

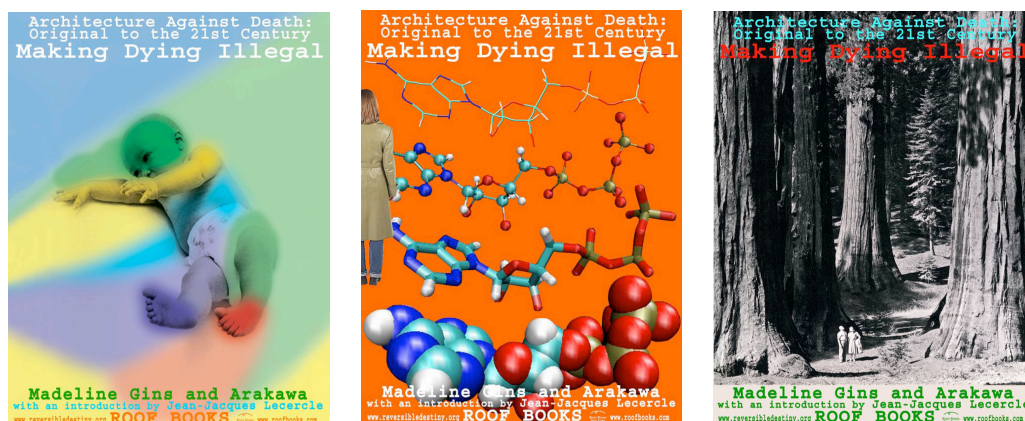
## The Destiny You Reverse May Be Your Own

Alan Prohm

*Making Dying Illegal* by Madeline Gins and Arakawa (New York: Roof Books, 2006).

To say that *Making Dying Illegal* marks a departure for Arakawa and Gins is like saying the Rock of Ages will be staying put for a while. The project this team of artists has been running since the mid-1960s, since the 80s under the banner of “Reversible Destiny”, is arguably both the most sustained and the most protean art endeavor of our time. As Arakawa and Gins see it, it is also the most radical. *Making Dying Illegal* is the latest chapter in the gradual and unrelenting unfolding of Reversible Destiny – remember, “Be unrelenting when faced with the relentless” (AB xv) – and it goes further than any yet in clarifying the nature of the project, at the same time that it blurs further than ever the frames and parameters we might wish to apply in assessing it.

### I.



From the *Making Dying Illegal* poster series, viewable on the website: <http://reversibledestiny.org/MDI.php>

Released this past Fall by Roof Books, the book marks a departure for its authors. Even to those who have followed the development of their project, with its periodic strong shifts of tack, this book was unexpected. While hardly recent, the shift they completed in the 80s from more straightforwardly painterly and literary output to a confusing and controversial immersion in architecture has yet to be fully processed by many art critics and observers. Recently, however, with the success of their built projects (esp. the Reversible Destiny “Park” at Yoro and the Mitaka Apartments near Tokyo) and the enthusiastic reception of their *Architectural Body* (2002), a work of architectural theory, many have been happy to simply accept their reincarnation as architects, albeit odd ones, and be done with it. *Making Dying Illegal*, however, as the title indicates, militates against our ever being done with anything, and consistent with that it redestabilizes the identity that for some may have seemed to be settling around them. In not following up one treatise on architecture with another (though

this work does contribute an important piece to that theory), the first thing this book shows is that their allegiance as actors is not to architecture, as it was not previously to painting or poetry, but really to the not dying they speak of and that so many might wish would just go away.

Far from going away, not dying remains the central point, and *Making Dying Illegal* shows how much more than architecture they are arraying around it.

