the reach of speaking” (1971: 120). Language’s essence, in speaking, is, as Heidegger puts it, “drawn out”.

Heidegger uses the word “draw” in relation to the showing-saying because he is interested in reaching the sense of the manifold modes of saying. Some modes grant language’s appearance, and others refuse it: a *drawing* (out) and *withdrawing*. In this way, the totality of Saying, and the essential being of language, means a Showing, but one that is not based on semiotics or signification, but a letting-appear, marked by the shuttling of presences as well as absences. The latter to Heidegger must remain unsaid, as such unshowable: as mystery. Therefore, the Showing, or the drawing-withdrawing of appearance, which is the “unity” in the being of language, Heidegger calls “design” (1971: 121).

The persistent image of drawing in design, which is symptomatically forgotten, and one that Heidegger evokes here as something to resist in an account of language, is that of an incision, a cut, in the sense of starting into something. In fact, the “sign” in *de-sign*, from the Latin, *signum*, is related to *sacere*, meaning to cut or saw. Drawing is etymologically related to traction, a movement or passage. The linear cut is as such violent, as it can involve a wresting or tearing away, as in to draw-out or to draw blood.

This description of design also recalls Heidegger’s notion of rift (*Riss*) in design or rift-design in his essay *The Origin of the Work of Art*. He quotes Albrecht Dürer’s well-known remark: “For in truth, art lies hidden within nature; he who can wrest it from her, has it.” (Dürer is not known for his gender-neutral language, or images, for that matter.) “Wrest” here means to draw out the rift and to draw the design with the drawing-pen on the drawing-board (1971a: 70).

Such an incision on the surface is a cutting of the surface by a line, whereby the action of one opens up or defines the other. In this mode drawing defines the other technically, by exposition.

Heidegger provides another image to imagine drawing, namely the furrow. He says, “We make a design also when we cut a furrow into the soil to open it to seed and growth” (1971: 121). In order to understand the possibilities in this image-concept, we need to get down low. The furrow, as fissure or chasm, inscribes the surface by dividing one side from another. This opening up of the world on one hand creates an antagonism between that which has been divided (the two banks), but it is also the condition of the source for all living things to reappear above the earth.

As the world opens itself up, the earth comes to rise up. It stands forth as that which bears all, all that is sheltered in its own law and always wrapped up in itself. World demands its decisiveness and its measure and lets beings attain to the Open[ness] of their paths. Earth, bearing and jutting, strives to keep itself closed and to entrust everything to its law. (1971a:38)

The plough does carve a line that makes a mute surface into a sign but, in making furrows, the straight line stands alongside many other parallel lines. For such an opening of the earth, Heidegger’s image-concept is “rift-design”, which is associated with growth and emergence.

The conflict is not a rift (*Riss*) as a mere cleft ripped open; rather it is an intimacy with which opponents belong to each other. This rift carries the opponents into the source of their unity by virtue of their common ground. It is a basic design (*Grundriss*) an outline sketch (*Aufriss*) that marks out the fundamental features of the rising up of the clearing of beings. (1971a: 63)

The furrow as rift-design marks out an ontological condition of identity in difference, of gathering and dispersal, being and nothing, proximity and distance, appropriation and expropriation. When Heidegger states that, “The rift-design is the drawing together into a unity of the sketch and basic design, breach and

outline,” we hear an undecidability between whether design is imposed on the earth by human beings, or whether humans bring out the hidden design already there: that is, whether the human genius gives decisiveness and measure to the earth, or finds it there. The question becomes, where is the genius, who or what is it that comes when summoned?

So drawing furrows through a field, as with writing lines of words on a page, becomes a documentation or witness – or, as Frascari would say, a demonstration – of the unsayable being of language, and with that the very possibility of Saying itself. Perhaps the genius shuttles between being active and passive, because to draw is also to be drawn; to inscribe a cleft or a rift is also to be drawn along it, and perhaps ultimately to be drawn into a gulf or abyss, or mystery? Drawing parallel lines, although incisive, enacts a non-dialectical separation between two conditions (for Heidegger they are thinking and poetry). Drawing is a setting apart (expropriation) that opens them to one another (appropriation) in nearness. And the drawing can only draw itself, *is* itself, as it performs this demarcation.

