

Chaos and Disorder in Italo Calvino's Invisible Cities: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract

The present study analyses the chaos and disorder in Italo Calvino's novel Invisible Cities through the lens of Husserlian Phenomenology. In Calvino's novels, chaos is prevalent which invites the immediate attention of the narrators to formalize this chaos. In this qualitative study, the close reading technique was used to collect data from the novel for analysis. The study proceeds from the phenomenological journey of the perception of chaos by Calvino's narrators to the management of that chaos through the phenomenological stages of presuppositionlessness, reduction, and intentionality. It explores postmodern anarchies like confusion, frustration, and chaotic proliferation through the phenomenological study of chaos and disorder. The study explores the intention of the narrators to find the true essence of the universe filtered through cosmic chaos. The study found out that Calvino is wrestling with the phenomenon of chaos and disorder in the novel which portrays the actual picture of the man of today.

Keywords: Confusion, Frustration Chaotic Proliferation, Invisible Cities, Phenomenology

Introduction

In this study, a hypothesis has been established that the phenomenon of chaos and disorder is the most persuasive theme in Italo Calvino's novels. Regarding the contention, only one novel 'Invisible Cities' has been chosen as a specimen for observation by the researchers. The researchers analysed the theme of chaos and disorder in the novel under study through the lens of Husserl's phenomenology (Calvino, 2006). According to Glattfelder (2019), the term "chaos" had been originally coined by the Greeks to describe the limitless gap or void; but now it depicts the unpredictable and random structure. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, biologists, astronomers, physicists, and economists have explored the growth of complexity in nature. This new phenomenon called chaos proposed a new way of observing order and pattern where formerly only, the erratic, the random, and the unpredictable-in short, the chaotic-had been observed (Peitgen, 1992).

Calvino's stated purpose in an interview with William Weaver, "The conflict between the chaos of the world and man's obsession with making some sense of it is a recurrent pattern in what I've written," echoes Husserl's proclaimed purpose of understanding and giving meaning to the chaos of post-World War I Europe. Calvino's novels deal with chaos and the nature of the phenomenon to discover a system that can capture the chaotic reality of the universe. Calvino makes a conscious effort to embrace chaos and formalise it with phenomenological intention. His fiction addresses the riddle of universal chaos and disorder, in which the fifty-five cities become the bracketed form of the universe, and the chaotic proliferation of the simple lawn transcends to the

order of the cosmos, which is chaotic within its borders. These ostensibly postmodern characteristics of Calvino's novels, namely the instability of the narrative voice and the continuous self-preferentiality of his fiction, run to propose a project of phenomenology, which seeks to find essences of phenomena, is similar in its quest to make an order or meaning out of chaos. Calvino's characters' most frequently used tools in their search for meaning are metonymy, metaphor, and synecdoche, which can be applied to those invariable essences that a phenomenologist seeks. Calvino's characters approach meaning in the same way that phenomenologists do, by employing phenomenological techniques such as presuppositionlessness, free variation, phenomenological reduction, and intention. Because they live in a post-modern world, their quest is constantly changing (Narrative across the Border).

Research Questions

The researchers raised the following research questions in the thesis:

- i. How does phenomenology manage the chaos and labyrinth of the universe in Calvino's novel 'Invisible Cities'?
- ii. How does phenomenological reduction help characters to move from the general phenomenon to the phenomenon of subjective reality?
- iii. How does intentional conscious work to perceive the prevailing chaos in Calvino's novel?

Literature Review

The history of chaos is as old as human beings. Broadly speaking the first disobedience of man and the first murder of man, were the first chaotic situation experienced by men. Myriads of time, writers, and critics have discussed chaos subjectively as well as objectively. In ancient times, the phenomenon of chaos was interpreted differently in various eras. Primordially, in the ancient age, chaos was considered a heavenly bane set apart in the wake of sin and the ills of humankind. Equally, in the Medieval, Renaissance, and Post-Renaissance periods, chaos was considered a curse or heavenly demise (Callahan, 2009).