A little inventory:

**Legislation:** Legislation is the surprise feature here, the unexpected new tack their project is taking, head-on into a host of new questions and controversies where the old ones still hover along unanswered. On the first page of their text they present the proposed “*Reversible Destiny* Statute (A Law Making It Illegal to Die). In brief: “Not making an all-out effort to go on living and the act of dying are from this date on classified first-order felonies.” In a later section they add a number of underlying laws to support this one, “GOLDEN RULE LAWS/SELF-PRESERVATION LAWS” such as the statute forbidding counter-productive interactions and “The Not-So-Damned-Sure-Of-Oneself Statute” (124-5), which suggest that what we are dealing with here is not an isolated conceptual gesture, but effectively a new creative genre<sup>1</sup>, one we can perhaps now expect to see elaborated in a series analogous to that of the team’s architectural procedures (listed for reference purposes on page 196). Following the lead statute and expanding its implications is a “Declaration of the Rights of Persons and their Architectural Bodies” that re-lays the moral foundations of constitutional law on not-dying as the bedrock value, and a list of sentencing guidelines for interpreting the new law.

While the *Reversible Destiny* Statute is the headliner here, the title track, as it were, it is far from the only highlight on the album. Its role in the book as a whole, in fact, stands relative to the in many ways more substantial later sections it serves to frame and focus.

**Biotopeology:** Arguably the most independently substantial section of the book, (though it turns up almost incidentally, as an attachment among others within an email exchange with two unknown scientists), is the treatise introducing the new “art-science” of *Biotopeology*. A metatheory grown from their spatialized model of awareness based on *landing sites*<sup>2</sup>, biotopeology is named and articulated here for the first time as a practical, counter-reductionist epistemology of tentativeness, a pragmatics of “knowing and non-knowing”, and as the mode of thought most conducive to the recommended goal of living as an architectural body. In it we recognize the phenomenology of diagrammatic awareness-tracking that underpins their work, both their theoretical search for a way to intervene in the body-cognitive processes that shape a world for a self and decide their limitations, and their practical search for the experiential leverage that might be applied (principally through architecture) towards a reconfigured mode of being. As theory, however, the leverage biotopeology itself exerts here takes the form of language, language concepts to support awareness and reorganize thinking.

The reconfiguration at issue in biotopeology reveals itself to be in line with several generations of effort to allow certain profound consequences of modern physics (and

of more recent cognitive science and biology) to work their way through into our operative self-/nonself-understanding as individuals and as a species. Put one way: “Biotopology does away with the discrete object....” (74). Learning to see/think with any degree of the complexity which relativity, quantum or complexity theory have shown to be the case, and escaping the apparent and devastating pitfalls of reductionist thinking in human and world affairs, is no easy task. In the 1940’s the designer Moholy-Nagy saw the link between social catastrophe and the bad habit of thinking in what he called “object concepts”, and in the 80’s the physicist David Bohm proposed the “rheomode” as a point of linguistic reform for addressing just this problem. Gins and Arakawa’s *cleaving*, *Bioscleave* and *architectural body* are concept proposals in this tradition, so in-between and in motion they resist our inevitable effort to think them as objects. And with the treatise on biotopology we now have two higher-order conceptual tools, the *approximative-rigorous abstraction* and the *terminological junction*. Presented as conceptual/linguistic strategies to allow thinking to proceed in the face of undecidability, where terminology-as-usual would kill the object of investigation by pegging it as an object, they are also very informative about the artists’ own idiosyncratic and often perplexing language use:

*Approximative-rigorous abstraction*, e.g. “cleaving”, “landing site” or “architectural body”: “holds open and continually keeps posing the question of what is it that in its name has been and is still being abstracted. It is an abstraction that has a reference realm that stays loosely and widely defined even as it is presented in sharp focus.” (57)

*Terminological junction*, e.g. “event fabric/landing site configuration” or “organizing principle/allowing tendency/axis of possibility”: “an important means for keeping vivid the multiple scales of action that are in operation as the world.” (61) “A terminological junction will loosen concepts or unwind them even as it acts as a means of pursuing them to the bottom of their implications.” (74)

