

"How many men soever you slay, you will never kill your successor" ~ Seneca

 By [Bronwyn Williams](#)

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This week's book choice, *Invisible Cities* by Italo Calvino is an adult fairy tale of sorts detailing the fantastical adventures of Marco Polo through a series of strange, sinister and surrealistic cities.

The book is wonderfully imaginative and highly thought-provoking. One of the invisible cities described in the book stands out, the city of Berenice.

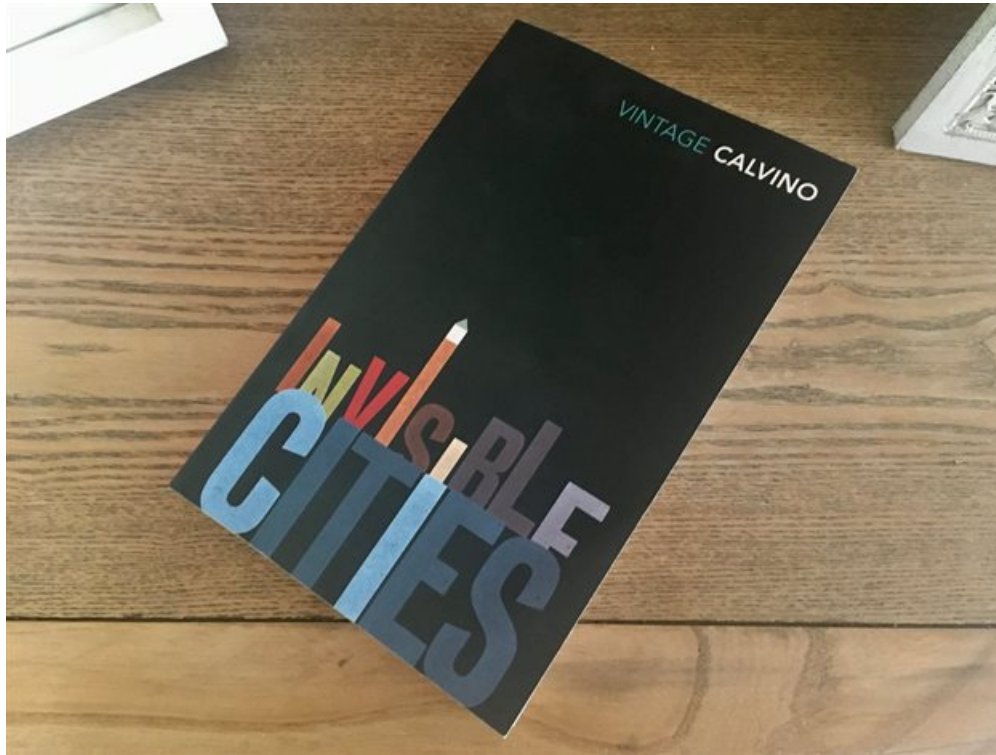
Berenice is a Russian nesting doll of a city, an "unjust", unequal city that hides a "just" hopeful city within it and, in turn, that future "just" city contains the trace of a further, distant, "unjust" city, and so on. Every good city containing the seeds of its own succession, and every successor, the seeds of its own succession in turn.

“ From my words, you will have reached the conclusion that the real Berenice is a temporal succession of different cities, alternately just and unjust. But what I wanted to warn you about is something else: the future Berenices are already present in this instant, wrapped one within the other, confined, crammed, inextricable. ~ *Invisible Cities* ”

This is, of course a profound metaphor for both business and life.

On a literal level, as human beings, women contain within our bodies the seeds of our future great, great granddaughters.

On a more figurative level, businesses, industries and even nation states carry the seeds of *their* own future replacements too.



“ *Like Saturn, the Revolution devours its children. ~ Jacques Mallet du Pan* ”

History has demonstrated time and time again, that today's “disruptors” are tomorrow's “disrupted”.

For example, who can forget how Nokia was replaced unceremoniously by Blackberry, and was in turn defeated by the iPhone? And who does not wonder who, or what, in turn will take Apple's place at the top of the cellphone food chain?

More topically, we are already debating who is going to succeed the big tech companies that currently rule the world - after all, the half-life of even a Fortune 500 company these days is down to under 10 years, implying no company, however rich or large, is exempt from being devoured by the future.

But, the real question is, of course, who is going to be your successor? Who is going to replace *you* in your job? Who is going to take your company's market share? Who is going to overturn your *industry*?

Your future replacement is unlikely to be your current competition. It is more likely to come from one of the blind spots in your peripheral vision.

Change is inevitable. And change requires both destruction and creation.

Fortunately, we also have the option to change ourselves and replace our old selves and our old businesses with new reincarnations. The choice is ours: reinvent ourselves, or be replaced.

ABOUT BRONWYN WILLIAMS

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