eScholarship
California Italian Studies

Title
A Jazz Cosmicomics: Geometry, Perversion, Resonance

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/32f5x484

Journal
California Italian Studies, 12(1)

Author
Rushing, Robert Allen

Publication Date
2023

DOI
10.5070/C312160023

Supplemental Material
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/32f5x484#supplemental

Copyright Information
Copyright 2023 by the author(s).This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

Peer reviewed

eScholarship.org Powered by the California Digital Library
University of California

A Jazz *Cosmicomics:* Geometry, Perversion, Resonance

La coscienza americana riesce a esprimersi solo con reazioni che non si cristallizzano in immagini: la pittura informale e lo jazz. Lo jazz «freddo» è una razionalizzazione del nervosismo attuale che direi più fondata e storicamente utile.[1]

—Italo Calvino, *Un ottimista in America*

Introduction

Italo Calvino is widely regarded as one of the most important Italian writers of the twentieth century. I will argue in what follows that Calvino's influence has been much more significant outside of literature than within it and at least as important outside of Italy as within it—in short, an influence that is simultaneously transmedial and transnational. Calvino has served (and increasingly serves) as a source of inspiration for all categories of art (music, painting, dance, opera, installation art, multimedia, sculpture and so on) but also in fields much farther afield: architecture, urban planning, caring for the homeless, art education, social networks, and much more.[2] In one example that is particularly apt for my purposes here, see Antonio Nicoletti's preface to Romaniello's *Six Memos in Jazz* (2014), an homage to jazz inspired by Calvino (both Nicoletti and Romaniello are jazz musicians). In that introduction, Nicoletti notes that in addition to Calvino's importance to their thinking about jazz, Calvino was also central to his own thinking as an engineer and urban planner. This transmedial, transdisciplinary, and transnational influence is in fact growing larger all the time; a metaphor that is not simply apt but that makes clear what is at stake in such a project, is resonance, the echo.

In "The Echo of the Subject," Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe turned to an ancient and largely obsolete term—catacoustics—to model a notion of influence that would help us to depart from strictly Oedipal or Lacanian notions of influence based on a static and unchanging image. If the *kata-* prefix in catacoustics might suggest the dying away or a fading of a sound, it can also suggest a radical disruption (cataclysm) or even a sudden and energetic impetus (the catapult). This acoustic metaphor has two features in particular that give it certain advantages for thinking about cultural influence. First, it is true that the echo eventually fades over time, but it also grows larger and more complex—meaning that, when thinking catacoustically, we do not need to be particularly concerned with questions of fidelity that plague most accounts of influence and adaptation. Second, all musicians know that reverberation can enhance sound, and indeed, give a tone the ideal sound that one imagines and hopes the instrument will have. As I have pointed out elsewhere

---

Thanks to the many colleagues who have given me feedback and suggestions, including Lilya Kaganovsky, Lucia Re, Tom Harrison, the astute external readers for *California Italian Studies*, and most especially to Jonathan Combs-Schilling at OSU who brought Lisa Mezzacappa's work to my attention in the first place.

[1] "American consciousness can only manage to express itself with reactions that don't crystalize into images: informalist painting and jazz. "Cool" jazz is a rationalization of the current neuroticism that I would say is more grounded and historically useful." All translations are mine.

[2] For more detail on these examples of Calvino's influence outside of literature and the arts, see Rushing, 115–16.

(Rushing 2021, 117–19), an echo—far from a pale and partial imitation—not only enhances the original signal, but also amplifies and enriches it, communicating both the sound of the instrument and the sound and nature of the space wherein that sound was produced. If you were blindfolded and taken to a random location (and I hope you never are!), your ears would tell you right away if you were in a cramped broom closet filled with laundry or in a giant, empty warehouse with aluminum siding. Indeed, every space produces a signature reverberation, one unlike any other space, the "sonorità propria" (Romaniello 2014, 10; "sonority of its own") that Romaniello notes in his book on jazz inspired by Calvino. The echo is, quite simply, the sound of space itself—and hence, we can ask what space is emerging, coming into being, from the original sound of Calvino's writing. And at the same time, we can ask ourselves what this echo might tell us about Calvino that we have missed, overlooked, or misunderstood, the ways in which it enhanced or brought out new elements of the sound.

There is a side benefit of making use of this acoustic metaphor in the case of Calvino: for very understandable reasons, Calvino criticism has often concentrated on the *image* as central to his work (see Almansi, Belpoliti, Grundtvig, Mirabile, Ricci, and many others), and Calvino's influence on the visual arts is both noteworthy and quite understandable. Indeed, it might be hard to be an artist and read *Le città invisibili* (*Invisible Cities*) and not think about how to depict some of the cities within, or read "La distanza della luna" ("The Distance of the Moon"), and not *see* little Xlthlx floating in the air and encrusted with glittering marine life, trapped between the Earth's gravity and the Moon's. That said, such an emphasis risks obscuring the non-visual dimensions of Calvino's work. It can obscure the many ways that Calvino is suspicious or critical of the image, as in the epigraph to this article, where Calvino hopes to find art that won't crystalize into images. Calvino's criticism of the image applies particularly to the notion of the geometric as rational, objective, disembodied—the Cartesian fantasy, in short.

As a result, I have been particularly drawn to music as one of the most important ways in which this Calvinian resonance has continued to grow and expand. In earlier work (Rushing 2021), I looked at Chris Cerrone and Yuval Sharon's magnificent opera of *Invisible Cities*, staged in Los Angeles' Union Station in 2013, as a work that adapted Calvino while also revealing the degree to which Calvino's text is about the political value of space and environment. While Cerrone's music is a delicate but profound post-minimalist exploration of that resonant space, in this essay, I want to look instead at a more boisterous, risky, and playful musical approach to Calvino (although equally transmedial, transdisciplinary, and transnational), namely Lisa Mezzacappa's eponymous jazz suite of the *Cosmicomics* from 2019 and, in particular, her rendition of "The Form of Space." My argument is that at the level of form, as well as in more specifically musical questions of orchestration and technique, Mezzacappa's interpretation understands not only that Qfwfq is a well-intentioned but somewhat neurotic nerd, but that "the form of space" in the story (also the form of musical space in the composition) is not a rational, controlled and orderly space, but rather one charged with possibilities that are musical, cognitive, and sexual.

These possibilities include, rather crucially, some queer potentialities that are raised and never realized—but also never foreclosed. Mezzacappa couldn't be clearer about this, not only through her use of particular musical techniques and orchestration, but overwhelmingly so at the level of form. Mezzacappa's take on the *Cosmicomics* should be understood catacoustically, however—it is not just "a version" of the text that might be judged as more or less faithful. Instead, it is part of the whole resonant space that came into being in 1968 and that has been expanding ever since. If we take as a guiding principle that the echo not only enhances but is an inherent part of the original sound, we find that Mezzacappa's playful improvisations in musical space are in fact developing

something that is already there in Calvino, whose geometries are in fact always suffused by paranoia and sexual desire. Ultimately, I hope what emerges from my analysis is a sense of Calvino that is dynamic and in constant evolution, in opposition to a certain kind of static, "crystallized" image of the author that I think can be misleading: a kind of rigid, geometric, brain without a body, besotted by the Enlightenment. This is an image of Calvino that is almost unrecognizable in the catacoustic space that has opened up around him, where he is seen as an irreverent and playful invitation to improvise.