**Correspondence:** Gins’ and Arakawa’s writings are notable for how rarely they reference the tremendous reading that precedes them<sup>3</sup>, or make explicit the actual or virtual dialogue their work carries on with that of other artists and thinkers. *Making Dying Illegal* goes some way towards showing how misleading this apparent isolation is. It features as prominent, fully integrated chapters three batches of correspondence testifying to critical and collaborative exchange between the authors and (mostly living) colleagues of theirs in other fields: two physicists, Carey Rudifolkine and Jean Zinovieff, the social psychologist Reuben Baron, and the fictional Leslie Fukuzawa-Emerson, whom I take to be a 21<sup>st</sup>-century hybrid and re-gendered embodiment of the authors’ 19<sup>th</sup> century forebears, Yukichi Fukuzawa and Ralph Waldo Emerson<sup>4</sup>. Reasserting the hermetic feel, however, and partly counteracting the sense of authenticity the letters might otherwise impart, everything in these exchanges has been (re)written in a uniform tone and style recognizable as Madeline Gins’.

The correspondence with Reuben Baron in particular gives us a good glimpse into the role conversation plays and has played in their project, which for all its occasional superbity of tone is genuinely dialogic and collaborative at many scales. The exchange presents a real back-and-forth, with Baron challenging the authors on several points, and the authors both countering with objections to certain of Baron’s readings, and acknowledging the debt they owe him for key insights that have obviously played a role in the development of their thinking, and in the writing of this book:

As part of your effort to keep us, so to speak, in good standing with social embedding, you began last week to urge us to dally no longer with an isolated “personing” but instead to make “interpersoning” central to our approach to architectural-body formation and the achieving of a reversible destiny through the construction of a built discourse. We tremble at the thought. We think you are right.  
(96)

**Procedural Architecture:** The book also returns to material from *Architectural Body* to articulate again the theory behind “procedural architecture”, which they insist must become critical infrastructure in any society that would try to comply with the new law against dying. What they add to their architectural theory here is an important text called “Directions for Architectural Procedure Invention and Assembly”<sup>5</sup>, explaining how anyone can go about designing procedural architecture themselves, and become “overnight an architect”. Since the *Reversible Destiny* Statute would effectively write their brand of architecture into the legal code, (anyone living in a “tactically posed surround/tutelary abode” would automatically be judged to be in compliance), declaring the “code” for this architecture, such as it is, to be open-source is a reassuring democratic gesture. It also raises the interesting question of what would come of other artists/architects setting up shop in a field of architectural experimentation now so strictly identified with Arakawa and Gins. More evidence that their commitment is not to an art-brand monopoly, but to the proliferation of research efforts towards actualizing life as architectural bodies? We will see when the first offshoots emerge.

**Testimonies:** Also conspicuously rare (or elusive) in their other writings are straightforward “explanations” of how they actually imagine reversible destiny working, what living as an architectural body would really look like, and how architecture like theirs might really make a difference in the mortality and moral lot of human beings. *Making Dying Illegal* reveals them to be less evasive on these points than it might have seemed till now, even if it reaffirms how speculative this venture remains even for them. What they offer us here is the “Nearly Universal Affidavit/Loosening Identity for Biotopological Purposes”, first-hand fictional testimony from someone required by law to go live in a “tutelary abode” of the reversible destiny type, and very articulate as to the transformations this brought about in hir<sup>6</sup>:

“First off I became unable to see the forest (myself) for all the trees, and that was a good thing.

...

I have successfully escaped the habit of subsuming all that jumps with aliveness in my vicinity....

...

These days if...forced to put it some way...it is as a loosely-knit group of self-organizations that I refer to myself.

...

The thing of it is that streams of inter-subjective attachment generally do not flow wholeheartedly as the milk of human kindness between people who consider themselves to have strikingly different identities; thus, if there is going to be a community-wide effort to do away with dying, then, so that people won’t be insufficiently fructified, so that they *will* be sufficiently encouraged along and replenished by streams of bioscleavic emanations, separatism-causing identities must be let go of.

