

about italo calvino's  
invisible cities  
(le città invisibili)

nov. 2010

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Invisible\\_Cities](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Invisible_Cities)

[http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Le\\_città\\_invisibili](http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Le_città_invisibili)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roland\\_Barthes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roland_Barthes)

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oulipo>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Structuralism>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colleen\\_Corradi\\_Brannigan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colleen_Corradi_Brannigan)

# reviews

<http://tal.forum2.org/invis>

[http://www.jeanettewinterson.com/pages/journalism\\_01/journalism\\_01\\_item.asp?journalism\\_01ID=171&journalism\\_01\\_Category=Building%20Design](http://www.jeanettewinterson.com/pages/journalism_01/journalism_01_item.asp?journalism_01ID=171&journalism_01_Category=Building%20Design)

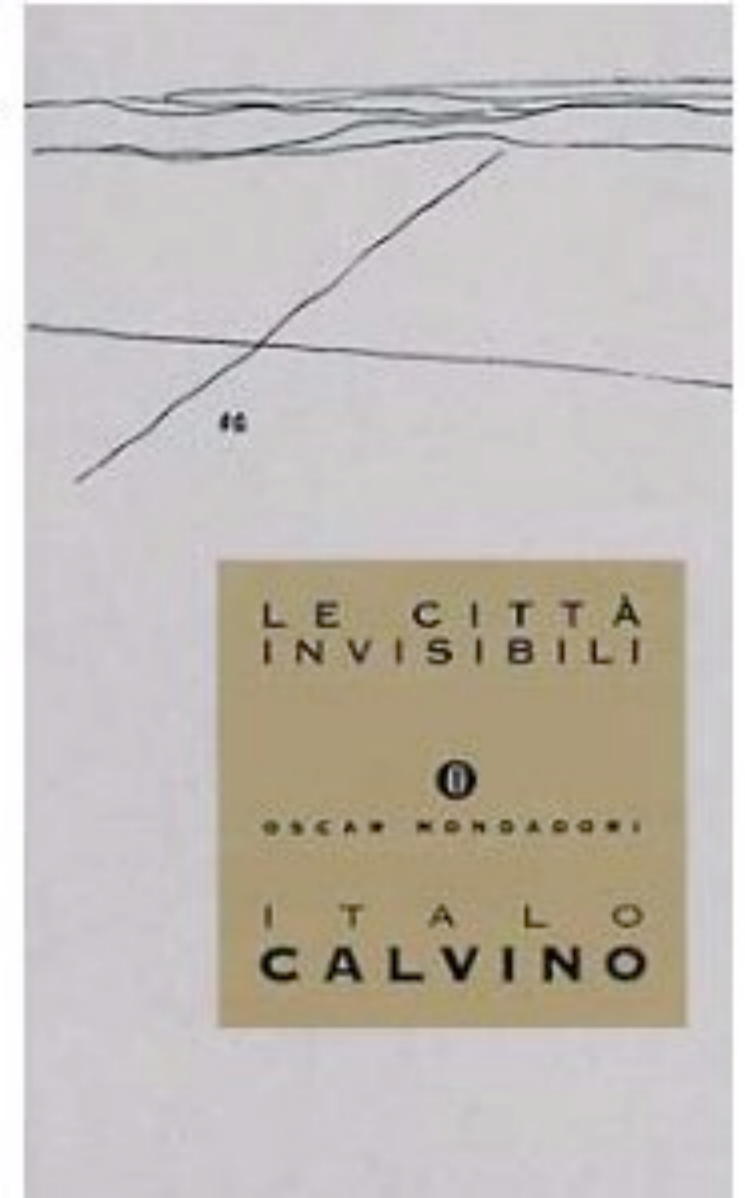
<http://www.theshortreview.com/reviews/ItaloCalvinoInvisibleCities.htm>

<http://www.pennworkingpapers.org/articles/2007/06/07/welsh-coletta-erasing-invisible/>

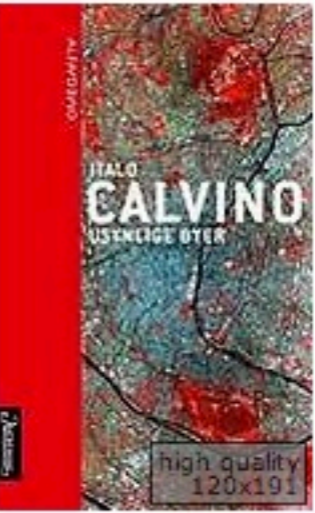
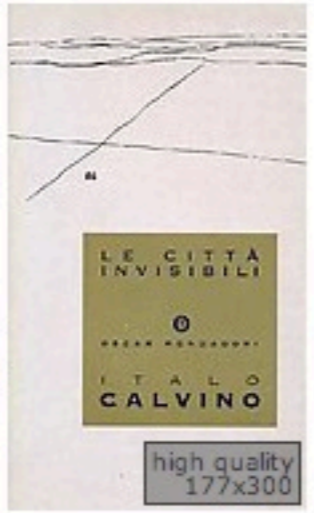
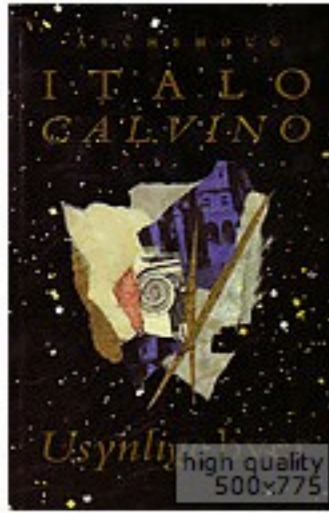
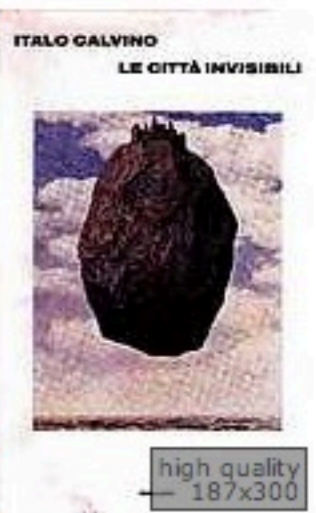
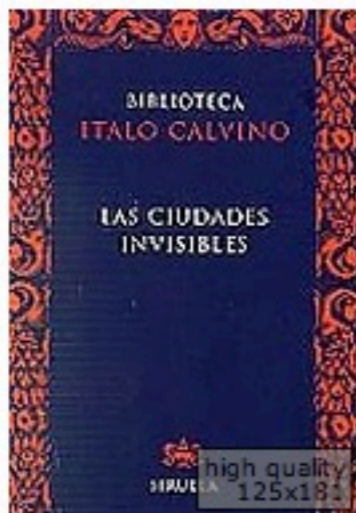
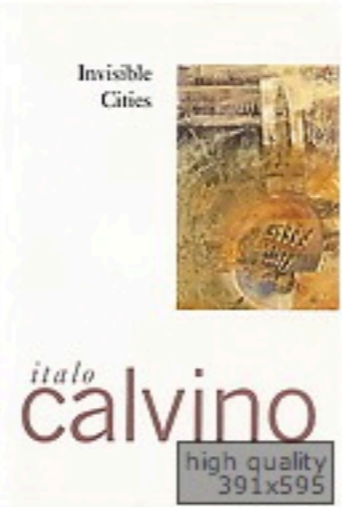
<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1974/may/30/fabulous-calvino/>

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9404E7DA1138F931A15752C0A962948260&scp=4&sq=Invisible+Cities+Calvino&st=nyt>

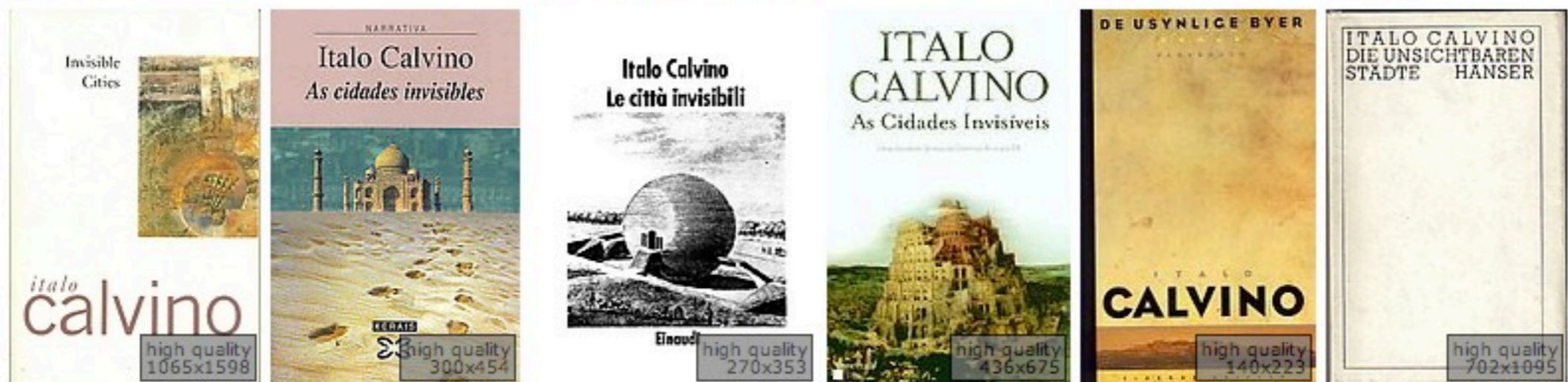
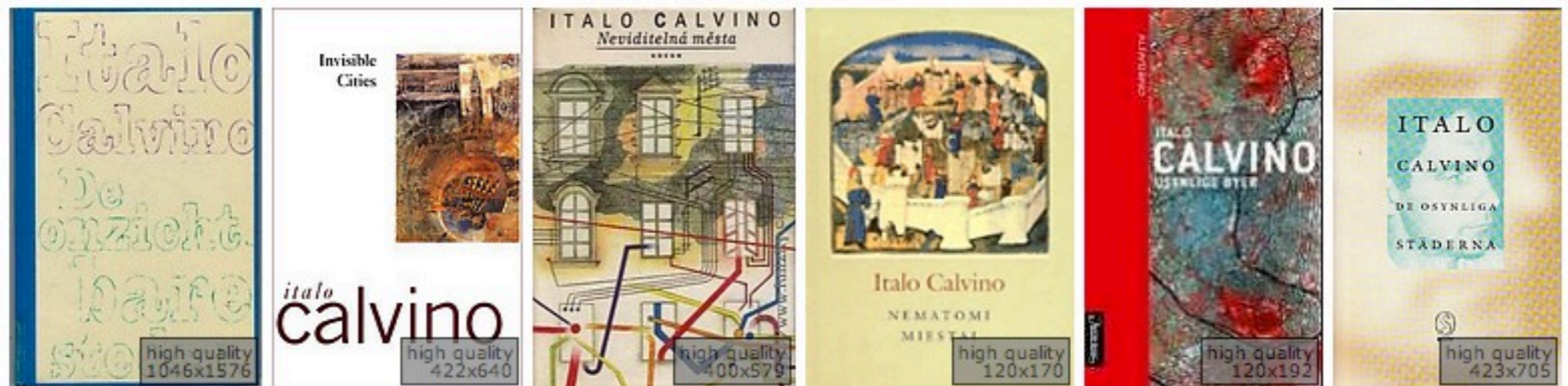
<http://www.medhasnotes.com/invisiblecities.html>