Here we might return to our initial epigraph from Calvino, who found something particularly promising in art forms that don't "crystalize" into images—that is not to say that Calvino objected to the visual register, but that the concrete image (in painting, poetry or prose) does not manage to capture the essence of the American spirit, which is a vague and shapeless unhappiness in the face of a mechanized modernity. Calvino was writing in 1959–60 and has in mind Whyte's conformist "organization man," a subject who had largely renounced individual creative freedom in favor of security, hierarchy and highly regimented labor—precisely what the "*Mad Men*" era that followed rebelled against. Instead, he turned to two forms of largely American art that both have the capacity to express something without it being reducible to a concrete and definable content, "informalist painting" (in the epigraph above Calvino used the more European term, but was clearly thinking about American abstract expressionism) and jazz. Of the two, he found that jazz has a greater capacity to "rationalize" the neurotic dissatisfaction of the postwar, consumerist American subject. Rationalize is a term with a number of possible meanings, but that here seems to be positive: a thinking through, even if it does not find settled or final terms, an "image," for that thought. This "non-crystalized" thought does not eschew either form or image, but attempts to render them provisional, continuously in progress, even "live," and this is an area where jazz particularly excels. One can see this directly in the cosmicomic tale "I cristalli," which is set in New York and features precisely one of these dissatisfied, restless organization men (Qfwfq, of course) whose life is entirely routine. He dreams of a life that is in perfect order, one giant crystal, uncontaminated by the tiniest disturbance or imperfection but concludes that the world is an impossible mixture of both crystallized forms and their flaws and impurities. In the story's final line, he prepares to share this revelation with his partner but decides to wait "che finisca il disco di Thelonious Monk" (Calvino 1992, 256; "for the Thelonious Monk record to finish"). The story's end leaves both Qfwfq, his romantic partner, and the reader on the verge of a crystalline revelation that is, however, suspended by jazz that is still, in some sense, "in progress."

In this article, however, I will turn to Mezzacappa's jazz pieces inspired by Calvino, based on those science-based "cosmicomic" stories of the 1960s (including *Le Cosmicomiche*, *t con zero* and *La memoria del mondo* [*World Memory*]). A number of jazz composers have turned to this material in recent years: Fernando Benadon has a piece titled "Cosmicomics" inspired by "Senza colori" ("Without Colors") and "Il cielo di pietra" ("The Stone Sky") that moves between jazz and a more classical composition; Tonino Miano has a free jazz improvisation based on "La luna come un fungo" ("The Moon Like a Mushroom"); and Telesmar Sanchez composed and recorded four of the cosmicomic stories as his senior project in jazz composition, later released as an EP entitled *Cosmic Music* (the title a gesture not only to Calvino but to jazz great John Coltrane).[3] These are

[3] The cosmicomic stories have inspired plenty of non-jazz music too, including French pop ("Cosmicomics" by the band Œ); an indie rock meditation on the end of the world by St. Terrible; ambient sound collage by 4th World Orchestra; the debut album by the all-female Italian rock band La distanza della luna; experimental Japanese hip-hop from the trio Dos Monos; or "Lunaria" by the Swedish composer Ivo Nilsson, a suite of 10 avant-garde classical pieces, each of which is inspired by a cosmicomic tale.

all musicians based outside of Italy, but they are hardly the only jazz compositions inspired by Calvino, and there are plenty from Italy as well: I've already mentioned Giuseppe Romaniello's reflections on how Calvino's categories in the *Lezioni americane* might apply to jazz, but Andrea de Martini's jazz big band is called Ottimo Massimo (the name of Cosimo's dog in *Il barone rampante* [*The Baron in the Trees*]), and Claudio Angeleri, more significantly, has an album of compositions inspired by *Il castello dei destini incrociati* (*The Castle of Crossed Destinies*).[4] I should also note that, in this article, I am bracketing off Calvino's own extensive musical collaborations, including his work with Luciano Berio in the theatrical and orchestral work *Allez-hop!* (Calvino penned lyrics for the two vocal pieces in *Allez-hop!* in the mid to late 1950s, both of which are broadly in the vocal jazz, torch-song vein of "Misty," lyrically and musically).[5] As fascinating and important as that work is, I am primarily interested in the transnational and transmedial echoes of Calvino's writings here.

Jazz as Play

Jazz is a musical tradition that emerged in the early twentieth century from African-American communities in the U.S. South, coming out of already existing African-American musical traditions like blues and ragtime. Its growing popularity throughout the twentieth century eventually made it into a global musical practice with a huge range of possible styles and forms, from commercial, popular music to artistically complex and technically challenging pieces. Because of its unusually broad range of forms, no single definition can suffice for jazz, but one could at least gesture to certain musical practices that characterize many of those forms, including improvisation, "swing" and syncopated rhythms,[6] rich and sophisticated harmonies, and complex interactions between different members of the group.[7]

In its most traditional, mid-century form (say, Horace Silver's "Song for My Father"), a jazz piece begins with a composed and orchestrated "head," which consists of a melody and its harmonic accompaniment (the chords); subsequently, a particular instrument improvises (or solos) while the other instruments provide an improvised harmonic accompaniment ("comping") that follows—or at least gestures at—the chords of the head. After several performers (piano and tenor sax in the Horace Silver piece) have taken solos, the entire ensemble returns to restate the head

[4] Note that the title of Angeleri's album (including the Calvino works he draws on, *The Castle of Crossed Destinies* and *Mr. Palomar*) and his songs are in English; to some degree, this reflects the larger market for Anglophone music, but this article is part of a larger attempt to understand Calvino as a transnational artist who—*also* in Italy—is partially understood through his resonance outside of Italy, and Angeleri's album is a case in point. I don't analyze it at length here because Angeleri's music is more loosely inspired by Calvino and less coherently tied to his source material: in addition to the track titled "Palomar," there is also an improvisational work not clearly tied to Calvino and a performance of the jazz classic "Round About Midnight."

[5] On Calvino and Berio more specifically, see Berio, Cosso, and Pomilio. For Calvino and music more broadly, see Minato, Musarra-Schrøder, and Privitera.

[6] The swung rhythm in jazz follows a regular and steady pulse, of course, but the subdivisions of that pulse are treated more loosely and freely, and can be pushed and pulled to give the music an expressive lightness. Many jazz critics and musicians say that swing can't be defined or explained at all, but is a certain rhythmic "feeling." Dankworth calls it "baffling" and something that must be "caught rather than taught" (38), while Lawn (18) gives quotes from Count Basie, Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington that all suggest it is almost undefinable, before offering an example ("Every Tub" by Count Basie) rather than a definition. Romaniello notes that "nulla più dello *swing* sfugge alle definizioni" (66; "swing resists definition like nothing else").

[7] There is general critical agreement that jazz is too historically varied for anything like a definition, but most critics agree that improvisation and rhythmic complexity (particularly swing) are among the most frequent and important elements (see King, 5, 14 or Lawn, 7 on improvisation and swing as an often cited "core" of jazz).

and bring the piece to an end. This structure is by no means obligatory, however, and is often abridged, extended, complicated, or otherwise modified.

Because so much jazz is improvised, the status of a musical "piece" or composition is somewhat different than in classical music: in jazz the musical score is a mere outline, and only partial. Even the composed portions of a jazz piece can be understood as merely suggestions—musicians might elect to omit portions of the head and begin soloing right away, for example, to change the melody or radically alter the harmony. A jazz artist could release a recorded album of compositions, but those recordings would simply be one version, to be re-invented and re-performed or even re-recorded later. Indeed, two versions of the same piece might appear on one album, as on *Bag's Groove* by Miles Davis, which features two versions of the title track and two takes "But Not for Me," as well. In short, even recordings are understood as reaching toward at least an imagined "live" experience, with an element of contingency (anyone might suddenly try something new or different), the charge of the "now."