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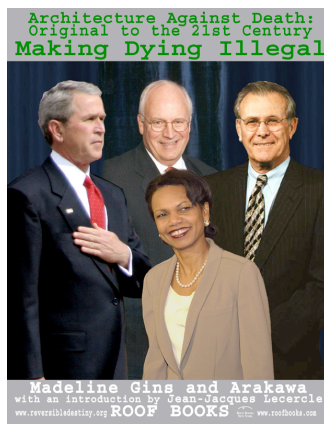
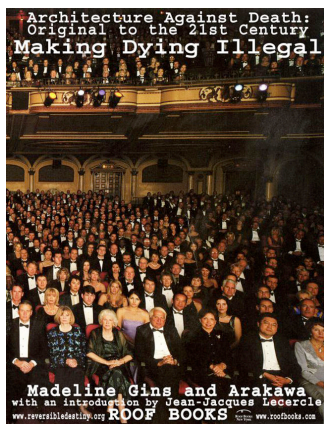
My dear abode managed, by virtue of how it was formed, to introduce me on a daily basis to my own tentativeness, a tentativeness that I had feared would be nightmarish, but that proved to be not at all so.

(MDI 121-3,125)

Readers who until now have not read closely may be surprised to find the dissolution of identity articulated as so much of what Reversible Destiny is about, or at the nearly Christian ring of their emphasis on loving-kindness (in more Buddhist terms “the forty-two tributaries or so that give rise to a compassionate self” (119). For anyone so surprised, this same witness’s explanation of one section of his new law code will go a long way towards dispelling the lingering vagaries around reversible destiny and this new legislative initiative:

GOLDEN RULE LAWS/SELF-PRESERVATION LAWS, which start from the dictum that a person should always think only of doing to others what she would find acceptable to have others do to her, generally hold people criminally responsible for their own ignorance when it comes to self-preservation. Inasmuch as we are interactively formed, a thorough-going pursuit of self-preservation must involve not only knowing what’s good for you but also being cognizant of the effects your actions have on others. In my opinion, we will need more of these laws than we now have.

## II.



In his introduction to *Making Dying Illegal*, the philosopher of language Jean-Jacques LeCercle addresses the heterogeneity of the book, and the orderliness of that overview is a real help for anyone orienteering over the parceled but gridless terrain of this text. LeCercle invokes the tradition of the romantic literary fragment as a first step towards explaining a composition which, knowing the authors, is neither accidental nor arbitrary. And this is certainly appropriate, provided we understand the fragment in relation to the favored romantic trope of synecdoche, the standing of parts for an absent but invocable whole. After the relative linearity and focus of *Architectural Body*, this book can easily be seen as merely a collection of dissociated parts, a “bonus disc with *all* the special features” as I worded it in a blurb requested for the publication. But it would be a mistake to neglect the whole these parts collaborate and

reinforce each other in projecting. If they are fragments in an artistic assemblage, they are at the same time ingredients for a near-total reconstituting of society. Representing law-making, philosophy, sociology, infrastructure and human lived experience, these ingredients stand proleptically for a future the authors would have us join them in willing into existence. A-symptomatic of futurist fantasies, however, the object of this willing as the book reveals is not a model of society, a plan (neither the laws nor the architecture amount to this), but simply (and species-historically) a threshold of transformation, an event-horizon for the flourishing of a radical and boundless intersubjectivity.

Extending, elaborating and undergirding the simple (as in monolithic) claim of not dying toward several different horizons, the pieces of this book may at first seem to multiply the nagging ambiguity still surrounding that claim, without resolving it. There are many opportunities in this book to ask, again: How do they mean that? Not literally!? Are they serious? Are they crazy? The hilarity of this book, on first hearing its title, is a hilarity of prolepsis, almost a slapstick of the authors' getting ahead of themselves. To propose adopting legislation that would make it a punishable offense to die, without the preposterousness of questioning mortality in the first place having in any way subsided, simply leap-frogs the prior and more fundamental provocation with a set of new ones. The effect is to go on with a conversation that seemed to have no continuation, letting not dying fall to the ground of presupposition as if it had been accepted, as a(n) (im)plausibility whose public response time has expired. The first accomplishment of *Making Dying Illegal*, from a conceptual art perspective, may be that of having found a next move in the game of tactical and polemic claim-making that began with "We have decided not to die". In *Making Dying Illegal*, Gins and Arakawa return to claim-making as a creative dimension of their project, and in so doing show that there is artistic life beyond going on record as refuseniks on the subject of death.

