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# What Counts as Language in a Closely Argued Built-Discourse?

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It is difficult to see at first how language enters into Arakawa and Gins' architectural body, but it is already presupposed in the closely argued Built-Discourse. For example, it is in the description of the house (or the architectural surround), in the hypothesis of the bioscleave, in the procedures for staging an intervention into the passive framework of formal architectural language-description (i.e., "theory"). As they write, "If architectural procedures serve as the words of a built discourse, then tactically posed surrounds, combining these procedures as they do, are its phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and texts" (Gins Arakawa 2002L: 57).

What is being proposed is a relationship between language procedure (Built-Discourse) and a tactically posed surround (Built Structure) that is equally defined as an art of *poeisis* (building, or making), but Arakawa and Gins – hereafter A + G – argue that the architectural procedure will prove to be more elusive, that "tactically posed surrounds will factor out as those poems that have ever eluded poets, ... poems that could only heretofore be intimated by an insufficiently procedural bioscleave" (Gins and Arakawa 2002: 57). The procedures of language only offer an anexact and insufficient hypothesis; moreover, if the built surround is to be likened to a poem, then it is one that has eluded the poets thus far, which also necessarily implies that the architecturally posed surround is the essence of poetry that poetry itself lacks. The poem would

be an insufficient intimation of the procedural bioscleave imagined by A + G, but for this reason it may also be an observational-heuristic one.

A + G's definition of procedural architectural is, in some way, related to Deleuze and Guattari's definition of "order-words." D + G didn't say this, or make this connection explicit, so I will do it for them. Architects are always producing order words (procedural directives) of a specific kind; they exist in the combination of schemata and cognitive directives that are communicated directly to an inhabiting organism through what A + G call landing sites. "Here is a door: enter/exit here." "Here is a window: look out/in here." "Here is a table with chair: sit here." "Here is a hallway: proceed to the next landing site." These are simple compositions of schemata and directives that can be found in most tactically built surrounds. There are others that are far more totalizing: "This is a house: live here." "This is an office building: work here." "This is a restaurant: eat here." "This is an airport: proceed to the next landing site."

Procedural directives are not simple prescriptives in the order of statements, "one should," but are directed to the action or possibility of the inhabiting organism: "you should." The relationship between architectural statements – even though these are not spoken statements but implicated in the spatial construction – and directives of authority or power is much more subtle because architectural statements first of all define possibility (of action or movement) before revealing their constraining or power-function. Procedural directives combine with schemata to compose the intricate poetry of a tactical surround: When I enter a room, the door has already been offered to me like a polite bellman, and then a window comes into view as what A + G call a perceptual landing site; I glance out of the window at a tree just outside and its leaves lightly tickling the glass, suddenly exfoliating the perceptual landing site to encompass an external façade of the structure which is used as a canvass to paint the internal affect of peaceful contemplation and a qualitative perception of taste into the surround. In this set of procedures I am not even aware that I am being ordered from one point to the next, or that the tree has been tactically placed there several years before so that it would grow into the tactically built surround.

Like performative statements in language, architectural directives are made to be obeyed and not understood; again, they are not functions of cognition, but rather of action and directly link the possibilities of the organism to the architectural surround, constraining it to act as much as giving it shape and form (for example, that of a person who belongs to a particular environment like a commuter in an airport, or a child laying on the couch in the family living room). Returning to the similarity between D + G's conception of "order words" and A + G's formulation of architectural procedures, it is important to notice that order-words are not explicit statements and do not always take the form of imperatives, but are rather defined as immanent relations between statements and acts that are internal to the speech act and constitute its "implicit and non-discursive presuppositions" rather than its explicit and external assumptions by which a statement refers to another statement or to an action (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 77). Likewise for A + G, "Not a fixed set of called for actions, an architectural procedure is a spatiotemporal collaboration between a moving body and a tactically posed surround" (Gins and Arakawa 2002: 73). In founding a theory of language on the function of order-words, D + G were attempting to reinsert the priority of pragmatics into any description of linguistic activity; it is impossible to define the internal presupposition of language as a code, or as communication of information, even explicitly as command or performative, because "the meaning and syntax of language can no longer be defined independently of the speech acts they presuppose," and every statement is linked, directly or indirectly, to an implicit order of "social obligation." Consequently, for DG, "the only possible definition of language is the set of all order-words, implicit presuppositions, or speech acts current in a language at a given moment" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 79).