### **Endnote: angels**

From the ground and the beginning, to the sky and the end. The endnotes are where the text acknowledges its finitude by virtue of the traces it leaves at the end, in the form of extensions, some explanatory of, and others tangential to, what has ensued in its body. At the endnotes, we find angels.

This is an endnote to a bigger project not considered here, which attempts to move the concept of faciality in architecture away from postmodern referentiality shored up by identity politics and anthropocentrism, the history for which includes work by the likes of Stanley Tigerman and Michael Graves. And I was also trying to move the face a little away from the Deleuzo-Guattarian molecular assemblage of “black holes” and “white walls” that functions as an “abstract machine” (Deleuze and Parnet 1987: 17-18) and which is able to deterritorialise subjective identification in a combination of over-codification and slippery semi-otisation. This larger project moves towards Félix Guattari’s psychoanalytically-biased take on the expressive potential of the face, based on its capabilities for transversal relations between self, and self as other. This face-off of the self and its internal other brought me to Giorgio Agamben’s essay *Genius*, in which the self faces genius as a face that both is, and is not, our face. To explain the many refractions of faces, Agamben fleetingly summons an angel.

In explaining Genius as the “divinization of the person” – a godly version of the self, in the self, and therefore what is most intimate and most our own – Agamben provided an image of the other in the self, an image of ourselves that we must face all our lives, by answering its call, and granting its requirements. What we do, in action and thought, become instantiations or materialisations of that genius. But in order for this other of the self to be so demanding or powerful, it must really reveal itself as more or less than, and therefore impersonal to, our lived selves. The excess or loss experienced in relation to “our” genius is that which propels us to action. To become a genius is to become what Agamben calls “impersonal”, to move outside ourselves to a pre-individual state. That is to say, our lived existence is determined by a movement to something which is one’s own that is also most strange and impersonal to us, continually shattering the pretensions of the ego to be self-sufficient.

We may say that in drawing, as a human material and poetic practice that summons the material world and incarnates the spirit to form a continuous landscape of possibilities, the human soul bears witness to its genius, and is therefore the actualisation of divinity within. To draw is at once productive of lines, and these lines are replete with potentiality because they call into visibility a greater or poorer version of the self, one that is always to-come.

But, we can say at the same time that drawing escapes the humanist idea of individualisation: the lines produced in fact do not subscribe to a companion who orients our existence and renders it amiable, but are traces of attempts to grasp at a shadowy figure who conspires against our identity, one who is our life in so far as it does not belong to us, and in fact harbours the dissolution and dissipation of this lived life of ours. In time, and influenced by the Christian tradition, this dichotomous personality of Genius took on the classic twofold aspect of ethical coloration: the good angel and the evil angel.

In this oblique reference to angels, Agamben says that the productive image of Genius is not in the image of Christian guardian angels, but the Iranian angel, a *daena*, the heavenly archetype in whose likeness the individual has been created, but whose face changes with the individual's every gesture, word, and thought. I quote Agamben here:

At the moment of death, the soul is met by its angel, which has been transfigured by the soul's conduct in life, into either a more beautiful creature, or into a horrendous demon. It then whispers: "I am your *daena*, the one who has been formed by your thoughts, your words, and your deeds." In a vertiginous reversal, our life moulds and outlines the archetype, in whose image we are created. (2007: 17)

Agamben draws upon the *daena* for her impersonality. The angel does not have a predetermined form. Her form, which manifests at the end of a human life when the soul faces its image, is an archetype that is *a posteriori* to the practices of that life. Therefore, it can be said that the material and poetic practices of the human being, practices of giving measure, with their attendant instruments and technologies – and here I ask the reader to reflect upon drawing as such a practice – are those that name beings, by giving them form, and allocate them to their place, their offices, their meanings. Drawing as a practice that inscribes clefts, rifts and furrows, gathers together the whole complex of meanings that constitute human being-in-the-world, or mortals dwelling-on-earth.

However, the drawer does not bring the rifts and furrows themselves into the world in strokes of genius. In the anticipation of the self in the angel – the form and image of which cannot be expressed and is un-anticipatable – the practice of drawing sets up an articulation by which beings (both mortals and angels) are brought into mutually limiting yet mutually respecting order (Heidegger calls this the Event of Appropriation or *Ereignis*): an order that is of quite a different kind from that of causality (Pattison 2000: 182), owing to the mutual thrown-ness of mortals and celestial beings.