And yet, outlawing dying, as a follow-up conceptual gesture, has nothing of the coyness, pose or arty calculation some may have attributed to deciding not to die. For one thing the speculativeness of the proposal is everywhere acknowledged. The statute itself is introduced with a rhetorical stutter-step as expressive of their intellectual stance in this enterprise as anything else: "What if there were a statute...but there won't be a statute...but there might be a statute which read: ...". And after all the framing and backgrounding of the law, when it comes down to indicating the sentence the crime will carry, they have only this to say: "This has not yet been determined" (42). The picture is not so much of two people divorced from common sense, but of two people soberly, strategically, ludicrously positioned against it. In the exchange with Rueben Baron, the realism and the strategy can be glimpsed together. They write: "If dying could be made illegal—highly unlikely—that would effectively force the issue of how extensive an effort would be needed to stop dying from happening, to stop it in its tracks" (108). It would take a law to force people out of the habit, the complacencies, by which they persist in sanctioning prevailing conditions as inevitable ones. And it would take a gesture like the one they are making with this book, and indeed with their whole quixotic project, to make that point, and if ever possible, to tip it.

The ludicrousness of Gins and Arakawa's proposals – that dying is surmountable and that it should be outlawed as a way of accomplishing that – in the context of the rather

reasonable mode of argument that reigns in this book, shows up less as a flagrant liability at the heart of their project than as a line of force they have harnessed and weaponized against the very state of things it speaks for. That their project involves a conceptual strategizing at this level was already evidenced in *Architectural Body*, where they write just after a brief, explicit statement of their argument for reversible destiny: “If you say no, or yes, to this automatically, who are you, then, and where does it get you?” (AB xx). Various perspectives have been advanced for thinking this strategic positioning, for example Arthur Danto’s, likening the decision not to die to Pascal’s wager, or James Sherry’s, calling the new book (which he edited) a satire. Both of these perspectives are informative, but I think the first misses the militancy of the project, while the second understates its positive, constructive force. Negatively, Gins and Arakawa’s positioning involves much more than staking out new philosophical territory where they see a chance to add some dim possibility to our lot without incurring any particular risk. The unreasonable claim and its logic lures reasonableness itself into an argument that convicts it of homicidal complicity *even if* reasonableness wins. A short script of the argument might run like this (though Gins and Arakawa are not likely to give up so easily):

A+G: We think dying should be outlawed.

Reasonable People (RP): That’s crazy. Dying is inevitable.

A+G: We disagree. And you’re not trying hard enough.

RP: Look you can’t pass laws against biology, and biology makes us die.

A+G: We think biology is still willing to negotiate. There are biologists who confirm this. And we are surprised you show so little motivation to explore this option for you and your loved ones.

RP: You are extremists, and fanatics. As a metaphor we might go along with your reversible destiny, but biology is not negotiable, not literally, not on this subject. With enough money and will power we can accomplish almost anything, and we love life as much as the next guy, but we are not going to waste our energies fighting the inevitable. We have a civilization to run.

A+G: OK. Maybe you’re right. Biology is ineluctable, and anyone who has escaped parental neglect, malnutrition, malaria, humiliating cruelty, obesity, societally abetted suicidal depression or murder, genocide, AIDS, flooding, hurricanes, refugee status, economic sanctions, health-care policy, suicide-bombers, land-mines, preemptive wars of liberation and regime change, carcinogens and neurotoxins in the air, food and water supply, elder abuse and homelessness to live to the ripe old age of 120 will croak like falling over a cliff and there’s nothing anyone can do about it. But what about everyone else? What’s your civilization doing for them?