Calvino spent a year in the U.S. precisely as "cool jazz" was emerging into prominence (indeed, Calvino was in New York immediately after Miles Davis was there to record *Kind of Blue*). Cool jazz was a new form of the genre in the 1950s and 60s that was interested in formal experimentation, had slower, more relaxed tempos, and emphasized a more nuanced, delicate, and melodic exploration of its musical territory (Lawn calls it "cerebral, sedate and sophisticated" [227]). Many of the recordings by the Modern Jazz Quartet, or Miles Davis' *Birth of the Cool,* are notable examples—but its "cerebral" character did not make it any less improvisatory or "live."

This improvisational *presence* also makes jazz fundamentally playful in character, as I suggested before. A part of that playfulness is responding to everyone else's improvisations, a spiral that always means that a performer might go too far, that a performance might "go off the rails," that the next player might balk at the direction the piece has gone in, go blank or run out of ideas… But as long as it lasts, the sense that the performance is on the edge and could go in any direction is precisely what gives improvised art forms like improv comedy or jazz their special charge. A jazz soloist might abruptly include a famous piece of music from the jazz tradition or beyond. As Monson notes while developing her notion of *intermusicality*, "direct quotations or indirect musical allusions may also be made for reasons of homage and respect" (124), often with an implied sense of humor: "The laugh acknowledges the cleverness of the musical moment or citation and draws attention to the fact that the listener has understood the musical argument in the context of the jazz tradition" (125). As Solis notes, the playful character of jazz, so evident to listeners and in performances, is nonetheless understated (often dramatically) by musicologists who historically felt "the very real need to argue for the seriousness and intellectual rigor of jazz" (54) when it was regarded as "less" than classical music, a concern made more fraught by "racial stereotypes" (55) that continue to inform the reception of jazz as an art form with deep African-American roots. Solis discusses both well-known examples of playful humor in jazz (Dizzy Gillespie) as well as the more complex negotiation of seriousness and play in Thelonious Monk (49–56). This playfulness gains a certain frisson or edge from the "live" character of jazz, which always allows for an unexpected *swerve* into new territory.

Jazz, Lucretius, and the Irrational

I've used the word "swerve" deliberately since it's an important part of Calvino's thinking, and it helps to understand why jazz musicians might gravitate particularly to the *Cosmicomics*, playful narratives of the new and unexpected coming into being. Calvino was deeply indebted to and

delighted by Lucretius' conception of how the universe might have emerged from its initial state of a cloud of undifferentiated atoms. In Lucretius' early universe, atoms do nothing but fall through the void in a straight line—but every now and then, for no apparent reason, one might swerve and collide with others, a movement that creates every form of difference, every kind of material, every event that follows. These straight lines are the creative ruts I referred to early, the all-too-concrete and finalized "images" that Calvino found inadequate to the historical moment (at least in the American case). They need to have some form of dynamic play that leaves them without a final form. The abstract impressionist painting that Calvino also praises in the epigraph refuses to condense into a crystallized image, but jazz goes one step further, by refusing any final, definitive form—a model that would seem to reach its apotheosis in Ornette Coleman's 1961 album *Free Jazz*, which juxtaposed Jackson Pollock's *The White Light* as the album cover and a radical commitment to improvisation that almost entirely dispensed with a head composed in advance or defined solo sections in favor of completely "in the moment" creativity.[8] Lucretius' model, which Calvino cited over and over again as a model for thinking about creativity in art, suggests that the universe is *by its very nature* improvisational: it unexpectedly swerves at random. The universe as jazz.

The term Lucretius uses for this phenomenon is *clinamen principiorum*, literally, the swerve of the first things (*clinamen* comes from the same root as "incline," *in+clinare*, to bend). It suggests an impulse, an inclination, to swerve away from the unchanging, the way things have always been. It is, for Lucretius, the motor of all difference and diversity in the universe, which would otherwise consist exclusively of the primary elements, falling endlessly in the void without touching. As Berkman has noted, Calvino very deliberately dramatized Lucretius' scenario in one of the *Cosmicomics*—a story of anthropomorphized particles that fall endlessly through space waiting for that unexpected swerve or clinamen that will change their existence and create something new. That story is "La forma dello spazio" ("The Form of Space"), the topic of the next section, a story that effectively retells Lucretius' atomic paths and their potential swerves into new territories and new combinations. The clinamen is non-deterministic, meaning that it can't be predicted on the basis of the particles' state right before the swerve. It happens for no reason, and hence it is also irrational in some sense, a spontaneous impulse in a random direction. Calvino is in fact insistent throughout his writings on the *necessity* of the irrational and the unconscious (as in "Cibernetica e fantasmi" ["Cybernetics and Ghosts"], the unconscious is the foundation, the ghost in the machine that makes literature), so in what follows I want to see how we might hear some of Calvino's qualities that are perhaps less accentuated in the criticism in the works that respond to, translate, and reshape his writings. I mean here his playfulness and his ability to swerve into some genuinely unexpected places, including sex. Here one can begin to see why Calvino would understand the improvisations of cool jazz as a "thinking through" of modern life. It offers a complete but non-final form of the modern subject's impossible double bind (sexual as well as social): you must

---

[8] Coleman effectively doubled down on the freedom of his free jazz by recording two jazz quartets, each of which was improvising independently but simultaneously with nearly complete freedom. The effect is one of explosive energy and barely restrained cacophony and was polarizing for critics. The timing of Coleman's album—just months after Calvino penned his note about jazz and abstract expressionist painting—certainly seems to confirm that the need for a non-crystallized and static freedom that Calvino was gesturing to really was part of the cultural zeitgeist, and least in the world of jazz.

follow the rules, but you must also somehow innovate. Jazz allows one to witness this dialectic playing out in real time, the high-wire act of modernity.[9]

The Form of Space

In her 2020 album *Cosmicomics*, bassist and bandleader Lisa Mezzacappa offers a jazz suite of Calvino's "cosmicomic" stories, a clear instance of "program music" (music that draws on extramusical content as a means of adding meaning, sometimes just through the title or perhaps through a more detailed program of explanation—and indeed, Mezzacappa offers interpretive ideas in the album's liner notes).[10] The titles are either taken verbatim from Calvino's stories or are slight modifications. Mezzacappa's sextet has some fairly traditional instruments—bass, drums, guitar, vibraphone, saxophone—and a somewhat less traditional suite of "electronics" played by Tim Perkis, which produce a wide variety of sounds, some tonal and "musical" in character, but more often whirring, scratching or squeaking noises, animal-like chittering and chirping, or wobbly and comic glissandos. In its most extreme moments ("All at One Point"), it can sound like a computer veering between alarm and sexual arousal. Often the pieces begin in a quite recognizable, even traditional, form of jazz (the Latin rhythms at the start of "The Soft Moon," cool jazz in "Solar Storms," the up-tempo swing of "The Form of Space"), but progressively veer into more unexpected territories, as if beginning with a logical premise and then progressively and insistently taking it farther and farther.