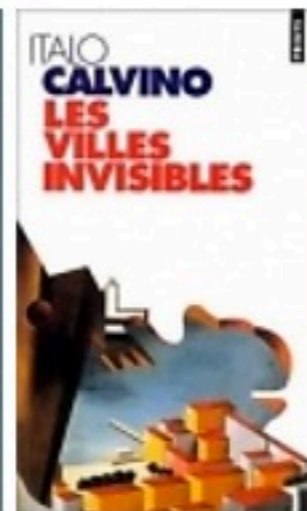
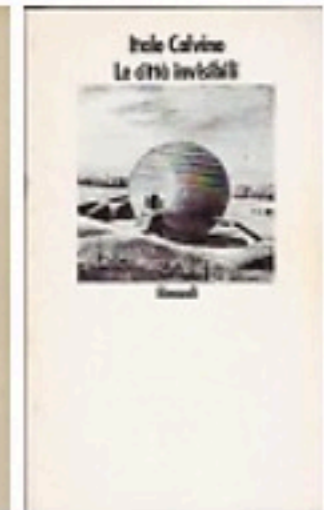
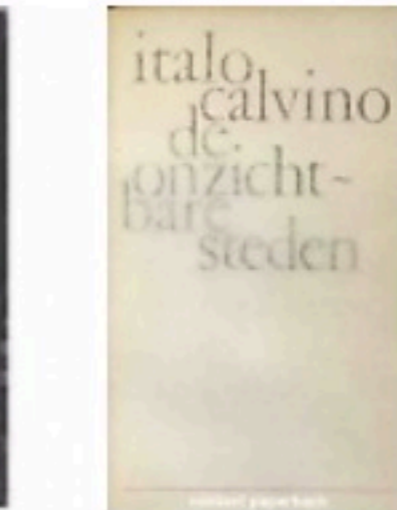
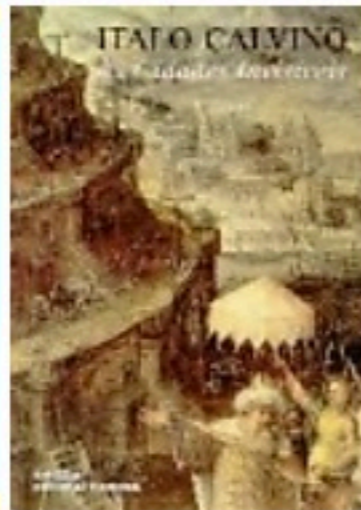
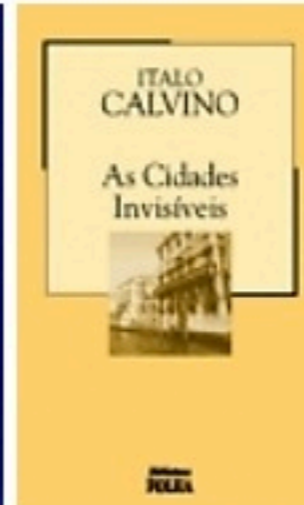
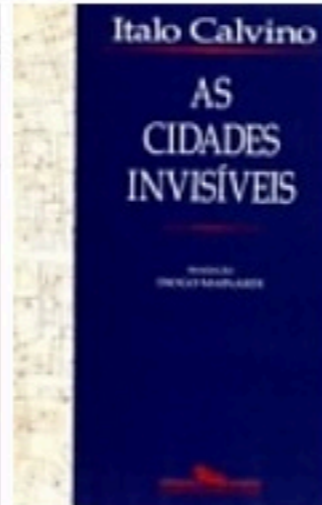




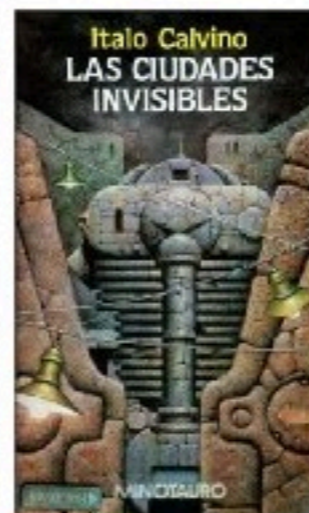
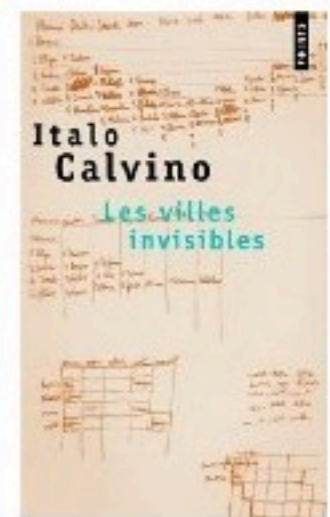
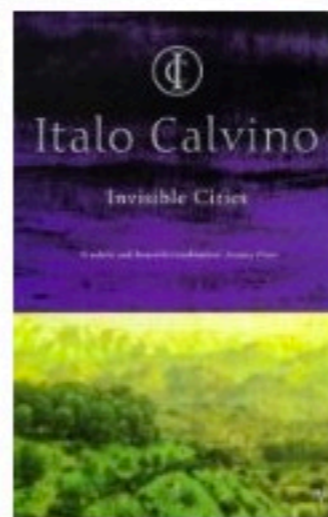
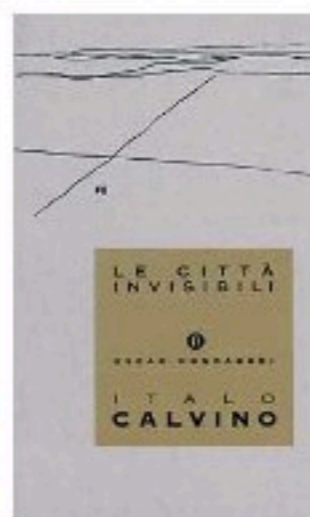
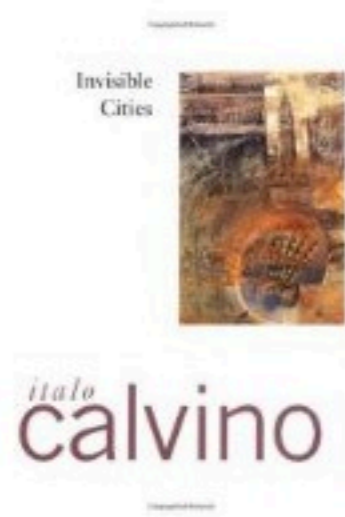
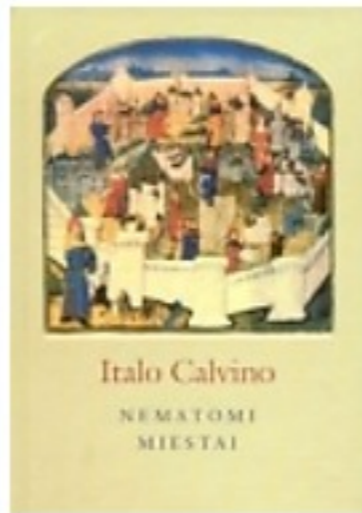
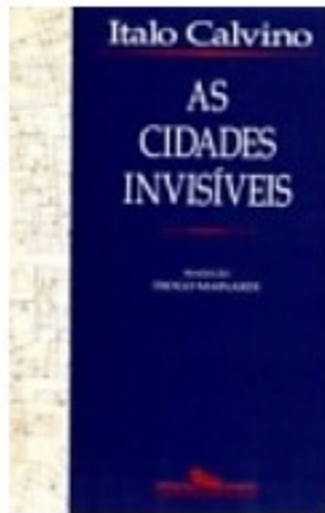
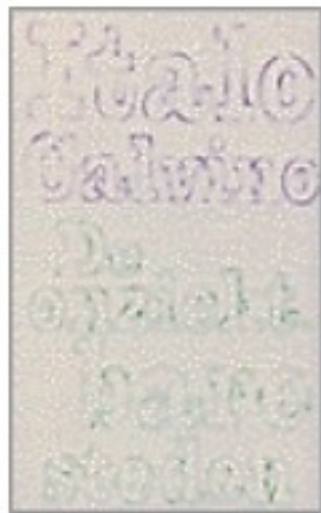


<http://www.librarything.com/work/15614/editions/>  
<http://www.librarything.com/work/15614/covers/>











# Illustrated Invisible Cities

An occasionally-updated list of illustrations of Italo Calvino's [Invisible Cities](#), newest first.

- Mikhail Viesel has [illustrated every city in IC](#) (text in Russian, though the [explanation](#) is in English)
- [Roman Ondak's work \(and workshops\)](#) cite Invisible Cities (and remind us of Paul Noble's work); Sergio Bonelli Editore illustrators made [11 drawings for the Milano Triennale](#); and here's one more [city](#). Christine Boyer's [Cybercities](#) is an interesting read.
- Our own illustrations: We're starting to post some [current art projects](#): illustrations for Italo Calvino's Invisible Cities, etc. Some of this was discussed on an [Edward Tufte thread on the London Underground map](#), where Jeffrey Berg pointed us on to these maps of [internet](#) and [p2p](#) networks.
- Wayne Thiebaud illustrated a [limited-run edition by Arion Press](#), see [a great set of images here](#). "The artist Wayne Thiebaud contributed 12 drawings, with the idea that the images of cities and objects remain invisible until the reader takes action. To realize this concept, Andrew Hoyem designed the book with the drawings printed on clear plastic in different colors of inks, each matching the color of the following sheet. The images are revealed only when the transparent sheet is turned back onto the preceding page, a white sheet with printed text." Also: the related [Souvenirs of Cities print](#). (His [Hill City \(Day City\), 1981](#) is slightly ICish, and reminiscent of the urban canyons of Brazil.)
- The [Illuminated Italo Calvino](#) project (tantalising, because there aren't any pictures. [Nor here.](#))
- Not an illustration, but an interesting project by Medialab's Rich Streitmatter-Tran on [Impossible/Invisible Forms](#), which planned to render visually four narrative strands/ accounts - those of Calvino, Polo, Khan, the reader. A project that might work better for IC's [If On A Winter's Night a Traveller](#). (And [R.S-T wrote](#) to say the project hasn't made huge leaps forward yet, and suggests Murakami's [Hard Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World](#) as another interesting target)
- Other things: Binary Bonsai's [concepts and renderings for Baucis](#); [Lynne Devine](#), Glasgow School of Art; [Catherine Rive](#) (slightly ambiguous as to whether it's an illustration of IC or not); possible illustration in an essay called [Utility and Uselessness](#); something by [Martin Lee](#)

Trude/Ersilia continues the Invisible Cities Illustrated series. Like its predecessor [HN30](#), it illustrates Trude and Ersilia from Italo Calvino's Invisible Cities, and includes the relevant texts.

The diagram, a network of curved lines connecting to every other node on a 6 x 5 grid, has two configurations: if the picture is hung one way up, it shows the "Ersilia configuration" (where the lines are like the threads strung between the buildings of Ersilia); if hung the other way up, it shows that of Trude (where the lines are like a complicated airline route map).

Ersilia (Trading Cities 4, p78):

In Ersilia, to establish the relationships that sustain the city's life, the inhabitants stretch strings from the corners of the houses, white or black or gray or black-and-white according to whether they mark a relationship of blood, of trade, or authority, agency. When the strings become so numerous that you can no longer pass among them, the inhabitants leave: the houses are dismantled; only the strings and their supports remain. From a mountainside, camping with their household goods, Ersilia's refugees look at the labyrinth of taut strings and poles that rise in the plain. That is the city of Ersilia still, and they are nothing.

They rebuild Ersilia elsewhere. They weave a similar pattern of strings which they would like to be more complex and at the same time more regular than the other. Then they abandon it and take themselves and their houses still farther away.

Thus, when travelling in the territory of Ersilia, you come upon the ruins of the abandoned cities, without the walls which do not last, without the bones of the dead which the wind rolls away: spiderwebs of intricate relationships seeking a form.

Trude (Continuous Cities 2, p128):

If on arriving at Trude I had not read the city's name written in big letters, I would have thought I was landing at the same airport from which I had taken off. The suburbs they drove me through were no different from the others, with the same greenish and yellowish houses. Following the same signs we swung around the same flower beds in the same squares. The downtown streets displayed goods, packages, signs that had not changed at all. This was the first time I had come to Trude, but I already knew the hotel where I happened to be lodged; I had already heard and spoken my dialogues with the buyers and sellers of hardware; I had ended other days identically, looking through the same goblets at the same swaying navels.

Why come to Trude? I asked myself. And I already wanted to leave.

"You can resume your flight whenever you like," they said to me, "but you will arrive at another Trude, absolutely the same, detail by detail. The world is covered by a sole Trude which does not begin and does not end. Only the name of the airport changes."

[This work and commissions are for sale.](#)

Medium: Durst Lambda print, A2-sized, 2003. Edition of 10.