This is the satire. The unpassable law criminalizing the inevitable mocks the entire edifice of morals, law and policy that lets all the avoidable dying (literal dying and less-than-literal dying) slip through the cracks, where it has not directly or indirectly instituted that dying as part of the reasoned and defended systems by which civilization itself chooses to live. But this book is not exclusively, and not primarily, a satire. Far from it. However hypothetical and polemical the legislative proposals, the move from simply claiming that destiny is reversible to mounting a legal advocacy for that reversal expresses the artists’ ambition to mobilize the notion of not dying as a major lever of radical social change.



Let me back up. Deciding not to die is an act with tremendous philosophical leverage. With death so firmly wedged as the cornerstone of Western philosophic certainty and worldwide common sense, to doubt death is clearly the most economic way to call all certainty and common sense back into question. It is also, clearly, a formula for the unconditional affirmation of life. If it can be done seriously and sustained, i.e. if we can imagine the act not merely as the coy move of savvy conceptual artists, but as a committed existential leap, we can begin to imagine how the leap might have transformative effects. There is an easy analogy here with the kind of argument that promises enlightenment, if not out-right release from conditioned existence, to anyone who can just sit down and do nothing, really nothing, or who can succeed at believing in their own non-existence for any length of time. There may be something about deciding not to die that can help explain the surprising inventiveness and endurance Arakawa and Gins have shown in pursuing their project over three decades, or the philosophical argument may be in itself compelling enough to motivate some number of people to take up their call to research and commit to daily practice in tactically posed surrounds for the sake of expanding life in whatever directions it will be expanded. But this does not make a social movement, and I believe what this book makes clear is that the point they are trying to make with not dying is fundamentally a social point, and one that must matter at a social scale if it matters at all.

The question comes down to this: how does philosophical leverage translate into social leverage? How can a project that is conceptualist at its core manage its critique and its insights in such a way as to leverage a social transformation in measure with the personal transformation their architecture is designed to leverage? Choosing architecture was the answer to half a question. It established a practice of embodying philosophical arguments in immediately experiential challenges, entrusting the proof of fundamental indeterminacy and of the distributed nature of self to buildings, because syllogisms lack impact. Broaching lawmaking sets to work on the other half of the question. How to generalize the cogency of those arguments beyond a specialized audience. An important short text in *Making Dying Illegal* makes this point explicitly: "This statute making it a crime to die will probably only need to be in effect for a relatively short period of time. It can and should be used merely as a transitional measure through which to get the general public to become aware of the possibility that lives can be conceived of and conducted apart from death" (43).

The calculation, it seems, is that within the notion of not dying is the seed of a revolutionary desire just maybe capable of motivating the overthrow of what we have forever accepted as the human condition. Once there is a shred of evidence, the thinking goes, the shadow of a doubt to suggest death may not be necessary, the life drive will kick in, species-wide, to do what it takes. And if what it takes is dissolution of egoic identity, a relinquishing of all objectivist/positivist habits of mind, and a thorough-going inter-identification of self with other at every scale, not to mention a redesign of the structures of human relationship that administrate life on this planet, then the inevitable transformation will have some striking moral benefits. Like the "even if" logic of the dialogue I sketched out above, these gains would be secured for humanity *even if* the 120-year outside limit of biological life proved a universal constant after all. In the logic of biotopology, what fails at one scale of action may well succeed at another, and there's no need to decide in advance which scale you're aiming at. As Madeline Gins says on this point, "We'll take what we can get"<sup>7</sup>.



The positive, constructive force of Gins' and Arakawa's project here, I believe, resides in the implication chain they trace between an unconditional desire for life and the whole cascade of personal and societal changes that would ensue from an informed pursuit of it. In this sense *Making Dying Illegal* shows up as a tactic, or set of tactics, within a strategy of change based on a particular formulation of "radical needs", to use the Marxian term (*radikale Bedürfnisse*). Could the fatalism it perennially submits to be refuted, certainly the desire to go on living, as a body, as a person, as a species, is as reliable a force as you can imagine to drive a revolution; provided a) people believe that to go on living is possible, and b) they know a revolution is what it will take. The Reversible Destiny project, and *Making Dying Illegal* in particular, can then be seen as a campaign to cultivate not dying as a transformative desire. Doing so, interestingly, brings the project in line with that of its unacknowledged distant cousin, the Situationist International, along a new dimension. The parallels between their labyrinthine architecture and that of the Situationist architect Constant are obvious enough<sup>8</sup>. What has not been so visible until now, however, is the extent to which Arakawa and Gins are operating a utopian strategy leveraged on latent desire. For Marx the bet was on workers' inherent desire to be free in the expenditure of their productive energies. For the Situationists it was on the desire to lead an unalienated life of creative, serious play. For Gins and Arakawa, it is the desire to go on living. In all three cases tactical action involves awakening and feeding the desire with tantalizing hints of plausibility, thus opening history to the reconfiguration its fulfillment would require. As the early Guy Debord put it:

