

journal6

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Journal 5: On Invisible Cities**Elegy for Cities and Glory for Literature**

This is a book that is difficult to discuss, yet it is a book that can be endlessly discussed.

Because it is written for readers, as well as for scholars and writers. Every reader can find shadows of the city they have lived in from any city in the book, just as Marco Polo said, every city he described was his hometown, Venice. In addition, almost any aphorism following the description of the city, or the dialogues between Marco Polo and Kublai Khan interspersed among the urban poems, can serve as materials for understanding philosophical thoughts such as structuralism and postmodernism.

However, I intend not to read from the perspective of identification and interpretation in this journal. Instead, I want to discuss, in conjunction with Italo Calvino's *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, the impact of postmodernity that this "collection of poems" as a whole carry, singing the elegy of cities about to pass away and the courage and talent to reproduce the glory of literature in danger.

Some critics say that *Invisible Cities* is an elegy for cities written by Italo Calvino. Calvino vividly depicts the varied and vibrant city images with his pen, which may have truly existed. It's just that in today's world where cities around the world are becoming homogenized, these vivid and diverse scenes have disappeared and become "invisible".

But perhaps there's no need to be so pessimistic. We can also think that Calvino's writing actually provides a way to look at cities, allowing us to see things that are difficult to see or can only be seen with our eyes.

In the "Visibility" chapter in *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, Calvino mentions how the emergence of photography and film media threatens literature. This reminds me of the problem of reproducing cities. I thought of Georges Perec's *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris*. In this book, the writer's pen is more like a camera, trying to capture everything that happens in Paris at every moment, not missing any details. But Perec regretfully admits his failure in the text because he found that no matter how hard he tried, he inevitably missed things. Then can I say that visible cities are inexhaustible and thus the representation of visibility inevitably fails? Then, the representation of invisibility becomes possible, which is also Calvino's method of reproducing cities. It is not about reproducing reality but

incorporating imagination and feelings into reality. Just like I particularly like cities and memories, cities and desires, cities and trade, cities are not just constructed by items and buildings, but also desires, , memories, and stories.

This is also why I am deeply influenced by Calvino's advice to read *Invisible Cities* poetically, because poetry is woven and constructed with images full of emotions.