Besides the revealed literature, many ancient writers like Homer, Euripides Aristophanes, Sophocles, Ovid, and Virgil have given place to this pestilence with its entire possible connotation in their respective works. One of the adequate examples of rendering chaos symbolically through literature is that of Sophocles Oedipus. The myth of Sophocles (1997) explores how chaos emerges in the shape of a plague, which destroys the whole structure of Theban's life. Here chaos also means the absence of truth that caused turmoil. However, a sense of false reality is established which results in a chaotic situation. In Oedipus Rex, the chorus with the following words depicts the gravity of a cursed city:

Thebes is in her extremity
Cannot lift her head from
The surge of death
The god of plague and pyre
Raids like detestable lightning through the city,
And all the house of Kadmos is laid waste,
All emptied and all darkened

Death alone battens upon the misery of Thebes (Prologue, lines 26-34).

Greek writers observed chaos in mythical-and-Athenian-plague-context, whether it is Aristophanes, Sophocles, or Euripides. Sophocles moves a step further and directly uses

“loimos” (Mitchell-Boyask, 2007), the Greek term for chaos and plague. As per (Sophocles, 1997), the whole Greek notion suffered plague as a divine curse; he holds plague to be a detestable raid of the god of plague upon the city of Thebes and correlates it with man’s sins and crimes where oblivion and ignorance are no excuse (Sophocles, 1997). Homer also mentions the word ‘loimos’ (Plague as a divine curse) because he thinks, “plague breeds lawlessness, which in turn thus becomes a societal illness” (Mitchell-Boyask, 2007). For the Greeks, the plague brings chaos. It was the set belief of the ancient especially the Greeks that plague or chaos is a divine ordeal suffered by the men due to some violation of god/goddess’s will. Even Sophocles, the most pragmatic of the Greeks, “in Oedipus the King, explained the pestilential epidemic as the result of human transgressions To argue for the necessity of re-establishing older religious customs”.

King Oedipus violates the message of God and chaos visits the whole cosmos of Thebes. Oedipus tries to order the situation by inquiring about the identity of the murderer of King Laius but an atmosphere of disorder is created by the inability to see the present truth. Sophocles examines the story of the famous king Oedipus who was once a saviour by solving the riddle of the sphinx but now the saviour becomes the ultimate cause of the plague. First, Oedipus brings order and prosperity to the life of Theban by solving the riddle but now his presence is a metaphorical representation of chaos and disorder in Thebes. First a saviour, a messiah, a redeemer, but now a murderer, an emblem of chaos. Oedipus knowing the affliction of Thebans sends Creon to the oracle of Delphi to order the situation but his every effort bears no fruit.

Biblical and mythological stories provide information creating world order from chaos. After that, the Renaissance tradition identified the chaos, which existed when the world did not continue. Milton in Paradise Lost discussed how God created the world not out of nothingness but out of chaos “At the beginning how the heaven and earth rose out of chaos”. Milton deals with the chaos in an affirmative sense in which the order of the cosmos takes place.

In the Shakespearean drama (2019), King Lear begins with the separation of the kingdom to create a new form and the creation to search for a new order in a new division. Lear wants to bring new order by deconstructing his kingdom. Lear does not know that a kingdom without order is a kingdom of chaos. He wants to reestablish the natural social order, which results in a chaotic situation. King Lear wants to challenge the position granted to him by God. However, the outer chaos in the universe shows the inner chaos present in himself. Lear’s madness is the state of sheer chaos and order restored as a discovery of Lear’s contact with the truth and love for his daughter.

In Shakespeare (2019b), the jealousy between the couples ends in disorder and chaos, which encapsulates their mutual relationship. Othello tells Desdemona:

"Perdition catches my soul,

But I do love the!

When love thee not

Chaos is come again”. (Shakespeare Ill. iii, 90-92).

In Shakespeare’s Venus and Adonis (2018) when Venus laments the death of Adonis as he claims that “to wail upon his death, who must live and not die. For, he is dead, his beauty is slain; beauty dead, black chaos comes again” In the Renaissance period, there were frequent references to chaos, as a gaping void, a lack of differentiation, and a confused mass.

In literature, the state of conflict symbolizes the sheer state of chaos. In Shakespeare's play Hamlet, the protagonist Hamlet undergoes the dilemma of moral conflict. Madness and reality are the crucial themes in Hamlet, which depict the chaotic turbulence in Hamlet's self and the state of Denmark. The dilemma in Hamlet is "To be or not to be". Due to Claudius' usurpation of the Queen and the throne of Denmark, characters such as Ophelia, Gertrude, and Hamlet suffer seriously from resentment, enragement, and betrayal. Hamlet's chaotic state of mind depicts his chaotic self, which is torn between madness and sanity, "I am but mad north-north-west" (Shakespeare). The reason for Hamlet's delay in killing his uncle Claudius reflects his disorder, inner trauma, and chaos, which hinder his state of action. In "A Course of Lecture on Dramatic Arts and Literature", Schlegel (1880) stated the reason for Hamlet's delay in the "hero's labyrinths of thought, in which he neither find end nor beginning" (280). According to Schlegel (1880), view "tragedy is the conflict between man and his hostile universe which held like Hamlet's intellectual character to reflect excessively. Because of his excessive conflict, he becomes disabled for action. Hamlet's inner self is disordered and chaotic, which impedes his power of action.