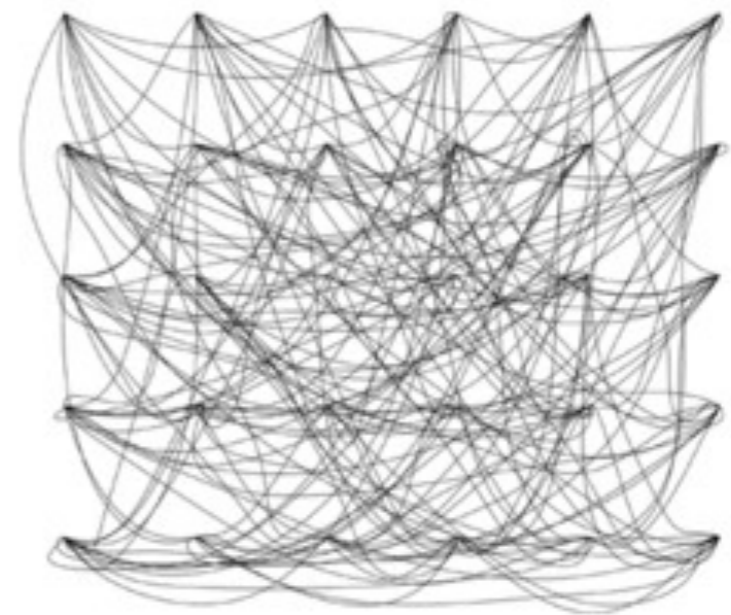
© copyright Rod McLaren, 2003

(Invisible Cities is © Harcourt Brace & Co, 1978.

Italo Calvino, Invisible Cities, 1972 (translated 1974), New York, Harcourt Brace & Co, 1978.

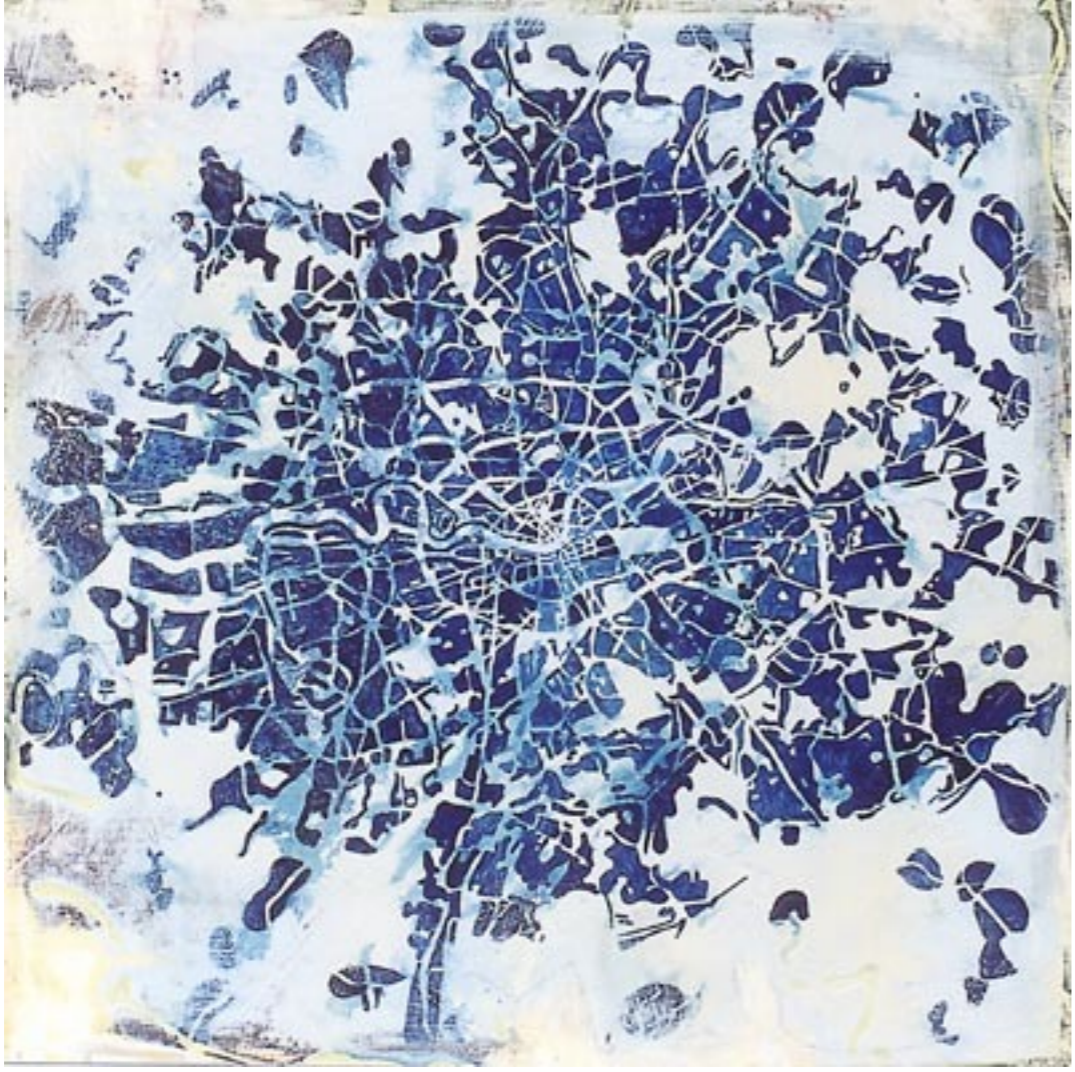
ISBN 0-15-645380-0)

*[Faint, illegible text from the left page of the artwork]*

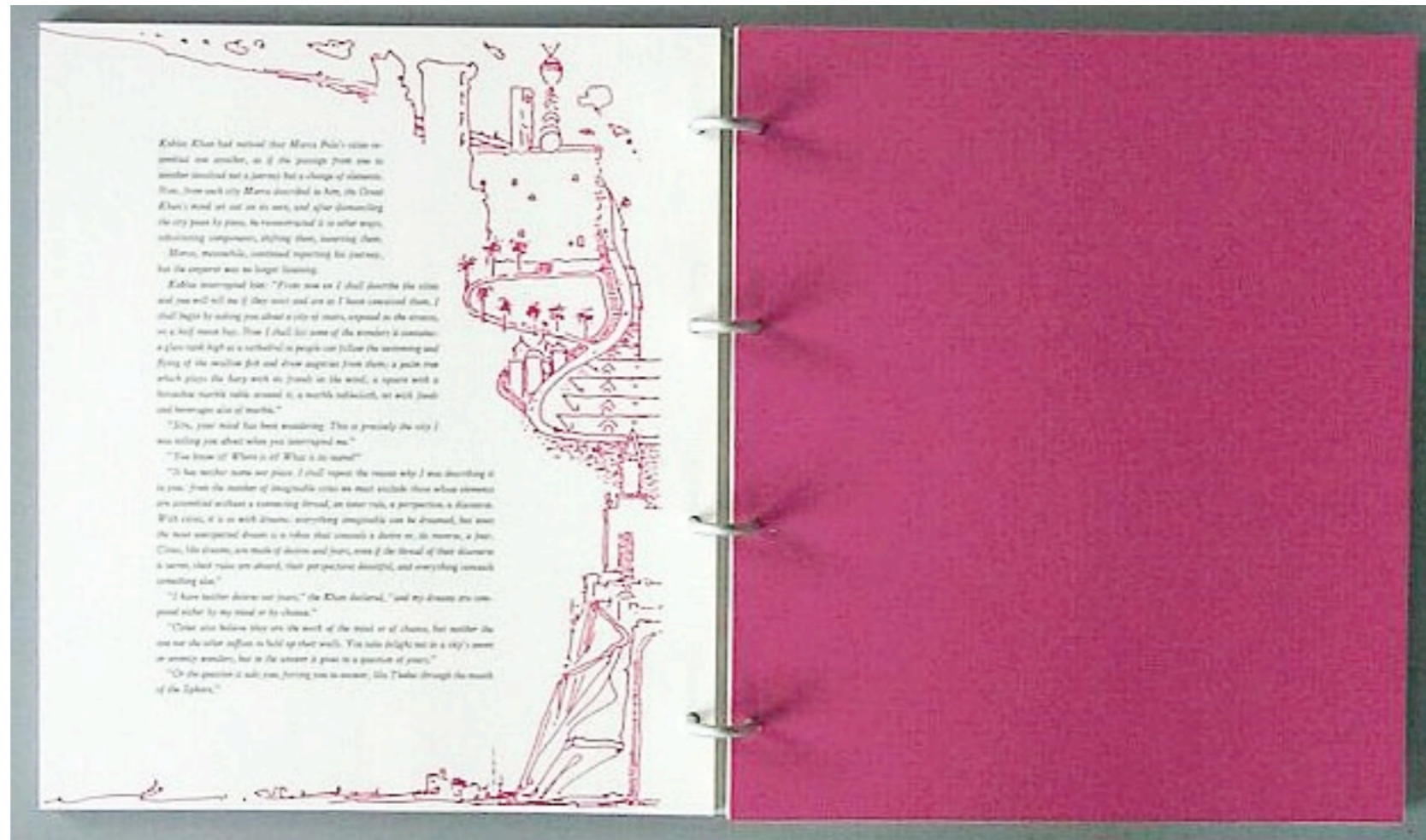


*[Faint, illegible text from the right page of the artwork]*













Comune di Bagnara

CON IL PATROCINIO DI:



Unione dei Comuni della Bassa Romagna



Provincia di Ravenna

# LE CITTÀ iNViSiBiLi

musica e letteratura  
a mostra di opere di  
Eugen Corradi  
e Gianfranco  
Manigán  
con la capolavoro  
di  
vino

Dal 2  
al 24  
ottobre  
2010

presso la  
Rocca Sforzesca  
di Bagnara  
di Romagna

2 ottobre  
10,00

inaugurazione

partecipano il  
critico Marco Sangiorgi,  
la scrittrice di letteratura  
e l'artista  
Eugen Corradi  
e Gianfranco Manigán.

con un rinfresco di dolci  
e vini autunnali

Sabato 9 ottobre  
ore 20,30

Concerto-recital  
LE CITTÀ iNViSiBiLi

Musiche originali  
per pianoforte,  
composte e suonate da Daniela Taglloni,  
accompagnata dall'attrice Briana Zakl, voce narrante

Corradi





Bauci



Anastasia



Aglaura



Argia



Moriana



Smeraldina



Olinda



Isaura



Irene



Ottavia



Zobeide



Eusapia



Eudossia



Zaira



Ipazia



Pirra



Clarice



Despina



Andria



Cloe



Perinzia



Raissa



Eufemia



Olinda

Isaura





<http://www.cittainvisibili.com/artista/esposizioni.htm>



19/2

Thiel 1911









<http://visualingual.wordpress.com/2010/08/17/city-paintings-by-amy%C2%A0casey/>

<http://cincinnatimercantile.wordpress.com/2010/09/20/italo-calvinos-invisible-cities-guest-post-by-visualingual/>











## Various Artists | Invisible Cities

Audio Installation/MP3 | F.0037.0001

"At times all I need is a brief glimpse... a glint of light in the fog, the dialogue of two passersby meeting in the crowd, and I think that, setting out from there, I will put together, piece by piece, the perfect city, made of fragments mixed with the rest, of instants separated by intervals, of signals one sends out, not knowing who receives them."

### Italo Calvino, Invisible Cities

Curated by Fällt designers Fehler, 'Invisible Cities' offers the opportunity to experience an intimate series of portraits of the world's cities painted with sound.

Through the interface of a gallery wall, each city, represented by an audio work of five minutes duration, is accessible through headphones. Participants in the gallery can transcend distance – moving from Moscow to Montreal, from Berlin to Beijing – in the time it takes to plug a pair of headphones into an alternative location.

A series of artists were invited to contribute a five minute audio work inspired by and utilising the sounds of the cities they cherish. Their contributions range from quiet and contemplative to noisy and frenetic with styles ranging from the pristine digital crackles of Baltimore based artist Richard Chartier (Whitney Biennial, 12k, LINE) to the near-silence of Tokyo based ultra-minimalist \*0 (Nosei Sakata).

Invisible Cities was commissioned by Queen's University, Belfast for Belfast Festival at Queen's 2002 and is supported in its touring format by the British Council. To date it has exhibited in: Lisbon, Portugal; Naples, Italy; Brussels, Belgium; and Valetta, Malta.