Mezzacappa's pieces often feature multiple (and quite different) composed sections alternating with improvised sections that generally involve multiple instruments without a pre-defined harmonic structure—the overall sense is perhaps less of a traditional jazz format (head, solos, head) and more like a constantly repeated oscillation between more organized and structured forms of music, and playful sonic chaos. A perfect example of this form is "The Form of Space" (a story, of course, about the notion of form itself). Mezzacappa imagined the piece as essentially a trio, with the saxophone, the vibes and the guitar playing the principal roles, and the bass, electronics and drums joining in only during the heads and the transitions in and out of the heads. Essentially, the piece has a fast, bebop-like head (from the start to about 0:16), an improvisational section (0:16-1:14), a second, more bluesy head (1:14-1:33) and a second improvisation (1:33-2:41), and then a very brief return to the original head (2:41-2:48) with a final improv (2:48-4:02) with a brief, slightly limping coda (the band works very slowly into this section, but you can hear it beginning around 4:03).[11]

---

[9] One of the anonymous reviewers for this article referenced at this point the notion that music has the curious capacity—at least in retrospect—to seemingly anticipate history (Jacques Attali's *Noise* is perhaps the most well-known and careful attempt to make this argument), and that African-American music and perhaps jazz in particular seem to have this capacity (Attali sees free jazz as essentially a failed revolution against an economy organized around "repeating"—essentially Benjamin's work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction—but a failure that presages an emergent economy of "composing" in which all music, and eventually all economy, is composed by musicians for themselves). While I find this thesis appealing, I am concerned that it is terribly easy to look backwards and see a teleology that leads to one's own present, so I remain agnostic here (while noting that, say, Ornette Coleman's radical gesture in 1961's *Free Jazz* toward total artistic freedom certainly does seem to anticipate political concerns that we normally think of in terms of the late 1960s).

[10] The album received a fair amount of (positive) critical attention, and was featured on NPR's Fresh Air with jazz critic Kevin Whitehead.

[11] I had originally planned on using short sound clips, but Mezzacappa requested that we offer the entire piece so that everything can be heard in context. Please see the "supplemental material" section of this article.

If a verbal description is perhaps a little difficult to understand, we are fortunate that Mezzacappa is known for producing striking visual diagrams of her pieces in addition to more conventional musical notation, and “The Form of Space” is no exception (see fig. 1).

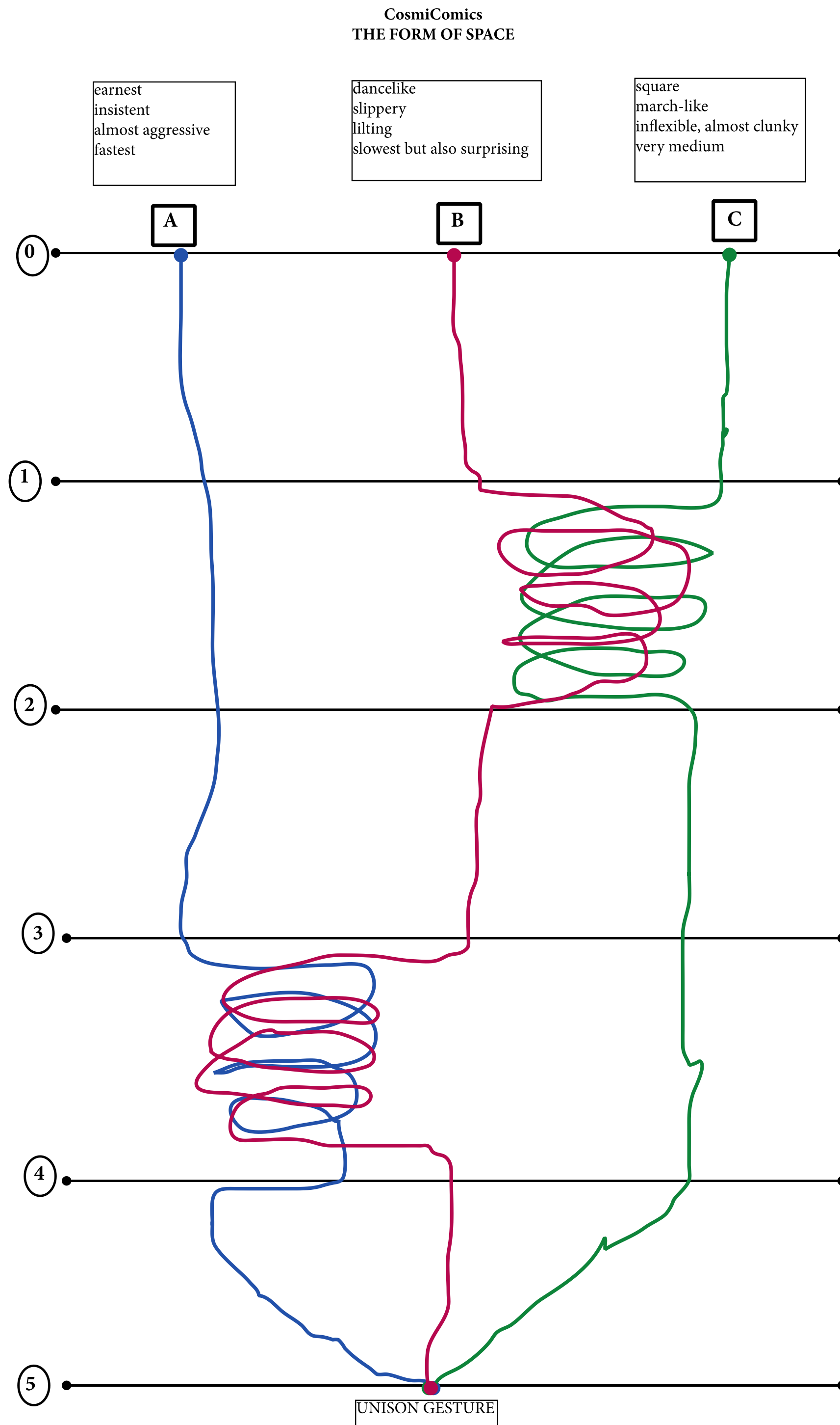

Fig. 1. *Cosmicomics. The Form of Space.* Courtesy of Lisa Mezzacappa.

Immediately, the structure becomes clear and so do the ways in which it reflects Calvino's story. The A part of the trio is the story's narrator (Qfwfq, aptly described by Mezzacappa as "earnest, insistent, almost aggressive"), the B part the curvaceous Ursula H'x ("dancelike, slippery, lilting"), and the C part Lt. Fenimore ("square, march-like, clunky," and a comical tempo description: "very medium"). Now one begins to understand why the first improvised duet sounds like a train wreck (the two instruments playing in different tempi, totally out of sync), at least initially, and the second is more harmonious, if no less improvised, playful and chaotic—and why the first duet is between Lt. Fenimore and Ursula H'x, while the second is between Ursula H'x and Qfwfq.

Mezzacappa's musical intervention does not exactly reproduce the structure of Calvino's story in which the (imagined) union between Ursula H'x and Qfwfq occurs first, followed by a neurotic, imagined union between Ursula H'x and Lt. Fenimore. That in turn is followed by a hostile conflict set in a "wild west" desert between Fenimore and Qfwfq, who attempts to flee with Ursula H'x and hide inside the very letters of the story we are reading (particularly the word "parallel," whose vertical letter l's form the three lines of our narrative, two of them together, and one separated).[12] One of the reasons for my catacoustic or "echo-logical" approach, however, is to help us understand that these "echoes of Calvino" should *not* be understood as mere translations or adaptations, which would be inevitably measured in terms of fidelity to the original. The echo-logical approach, by contrast, understands that the echo is a *part* of the sound, a part that both enhances and enriches it, and that also tells us something vital about it, namely the space in which it was produced, its acoustic environment. Hence, the salient echo-logical question is not how this musical version is different from or faithful to Calvino's original text, but what it tells us about that text, as well as the larger space in which we are now hearing that sound and its echoes. Looking at Mezzacappa's diagram, its most striking feature is that it is organized *vertically* so as to suggest three lines in free fall—any horizontal motion of those lines represents a possible entanglement. This rotates some of the basics of musical notation by 90°, so that time is represented by movement from top to bottom (since the characters are falling), rather than from left to right; harmony and polyphony, which would normally be sought in the vertical dimension of standard musical notation, here appears as the horizontal entanglement of vertical lines.[13] So far, this cleverly mimics the Lucretian conceit of Calvino's story: three figures falling along separate but parallel tracks that may or may not converge.