One of the most striking correspondences between D + G's notion of order-words, or a set of all order-words that define the implicit presuppositions of a language, and A + G's conception of the architectural procedures that define the presuppositions of any given architectural surround is that both are founded on redundancy. As D + G write, "the relation between the statement and the act [in language] is internal, immanent, but it is not one of identity" (1987: 79). Thus, the

speech-act repeats what was already implicated in the order, but not in the manner of a code that is deciphered, or information that is communicated to a passive subject. Likewise, in entering an architectural surround, there are a number of procedures that are performed that are already redundant to the built surround: there is a chair for sitting (I sit); there is a window for looking through (I look); there is a table for spreading out papers or a computer for accessing files (I begin working). However, these redundant actions do not take place like a program and there is always a certain degree of indeterminacy in the functioning of the total system that makes up the architectural body, which A + G seek to intensify through an increasing awareness of which might be compared to what D + G identify in language as “free indirect discourse.” In this regard, A + G oppose the values of form and formalism that exists in much architectural theory, which takes on an imperative order; moreover, we must acknowledge that traditional architectural design is prone to a nearly fascistic emphasis of form over function, or in making explicit the set of order-words that are “built into” any surround, leaving the organism that inhabits it little or no choice but to obey the commands of the architectural body (read here: the architect-designer).

We can highlight this emphasis on procedural indeterminacy (later defined as the “tentative constructing of a holding in place”) over pure formalism in A + G’s body of theory in the following excerpt:

Only procedures and proceduralism, not mere form or formalism, can redistribute and reconfigure the architectural body of an organism that persons. It is not to be forgotten that the architectural body, a person’s fleeting association of herself with the whole of what encloses her, fills the whole of the architectural surround, built in procedures included. (Gins and Arakawa 2002: 79)

Here, we can see A + G attempting something parallel in reconceptualizing the architectural surround from all the implicit presuppositions it already contains, presuppositions that may be actualized or not actualized depending on the organism-person, implicit presuppositions that are built into the structure like guesswork, but do not determine the interaction. Thus, “always invented/reinvented on the spot, they exist in the tense of the supremely iffy”

(73). However, this does not simply mean that architectural directives are subliminal messages built into the surround like codes of information, or like effervescent signifiers floating on the surface of ice in a scotch glass, but are rather built into the surround as conditions of possibility and experience. Tactically interposed between perception and consciousness, A + G define the interplay that functions in any built surround as “a scattering of nods that everywhere notes positionings.” Consequently, as they write, “a landing-site configuration forms, as a heuristic device, when the continual symbolizing of a symbolizing creature – which can, in effect make a symbol or metaphor of anything – [that is, when] the symbolizing creature becomes a landing site coordinating creature” (22). It is here we see the complete functioning of the diagram, as a set of schemata functioning in a coordinated arrangement with a set of directives (“order-words”), to constitute a more or less complex information management system. “Landing sites deliver an on-the-spot management system. Information management – that is what landing sites are set up to do” (22). In other words, A + G do not seek to avoid the power equation of the architectural diagram, which is already that of a “training ground” belonging to a disciplinary regime, but seek to deploy it in a different direction, that is, against a previous regime of discipline or training. Thus, walking into a building is like entering into a “purposeful guess,” and there is much freedom to explore a probability structure in any direction whatsoever, including what is presupposed in the built world, and “by what the apportioned out [probability] comes to be everywhere” (23).