"We need to work toward flooding the market—even if for the moment merely the intellectual market—with a mass of desires whose realization is not beyond the capacity of man's present means of action on the material world, but only beyond the capacity of the old social organization."<sup>9</sup>

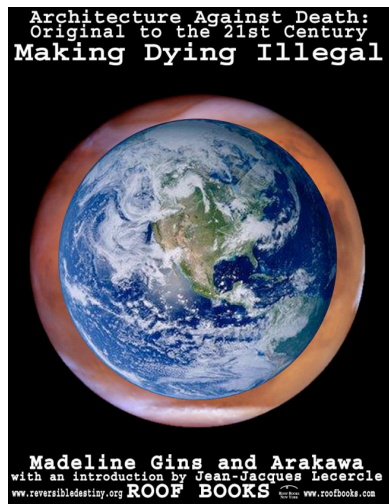
By bringing in the SI here, I do not mean to dismiss the obvious and important differences between these projects. Compared to Arakawa and Gins, Constant had no idea what to do with space, while compared to the SI, Arakawa and Gins have no revolutionary theory. But if I am right in pointing up a real structural parallel between their notions of social leverage, then we arrive at last at a point where *Making Dying Illegal*, and the impulse it represents at this stage in their project, can be appraised critically. To the extent their project has focused on architecture, the evaluation has involved assessing the potential "architectural" efficacy of their built works, and while wildly speculative so far, this has led to some very interesting thinking on the question of how kinesthesia and spatial cognition might interface functionally with identity formation and the setting of worldviews, even possibly with the substrates of biological vitality. Assessing their newest proposals, by contrast, brings us onto the terrain of social, and ultimately political, efficacy. On this terrain there has already been substantial reaction to the problematic notion of using the law to bring people to their radicalizing, liberatory moment. But considering the degree of polemic and satire stirred in with the seriousness of *Making Dying Illegal*, this seems to me a secondary distraction. More central is the question of how living as an architectural body – identity grown inter-personal, understanding biotopologized, organism learning how not to die – might interface with the conditions producing broad-based social change. Or even of how the conditions for a widespread learning to live as an architectural body might be brought about socially in the first place (whether through legislation or by any other means).

Avoiding these questions would entail writing off any social dimension of their project as just poetry, or as ‘pataphysics, a “science of imaginary solutions”. Indeed, Reversible Destiny as a project seems designed to attract this sort of accusation at every dimension. So they have been here before. It is their accomplishments in real building, the seriousness and originality of their architectural theory and a margin of speculative willingness on the part of cognitive psychology and biophysics that has kept their previous claims to efficacy afloat as more than ‘pataphysics. But to do the same for these new claims will require something else, something less ultimately but much more immanently radical: a theory of radical social change. Without some serious, if speculative, revolutionary theory, capable of engaging the complexities of real world political economy with at least a portion of the vigor they have brought to the complexities of awareness and personing in buildable architecture, the new claims they are making now can be expected to settle into a role clearly secondary to the architecture and its philosophy, a role more discretely poetic, if no less cogent. With such a theory, on the other hand, the campaign to outlaw dying might really go somewhere.