In the tragic history of Dr. Faustus (1997), the character named, Faustus undergoes the dilemma of moral conflict. Faustus by signing the pact with Lucifer damned his soul for twenty-four years. Faustus's inner self is chaotic as he was a prisoner of his conception and preconception. The presence of Good Angel and Bad Angel is the physical manifestation of his inner conflict. Conflict is the other form of chaos, which Faustus suffers. Faustus' inner self is disordered as he is blind to see the mercy of God. He understands the justice of God but cannot understand the Mercy of God. Faustus himself reflects on the situation and states; "Faustus offense can ne'er be pardoned: the serpent that tempted Eve may be saved, but not Faustus" (54). The continuous appearance of Good and Bad Angel is the reflection of Faustus' chaotic state of mind. The play is about conflict while hell is a state of mind, which keeps on fluctuating between Good and Bad Angel. Faustus's torture is hell, which is reflected in his internal chaotic state of mind. Faustus declares his damnation:

Faustus. O Faustus,

Now hast thou but one bare hour to live

And then thou must be damned perpetually!

Still, as time runs, the clock will strike.

The devil will come, and Faustus must be damned. (Marlow 57).

Literary theorists value chaos to expose the ideological foundations of traditional ideas of order. This theorist like chaos because it is opposed to order. They value chaos because it serves as an engine that drives a system toward a complex kind of order (Piskunov, 2014). After World War II, the ambiguity within chaos was shadowed by the ambiguity within an order. On one side order signifies stability, predictability, and regularity it also connoted something disarray, chaotic and senseless formation (Charles, 2008).

In the absurdist play *Waiting for Godot* (1954) where the world is based on chance, the chance has a timeless orderly sequence and no meaning. *Waiting for Godot* records the post-war values where people like Estragon and Vladimir are living chaotic life without any orderly sequence. These characters are entangled in a sheer sense of loss and chaos. Characters live in an uncertain world in which no one makes any movement. Estragon: "Nothing happens, nobody comes and goes, it's terrible" or "Don't let's do anything. It is safer". Their uncertain and chaotic existence

makes them afraid to make any movement as Vladimir says, “Nothing is certain when we are about” (8). Nothing is certain in the play even though they are uncertain about Godot’s arrival. When Estragon and Vladimir are talking about the arrival of Godot, they talk about the uncertainty of his arrival: The characters of Becket have lost their faith in the existence of God. Their concept of religion is very doubtful in this bleak and chaotic world. When Vladimir asks Estragon, whether he remembers the gospel, he replies that “I know the map of the Holy Land”. Their belief in existence is chaotic and uncertain. The play explores the illusory pattern, which Vladimir and Estragon have made for them. Eugene Web in “The Case of Enthusiasm in Making a Pattern in One’s Life” recorded Aristotle's dictum: “Man, cannot endure the absence of meaning. Meaning is the pattern of life. If a man is unable to find a pattern in his existence then he tries to create it, or at least imagine it. A tin can and stump can do if a jar is not available”. If Aristotle emphasizes that pattern is essential for human life then Godot’s arrival can certainly bring patterns and meanings to Estragon and Vladimir’s lives. Web argues that Vladimir realizes the truth that Godot is just a God of his deliberate imagination, who is as empty as the traditional one ‘with a White beard’. Vladimir recognizes that Godot can do nothing for them(Bansal, 2010).

In America and Europe, the postwar generation suffered the terrible shock of disillusionment. The whole generation was in a state of disintegration and chaos. The writers of postwar values epitomize the chaotic situation of modern and postmodern men and their fruitless labor to cope with this disarray and turmoil. According to Samuel Beckett, life is full of chaos. Words like success, failure, love, and hatred are merely empty words; they have no meaning in human life. Through language, Becket tries to depict the world, which is absurd and chaotic, even though language fails. Language is puzzling and meaningless; as *Waiting for Godot* begins with an ambiguous phrase ‘nothing to be done.