Following this progression, it is not by chance that procedural architecture has incorporated the digitalized layers of information in its diagram. The tree in the window now appears also in the screensaver of a video monitor in the corner of an office space or living room creating a new range of possibilities; or better, monitors displaying departure information are tactically placed above escalators directing the movement of symbolizing creatures to the left or to the right, immediately revealing long corridors of landing sites numbered sequentially stating at each step, “you are here,” and “you need to be here.” In turn, these lead to a sequence of numbered chairs, “you need to be here,” preceded by

staging areas (bars, restaurants, lounges) which provide stop-overs for digital interplay with virtual surrounds where you spend your time waiting. Yet, the quantitative increase of the number of virtual landing sites that have been incorporated into the built surround has not impeded the efficiency of the management system; in fact, this confirms A + G's observations on the dimensionality of landing sites that are dispersed or apportioned out in such a way that the "anywhere" comes to be "everywhere."

A fundamental perspective is revealed, however, when we realize that a "person" can never be extricated from surroundings, raising the question of how far into the environment does the organism of the person extend, and more crucially, how far into the organism does the environment extend to determine the nature of the person found there. "Moving within an architectural surround, a person fashions an evolving matrix ... not entirely of his or her own making" (2002: 40). The person that I am or who sits next to me in the airport lobby, the person I am or who I imagine sitting in a chair at home – are these not merely two expressions of the architectural body that confines or bounds that particular kind of person one expects to find there. When I am at home I am someone, just as when I am at the airport I am anyone, just like anyone else, and this is how I piece together my role in a multiplicity of actions as I get into line or take my assigned seat in an intricate ballet of landing site coordination, just as when at home I follow the coordinates established by routine and habit. As A + G write, "standard rooms evoke a relatively predictable set of actions. In the good fit of a familiar room, one feels the tentativeness underlying actions that have been molded" (43). Moreover, "One's living room is and isn't one's own sensorium. All that is tentative is in the realm of the sensorial; all that appears to be definite has been physically constructed" (42).

This begs the following question: is a person tentative or a definite part of the architectural body? Of course, the answer is the former rather than the later, since the same person could also be found to be elsewhere, in another architectural surround. However, "isolating persons from their architectural surrounds leads to a dualism that is more pernicious than that of the mind and

the body.” Rather than being passively determined by formal architectural environments, which has been the dominant procedure theoretically and practically, the point would be to activate the heuristic activity of a person defined as a “tentative constructing of a holding in place.” In other words, “Our claim: architecture can help a person figure herself out” (2002: 44). Helping a person figure herself out is related to “getting out” of a currently constructed bioscleave that is too constrained and confining; in turn, for A + G, this means extending life – and simultaneously, proposing an architectural surround that appears “against dying.”

Here we might imagine dying, or the moment of death, purely from the perspective of a near zero-degree of interplay between the person and the surrounding environment to the point of being isolated and indifferent. This growing indifference between the organism that a person needs to construct as a living hypothesis of holding itself in place within its own surroundings is gradually let go of until the organism itself submits to becoming detached from the person entirely. Thus, death happens by detaching a person from its tentative constructing of holding itself in place. Thus, even in sleep, the person still holds itself in place via the tentative constructing of dreamwork which pertains to its own environment, but which is still attached to the organism that breathes in and out of its bioscleave. But let us also think of children playing video games on the living room floor, which in some ways also emulates this dream environment in the interaction with virtual space; rather than being interpreted negatively, they are also performing this activity of tentatively constructing a holding in place. In other words, they are still resisting dying.

In each example, whether dreaming or video gaming, we see an organism maintaining herself as a person. Here, we have to extend the philosophical notion of the person in order to touch the meaning of the organism as the ground of the determination, or determining determination (as philosophers say). The organism needs the person as a tentative constructing of a holding in place within an environment or territory, but the person needs the organism in order to breathe into its environment and out into its territory. “Each organism that