The second distinctive feature of Mezzacappa's diagram is its insistence on the *neurotic* character of the story, a term she also uses in the liner notes: the narrator is "earnest, insistent, almost aggressive," while Fenimore is awkward and clumsy. Visually, this is expressed in the way that the various lines interact—they don't simply touch, but frantically and chaotically curl around each other, missing each other as often as they make contact. We might look even more closely at the lines and note that none of them is perfectly smooth or straight at any point—they're all slightly "twitchy," sometimes veering toward and sometimes away from their ostensible object of desire, even occasionally moving briefly backwards. Much has been made of Calvino's love of the geometric and the cerebral, often with the concomitant sense that his love of geometry and abstract thought is a deliberate and defensive gesture against the world's complexity—particularly sexuality. This is true both in Italy, where Benedetti contrasts Calvino's escapist "purity" and desire for a permanent "verginità artistica" (85; "artistic virginity") against Pasolini's more

[12] Happily, this visual arrangement of the letter l's in the word "parallel" is the same in English and Italian.

[13] Mezzacappa wrote out the melodies in the head sections in standard musical notation, as well.

laudable “impurity” (13–17, and presumed sexual experience), and in the U.S., where Kathryn Hume equated Calvino’s “majestic geometric patterns” with sexual “frigidity” (160).[14]

I argue that Calvino is instead trying to say something surprising about the pretensions of the geometric to be dispassionate, detached and objective—in short, the tradition of the Cartesian thinker who, seated in his armchair, dedicates his mind to a priori mathematical truths. Here is the surprising part that catacoustics brings home: in Calvino’s world, geometry is *always* linked to sexuality and hostility; it is *never* neutral, detached or dispassionate. To put it bluntly, Calvino does not seem to believe in a pure rationality—all reasoning is motivated reasoning. Although some of his characters try to sustain a belief in Enlightenment rationality, the overall effect of the text is always to expose such pretensions as unworkable or secretly motivated; the lines that reason follows are those of desire, fear and jealousy. The narrator of “La forma dello spazio” spends a great deal of time pondering parallel lines and non-Euclidean geometry, but only in the hopes that it will get him to the girl, in terms that leave no doubt about the character of that union:

> la linea invisibile che percorrevo io e quella che lei percorreva sarebbero diventate una sola linea, occupata da una mescolanza di lei e di me dove quanto di lei era morbido e segreto veniva penetrato, anzi, avvolgeva e quasi direi risucchiava quanto di me con più tensione era andato fin lì soffrendo d’essere solo e separato e asciutto. (Calvino 1992, 184)[15]
>
> (the invisible line that I was running along and the one that she was running along would become a single line, occupied by a mixture of her and me in which that part of her that was soft and secret was penetrated, no, it enveloped and I would almost say sucked up that part of me that had, up until now, suffered from being alone and separate and dry.)

Mezzacappa is correct to refer to this character’s slightly desperate and neurotic character—he’s not just sexually aroused, but existentially lonely as well. What he would *like* is this perfect union along a single line, one that, in its geometric simplicity would be pure and simple and containable. This is emphatically *not*, however, what happens. There is instead a clinamen, or several of them. To begin with, the formula of the simple, straight line is already troubled, since the story emphasizes again and again that what is sexually appealing about Ursula H’x is that nothing she does follows a straight line: her wrists twist in “una maniera quasi serpentina” (Calvino 1992, 184; “an almost serpentine fashion”), she turns and spins in “una specie di capriola” (Ibid., 186; “a kind of somersault”), begins a kind of falling dance by “ondeggiando” (Ibid., 187, waving or wiggling her whole body), “un inarcarsi della schiena” (Ibid.; 188; “an arching of her back”), “un certo suo andare come volteggiando” (Ibid., 189; “a certain way of moving like twirling”), and so forth.

[14] Benedetti’s polemic against Calvino, from 1998, is careful—perhaps too careful—to avoid an explicit contrast of her two authors’ sexuality (the only mention of Pasolini’s homosexuality is inside a parenthesis in a footnote [14]), but her terms for discussing Calvino are nonetheless loaded; if Calvino has any sexuality outside the desire for a permanent “verginità artistica,” it is a desire for death, from Calvino’s “concezione cimiteriale della letteratura” (20; “idea of literature as a cemetery”) to his use of style, “un uso necrofilo” (53; “a necrophiliac use”). Hume—generally an astute and sympathetic reader of Calvino—refers to the author’s alleged, lifelong aversion to and fear of sexuality, while concluding it undergoes something of a shift when he works on his stories about the senses. Neither author ever offers any evidence for this supposed fear of sexuality.

[15] Throughout, citations to Calvino’s fictions are to the Meridiani edition of *Romanzi e racconti* (Calvino 1992). I will list the volume number in roman numerals (invariably vol. II here), followed by the page number.

Moreover, the great discovery of the story—and of the scientific premise from which it departs—is that space does not have a simple geometry: space itself is rough, textural, tactile. And this is a good thing, because it means that all kinds of sexual adventures are possible in it and with it. The narrator imagines that he and Ursula H'x get sucked onto a kind of "isola subspaziale" (II: 190, island of subspace) in which they roll together: "intrecciandoci in tutte le pose e i capovolgimenti, finché a un tratto le nostre due rette riprendevano la loro distanza sempre uguale e proseguivano ognuna per conto suo come se niente fosse stato" (Ibid., 190; "entwining ourselves into all the different positions and their upside-down versions, until suddenly our two straight lines return to their ever same distance and follow along each one by themselves as if nothing had ever happened"). Calvino's "pure geometry" is more like the *Kama Sutra*, and perhaps beyond. In particular, the simple and abstract geometry of straight lines is repeatedly sabotaged here, and they become braided or entwined (*intrecciarsi*). Geometry is put to use to find all possible sexual positions, and in a delightful (and very Calvinian) gesture, they are then redoubled by the recognition that they can all also be done upside-down. These *capovolgimenti* are literally perverse—the straight line is fully turned around (*per-versus*). Calvino could also not be clearer that the apparent abstract formalism of the straight line, and of geometry more generally, literally *conceals* these perversions: after they're done, everything returns "as if nothing had happened."

Mezzacappa's diagram and music don't just recognize this—they explicitly encode it as a formal level, both visually and acoustically. Not only does she twist or rotate standard musical notation, but the parallel lines of her piece (which are never smoothly straight in the first place) don't unite in any simple, straightforward way; they too prefer a complex twisting, a messy spiral. Musically, this is most clear in the duet between Lt. Fenimore (guitar) and Ursula H'x (vibraphone). Fenimore plays at a completely different tempo and does not swing the beat (listen to "Form of Space" from the beginning to about 0:36). His military background makes him march instead to a rigid tempo of strummed chords, totally out of sync with the rest of the ensemble and with his would-be lover. After a while, he does eventually begin to improvise, to try to find a different musical language, but it is mostly awkward attempts to continue in the same rigid rhythm and chords. Ursula H'x's vibraphone, however, stays within a much more traditional jazz idiom, both rhythmically and harmonically, testing out a series of more sprightly scales and figures (Mezzacappa describes her as "slippery"), even as Fenimore is mostly reduced to silence at the end of the duet, and the drums lead into a new composed section (a second head) of the piece at a new, much slower tempo.