World War 1 had traumatized the whole society and the world. Human beings observed the world as chaotic and devoid of human values. A sense of bewilderment and disillusionment grew in popularity in the very fabric of society. T.S. Eliot’s, *The Waste Land* became the “work that expressed the mood of post-war disillusionment by the loss of faith and ideals in progress”(Dupree, 1994). *The Waste Land* depicts the post-war scenario where values have been lost and man finds himself hopeless and confused in this senseless chaotic society. Post-war modernistic society presents disillusionment and fragmentation. His poems *The Hollow Man*, and *The Waste Land* express the confusion of the post-war era. *The Waste Land* is a search for renewal, survival, and redemption, a search for a new order in a spiritually sterile landscape. Eliot has confused structure and obscure illusions making the poem depict the condition of modern society. *The Waste Land* illustrates the chaotic condition of Europe after World War I. The barren field; *The Waste Land* is a metaphor for the condition of Europe (Sharratt, 2015). Eliot uses the ‘dialect of analogies’ which metaphorically represents the disillusionment of the modern generation (Kennor, 1949). In the poem, Eliot depicts the condition of the chaotic existence of human life:

April is the cruelest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring ram
Water keeps us warm, covering (45).

In *The Waste Land*, the month of spring, April, has no longer a joyous time. In the first scene of “A Game of Chess”, a couple is shown living a meaningless life, composed of a chaotic dull routine. Their relationship is artificial and forced. Individuals are so absorbed in themselves that makes communication among them, is futile. Eliot’s poems record the chaotic, fragmented structure, as Jewel Spears Brooker argues, of “strikingly modern avant-garde and fragmented in nature”. *The Waste Land* is a poem about Europe. The poem represents the actual condition of Europe; the barren and chaotic landscape metaphorically depicts the Post-War European phenomenon. This poem demonstrates the “disillusionment of a post-modern generation” (Kennor, 1949). For Bloom(1999), *The Waste Land* is the manifestation of dead land and spiritual chaos. In the section, *The Burial of Dead*, the speaker witnesses London after the atrocities of the Great War as dry, broken, and lifeless, full of dead bodies. London, a city of progress and fertility has become nothing more than an “unreal city” chaotic city. *The Waste Land* creates a “portrait of the mind of Europe”. The life span of modern man lacks logical pattern and coherence as the characteristic of mental disorder is reflected in the image of a “crowd of people, walking round in a ring” amid a “heap of broken images” (22).

The Hollow Man narrated by one of the *Hollow Man* portrays the culture and society, which have lacked faith and humanity. The society of *Hollow Man* is obsessed with alienation and loss. This fragmentary poem records the chaos of modern existence, as *The Waste Land* is a metaphor for universal disorder; the *Hollow Man* is an archetype of a modern individual self. The chaos in the self of an individual lurks through the sense of hollowness as Eliot states:

We are the hollow men
We are the stuffed men
Leaning together Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!
Our dried voices Are quiet and meaningless (89).

The poet in his essay “Baudelaire” explained, “It is better in a paradoxical way to do evil than to do nothing at least, we exist”. But the condition of *Hollow Men* are different, they do not exist at all; their shape is without form and color, paralyzed forces, gesture without motion” (6). In *Cosmicomic*, games, and entertainment are dominant; chaos and order coincide in the whole phenomenon of the cosmos. Enzo Siciliano remarks that, in Calvino’s later writings, a text becomes a type “of a recipe- book of itself,” as if readers are invited to a dinner party and offered the menu as the meal rather than the food itself, and “offered them the wine list instead of the wine itself, embellished with the most beautiful imaginable colors”. In Calvino’s, everything becomes too graphic and schematic to the extent that man remains left spineless and reality assumes a geometric configuration where there is room left only for computation, calculation, and theorem (Weiss 206). This explains why Mr. Palomar whose “activities are mental and perceptual,” is no longer a living character but rather an “aspect of looking, a wide-opened eye looking in the horizon in its totality” (Milanini 128).