persons finds the new territory that is itself, and, having found it, adjusts it" (2002: 1). Returning to A + G's earlier maxim, persons cannot be extracted from their surroundings, and this results in multiply determined surrounds and a whole differentiation of the organism into a species. A species is just a person according to a different scale, just as a microorganism persons according to the opposite pole of the same scale. "An organism casts itself onto the world as a person, and wavers continually between existing as an organism [as a species] and as a person [organisms co-determined by environments]; moreover, "if organisms form themselves as persons by uptaking the environment, then they involve not only bodies but domains [territories], spheres of activity and influence" (66). Just as in the philosophy of Whitehead, or in D + G's nomadology, there is no privileged perspective from which to enter the scale, which is why A + G often introduce molecular perceptions (Lilliputian perspectives) into their determination of the architectural surround alongside much larger scales such as that of Gulliver moving through the town of Mildendo, the capital of Lilliput. Consequently, as they write in their directions for use, "construct more than one scale of operation" (77), and; "Not a series of actions that take place on this scale of action or that but the coordinating of different scales of actions makes a person able to construct a world" (63).

Finally, in exploring the notion of the bioscleave, in relation to the organism that persons and that takes up an environment, let us begin as A + G do with a simple organism: a snail. Here, we are immediately given the image of a cramped bioscleave, which is easier to get into than to get out. The human snail is no different and the problem will also be one of getting out, that is, increasing lifespan. The embryo, generated in the womb, passes with difficulty into another bioscleave, the body. However, as Lacanian psychoanalytic theory has taught us, the human snail body (the primitive outer shell of the person excreted by the organism) is already determined by what A + G call an "insufficient procedural bioscleave hypothesis," since according to Lacan all human snails are born prematurely. It is in this organic prematurity (or "insufficiency" to use A + G's term) that is "built into" the primary bioscleave that conditions the construction of prosthetic supplements, external bioscleaves that are excreted around the first

and primary bioscleave, which, in fact, is the infant's first imaging capability that is bound up with its kinesthetic and perceptual landing site. It is this series of prosthetic supplemental bioscleaves, including language and spatial awareness, which leads to A + G's hypothesis of the architectural body, and gives us a deeper sense of the use of the term "surrounding" in their works.

At this point, I will read the poem "Humansnails" that appears in the dialogue "Architectural Hypothesis," after which I will conclude by returning to take up the question "What counts for language in a closely argued built structure?"

### **Humansnails**

But getting out of tight spots is quite another matter.  
The more credit to them for picking up an edge and going in,  
given how much harder it is to get out.

Loving *their* medium, humansnails go along glued bodily to it,  
all their breath closing in palpably around them.  
They carry this with them, they swallow it,  
they expel, exude, and disperse it.  
They go through it. It *goes* through them.

*Their* medium: sited awareness.  
All that a humansnail disperses: (its) ubiquitous site.  
Call all that a humansnail disperses: (its) architectural body.  
An interpretation in the best possible taste  
because, as it were, of complementary tones:  
passive and active elements. The one simultaneously  
bathes and feeds the other,  
which covers the distance it breathes in and out of its forms.

Humansnails go along glued bodily to the second skins or shells  
(architectural surrounds).

First shells: shaped volumes of the beloved medium of humansnails.

First shells: shaped volumes that form by virtue of actions humansnails take within second shells (architectural surrounds).

First shells: relatively large atmospheric globular samples of the beloved medium – medium as oneself?? – that wraps around humansnails.

First shell: on-the-spot humansnail made wrappings of sited awareness.

Have the man-made become at to the point as the snail-made?

Thick with one's own breathing.  
Thick with one's own landing site configurations.  
They carry landing sites with them, they swallow them,  
heuristically for direct mapping.  
They expel, exude, and disperse landing-site configurations.  
They *go* through their ubiquitous sites,  
i.e., the sum of all landing sites of each moment.  
Their ubiquitous sites *go* through them.

Note too that you cannot conceive of a humansnail  
emerging from its shell and not moving.  
The moment it stops to rest  
it pulls back into its next pair of shells.

(Other things might be mentioned about humansnails. To begin with, their characteristic timidity. Their *sang froid*. Their extensibility.)  
(Gins and Arakawa 2002: 30-32)

First observation on the poem: here we see the process by which the humansnail (the organism that persons) first forms the primary medium from its immediate environment – its first outer shell that it exudes or excretes out of its own organs, its body, for lack of a better term – that then is “taken up” and dispersed in its supplementary shells (i.e., architectural surrounds). “Taken up” and exuded or excreted implies that the “on the spot awareness” that defines the perception-consciousness system of the first medium (the body) is dispersed into landing-site coordinates via architectural procedures. In other words, here we find A + G’s definition of “the person” as an ubiquitous site in a complex information management system.