The duet between Qfwfq (saxophone) and Ursula H'x (vibraphone) seems different, potentially more compatible, as both are fluid, quickly adapt, and venture in new directions; however, despite being more compatibly stylistically, in both duets (especially the first, less successful one), the players play more *over* each other than they do *with* each other. It may be that our idealized fantasy involves the abstract simplicity of "two becoming one," making a united, harmonious sound (a unison, literally), but the messiness of the real world means that people rarely behave in ways that allow for this. Indeed, what is clear in Calvino's story, and that Mezzacappa's insistence on Qfwfq as "neurotic" gets so right, is how a belief in our own rationality coupled with our real anxieties and repressions keeps us trapped in our own heads even when we are together—an issue that particularly affects Calvino's male protagonists. The musical effect the sextet achieves is delightfully chaotic but emphasizes precisely the impossibility of the different characters to get out of their established positions. (It is, in the words of the epigraph, a literal "razionalizzazione del nervosismo attuale" [a thinking through of contemporary neuroticism.]) Fenimore isn't sexy, and he doesn't know how to swing, and our narrator is stuck on his own

preoccupations, which are not only about the beautiful if elusive Ursula H'x, but very much also about Lt. Fenimore, his nasty mustache, and his habit of soundlessly whistling while he pretends that he and Ursula H'x are dancing together.[16] We have musically started to think through their neuroticism, and done so in a way that avoids closed or "crystallized" forms.

Mezzacappa's acoustic chaos helps us understand that Calvino's story is quite a bit more perverse than has been generally understood, not just in the etymological sense of bending straight lines—although we might begin from there, from the apparent deviation from the straight, the *clinamen*. When the narrator first imagines swerving into a union with Ursula H'x and being engulfed by her, he almost immediately imagines something else. If parallel lines come together in space, then not only does his line join with Ursula H'x's, but so does Lt. Fenimore's. Although Calvino's language here is refined, it is also clear and follows logically from the scenario he has laid out. It is in fact a "rationalization" of the neuroticism implicit in the clinamen itself. The narrator's encounter with Ursula H'x is described as face to face, but *all three lines converge simultaneously*—so Lt. Fenimore "encounters" her from behind. Let me give the scene in its entirety:

> Succede ai sogni più belli di trasformarsi a un tratto in incubi… nel momento stesso in cui Ursula H'x avrebbe cessato d'essermi estranea, un estraneo con i suoi sottili baffetti neri si sarebbe trovato a condividere le nostre intimità in modo inestricabile… sentivo il grido che il nostro incontro—di me e di lei—ci strappava fondersi in un unisono spasmodicamente gioioso ed ecco che—agghiacciavo al presentimento! —da esso si staccava lancinante il grido di lei violata—così nella mia parzialità immaginavo—alle spalle, e nello stesso tempo il grido di volgare trionfo del Tenente, ma forse—e qui la mia gelosia raggiungeva il delirio—questi loro gridi—di lei e di lui—potevano anche non essere così diversi e dissonanti, potevano raggiungere essi pure un unisono, sommarsi in un unico grido addirittura di piacere. (Calvino 1992, 184–85)
>
> (It happens to the loveliest dreams to suddenly change into nightmares… in the same moment in which Ursula H'x would cease to be foreign to me, a foreigner with his wispy little black mustache would find himself inextricably sharing our intimacy… I heard the cry that our encounter—mine and hers—tore from us meld into a spasmodically joyous unison and then—I froze at the thought of it coming! —from that unison there broke off her piercing cry, violated—so, in my stubborn prejudice I imagined—from behind, and at the same time the Lieutenant's vulgar cry, but perhaps—and here my jealousy became delirium—these cries of theirs—of her and of him—could even not be so different and dissonant, they could arrive at being a unison too, adding together in a single cry, one even of pleasure.)

There is a good deal to unpack here, but I will first stop and take some guidance from Mezzacappa's diagram. Although the diagram shows two duets, the more traditional sheet music has two duets and a "tutti improv" section, which is effectively a third duet: just like the other two improvised duets, it begins with two instruments only (bass and drums). Logically, of course, there

[16] This reading is already complex enough, but I would be remiss if I didn't point out that much of Calvino's story is surprisingly structured by acoustic motifs, from Fenimore's tuneless whistling to the cries of pain and pleasure during the various erotic encounters that are—or are not—in unison.

is a different third possibility for the duets: guitar and saxophone. The two-dimensional nature of Mezzacappa's diagram does not permit us to *visualize* this, since there is no way for line A and C to interact on the written page without also crossing B (we can have a threesome, but not the two "male" lines together), but it is logically possible and would be musically trivial to arrange. In the recorded performance, that final duet with drums and bass is both longer and much more tightly coordinated and harmonious than the other two. As the other instruments come in, we hear a great deal of *portamenti* (particularly evident starting around 3:40). This is when an instrument slides smoothly across a wide range of pitches, and it tends to sound both playful and humorous (it is the "sad trombone" sound used for comic deflation) and sexual (it is also the "wolf whistle" of sexual desire). In other words, Mezzacappa's third "duet" raises precisely the same possibility of queer entanglement that Calvino's story does, and, just like Calvino, while the music does not realize it or name it, it does not fully foreclose on it either. In her book on the erotic in Calvino (still the only monograph on the subject), Tommasina Gabriele *defines* eros in Calvino "as heterosexual love" (38)—but the clinamen cannot be predicted; all we know is that it sometimes swerves unexpectedly from the straight line.

As I already suggested above, the narrator of the story himself is quite clear that, although his fantasy begins with an imagined union between himself and his female object of desire, his fantasy then expands to also include his male rival. When he imagines a second encounter with Ursula H'x later in the story on an "island of subspace," he describes their coupling as including "all the positions" and—let us try a different translation of "capovolgimenti" that gestures to both yoga and nineteenth-century sexology—their inversions. Calvino describes this pansexual litany of positions as an "intrecciarsi." Unlike the typical English translations of this term (enlacing, entangling, entwining), however, the number three (*tre* in Italian) is visible in the word *intrecciarsi*, which literally means to braid (braids are *trecce* in Italian), a formal pattern that requires *three* formerly straight lines which are then twisted around each other. Moreover, in the standard braid *every* possible pair of strings (AB, BC, AC) will be together on one side at some point in the process, separate from the third (the literal sense of Calvino's play on the word *parallel*).

If on a winter's night a threesome…

This is not the only queer threesome in the supposedly "pure," "frigid" and sexually defensive Calvino, however; let's take a brief excursus to a third text, this one within Calvino's own corpus, from some ten years later, his own echo of this triad. In the "revolutionary" novel within *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* (*If on a winter's night a traveller…*), entitled "Senza temere il vento e la vertigine" ("Without Fear of Wind or Vertigo"), the narrator, Lt. Alex Zinnober, and his friend Valeriano walk with a young woman, Irina Piperin, their arms intertwined (Irina "naturally" in the center). The tone of the chapter is strikingly dark and serious, and the psychosexual elements are clearly present right away: it becomes clear that Irina is a kind of dominatrix ("prendeva veramente possesso di noi" [Calvino 1992, 686; "she really took possession of us"]) who imposes a sort of magic circle of submission on the two young men.