Research Methodology

This research was qualitative and was based upon the study of Italo Calvino’s novel ‘*Invisible Cities*’ in the backdrop of Edmund Husserl’s idea of phenomenological consciousness(1907). This research study undertook the task of critical evaluation of the prescribed text through the interpretation of various books and research articles available on Calvino. The researchers conducted the textual analysis to identify the phenomenon of chaos and its phenomenological order by the individuals. In the due course of the research, the researchers tried to evaluate and

co-relate the selected and identified textual material to prove that the orderly simple system is even more complex and unpredictable in the present modern world. References, pertinent material, and evidence from primary texts are used to validate the study's contention. The Husserlian phenomenological intentionality explored the way to order the phenomena of objective reality as well as subjective consciousness. Hence, the purpose of the research was to prove that the phenomenon of chaos in the respective novels invited the immediate attention of the protagonists to order this through their phenomenological observation: Presuppositionless, Free Variation, Phenomenological Reduction, and Intentionality.

Data Analysis and Discussion

“Invisible Cities” is a story of intricate and combined discreet units. The book is a framed narrative. Calvino's purpose is to understand the structure and order of the universe through the metaphoric representation of those fifty-five cities. Here the purpose of the researchers' contention is to understand the inner order and chaos working in the imaginary cosmos of Polo and Great Khan. The representation of these fragmented cities gives a metaphorical lens to order the chaos of the universe. Here the German philosopher Edmund Husserl's phenomenological study becomes the focal lens to observe this chaos and order dichotomy. In Invisible Cities both Marco Polo and Kublai Khan are phenomenologists. Their phenomenological journey begins from their presuppositionless position. The cities which Marco Polo describes are the product of his mind. From the presuppositionless world, the journey for order enters into the realm of free variation. In the idea of free variation Polo's mind varies from the imagination of one city to another city and then the reduction starts. In phenomenological reduction, the whole universe is reduced in the phenomenon of a single city. The description of every city is the microcosm of the whole cosmos. The phenomenological journey of Marco Polo ends in intentional consciousness. In the act of intentionality, every phenomenon is perceived through the direct experience of the mind.

Presuppositionlessnes

Edmund Husserl introduced the methodology of phenomenology in the second volume of his logical investigation. He describes the phenomenological fact and phenomenological situation but he says little about how phenomenology has to be practiced, other than that it involves (a) avoidance of presupposition, and (b) the tracing of concepts back to a concrete concept that validates them. Phenomenology is to lead to a sphere of direct intuition. According to Calvino phenomenology, on the other hand, lays bare the sources from which the basic concept and ideal laws of pure logic ‘flow’, and back to which they must once more be traced, to give them all “cleanness and distinction” needed for an understanding. (Husserl 1:166). In phenomenology, the phenomenologist is concerned with the essential structure of cognition to things known. When Husserl states in this introduction to logical investigation ‘we must go back to the things themselves (Husserl 1:168). Husserl emphasizes that consciousness must be approached in its ‘purity’, in pure ‘immense’, as a self-enclosed domain and all assumptions drawn from the actual world removed: ‘consciousness conceived in “purity” must be held to be a self-contained complex of being into which nothing can penetrate and out of which nothing can slip(cha 1, sec 49,p.112). The novel Invisible Cities begins with the presuppositionless attitude of Marco Polo as he describes the phenomenon of fifty-five cities without any precise and definite account

rather the cities are the description of his imaginative thinking. Polo wants to exercise his power of order in the fragmented realm of Kublai Khan.

Letizia Modena in his book “Italo Calvino’s Architecture of Lightness” states that “Calvino had become convinced that the writer’s imagination had to be free itself from the weight of conventional representation and interpretation to devise a visualized image according to the value of lightness” (19). At first, Polo is a stranger to the language of the Levant, express only by drawing objects and pointing to them with gestures, cries of horror, the boot of the owl, and the bay of jackal. For Kublai Khan, being ignorant of Polo’s language, everything could have various meanings. He deciphers Polo’s means of expression but meanings remained unlimited. Khan enjoys Polo’s way of expression, no matter how difficult it is for Khan to decipher the real meanings. In the course of the novel, when the essence of presupposition is taken off, Polo learns the Tartar language, tribal dialect, and local idioms; his account becomes more and more precise. Now there is less and less curiosity for Khan. For Khan, each signifier replaces another signifier. Polo says; “memory’s images, once they are fixed in words, are erased...perhaps I am afraid of losing Venice if I speak of it (87).