## Italo Calvino - Invisible Cities



still from zirma



still from  
valdrada



still from baucis



still from argia



zirma disk  
front and back



valdrada disk  
front and back



baucis disk  
front and back



argia disk  
front and back



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LcqvxbnfTkM>

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C\\_wA1Re94lc&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_wA1Re94lc&feature=related)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LcqvxbnfTkM>



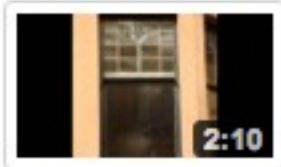
**3** Italo Calvino Le città invisibili Tamara

by luropa1000  
279 views



**7** Le città invisibili Italo Calvino Zenobia

by luropa1000  
335 views



**4** la città invisibili Italo Calvino Despina

by luropa1000  
484 views



**11** Le città invisibili Italo Calvino Valdrada

by luropa1000  
386 views



**2** Italo calvino le città invisibili Anastasia

by luropa1000  
363 views



**9** Le città invisibili Italo Calvino Armilia

by luropa1000  
192 views



**15** Le città invisibili Italo Calvino Kublai ...

by luropa1000  
117 views



**19** le città invisibili Italo Calvino Cecilia

by luropa1000  
219 views



**5** la città invisibili Italo Calvino Isaura

by luropa1000  
126 views



tratto da "le città invisibili" di Italo Calvino...

by freesce2  
306 views



**13** Le città Invisibili Italo Calvino Olivia

by luropa1000  
103 views



**21** Le città invisibili Italo Calvino Kublai ...

by luropa1000  
185 views



**10** Le città Invisibili Italo Calvino Cloe

by luropa1000  
355 views



**8** le città invisibili Italo Calvino Kublai e...

by luropa1000  
219 views



maury a milano

by pieper95  
181 views



**16** le città invisibili Italo Calvino Eusapia

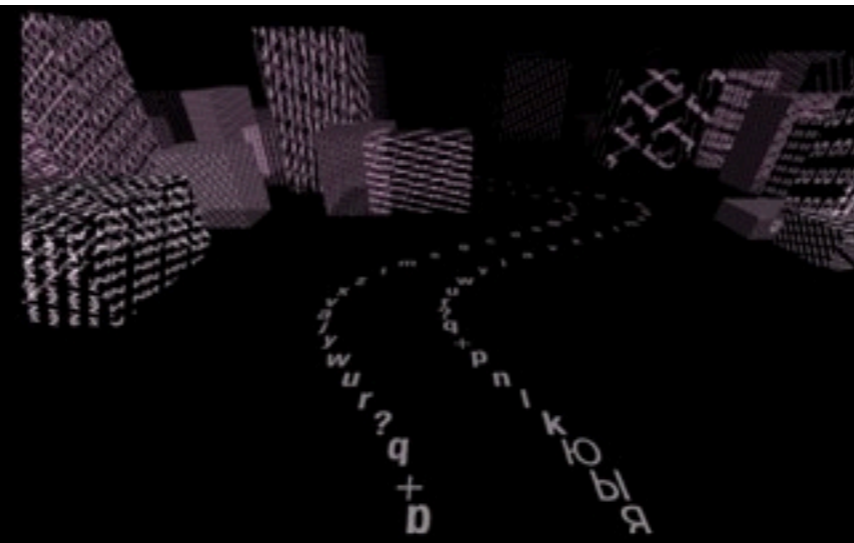
by luropa1000  
402 views



**1** Italo Calvino Le città Invisibili Kublai e Po...

by luropa1000  
283 views

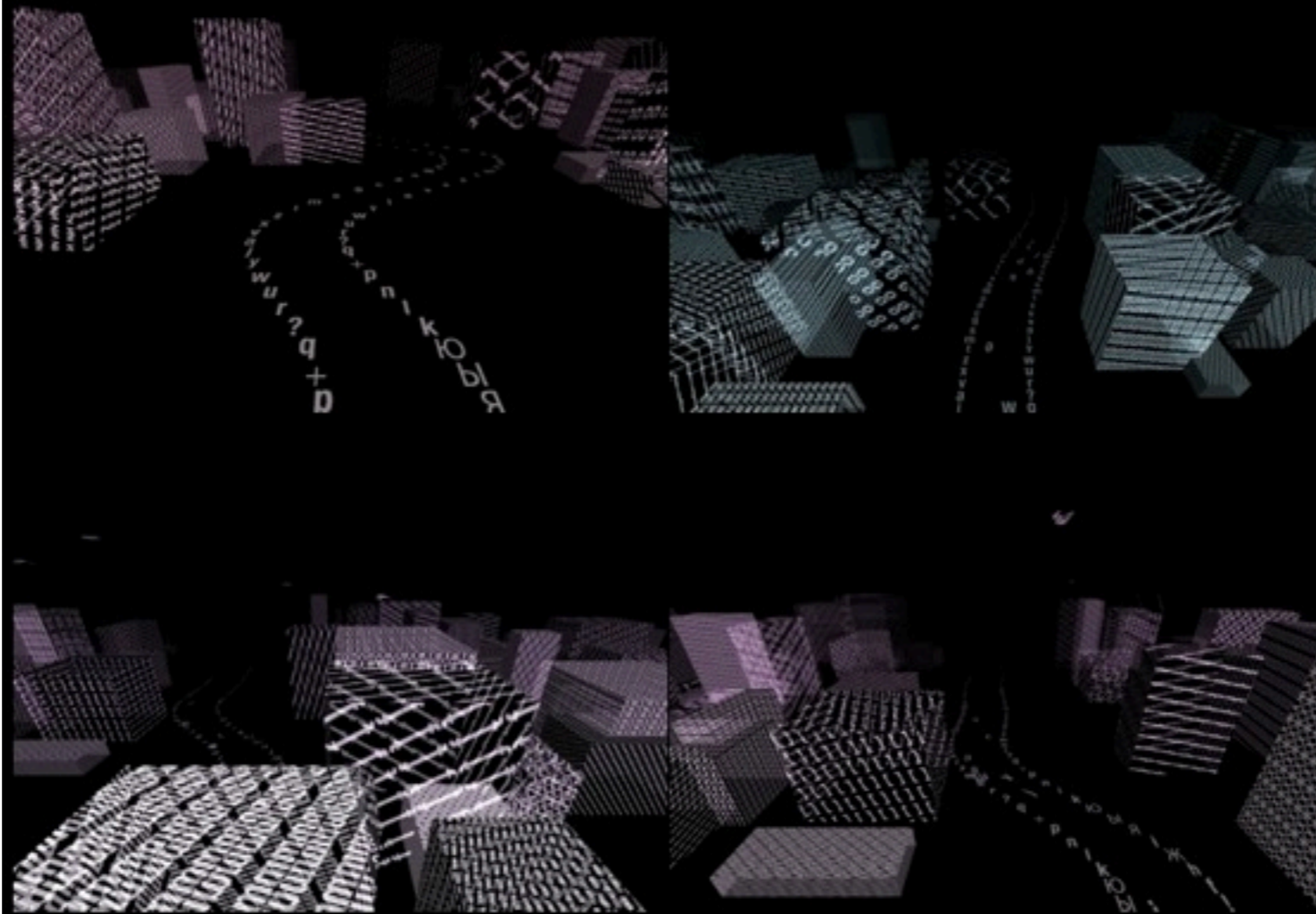




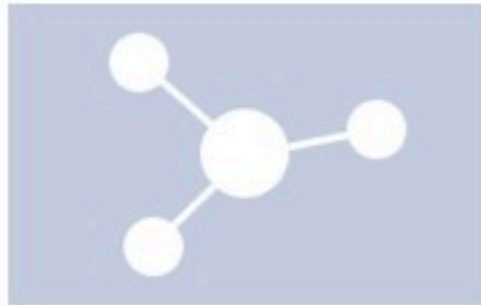
## Viaggio in una città invisibile :- Video


sabato 1 novembre 2008

*«Come veramente sia la città sotto questo fitto involucro di segni,  
cosa contenga o nasconda, l'uomo esce da Tamara senza averlo saputo»  
Italo Calvino, "Le città invisibili"*







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## Le Città Invisibili Italo Calvino

Book

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While it is certainly true that *Invisible Cities*—with its combinatorial, “geometric” structure—can be read as a literary game, it is important to consider the possibility that it may be a very serious game.



#### CAP. I A

- .... [comice I]
- **Le città e la memoria.1.** Diomira
- **Le città e la memoria.2.** Isidora
- **Le città e il desiderio.1.** Dorotea
- **Le città e la memoria.3.** Zaira
- **Le città e il desiderio.2.** Anastasia
- **Le città e i segni. 1.** Tamara
- **Le città e la memoria.4.** Zora
- **Le città e il desiderio.3.** Despina
- **Le città e i segni. 2.** Zirna
- **Le città sottili. 1.** Isaura
- .... [comice II]

#### CAP. I B

- .... [comice II A]
- **Le città e la memoria. 5.** Maurilia
- **Le città e il desiderio. 4.** Fedora
- **Le città e i segni. 3.** Zoe
- **Le città sottili. 2.** Zenobia
- **Le città e gli scambi. 1.** Eufemia
- .... [comice II B]

#### CAP. III

- .... [III A]
- **Le città e il desiderio. 5.** Zebeide
- **Le città e i segni. 4.** Ipazia
- **Le città sottili. 3.** Armilla
- **Le città e gli scambi. 2.** Cloe
- **Le città e gli occhi. 1.** Valdrada
- .... [comice III B]

#### CAP. IV

- .... [comice IV A]
- **Le città e i segni. 5.** Olivia
- **Le città sottili. 4.** Sofronia
- **Le città e gli scambi. 3.** Eutropia
- **Le città e gli occhi. 2.** Zemrude
- **Le città e il nome. 1.** Aglaura
- .... [comice IV B]

#### CAP. V

- .... [comice V A]
- **Le città sottili. 5.** Ottavia
- **Le città e gli scambi. 4.** Ersilia
- **Le città e gli occhi. 3.** Bauci
- **Le città e il nome. 2.** Leandra
- **Le città e i morti. 1.** Melania
- .... [comice V B]

#### CAP. VI

- .... [comice VI A]
- **Le città e gli scambi. 5.** Smeraldina
- **Le città e gli occhi. 4.** Fillide
- **Le città e il nome. 3.** Pirra
- **Le città e i morti. 2.** Adelma
- **Le città e il cielo. 1.** Eudossia
- .... [comice VI B]

#### CAP. VII

- .... [comice VII A]
- **Le città e gli occhi. 5.** Moriana
- **Le città e il nome. 4.** Clarice
- **Le città e i morti. 3.** Eusapia
- **Le città e il cielo. 2.** Bersabea
- **Le città continue. 1.** Leonia
- .... [comice VII B]

#### CAP. VIII

- .... [comice VIII A]
- **Le città e il nome. 5.** Irene
- **Le città e i morti. 4.** Argia
- **Le città e il cielo. 3.** Tecla
- **Le città continue. 2.** Trude
- **Le città nascoste. 1.** Olinda
- .... [comice VIII B]

#### CAP. IX

- .... [comice IX A]
- **Le città e i morti. 5.** Laudomia
- **Le città e il cielo. 4.** Perinzia
- **Le città continue. 3.** Procopia
- **Le città nascoste. 2.** Raissa
- **Le città e il cielo. 5.** Andria
- **Le città continue. 4.** Cecilia
- **Le città nascoste. 3.** Marozia
- **Le città continue. 5.** Penteselea
- **Le città nascoste. 4.** Teodora
- **Le città nascoste. 5.** Berenice
- .... [comice IX B]



## The Structure of the novel

Calvino favored non-traditional, imaginative structures for his novels, and no two are precisely alike. Using *The Travels of Marco Polo* as his point of departure, he created a model for *Invisible Cities* that alternates between an ongoing dialogue (between Marco Polo and Kublai Khan) and short, jewel-like descriptions of imaginary cities. The cities fall into eleven categories, and each category features five model cities; thus there are fifty-five cities in all. The second through eighth chapters each have five cities that appear in a pattern whereby no two categories are repeated, one category is removed, and one new one is added. This can be displayed graphically:

1. mem, mem, des, mem, des, sig, mem, des, sig, thi
2. mem, des, sig, thi, tra
3. des, sig, thi, tra, eye
4. sig, thi, tra, eye, nam
5. thi, tra, eye, nam, dea
6. tra, eye, nam, dea, sky
7. eye, nam, dea, sky, con
8. nam, dea, sky, con, hid
9. dea, sky, con, hid, sky, con, hid, con, hid, hid

As you can see, the first and ninth chapters are twice as long (ten cities each), and do not follow the rules of the intermediate chapters. In order to set his pattern in motion (and wind it down at the end), Calvino had to create first and final chapters that work, literally, as bookends, and which by necessity had to repeat cities of the earliest and last categories.

Is the order of the city categories significant? It is seemingly arbitrary, but notice that the last category to appear is “Hidden cities” which seems to be a lighthearted joke by Calvino. However, the dialogue between Polo and Khan often mirrors the content of the cities in some fashion. The first half of the novel stresses the theme of communication (esp. semiotics) which matches the many “Cities and signs.” The end of the novel introduces new themes concerning the moral and amoral nature of civilization, and this is most often scene in the “Hidden cities.”