Speaking about celestial beings and Heidegger's account of existential ontology in the same breath may seem strange, but within his rereading of *Parmenides* is an exposition of *aletheia* as the goddess "truth": "'The Truth' – itself – is the goddess." (1992: 5) Here, Heidegger is reclaiming the words of Parmenides, which

appear in the linguistic form of poems with verses and strophes, from didacticism to poiesis which entails work by the thinker in bringing into language the unconcealment of and/or by the divine. Recounting how the goddess greets Parmenides at her house in his travels, Heidegger conceives of the words of truth uttered by the goddess in her greeting as not emanating from her person as messenger, but that truth itself is experienced *as* a goddess. This is an attempt at thinking human thinking outside truth as an onto-theological condition in which the goddess is not a mytho-transcendental experience of the thinker, but the thinker “out of his own initiative is ‘personifying’ the universal concept of ‘truth’ in the indeterminate figure of the goddess” (1992: 5). Truth, as the open, is not the revelation of a universal by a thinker, but necessitates a change in his or her mode of existence where the open is made present, and in which the unconcealed truth is encountered.

However, Agamben’s summoning of the *daena*, and Heidegger’s greeting by the goddess, still do not tell us much about the status of the drawing itself, the line drawn demarcating the threshold of the house, or the field that is drawn or furrowed, in this psycho-cosmological equation. It may be the angel that provides the drive for marking parallel lines of the furrow, but it is also the furrow, like Marco Frascari’s instrumental angle, which summons the angel. Parallel furrows, in the relationality between opposing banks that never meet, is immanent to the open, or rather, *is* immanence, *the* open, pure potentiality as truth, *aletheia*. In order to explain this, I have to come back down to earth, or at least to the mountain that makes up the bank of the furrow, and the bridge that crosses the unfathomable chasm beyond it. And I have to turn to cosmology on Iranian Sufism, to the geography and topography of the actual meeting between the soul and the angel, *daena*, as its celestial form, thereby making an endnote to Agamben’s endnote on *daena*.

In Iranian Sufism, the human soul or *fravarti*, meets *Daena* (who is the daughter of Spenta Armaiti, the feminine Archangel of the Earth or, in short, Mother Earth (Afshari 2004)) upon death. Here the *fravarti* undertakes a difficult journey, on a path up a mountain that leads to a precipice spanned by a bridge called the Chinvat Bridge, beyond which is the Abode of Hymns, the region of Infinite Lights. The human soul, the *fravarti*, is a trilogy: the soul-in-the-body, akin to the terrestrial form of the angel and close to the Western conception of genius; the soul-outside-the-body, which is the soul when it has reached the Abode of Hymns; and, lastly, the soul-on-the-way to the Chinvat Bridge, the one that is met and led by the angel *Daena* across that bridge. *Daena* does not take on the role of the messenger in the way that is widely believed in Western eschatology. *Daena* carries the message in, or by virtue of, her form, that is, she carries knowledge and information of a terrestrial life in her face, shape and persona.

What is also interesting is that in Sufi mythology, the bridge is not a mute object: like the angel, it is a primordial archetypal image, and like the furrow-mountain before and beyond it, a visionary geography. On the bridge, *Daena* seizes the hand of the *fravarti* and leads it across. A beautiful *daena* in the form of a young girl will help the soul of good deeds, in whose image it is, across the bridge without difficulty, as twins. The soul of evil deeds is however led by an ugly witch, who halfway across the bridge will attempt to throw the *fravarti* into the infernal hole.

But the story goes that the bridge itself makes a selection – Chinvat means the Bridge of the Selector – it widens for the just, and narrows for the wicked to the point that it is no more than a razor’s edge (Bonney 1991: 114). The bridge, as something which arrives out of drawing, is itself the register of the behaviour of the human soul. This means that the earthly human condition, and drawing as a practice that demonstrates that condition, is the boundary state between potential angel and potential demon. The human condition, its concepts, practices and beliefs, is therefore implicated in the form of the bridge, and is immanent to the ease of access across it, to go between the terrestrial-instrumental practices in the world of reality, and that of the abstract-cosmological-transcendental realm.