Second observation: I would also underline that A + G’s poem always describes the humansnail in movement, or as a doubled pattern of digestion and excretion (a nutritive pattern) and inhalation and dispersal (a breathing pattern). The humansnail moves from one chamber to the next connected to the umbilicus of its body, swallowing each architectural surround it enters, which goes through it to become perception-consciousness or “sited awareness,” and then, moving into

the next architectural surround to digest its coordinates by the same set of procedures. This constitutes the in and out pattern of breathing that directly links the organism to the environment composed of architectural surrounds that are like hardened media “thick with one’s own breathing.” Consequently, here we have the image of the architectural body, in which the external surround is not reduced to a static set of coordinates, but a living articulation of procedural construction of sited awareness.

If the entire point of movement is described by A + G as one of “getting out” – the humansnail seeks to get out of a surround that has become too cramped and constrictive – then this happens by withdrawing into proximity to “its beloved medium – medium as oneself...” At the same time, there is a notation that if the humansnail ever stops to rest in this interminable process of getting out, it merely “pulls back into its next pair of shells.” Here we can witness a certain Beckettian sense of fatality and incredible humor in A + G’s description, comparable to the ending of Molloy: “I can’t go on. I must go on.” In other words, what we find is a depiction of an organism that seeks to escape the constraints of its own medium only to inevitably exude and excrete more media in a space that is fundamentally determined as *partes extra partes*. This would imply that architecture itself is simply a symptom of a particular organism that is stuck in its environment, or rather, stuck to its own medium that it cannot escape like a mollusk cannot live outside its own shell.

My third and final observation concerns the form of the poem itself as a vital and compelling image of the architectural body in A + G’s theoretical body of work. What is a poem, after all, but the excretion and hardening of the breath into a distinctive form via a language procedure? However, I return to the earlier comment, quoted in the beginning of my presentation, that “tactically posed surrounds will factor out as those poems that have ever eluded poets, ... poems that could only heretofore be intimated by an insufficiently procedural bioscleave.” In other words, the poem is only a primitive or rudimentary shape for imaging the architectural surround that A + G dream of fabricating, and this is certainly not a Heideggerian fixation on the form of the poem as an adequate

description of “the house of Being.” Language is too abstract, and the syntactical coordination of its phrases, sentences, paragraphs (or stanzas) and texts does not convey the sense of the tentative holding in place of the person that appears within an architectural surround. Nevertheless, the poem does intimate a new way of imaging the architectural body and we might imagine now entering a room in the same way one constructs a poem, by means of a tentative procedure of combining the elements of “free indirect discourse” in a set of all order-words that belong to language at a given moment.

Is there a possibility of “free indirect discourse” in the architectural surround? A + G define the ubiquitous site of the architectural body as “the set of all landing sites of each moment that define a given architectural configuration. As I have attempted to describe earlier on, architectural procedures that determine the possibilities of movement and sense belonging to an architectural surround can be comparable to what Deleuze and Guattari define as “order words,” or to the set of all order-words that define the possibility of a language. The point is, just as in the construction of sense in a poem, to introduce what A + G constantly refer to as “tentativeness” into the procedural order, which could be compared to the tentativeness of certain phrases in a poem: the apparent tentative constructions of phrases like “he danced his did” in a poem by Cummings, the neologisms of Carroll, the syntactical awkwardness of Berryman or Celan, or in the poetry of Gins herself. Thus, the tentative constructing of a holding in place that is enacted by the poem could provide us with a procedural hypothesis for entering the architectural surround in a new manner, and adjusting it to one’s own living configuration. Entering a room like making a poem. This could be a way of understanding the sense of the statement *tentative constructing of a holding in place* in A + G’s work.

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