Richard Grigg in “Language, the other and God: On Italo Calvino, Last Novels”, states that ‘Calvino’s novel reveals juxtaposition of fifty-five cities according to a precise mathematical scheme. Invisible Cities is not about combining discrete components rather it is self-conscious about being so in a way most novels are not (55). The novel is a description of more than a mere formal exercise. For the readers ‘it is impossible to miss the implications that the whole of Khan’s empire or perhaps each city becomes the metaphor of the whole cosmos’ (55). At one point Polo considers the suggestion that “the true map of the universe is the city of Eudoxia” (96). The reader traced the metaphysical speculation such as this one: “Perhaps, for the Kublai’s khan thought, the empire is nothing but a zodiac of the mind’s phantasms” (22). The cities are faithful descriptions of Polo’s imagination. Albert Carters seem accurate when he describes that “ within the imperial garden, Kublai Khan and Marco Polo rest in their hammock, smoke pipe and weave reality”(30).

These cities exist in the imagination of Polo. His imagination sheds all the presupposed ideas and conceives the construction of cities as appears to his mind. In the description of “Aglaura”, he describes what he “personally saw and experienced” (67). His own experience imagines the colorless and random structure of the city.

The journey of Marco Polo and Khan is continuous, it never stops. From the description of the cities, khan starts imagining his cities. He becomes a phenomenologist. As “each city Marco described to him, the khan’s mindset out on its own, as he reconstructed the cities in other ways, substituting and shifting components, and inverting them”(43). Now the emperor does not listen to the continued reporting of Polo’s journey rather he interrupts him: “From now on I shall explain the cities and you will tell me if they ever exist are they are just the phantoms of my mind” (43). The imagination of Polo suddenly stirs the imagination of Great Khan.

Free Variation.

Invisible Cities records the imaginative free variation account of Marco Polo and Kublai Khan’s description of the imaginary cities. Marco Polo makes the cities visible to the great Khan through the journey of his phenomenal variation. In the course of the novel, Marco Polo’s mind travels from the description of one imaginary city to the other. All the fifty-five cities are the creation of his imaginative mind. Marco Polo describes these cities to Khan and then the journey of Khan’s

imaginative free variation starts. Marco Polo, newly arrived, and ignorant of the Venetian language, communicates with the emperor through different objects, for example, ostrich plumes, pea shooters, and quartzes. Marco Polo “arranges these objects in front of Khan like a chessman, and expresses himself with gestures, cries of wonder and horror, animal hooting and barking” (21). Kublai Khan through his free variation draws different meanings from these objects. The communication between them remains uncertain as Great Khan deciphers the sign.

Marco Polo’s description of the cities remains uncertain as they are the free play of fancy of his mind. Khan accuses Polo as he says, “You return from distant lands and you tell me the thought that comes to a man who sits on his doorstep in the evening to enjoy the cool air” (27). To this Polo replies that “my gaze is meditating, lost in thought” (27). Here the Venetian prophesied that Great Khan also wanted to follow his private thought. As the phenomenological journey moves on both men ponder in silence. As Calvino states, “They were silent, their eyes half-closed, reclining on cushions, swaying in hammocks, smoking pipes” (28). In Polo’s journey of free variation, Kublai Khan interrupts him as he states to Polo “From now on I shall describe the cities and you will tell me if they exist and areas I have conceived them”(43). Here the journey of Khan’s imaginative free-variation begins and he starts imagining the description of those fragmented cities. Khan’s imaginative free variation begins: The empire is being crushed by its weight,” Kublai thinks, and in his dreams now cities light as kites appear, pierced cities like laces, cities transparent as mosquito netting, cities like leaves, cities lined like a hand’s palm, filigree cities to be seen through their opaque and fictitious thickness (73).

The phenomenon of free-variation works like a dream which is absurd and has no discourse where everything conceals something else. Cities are the imaginative work of the mind or chance as Khan declares, “My dreams are composed either by my mind or by chance” (44). Kublai Khan, in his imaginative free variation, observes that his “empire is rotting like a corpse in a swamp” (59). The Great Khan intuits that the cities do not exist perhaps they will never exist again; they are just the fables of Polo’s free variation. Marco Polo through his imaginative variation first perceives the chaos prevalent in the empire and then tries to order his chaos. For him the empire is sick, it is worse, but Polo’s exploration aims to trace the happiness (order) which still glimpses. Polo’s imaginative mind works on the idea of chaos and order simultaneously. If the left side of his consciousness perceives the chaos then the right side orders this chaos. In Polo’s imagination, the description of the cities is chaotic as well as precise. Polo believes in a labyrinth and rhizome like an empire—a fluid-changing and evolving empire, but Khan believes in a definite and concrete. In Polo’s imagination, cities appear without shape and color. The city of Aglaura appears, as a “colorless city, without character, planted there at random”, but there is “something unmistakable, rare and perhaps magnificent” (68). The city of Eudoxia has winding alleys, and chaotic structures but a carpet is preserved which reflects the true design of the city.

