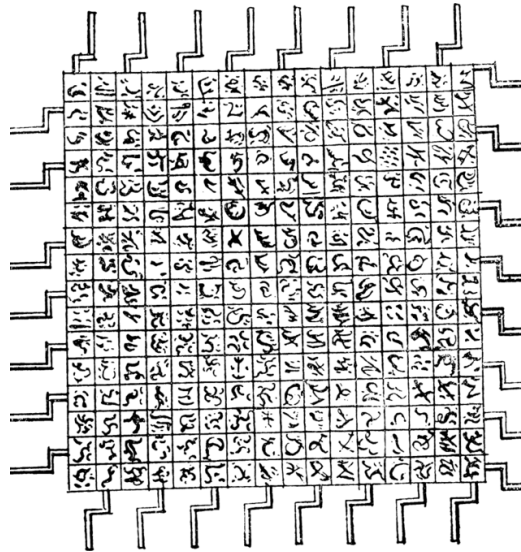


# zairja method

**The zairja is an ancient computational device designed to reconfigure “notions” into “ideas” through a process of randomization and resonance.** In use since at least the 11c., its (mostly) Arabic inventors/users influenced Western mystics, most notably Ramón Llull, who universalized the astrological and combinatorial components of the zairja into a system of meditative cognition. His method became famous and was taught at the University of Paris for over three hundred years, until the Jesuits banned it on account of its use in divination. Remnants filtered into Western thought, and Jonathan Swift produced this “writing machine” in his novel *Tale of a Tub* as a frame with 24 cranks to rotate cubes bearing figures and numbers. Daniel Libeskind copied this design for his own writing machine, submitted with two other machines for the Venice Biennale.

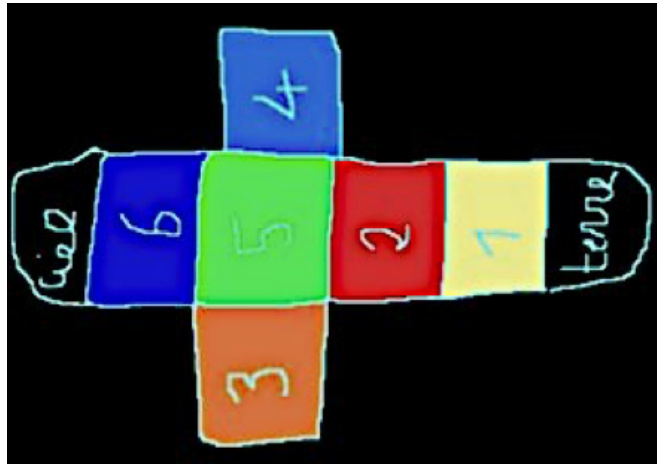


**Zairjas create thought out of non-thought** by presenting the mind with an event of singularity. In this event, the past meets the future in a “hapax” (originary) formation. It converts thinking into a “pure act” where *automaton* (natural chance) converges with *tuchē* (human affordance). This is a different concept of instrumental cause, normally degraded as a mechanical process, but clearly the inventors and users of the zairja saw how the occultation of intentionality could lead to greater things. This returns thought to its primary aspect as a pre-symbolic Real, an emergent aspect of lived experience. A few key artists, scientists, and philosophers have developed this idea, with a consistency that demonstrates that they have all happened upon the same notion — that thinking is primarily a form of divination, whose modern form is epiphany.

The key to “zairja thinking” is to see just how many kinds of “zairjas” have actually been used, and in what forms: architectural, literary, mathematical, musical, etc. Given that the famous art of memory invented (allegedly) by Simonides and brought to a consummate architectural form by Giulio Camillo are two such cases, we are forced to see that only the greatest thinkers have employed zairjas, usually secretly, in order to strengthen and diversify their own projects.

Ramón Llull was simply consolidating and formalizing a tradition that had been in existence since ancient times. Yet, his “method” was popular throughout the Late Middle Ages. Julio Cortázar’s novel *Hopscotch* (*La Rayuela*) invited readers to re-assemble chapters in alternative orders, directly carrying forward Llull’s tradition, but we can take the zairja idea directly to the case of the human subconscious, where images, experiences, and thoughts accumulate temporally but are stored “spatially,” each with a narrative component used for a “temporal recall” (see the review of the Event Dream).

Your zairja is the key to allowing ideas to float around long enough to connect into extended chains that allow recombinations and emerging symmetries.



## zairja method

- Have a new thought each day
- add the new thought to the zairja list
- accommodate the new thought to the idea, and vice versa
- take this accommodation to two other (random) topics on the list
- lists can be shared, new terms can be shared ...
- your “finished” zairja will be turned in at the end of the semester.

### SOME ZAIRJA TERMS THAT WILL BE EXPLAINED IN CLASS

super-symmetry  
body loading  
metonymy  
resonance  
chirality  
absence  
exaptation  
occultation  
zairja method  
flesh of the world  
theory of two bodies  
hermeneutics not for art  
instrumentality  
emergence  
the gap  
spandrel  
sexuation  
catalepsis  
metalepsis  
idiotic method  
reversed predication  
*mi-dire* (half speech)  
imagination vs. fantasy