Ultimately, what is important about Calvino’s structure for the novel is that it is arbitrary and infinitely repeatable. The back-and-forth alternation between the dialogue and the descriptions of the cities creates a meta-dialogue, or a dialectic a la Hegel. Furthermore, the medium is the message, as Marshall McLuhan would say.



### **Fibonacci's Sequence**

The first chapter, and its inverse, the ninth chapter, summon to mind the Fibonacci sequence. Fibonacci was a 13th century Italian mathematician who died around the year 1250. Perhaps it is no coincidence that Marco Polo was born c. 1254. Calvino's novel is set (rather loosely) in the 13th century, so it would be appropriate for him to subtly invoke Fibonacci. The Fibonacci sequence is a series of numbers in which each number is the sum of the two numbers that preceded it. Thus:

0 , 1 , 1 , 2 , 3 , 5 , 8 , 13 , 21 , 34 , 55 , etc . . .

Like the structure of *Invisible Cities*, the Fibonacci sequence can theoretically be carried out to infinity. More importantly, it begins, seemingly from nowhere, with a repetition of one (as *Invisible Cities* begins with a repetition of "Cities and desire"). Also, as the sequence progresses, any number divided by the number that follows it will approximate the golden ratio more and more closely. If one is inclined to privilege the golden ratio with mystical significance, then one could argue that Calvino invokes Fibonacci and the Hegelian Dialectic in the structure of the novel, implying perhaps, that the understanding between Polo and Khan moves closer and closer to perfection or true harmony with each passing cycle of dialogue/cities. The novel has no traditional plot, and yet it seems to move towards a satisfying resolution in the end nonetheless.

## Venice as Climax

While the book eschews a traditional Shakespearean plot arc, Calvino adds emphasis to the middle of the novel via his introduction of Venice as a trope. Shakespeare placed the climax in the middle of a play (Act 3), and it was the moment of greatest dramatic tension with regards to the play's central conflict. *Invisible Cities* has no conflict, per se, but as it is a meditation on the nature of cities and the civilization from which they spring, the exact middle of the novel serves a fulcrum or place of equilibrium. Here the conversation between Polo and Khan begins to shift subtly from pure imagination to a real city, Venice. The second half of the novel increasingly reminds the reader of real-world urban problems; sometimes to harrowing effect.

Calvino marks the beginning of this fulcrum with a very short piece of dialogue at the end of chapter five.

Marco Polo describes a bridge, stone by stone.

"But which is the stone that supports the bridge?" Kublai Khan asks.

"The bridge is not supported by one stone or another," Marco answers, "but by the line of the arch that they form."

Kublai Khan remains silent, reflecting. Then he adds: "Why do you speak to me of the stones? It is the arch that matters to me."

Polo answers: "Without stones there is no arch."

By drawing the readers attention to the metaphor of the arch, Calvino not only justifies his fragmentary structure for the novel, composed as it is from little "stones," but he also summons to mind the concept of the keystone in the middle. This bit of dialogue, and the longer dialogue at the beginning of chapter six, marks the middle of the novel. And it is at the beginning of chapter six that Kublai Khan confronts Marco Polo about the subject of Venice.

"There is still one of which you never speak."

Marco Polo bowed his head.

"Venice," the Khan said.

Marco smiled. "What else do you believe I have been talking to you about?"

The emperor did not turn a hair. "And yet I have never heard you mention that name."

And Polo said: "Every time I describe a city I am saying something about Venice."

Like Polo and the Khan, the reader compares each city in the novel to his or her own Ur-city. And Polo illustrates this point eloquently with the two cities that follow this dialogue and open chapter six, Esmeralda and Phyllis, which are both cities of canals that closely resemble Venice.



### **The Theme of Desire and the Names of the Cities**

All of the cities in *Invisible Cities* bear feminine names. This point is somewhat lost upon English readers since our cities are neuter. However, for the traveler Marco Polo who misses his homeland and the comforts that come with it, each city is female and the object of desire. The names are mostly exotic and occasionally hint at the qualities of the city in some manner. So, for instance, the spider web city is Octavia. *Invisible Cities* is fundamentally a dialogue between two men, and so the theme of desire in the novel is consistently a very male desire in which women are chased. This idea is explored quite literally in *Cities and desire 5, Zobeide*. This is the city whose street plan is the result of the many dreaming men who chased an imaginary woman to the site of Zobeide. But Calvino suggests that unbridled desire has resulted in “this ugly city, this trap.”

### **The Green Theme and the Continuous Cities**

It is difficult to read *Invisible Cities* today without seeing the theme of environmentalism. This theme is most evident in cities such as Leonia, Trude, and Procopia. First published in 1972, *Invisible Cities* demonstrates that Calvino was already concerned with urban sprawl, overcrowding, and throw-away culture.

Continuous cities 1, Leonia, is a frightening indictment of the modern consumerist culture. Its inhabitants throw away everything they use daily. The refuse is hygienically whisked away by angelic garbage men, but it piles up outside the city in ever larger mounds. Calvino imagines a cataclysm that will destroy the city under an avalanche of its own garbage, but, pessimistically, another neighboring garbage city will simply plow the ruins of Leonia over to claim the land for its own garbage dump. Extending this logic, one could see the entire world as being composed of cities that are continuously pushing their rings of garbage farther and farther out until they butt up against the encircling garbage ring of neighboring cities. As I write this, a recent waste-disposal crisis in Naples has added emphasis to Calvino’s critique.

Continuous cities 2, Trude, is a scathing attack on the sameness of our suburban world. Employing anachronism artfully (as he does throughout the novel), Calvino presents a city that is identical to countless other cities: “Only the name of the airport changes.” The truth of Trude can only have been magnified since Calvino wrote the novel, as the same chain retailers and “big box” stores increasingly swallow up and rub out signs of regional identity.

Continuous cities 3, Procopia, is a riff on overpopulation. As our narrator returns to the city each year, he finds the population has grown exponentially. Carried to its logical conclusion in the final paragraph, the city has become so densely populated that one can no longer move at all. Calvino describes the faces of Procopia’s citizens as “round” and “flat,” so it is easy to read this as a commentary on the Far East. Regardless, the comic ending of his description of Procopia is no laughing matter: the real world cannot sustain the exponential population growth that Calvino describes here so easily.

### **The Final Message**

The ultimate city in the novel, Berenice (Hidden cities 5), expands more explicitly upon the Hegel-inspired interplay of the just and unjust. Berenice, like an onion, contains layers within layers of alternating micro-cities, oscillating between the just and unjust. Calvino's message is optimistic here: even in a world of evil there is the germ of a better society that can be nurtured and grown from within. However, the opposite is true too, and an ethical citizen must be ever vigilant and on the lookout for the seed of the unjust.

While the entire novel up until the final pages (blessedly) avoids preachy judgments and instead only hints slyly at the positive and negative aspects of our cities, the final snippet of dialogue between Polo and Khan is more direct. After contemplating the Great Khan's atlas that includes every imaginary city of fiction (Calvino reveals the breadth of his own literary connoisseurship: Utopia, Brave New World), Polo pessimistically states that we are already living in an unjust world, an "inferno." Of course inferno is more laden with meaning for the Italian reader than the English one since Dante's Divine Comedy is the foundation of Italian literature. Whether or not the reader appreciates the allusion, Polo suggests two methods for escaping the inferno (Virgil and Beatrice being unavailable):

"The first is easy for many: accept the inferno and become such a part of it that you can no longer see it. The second is risky and demands constant vigilance and apprehension: seek and learn to recognize who and what, in the midst of the inferno, are not inferno, then make them endure, give them space."

Polo provides an apt argument for reading *Invisible Cities*: it is certainly not part of the inferno – and long may it endure. The novel is astounding for the potency of its prose-poetic magic and for the universal and timeless themes it contains.



M	Le città e la Memoria (M)									
M	D	Le città e la Desiderio (D)								
M	D	SE	Le città e la Segni (SE)							
M	D	SE	SO	Le città Sottili (SO)						
M	D	SE	SO	SC	Le città e gli Scambi (SC)					
	D	SE	SO	SC	O	Le città e gli Occhi (O)				
		SE	SO	SC	O	N				
			SO	SC	O	N	MO			
				SC	O	N	MO	CI		
					O	N	MO	CI	CO	
						N	MO	CI	CO	NA
							MO	CI	CO	NA
								CI	CO	NA
									CO	NA
										NA



Il dodecaedro

# Il filosofo e le città

Seminario su *Le città invisibili* di Italo Calvino

<u>Topic</u>	<u>memory</u>	<u>desire</u>	<u>signs</u>	<u>thin</u>	<u>trading</u>	<u>eyes</u>	<u>names</u>	<u>dead</u>	<u>sky</u>	<u>continuous</u>	<u>hidden</u>
• 1/10	diomira										
•	isidora	dorotea									
•	zaira	anastasia	tamara								
•	zora	despina	zirna	isaura							
• 2/5	maurilla	fedora	zoe	zenobia	eufernia						
• 3/5		zobeide	ipazia	armilla	cloe	valdrada					
• 4/5			olivia	sofronia	eutropia	zembrude	aglaura				
• 5/5				ottavia	ersilia	bauci	leandra	melania			
• 6/5					smeraldina	fillide	pirra	adelma	eudossia		
• 7/5						moriana	clarice	eusapia	bersabea	leonia	
• 8/5							irene	argia	tecla	trude	olinda
• 9/10								laudomia	perinzia	procopia	raissa
•									andria	cecilia	marozia
•										penteselea	teodora
•											berenice
• 9 chapters	18 dialogs	55 cities									

▼ visiting orders

- natural (chapters)
- genres
- fibonacci/non
- primes/non
- odd/even
- ▶ alphabetical
- name length
- text length
- ▶ content
- ▶ characterization



- 1 { D 1-10 D }
- 2 { D 1-5 D }
- 3 { D 1-5 D }
- 4 { D 1-5 D }
- 5 { D 1-5 D }
- 6 { D 1-5 D }
- 7 { D 1-5 D }
- 8 { D 1-5 D }
- 9 { D 1-10 D }



[.....]

{1}(2)(3)(4)(5)(6)(7)(8){9}

{dialogue} (city) (city) (city) ... {dialogue}

{mesostic} (something else) ..... {mesostic}

brackets  
specially time brackets

....[(t1) instructions (t2)]....

...[ ].....[ ]..[ ].....





for Rubber Arch  
**RYOANJI**  
JOHN CAGE

Two staves of musical notation. The top staff shows a single melodic line with various notes and rests, including some notes in parentheses. The bottom staff shows a more complex arrangement of notes and rests, also with some notes in parentheses. The notation is minimalist and focuses on pitch and duration.

0'00" ↔ 0'45"      0'30" ↔ 1'15"

Musical notation for the piano part. It consists of two staves. The top staff has a treble clef and the bottom staff has a bass clef. The notation includes various chords and notes, with dynamic markings *f* and *mf*. Time brackets are indicated above the staves: "0'00" ↔ 0'45" and "0'30" ↔ 1'15". Some notes are enclosed in parentheses, and there are some notes with an 'x' over them.

Each part has ten time brackets, nine [of] which are flexible with respect to beginning and ending, and one, the eighth, which is fixed. No sound is to be repeated within a bracket.

In the piano part each ictus in a single staff is to be played in the order given, but can be played in any relation to the sounds in the other staff. Some notes are held from one ictus to the next. A tone in parentheses is not to be played if it is already sounding. One hand may assist the other.