Polo’s free variation imagines the universe as disordered like the city of Eudoxia but then imagines this structure with the symmetrical design of a carpet. The carpet has straight and circular lines, similarly, the places of the cities are arranged according to the true design of the carpet. Both the characters have different imaginative variations as the cities visited by Marco Polo were always different from those imagined by the emperor. The Great Khan states that “from now on, I’ll describe the cities”, and “in your journey, you will see if they exist” (69), but Kublai Khan has always different imaginative variations from Polo. The Great Khan’s free variation always fluctuates between chaos and order; he imagines the empire being rotten and

crushed but in his dreams “cities light as kites appear, pierced cities like laces, cities as transparent as mosquito netting, cities lined like a hand’s palm, cities like leaves veins, filigree cities to be seen through their fictitious thickness”(73).

Joseph Hudnut’s “Architecture and the Spirit of Man” makes it clear that in Calvino’s novel “nothing is categorical; everything is opaque and contradictory” (301). When Polo describes a bridge stone by stone, Khan asks Polo which stone supports the bridge, he replies “The Bridge is not supported by one stone but by the line of the arch that they form”. Here Khan replies “Why do you speak about stone? It is only the arch that matters to me”, Polo answers; without stone, there is no arch” (82). The stone mentioned by Polo symbolizes the fragmented cities while the line of the arch is the unity of those cities, is empire. In his essays “Exactitude” according to Calvino “the complex structure of the cities gave him a possibility of analyzing the tension between rational geometry and the entanglement of human existence” (88). The city, he explains “allowed him to reflect on a multifaceted structure, a network in which one can follow multiple routes and follow multiple consciousnesses” (89). Through the description of imaginative variation Calvino allows his reader to “see” the designing of the cities as it were the work of architecture. From their free variation, the phenomenon of reduction starts. In reduction, each city is the bracketed form of the cosmos.

Phenomenological Reduction

Husserlian reduction is the third phase of the phenomenological journey. Husserl in logical Investigation wants to replace the traditional Berkeleian and Lockean account of abstraction as a kind of “selective attention”. Husserl states that “under the act of reduction consciousness is considered independently of the existing, casual and physical world, to be grasped as an appearance in its own right” (11, sec 13). For Husserl, the ‘empiricist presumes that an object is a collection of ideas but this idea of empiricism is ambiguous. While positively speaking, abstraction is not a separating at all; rather, it is a beholding and viewing of the object as something independent’ (chall, sec 10). In the act of phenomenological reduction, one property or attribute is separated or bracketed off. JoAnn Cannon's “The Map of the Universe”, states that Calvino’s novel *Invisible Cities* “poses as a reworking” of Polo’s “cosmography of the khan’s empire” (83). Kublai Khan because of old age has given up to control directly his large crumbling domain. In the course of the novel, Polo reduced the structure of the whole cosmos to the division of fifty-five cities. The whole order of the universe is bracketed off in the description of those fragmented cities. Giovanni Falaschi explains that Calvino regards *Invisible Cities* as “a series of mental designs continuously subjected to frustration that leads to zero degrees. The novel “is set as an adventure of the mind, as a mathematical construction that at the ends results into nothingness (602). Marco Polo wants to order the chaos of the universe by structuring those imaginative cities. He reduces the phenomenon of the whole universe in the description of each fifty-five cities. As every city is the bracketed form of the universe.

In his article “Ecological Wisdom and Postmodern Defiance in Italo Calvino’s *Invisible Cities*,” Earnest Yanarella interpreted the cities as the present postmodern phenomenon, where the cities represent the faithful observation of the present world. As in *Invisible Cities*, the description of cities represents the different order of the universe. The city of Chleo signifies this universe as the inhabitants of strangers, “in Chloe, a great city, the people who move through the streets are all strangers” (51). Polo moves on in the description of cities where he reduces the structure of the cosmos to the shape of a spider–web city. The city of Octavia is made of a spider web. The

city is over the void, bound with two ropes and chains. The foundation of the city is like a net which serves as supports and as passage” (75). The description of Octavia is the microcosm of the spider web shape of the universe. The universe is as chaotic as it has no solid foundation. It is fragile and threatens but sustains through chains, ropes, and catwalks (Yanarella 6). Here Calvino makes it clear that although “suspended over an abyss, the life of the Octavia inhabitants is less uncertain” (75).