Drawing firstly summons, then becomes, the Angel who proceeds from the archetypal world. But in order to meet a beautiful angel and cross a strong wide bridge, drawing needs a transcendental active imagination, which can give form to perceptions, and that will show something of the un-Sayable. It is here that drawings have to tell fictions, with bravery, risk and perseverance, so that the soul can cross the chasm by having its angelic image as a “productive” one; that is, one that requires a healthy adoption of the monstrous or the hybrid, as discussed by Frascari. The potentiality of this occurring is increased by a productive imagination. After all, as Manfredo Tafuri once said in an essay about the angelic monstrations in Massimo Scolari’s drawings, such coming together of the psycho-cosmic in the imagination has served as the basis for many gigantic symbolic constructions, for example, the Ziggurats of Babylonia, and the Stupas of Cambodia, all of which are symbolic architecture that is the outer covering of an inner secret (Tafuri 1981).

One last event. It is also on the mountain from which Chinvat Bridge springs, the Mountain of Dawns, that the prophet Zarathustra meets the Archangel of “Excellent Thought” Vohu-manah, whereupon Zarathustra disrobes, discarding his material body and organs of sensory perception. That is why, under certain human conditions of small deaths, in sleep, ecstasy, meditation, trance and euphoria, the soul momentarily escapes in ecstatic anticipation to meet soul-on-the-way; for a glimpse of *Daena*. And the practice of drawing, which enables, and is enabled by, imaginations of the inarticulable and the unsayable, is one way the human arrives at the light, albeit momentarily and in small ways, that brings about the transfiguration of the world.

## Conclusion

Drawing instigates a return to the unsayable and the unredeemable, not in the name of a technological mastery of nature, but a mastery of the relationship between humanity and nature. This is because drawing allows the legitimate deformations and unnatural relationships between facts of physical action, and the invisibilities of the imagination, to produce beings – Frascari’s monsters – that are “enigmas that express precisions” (Frascari 1990: 86). Drawing is not a sign of the genius’s capability to build whole-object relations, but rather demonstrates a co-evolution governed by the rhythmic incarnation and excarnation of the spirit: a place of continual rebirth into oneself (Carter 2004). Drawing vivifies the constant condition of the “between”, or interstices of the parallel, a condition for which we have no name, that is neither animal nor human, nature nor humanity, but holds itself in a material relation (Agamben 2004).

## References

- Afshari, A. (2004). The earth is an angel. In *Mazdean Angelology* (December 13, 2004). <http://www.iranian.com/History/2004/December/Mazda/index.html>. Accessed 4 April 2010.
- Agamben, G. (2004). *The Open: Man and Animal*. K. Attell (Trans.). Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Agamben, G. (2007). Genius. In *Profanations*. New York: Zone Books.
- Carter, P. (2004). Containment: Greg Burgess's Architecture of Community. Unpublished paper.
- Bonnefoy, D. (1991). *Asian Mythologies*. W. Doniger (Trans.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Corbin, H. (1972). Mundus Imaginalis, the Imaginary and the Imaginal, *Spring*, 1972. New York: Analytical Psychology Club of New York, Inc., 1-19. Accessed at [http://hermetic.com/bey/mundus\\_imaginalis.htm](http://hermetic.com/bey/mundus_imaginalis.htm) 24 August 2010.
- Deleuze, G. and Parnet, C. *Dialogues*. H. Tomlinson and B. Habberjam (Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Frasconi, M. (1990). A New Angel/Angle in Architectural Research: The Ideas of Demonstration Angels and Angles, *Journal of Architectural Education*, Vol.44, No. 1. (Nov, 1990).
- Frasconi, M. (2005). Cooking an Architectural Happy Cosmopoiesis, *Crossing Boundaries: Architecture and The Influence of Other Disciplines*. Volume 31, Issue 1 (March 2005), 31-37.
- Heidegger, M. (1971). The Way to Language. In *On the Way to Language*. P. D. Hertz (Trans.). New York: Harper and Row.
- Heidegger, M. (1971a). The Origin of the Work of Art. In *Poetry, Language, Thought*. A. Hofstadter (Trans.). New York: Harper and Row.
- Heidegger, M. (1992). *Parmenides*. A. Schuwer and R. Rojcewicz (Trans.). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Pattison, G. (2000). *Routledge Guidebook to Later Heidegger*. London: Routledge.
- Tafari, M. (1981). The Watercolors of Massimo Scolari. In *Massimo Scolari : Watercolors and Drawings 1965-1980*. F. Moschini (Ed.). London: Academy Editions.