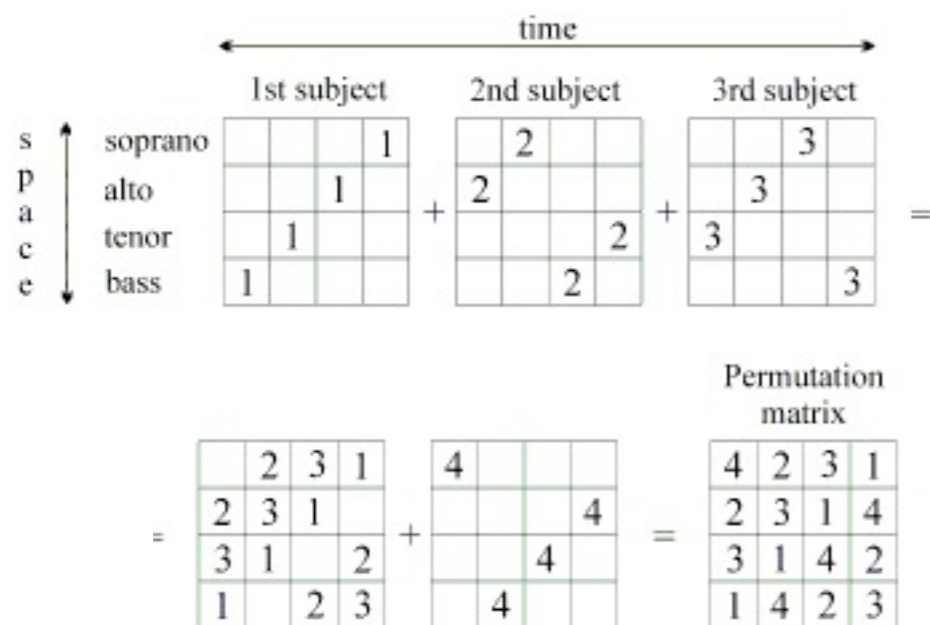
fugue and mirror structure

	SE	SO	SC	O	N				
		SO	SC	O	N	MO			
			SC	O	N	MO	CI		
				O	N	MO	CI	CO	



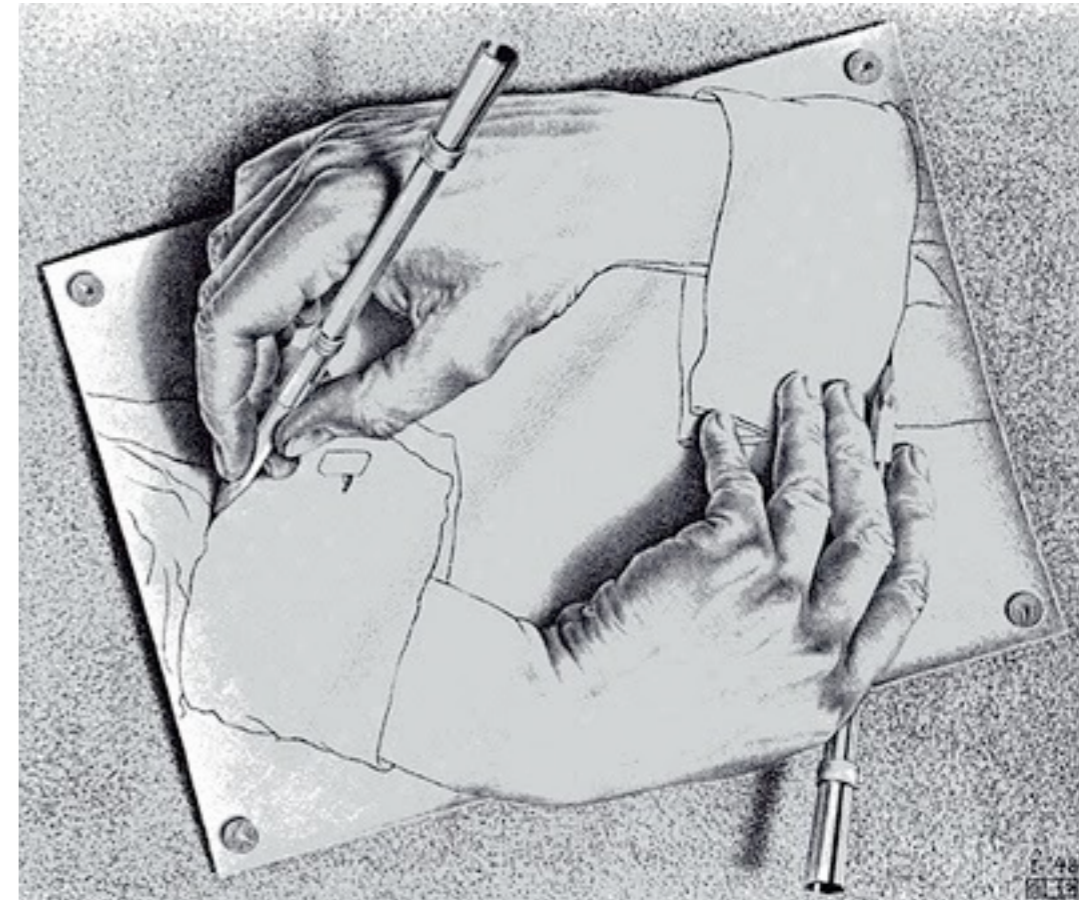
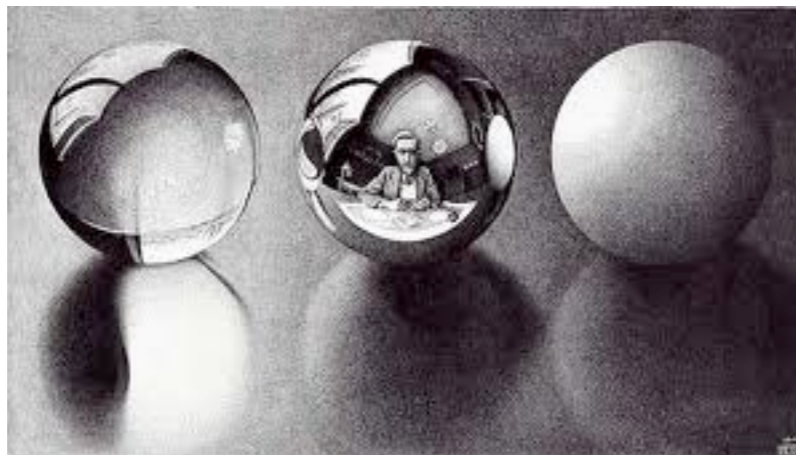
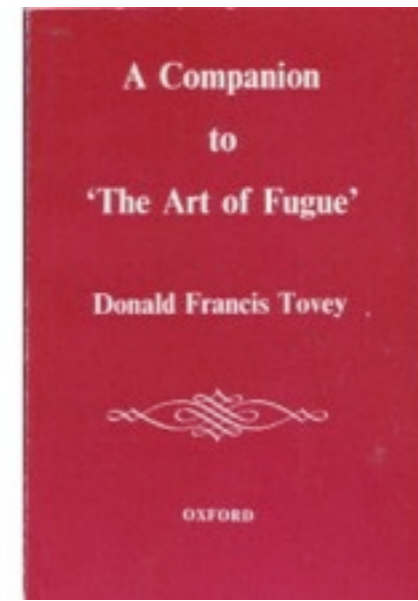
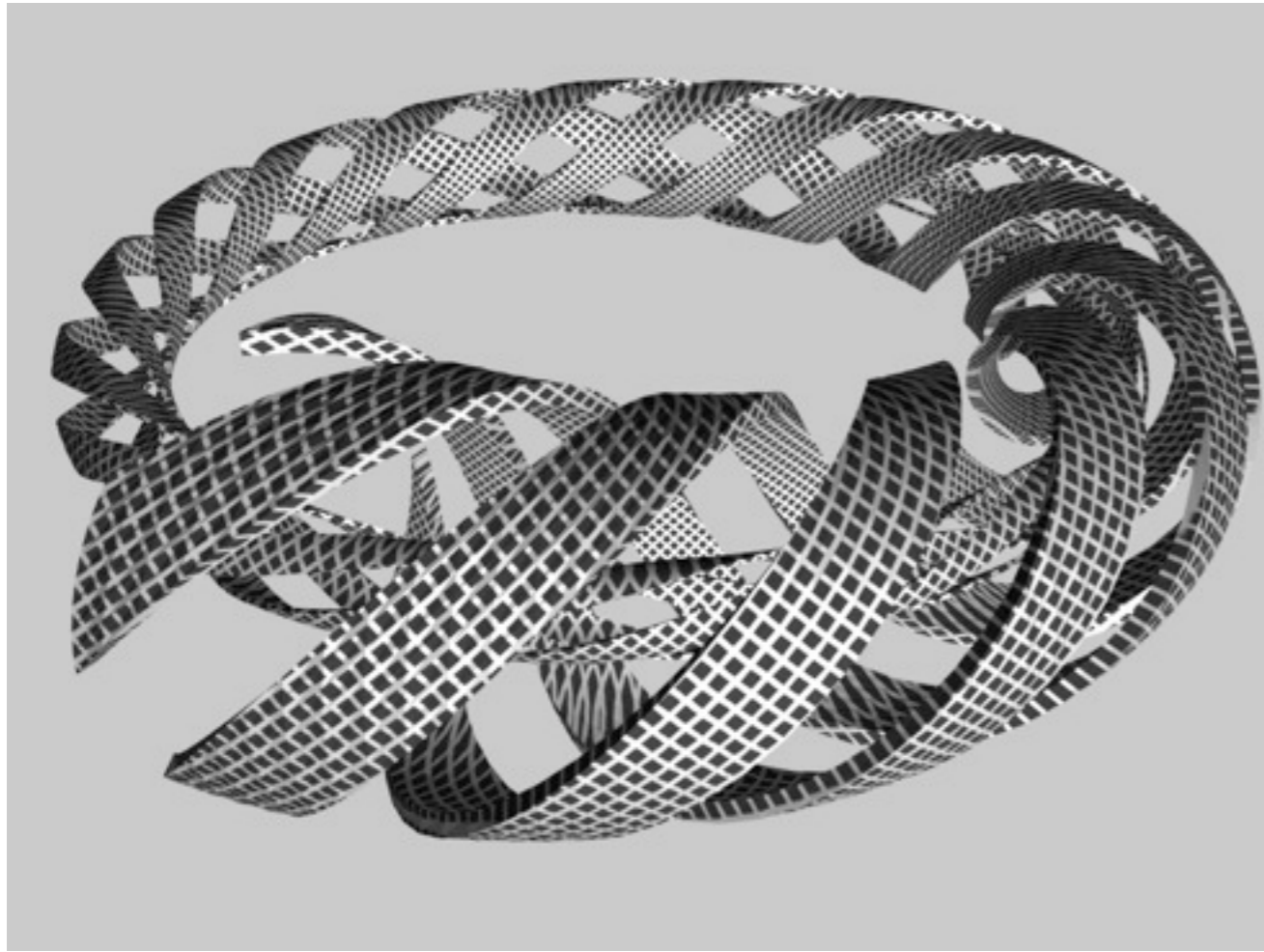


*Dritter Theil*  
*der*  
**Clavier Übung**  
*Lehrbuch*  
*in*  
*verschiedenen Vorspielen*  
*über die*  
*Catechismus- und andere Gesänge,*  
*vor die Orgel,*  
*Denen Liebhabern, und besonders denen Kennern*  
*von dergleichen Arbeit, zur Gemüths Ergetzung*  
*verfertigt von*  
**Johann Sebastian Bach,**  
*Königl. Polibeyler, und Kirchenpf. Secret.*  
*Könl. Capellmeister, Capellmeister, und*  
*Director Chorknaben in Leipzig.*  
*In Verlegung des Verfassers.*