The initial scenario is once again acoustic in character: they emerge from an underground club after a night of music into a grim world of corpses in the streets and revolutionary plots; Irina begins to whistle, silently at first (an echo of Lt. Fenimore), then with sound, and the two young men join in. Later, "il nostro terzetto ormai inseparabile" (Ibid., 695; "our by now inseparable trio") will meet for "una scena che dev'essere d'intimità ma anche d'esibizione e di sfida, la

cerimonia di quel culto segreto e sacrificale di cui Irina è insieme l'officiante e la divinità e la profanatrice e la vittima" (Ibid.; "a scene that should be one of intimacy, but also of exhibition and challenge, the ceremony of that secret, sacrificial cult of which Irina is simultaneously the officiant and the divinity and the profaner and the victim"). Abruptly, the three are naked among the "tendaggi a disegni geometrici" (Ibid.; "drapes with geometric designs"), and the narrator looks over Irina's body, her skinny abdomen and slight breasts, her "pube stretto e acuto a forma di triangolo isoscele (la parola «isoscele» per averla una volta associata al pube d'Irina si carica per me d'una sensualità tale che non posso pronunciarla senza battere i denti)" (Ibid., 695–96; "narrow, sharp pubis in the shape of an isosceles triangle [the word 'isosceles' now by virtue of once being associated with Irina's pubis is charged for me with such an intense sensuality that I cannot speak it without my teeth chattering")].

I'm trying to weave together three different strands here as well, so let's return to "La forma dello spazio" and note something else that is conspicuous but perhaps manages to pass unobserved as well. When the narrator first imagines his sexual union with Ursula H'x, it leads to an acoustic outburst, a cry: "il grido che il nostro incontro—di me e di lei—ci strappava fondersi in un unisono spasmodicamente gioioso" (Ibid., 184–85; "the cry that our encounter—mine and hers—tore from us melds into a spasmodically joyous unison"). What is so conspicuous and yet invisible here is that the narrator stops to specify the antecedents for the possessive adjective "our" in "our encounter"—they are "di me e di lei" ("mine and hers"). With this one phrase, Calvino makes it clear that *he must have considered* the possibility of some other set of antecedents, and there is only one other possibility, "di me e di lui" ("mine and his"), a possibility disavowed, but not foreclosed, just as Mezzacappa's performance and diagram suggest. It is never articulated directly, but Calvino's language keeps it hovering on the edge of the reader's consciousness.

This is absolutely true of the revolutionary threesome in *Se una notte d'inverno* as well. The actual sexual acts depicted there are heterosexual, but homoerotic overtones are clearly present as well (even more than in "La forma dello spazio"). And once again we see Calvino's penchant for the perversion of geometry, which is never neutral, but so sexually charged that Alex cannot say the word "isosceles" without his teeth chattering, because every isosceles triangle is now Irina's vagina. Irina, for her part, is determined to move beyond this world of straight lines (including the lines that make up an isosceles triangle), here associated with the phallic, by perverting (etymologically) the geometric. She grabs her two lovers' penises:

> Sono due teste di serpente che Irina afferra con ambe le mani, e che reagiscono alla sua stretta esasperando la propria attitudine alla penetrazione rettilinea, mentre lei pretendeva al contrario che il massimo di forza contenuta corrispondesse a una duttilità di rettile che si pieghi a raggiungerla in contorcimenti impossibili. Perché questo era il primo articolo di fede del culto che Irina aveva istituito: che noi abdicassimo al partito preso della verticalità, della linea retta, il superstite malriposto orgoglio maschile che ancora ci aveva seguito pur nell'accettare la nostra condizione di schiavi d'una donna… (Ibid., 696–97)
>
> (They are two serpents' heads that Irina seizes with both her hands, and that react to her grasp by increasing their aptitude for rectilinear penetration, while she demands on the contrary the maximum of force contained should correspond to a reptile flexibility that could twist to reach her in impossible contortions. Because this was the first article of faith in the cult that Irina had instituted: that we should

abdicate the preconceived notion of verticality, the straight line, the unmotivated surviving masculine pride that had still followed us even after we'd accepted our condition as a woman's slaves…)

I want to be as clear as possible, because otherwise it's too easy to gloss over it: Irina, Valerian, and Alex are in a threesome that practices bondage and domination, with Irina bending their erect penises as a marker of their subjection to her, a subjection that denies masculine penetration of the female body. In short, the scene's purely heterosexual character—as Gabriele would have it—seems to be more accurately "technically heterosexual," or perhaps even "not explicitly non-heterosexual." The scene's queer charge emerges more clearly in what follows, however, when Irina stands upright and forces Valeriano to perform oral sex on her while she stares intently into Alex's eyes. "—Giù, —diceva Irina e la sua mano premeva la testa di Valeriano all'occipite, affondando le dita nei capelli lanosi d'un color rosso stoppa del giovane economista, senza lasciare che sollevasse il viso dall'altezza del suo grembo, — giù ancora! —e intanto guardava me con occhi di diamante, e voleva che io guardassi… (Ibid., 697; "'Down,' Irina was saying, and her hand pressed into the back of Valerian's head, sinking her fingers into the young economist's wooly, red-blonde hair without allowing him to raise his gaze from the height of her lap, 'farther down!', and meanwhile was watching me with diamond eyes, wanting me to watch…). Alex's eyes remain locked with Irina until she finally closes her eyes and begins to cry out with pleasure. Again, Calvino—both in this scene and in "La forma dello spazio"—as well as Mezzacappa ensure that the woman remains between the two male characters, while simultaneously leaving markers that make it clear that logically there are other sexual possibilities that are inherent to the geometry of the scene (it is a love *triangle*, after all, so there is always a side connecting the two men). Calvino is not running away from sexuality when he turns to geometry—on the contrary, it is geometry itself that sets his teeth chattering with desire. He is running to it, because he has created a universe in which geometry is perversely the sexiest thing there is. This point is actually made repeatedly and explicitly in the cosmicomic stories. To return to Calvino's midcentury jazz story in the *Cosmicomics*, "I cristalli," Qfwfq notes that "se io amo l'ordine, non è… una repressione degli istinti. In me l'idea d'un mondo assolutamente regolare, simmetrico, metodico, s'associa… alla tensione amorosa" (Ibid., 250; "if I love order, it's not a repression of the instincts. In me the idea of an absolutely regular, symmetrical, methodical world is associated with amorous tension"). The geometric is nothing but a series of potential sexual scenarios—far from a defense mechanism, it is a point of access to the object of desire.

Let us recall that Mezzacappa does, in fact, bring the three main characters (along with the rest of the band) together at the end. They clumsily try to play in sync and initially fail (what Mezzacappa calls in her notes a "unison gesture," rather than a unison), before finally landing together in perfect unison on that last note, a D coming just after an A (the A to D movement gestures at a strong V-I resolution, typical in both classical and jazz music). They have effectively all come together—read that however you like—at the end of the piece, and something remarkable happens that does not happen anywhere else on the album: that ending becomes the beginning of the next piece. All the instruments land on that final note (vibraphone, bass, saxophone, guitar, and electronics, as well as the drummer striking a cymbal), and as the other sounds decay, the saxophone swells slightly above them, holds the note, and then stops. The piece ends, and the next track/cosmicomic story begins: the saxophone, still on the same D, swells up and stops again, and slowly, over a series of swelling and falling pulses on D, the other instruments come in and gradually begin to complicate the music once more.

Conclusion

Mezzacappa links the ending of "Form of Space" seamlessly to the beginning of "All at One Point." This tells us something that might not have been apparent at first blush to the reader of the *Cosmicomics*, where they are not sequential: both stories are about the erotic possibilities inherent in the advanced geometries of spacetime after Einstein (parallel lines that meet at infinity because space itself has a shape that is contorted and bent in the first story, the universe compressed to an infinitely small point in the second). Moreover, "All at One Point" (both Calvino's story and Mezzacappa's jazz version) does precisely what a catacoustic reading suggests perhaps all art does or at last might potentially do, and certainly what midcentury American jazz was attempting to do: expand into space, and more radically, expand the possibilities of space itself.[17] In other words, while we have always understood that Calvino's works open up a space, the space that we imagined (largely literary, centered on the image, dominated by a sense of the author as controlling, rigid and cerebral) was only a fractional slice of what was actually happening—in painting, in sculpture, in dance, in architecture, urban planning, opera and even in jazz. Indeed, a huge part of the reason Calvino continues to resonate through much of the Western world and beyond is precisely the jazz-like character that Mezzacappa realizes and makes audible in her album: the works are playful, improvisational, unexpected, and surprisingly open.