#### Postscript:

While the project of arguing an end to dying for the human race should seem exponentially more difficult than promising it for a given individual, Madeline Gins and Arakawa should take heart in the simple fact that, paradoxically, Reversible Destiny may well be an easier sell at societal scales of action than at private ones. The idea that not dying might galvanize humanity to throw off ignorances and cruelties no science, legal code or spiritual tradition has yet been able to eradicate, however ludicrous or lunatic at first blush, becomes suddenly more compelling at that moment in history when the human species begins hearing its near-term viability seriously questioned on the nightly news. In this sense Gins and Arakawa are not the only ones banking on our inherent desire to go on living as a leverage of hope for the species. And in that regard their proposal to reframe our constitution, rethink all selfhood and epistemology, and repurpose our urban planning may not be the least worth trying.

Who knows, the destiny we reverse may yet be our own.



<sup>1</sup> In the currently unavailable text, “Parapoetics: a Soft Manifesto for the Nomad Cortex”, Steve McCaffery argued for a poetics not restricted to “exclusively poetic territories”, specifying among others the “architectural” poetics pioneered by Gins and Arakawa: “Convinced that contemporary poetics has reached an impasse in exclusively poetic territories, I want to propose leaps or ‘becomings’ towards architectures, laws, musics, economics, anthropologies”. While his later rewriting of this text (and this sentence), in “Parapoetics and the Architectural Leap”, re-limited the claims for this emancipation to the first in his list of new territories, architecture, the potentials for a poetics of the second territory, law-making have now also been substantiated. McCaffery, Steve. “Parapoetics: a Soft Manifesto for the Nomad Cortex”. The North American Centre for Interdisciplinary Poetics <http://www.poetics.yorku.ca/article.php?sid=5&mode=&order=0> (address not responding, last tried 29.3.2007). (<http://www.poetics.yorku.ca>). An altered and expanded version published as “Parapoetics and the Architectural Leap”, in *Architectures of Poetry*, ed. Sanchez and Dworkin, New York: Rodopi, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> cf. *Architectural Body*, Chapter 2. *Architectural Body* by Madeline Gins and Arakawa, University of Alabama Press, 2002.

<sup>3</sup> Where an attribution is due, they use the rare footnote or endnote to make it as discretely as possible (cf. MDI 144). They almost never engage another author or artist directly in the body of their texts, and such a thing as a bibliography is unheard of.

<sup>4</sup> Yukichi Fukuzawa (1835-1901), author of the 17 volume *Gakamon no Susume* (*An Encouragement of Learning*) and founder of Keio University, was an influential writer and wide-ranging intellectual at the time of Japan’s first opening to the West. He promoted education and self-development as the key to both personal fulfillment and national greatness. In this regard he can be seen as in many ways a Japanese counterpart to Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), catalyst of the American Renaissance and author of such texts as “The American Scholar” and “Self-Reliance”. In terms of the history of ideas, Fukuzawa and Emerson can also be seen as complimentary opposites, the one adding a westernizing spin to Japanese cultures of identity, where the other had introduced intimations of no-self and species being into his Transcendentalist affirmation of American individualism. Source: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org).

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<sup>5</sup> First published in the two-volume edition of *Interfaces*. *Interfaces* n°21/22, Frédéric Ogée and Maurice A. Géracht editors, Paris: College of the Holy Cross, 2003.

<sup>6</sup> Hinting not subtly at their reading of the criminal tendencies, the affidavit is signed “a formerly would-be suicide, a formerly would-be suicide bomber, a formerly would-be ultra-conservative, a formerly would-be \_\_\_\_\_.” (126)

<sup>7</sup> From an unpublished interview conducted in New York, November 15, 2006.

<sup>8</sup> Despite a valuable essay by Steve McCaffery on precisely this point of comparison, relations between Reversible Destiny and their obvious precedents in Situationist architecture and urbanism remain largely ignored; c.f. McCaffery, “ ‘To Lose One’s Way’ (for Snails and Nomads): The Radical Labyrinths of Constant and Arakawa and Gins”, in *Interfaces* 21/22, p. 113-144.

<sup>9</sup> Guy Debord. “Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography”, trans. Ken Knabb, in *Situationist International Anthology*. Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981.