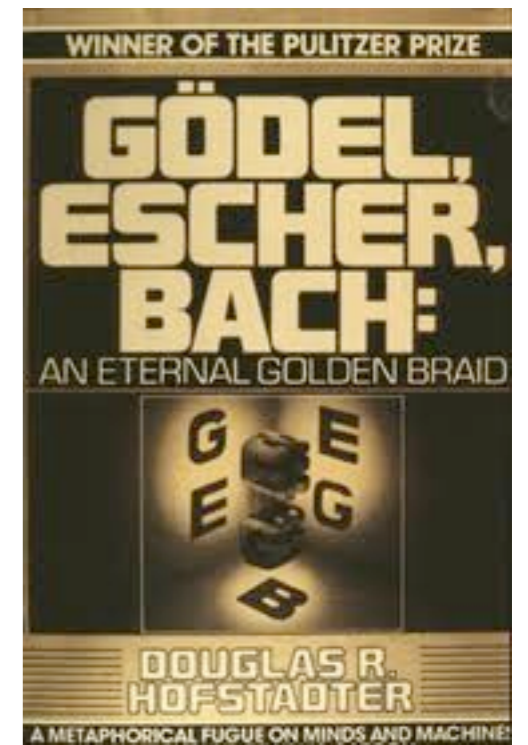
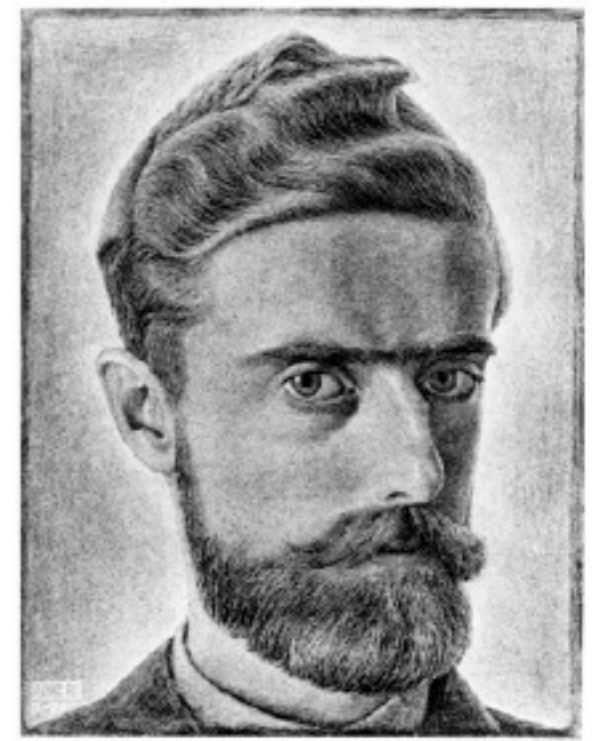
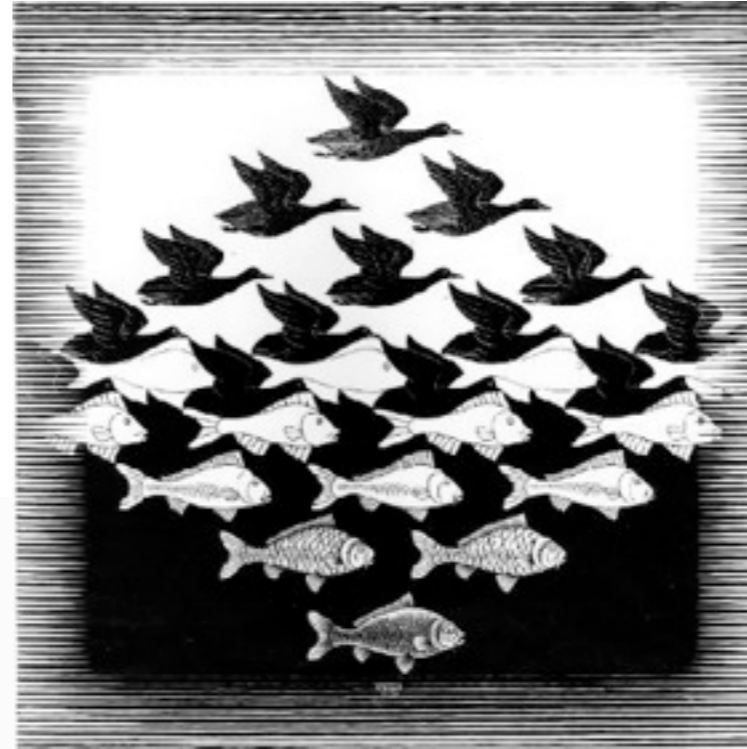
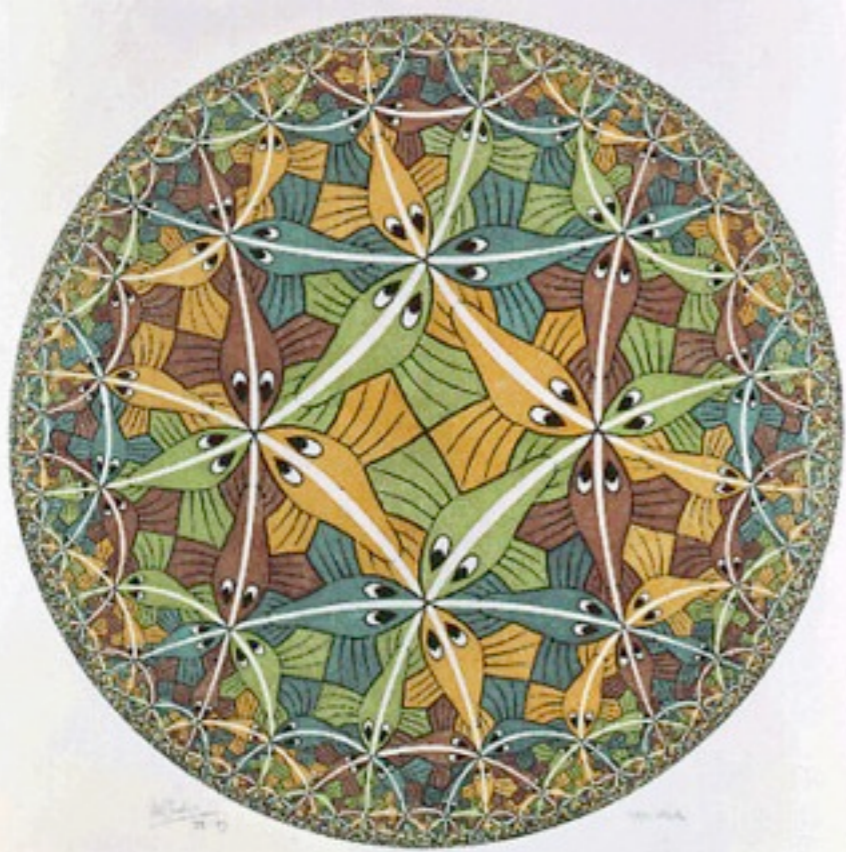


*J.S. Bach Permutations (J. S. Bach: The Art of Fugue)*  
*The permutation matrix in Contrapunctus XIV*

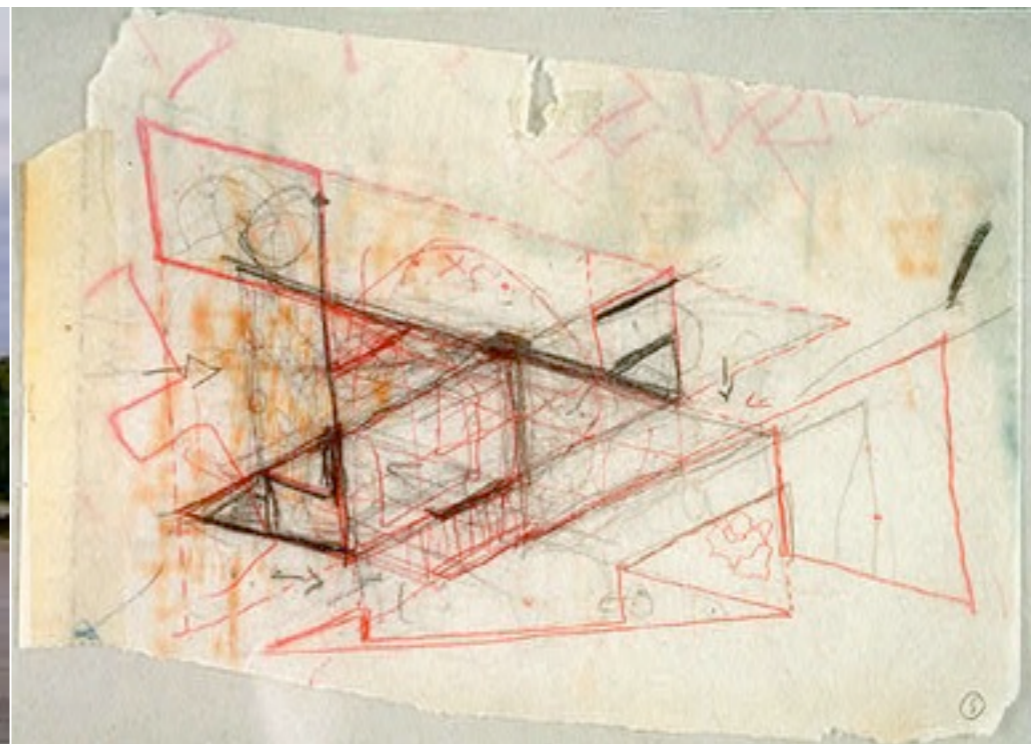
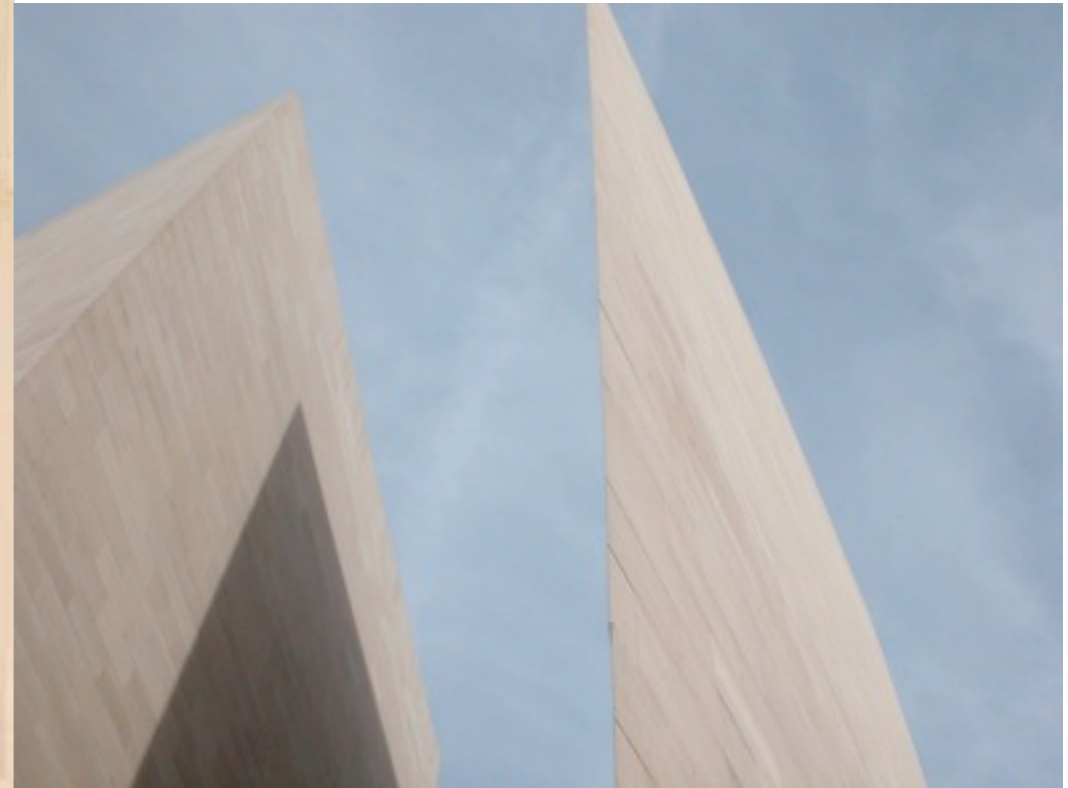












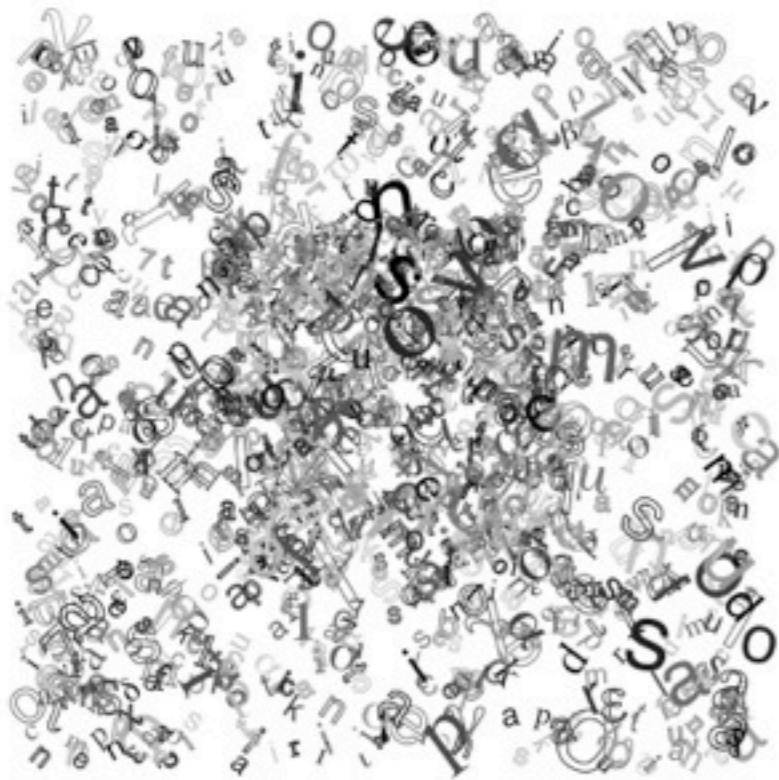


“But which is the stone that supports the bridge?” Kublai Khan asks.