Works Cited

4th World Orchestra. 2012. "Cosmicomics." *On Sound Reasons*. Sound Reasons Records, compact disc.

Almansi, Guido. 1971. "Il mondo binario di Italo Calvino." *Paragone* (258): 95–110.

Angeleri, Claudio. 2021. *Music from the Castle of Crossed Destinies*. Dodicilune Music, compact disc.

Attali, Jacques. 1985. *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Belpoliti, Marco. 1996. *L'occhio di Calvino*. Turin: Einaudi.

Benadon, Fernando. 2017. "Cosmicomics." *delight / delirium*. New Focus Recordings, compact disc.

Benedetti, Carla. 1998. *Pasolini contro Calvino: Per una letteratura impura*. Turin: Bollati Bolinghieri.

Berio, Luciano. 1998. "La musicalità di Calvino." In *Italo Calvino: la letteratura, la scienza, la città*, edited by Giorgio Bertone, 115–17. Genoa: Marietti.

[17] One reader suggested that this "expansion into space" might be profitably read not only as part of a larger jazz tradition of thinking about musical space (as when Coleman arranges free jazz into a double quartet, each in one channel of your stereo headset), but also about Afrofuturism and specifically the famous bandleader Sun Ra, whose playful "space music" is about both literal cosmic space and an ever expanding metaphorical space: "I leave the word space open, like space is supposed to be" (Sun Ra, quoted in Youngquist, 142). Sun Ra's Afrofuturist tradition was perhaps outside of Calvino's direct orbit (so to speak), but it was certainly part of the resonances that shaped Lisa Mezzacappa's music. Mezzacappa herself notes that space is idealized and utopian for Sun Ra, while for Calvino it is full of "insecurities and obsessions and petty urges" (personal communication). For reasons of space here I would simply say that the obvious resonances between Calvino's idea of the "cosmicomic" and Sun Ra's Arkestra (a musical spaceship ark/orchestra that embodies the hopes for a Black space in the future) are one of the many reasons that resonance offers a more capacious model that "influence" does not provide. Calvino and Sun Ra can see space very differently, and yet both create echoes that overlap and resonate in Mezzacappa's music, both cosmic and comic.

Berkman, Natalie. 2020. “Italo Calvino’s Oulipian Clinamen.” *MLN* 135 (1): 255–80.

Calvino, Italo. 1992. *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 2, edited by Mario Barenghi and Bruno Falcetto. Milan: Mondadori.

_____. 2002a. *Lettere, 1940–45*, edited by Luca Barabelli. Milan: Mondadori.

_____. 2002b. *Un ottimista in America*. Milan: Mondadori.

Cavarero, Adriana. 2003. *A piu voci: filosofia dell’espressione vocale*. Milan: Feltrinelli.

Cerrone, Christopher. 2014. *Invisible Cities*. The Industry Records, compact disc.

Cosso, Laura. 1995. “‘Un re in ascolto’: Berio, Calvino e altri.” In *Berio*, edited by Enzo Restagno, 113–34. Turin: E.D.T.

Dankworth, Avril. 1968. *Jazz: An Introduction to its Musical Basis*. London: Oxford University Press.

Dos Monos. 2021. “Ra Cosmicomiche (Race for Space) [feat. JAZZ DOMMUNIUSTERS].” *Dos Siki Second Season*. Warner Music Japan, compact disc.

Duncan, Dennis. 2012. “Calvino, Llull, Lucretius: Two Models of Literary Combinatorics.” *Comparative Literature* 64 (1): 93–109.

Gabriele, Tommasina. 1996. *Italo Calvino: Eros and Languag*e. Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.

Grundtvig, Birgitte, Martin McLaughlin, and Lene Waage Petersen, eds. 2007. *Image, Eye and Art in Calvino: Writing Visibility*. London: Legenda.

Hume, Kathryn. 1992.“Sensuality and the Senses in Calvino's Fiction.” *MLN* 107 (1): 160–77.

King, Jonny. 1997. *What Jazz Is: An Insider’s Guide to Understanding and Listening to Jazz*. New York: Walker and Co.

Lacoue-Labarthe, Philippe. 1989. “The Echo of the Subject.” In *Typography: Mimesis, Philosophy, Politic*s, edited by Christopher Fynsk, 130–207. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

La distanza della luna. 2015. *La distanza della luna*. Bassa Fedeltà Records, compact disc.

Lawn, Richard. 2013. *Experiencing Jazz*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge.

Mezzacappa, Lisa Six. 2020. *Cosmicomics*. Queen Bee Records, compact disc.

McClary, Susan. 2002. *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender & Sexuality*. 2nd edition. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Miano, Tonino and ensemble. 1998. “The Moon Like a Mushroom.” Recorded April 4, 1998. https://roulette.org/event/tonino-miano-2/.

Minato, Luana. 2009. “La poétique de l’écoute dans l’œuvre d’Italo Calvino.” PhD diss., Université de la Sorbonne nouvelle.

Mirabile, Andrea. 2017. *Piaceri invisibili: retorica della cecità in D’Annunzio, Pasolini, Calvino*. Rome: Carocci editore.

Monson, Ingrid. 1996. *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Musarra-Schrøder, Ulla. 2010. *Italo Calvino tra i cinque sensi*. Florence: F. Cesati.

Nilsson, Ivo. 2021. “Lunaria.” Recorded by Ensemble MA. On *Lunaria*. Blue Music Group, compact disc.

Œ. 2018. “Cosmicomics.” *Sainte Pop II*. La Souterraine, compact disc.

Pomilio, Tommaso. 2016. “Scrittura dell’ascolto: Calvino in Berio.” In *Le théâtre musical de Luciano Berio. Actes de six journées d’études qui ont eu lieu à Paris et à Venise entre 2010 et 2013*, edited by Giordano Ferrari, 2117–43. Paris: L’Harmattan.

Privitera, Giovanni. 2012. “Calvino et les Cantacronache: Une nouvelle redessinée et mise en musique.” *Italies: Littérature, civilisation, société* 16: 583–95.

Ricci, Franco. 2001. *Painting with Words, Writing with Pictures: Word and Image in the Work of Italo Calvino*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Romaniello, Giuseppe. 2014. *Six Memos in Jazz*. Rome: Conti (Morgex).

Rushing, Robert. 2021. “Calvino, Cerrone, and the Catacoustic: An “Echo-logical” Reading.” *Italian Culture*, 39 (2): 115–35.

Sanchez, Telesmar. 2021. *Cosmic Music*. Streaming audio.

Solis, Gabriel. 2007. *Monk’s Music: Thelonious Monk and Jazz History in the Making*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

St. Terrible. 2021. “Cosmicomics.” *The Wonderful End of the World: Side A*. Records DK, compact disc.

Whitehead, Kevin and Dave Davies. 2020. “Lisa Mezzacappa’s *Cosmicomics* Riffs On Italo Calvino’s Scientific Surrealism.” *Fresh Air*, April 7, 2020. National Public Radio, https://www.npr.org/2020/04/07/828824103/lisa-mezzacappas-cosmicomics-riffs-on-italo-calvino-s-scientific-surrealism.

Whyte, William H. 2002. *The Organization Man*. Revised ed. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002.

Youngquist, Paul. 2016. *A Pure Solar World: Sun Ra and the Birth of Afrofuturism*. Austin: University of Texas Press.