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Polo answers: “Without stones there is no arch.”



Shi Naian Shui Hu Zhuan (Water Margin)  
H de Balzac La Condition Humaine  
Plato Socratic Dialogs

JS Bach The Art of the Fugue, Sonates&Partitas, Cello Suites, etc...WA  
Mozart Variations on Ah vous dirai-je Maman?  
R Wagner The Ring

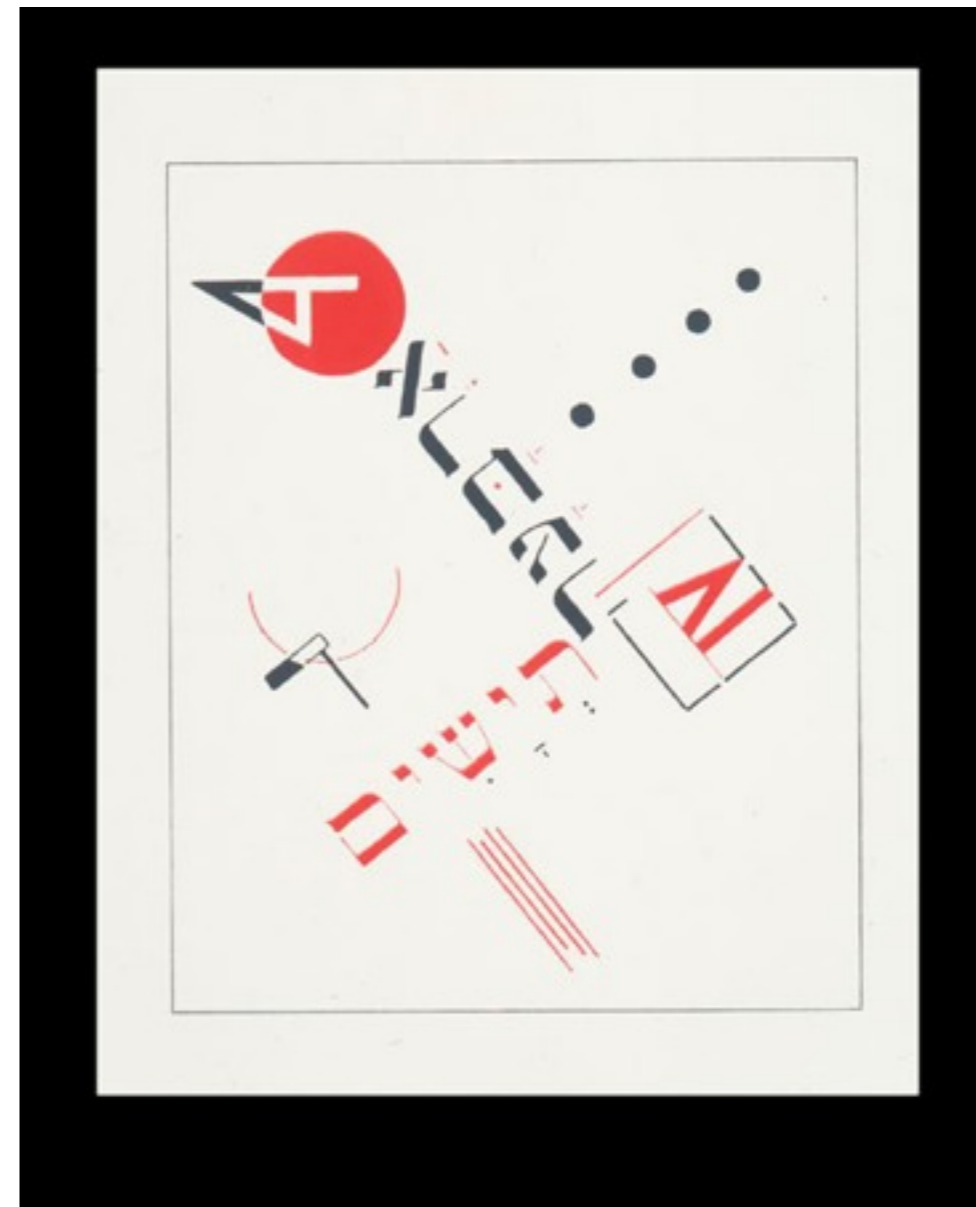
M Bill Fifteen Variations on a Theme  
Hokusai One Hundred Views of Mount Fuji  
M Ernst La Femme Cent Têtes, Une Semaine de Bonté





nature  
 Positivism  
 concerning events  
 method  
 result  
 Thus  
 verifiability  
 science  
 atomic  
 anything  
 way  
 system  
 sense  
 since  
 knowledge  
 Heisenberg  
 verified  
 theory  
 world  
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 unfortunate  
 event  
 statement  
 statement  
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 universe  
 within  
 mathematical  
 electron  
 escape  
 probability  
 Metaphysics  
 positions  
 objects  
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 Physics  
 mathematics  
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 hole  
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 number  
 proposition  
 Logical  
 meaning  
 discover  
 inside  
 momentum  
 light

music  
 indeterminacy  
 words  
 collaboration  
 speech  
 invention  
 silence  
 cage



amOng  
 rOcks,  
 Leaves  
 borroWing  
 ambieNt  
 strenGth



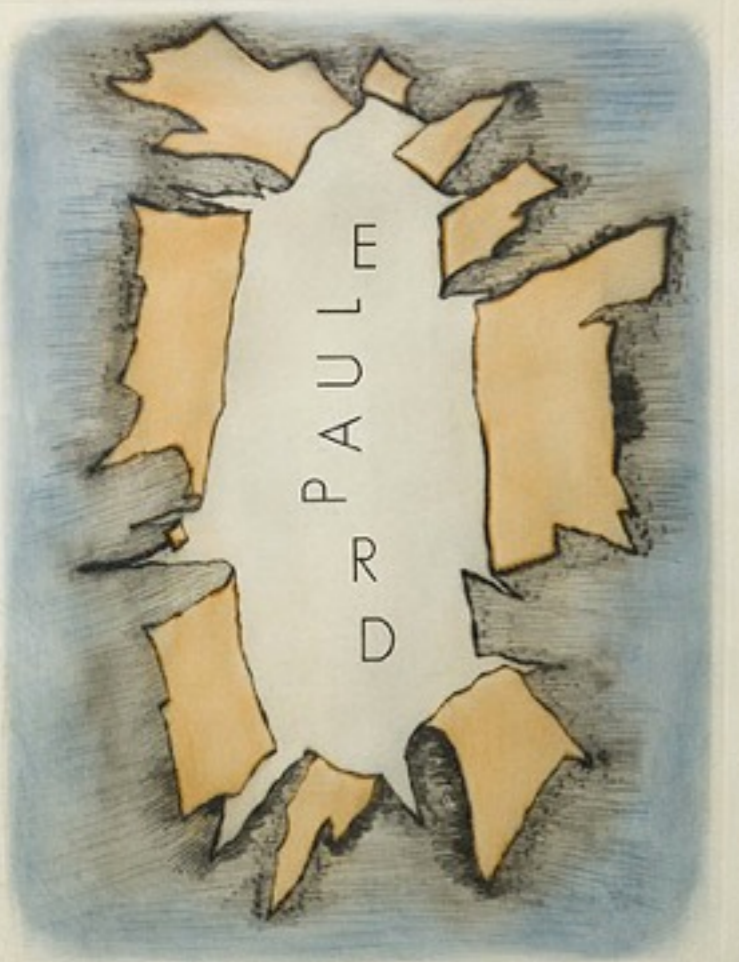
1 ET VI SUR JAPON IMPERIAL  
 4 NOMINATIFS SUR VIEUX JAPON  
 2 IMPRIMERIE UNION JAPON  
 3 2 STICE D HIVE  
 ATELIER SOINS DE RAYMOND BILLOUARD  
 DE GEORGES LEBLANC SOINS  
 CHARLES SCHMITT (C) 65 ILIAZD



D O R M A I T



L É G È R E



I N V I S I B L E  
 A L L E N U  
 E L L E P A R A I S S A I T D A N S S A  
 F A M I L L E E T R E L A P L U S



L O I G I N E  
 D U  
 S O L E I L



in maximiliana, ernst and iliazd  
mix themes and variations for  
texts, glyphs, typography and illustrations  
while preserving unity of style

# wheel of time a flow for Italo Calvino invisible cities

looping after each interactive recording

there are many other elements  
selected interactively out of this loop

```
void iSeq() {  
  // build and save interesting sequences, function(frameCount or recordCount)  
  // add few bright spots, tsc together, lines and objects alone  
  
  // inits  
  if ( recordCount == 0 ) {          initialize  
    nof=true;  
    tics=2;  
    free=true; // shown but not recorded  
    REC_LEVEL = 5; // or 6. 7 too much?  
  }  
  // REC_LEVEL = (recordCount % 2 == 0) ? 4 : ( (recordCount % 3 == 1) ? 5 : 6 ); // or 6. 7 too much?  
  // presences triangles, squares, circles, lines, flags, mixes  
  int [][] presence = {{0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1},  
                      {0,0,0,0,1,1,1,1,0,0,0,0,1,1,1,1},  
                      {0,0,1,1,0,0,1,1,0,0,1,1,0,0,1,1},  
                      {0,1,0,1,0,1,0,1,0,1,0,1,0,1,0,1},  
                      {1,1,1,1,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,1,1,1},  
                      {0,0,0,0,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,0,0,0,0}};  
  if ( presence[0][recordCount] == 1 ) { triangles=true; } else { triangles=false; }  
  if ( presence[1][recordCount] == 1 ) { squares=true; } else { squares=false; }  
  if ( presence[2][recordCount] == 1 ) { circles=true; } else { circles=false; }  
  if ( presence[3][recordCount] == 1 ) { lines=true; } else { lines=false; }  
  if ( presence[4][recordCount] == 1 ) { flags=true; twoFlag = true; } else { flags=false; twoFlag = false; }  
  if ( presence[5][recordCount] == 1 ) { mixes=true; } else { mixes=false; }  
}
```

schedule for the presence of objects



## schedule for colors

```
// fill colors
float blendLevel; // blending increases from -> to
int alphaLevel; // alpha decreases
alphaLevel=max(0,min(255, 191+recordCount*4 )); // alpha decreases
if (recordCount<8) {
    blendLevel=max(0,min(1., recordCount/7.)); // blending decreases from -> to
    continuousFillColor=blendedColors( "CadmiumYellowDeep", "CobaltBlue", blendLevel, alphaLevel );
} else {
    blendLevel=max(0,min(1., (recordCount-8)/7.));
    continuousFillColor=blendedColors( "CobaltBlue", "FrenchVermilion", blendLevel, alphaLevel );
}
// stroke colors
alphaLevel=max(0,min(255, 192-recordCount*4 )); // steeper alpha decreases
// String [] strKlr={ "FrenchVermilion", "UltramarineDeep", "CadmiumYellowDeep" };
String [] strKlr={ "VenetianRed", "CobaltBlue", "YellowOchre" };
// String [] strKlr={ "CobaltVioletRose", "CobaltBlue", "CinerousBlue" };
// String [] strKlr={ "TerreVerte", "NeutralTint", "YellowOchre" };
if (recordCount<8) {
    blendLevel=max(0,min(1., recordCount/7.));
    continuousStrokeColor=blendedColors( strKlr[0], strKlr[1], blendLevel, alphaLevel );
} else {
    blendLevel=max(0,min(1., (recordCount-8)/7.));
    continuousStrokeColor=blendedColors( strKlr[1], strKlr[2], blendLevel, alphaLevel );
}
print(recordCount+" / "+frameCount+" ");
}
```

schedule for fill colors

schedule for stroke colors

# goal: more surprises within an observable flow

- decrease the importance of stroke colors (lines)
- increase range of variations of object sizes
- lighten many images by decreasing densities
- increase use of text parameters
  - (number of lines, words, vowels, position of the central letter, etc...)

mirrors and fugues + mesostics poetry

flow of evolving images

flow of poetic impressions

flow of typographic feature

unity of style

+ preservation of the perception

of Calvino's structures

of the mesostic natures of the text

the stones & the arch

surprises (the stones)

within an observable flow (the arch)