The labyrinth shape of the universe has certain perfection as the inhabitants are happy. Although the universe is chaotic under this chaos a complete order is present. Polo in his journey of phenomenological reduction, brackets the universe in another city, ‘Andria’. Andria is a city of the cosmos (11). The construction of Andria is built so artfully that its street follows the pattern of planet’s orbit, its building and places repeat the order of the constellation and the position of luminous stars”(150). Andria is a celestial city, a city that mirrors the movement of the stars and constellations (11). According to Polo’s description, the correspondence between the city and sky is so perfect that “any change in the Andria involves certain novelty among the stars” (151). Each change in Andria implies a sequence of other changes. According to Calvino, this change represents order and continuity in the working of the cosmos. Everything is in motion and evolution takes place. In the city of Armilla, there “[are] no walls, no ceiling, no floors: it has nothing that makes it seem a city except the water pipeline” (49). It seems that the construction of the city remains unfinished or demolished. Chaos lurks in the very fabric of the city houses, streets, and floors. Here Polo states that although the city is in its deserted shape still order is present in the form of a water pipeline that rises vertically. According to Calvino, Armilla cannot be called chaotic because of the forest of water pipelines that ends in taps, and showers which signify the late fruit hanging from the boughs. Each city signifies the different patterns and shapes of the cosmos. Polo in the description of phenomenological reduction reduced the “map of the universe in the city of Eudxoia” (97). The structure of the universe spreads out shapelessly like Eudxoia, with “crooked streets, houses crumble one upon the other, the cloud of dust and fire, screams in the darkness” (97).

The city of Valdrada where nothing exists or happens is symmetrical. In the frame narrative tales, the function of Great Khan serves as the reader of the text, as he discusses, contradicts, asks a question, and tries to find a pattern that allows him to make some sense out of the writer’s (Polo) imaginative description concerning his empire. In the journey of phenomenological reduction, the Great Khan “owns an atlas where all the cities of the empire and realm, building, streets, walls, river bridges, and harbor are drawn” (135). The atlas represents the frustrated desire of Kublai Khan to create a phenomenological order of the universe. The atlas signifies the maps of the universe, the form of ruined civilization that is swallowed up with time. Actually “Kublai Khan’s atlas contains the map of the promised land visited in thoughts and not yet founded or discovered” (164). First Marco Polo brackets the universe off in the shape of ruined cities and Khan was the reader of those cities. At the end of this phenomenological journey, Khan becomes the writer of this journey as he rewrites the map of the universe. The great Khan desires to “put together, piece by piece, the perfect city made of fragments” (164). Khan’s journey toward the city is “discontinuous in space and time, now scattered, now condensed, you should not believe the search for it can stop.”(164).

In the journey of phenomenological reduction, Marco Polo stages a majolica pavement at the foot of the great Khan’s throne. Polo arranges the samples which he brought back from his journey: a seashell, a helmet, a coconut, and a fan on the white and black tiles of the chessboard.

The game of chess represents the phenomenon of the universe that polo wants to arrange in a certain pattern. The great Khan likes the game of chess and wants to learn the rule and patterns of the empire and especially the universe. He thought: "If each city is like the game of chess, then the day will come when I shall finally learn the rule and possess my empire" (121). For Khan, the structure of the chessboard reflects the invisible order that sustains each city. Through the symbolic lens of the chess board, Khan discovers a coherent, harmonious pattern underlying infinite deformities and discords. Now he can understand the order of those chaotic cities. This phenomenological journey of reduction helps Kublai Khan to understand that the true knowledge of empire is hidden in the pattern drawn by the angular shift of the knight, by diagonal passage on the chessboard. Both Marco Polo and Great Khan imagine a model city from which they deduce all the other cities. Kublai Khan states "I have constructed in my mind a model city from which all possible cities can be deduced"(69) whereas Polo answers that " I have also thought of a model city from which I deduce all the other"(69). From the idea of 'bracketing off', their journey from chaos to order moves in the state of intentional consciousness. In intentional consciousness, every phenomenon is analyzed under the complete act of consciousness.

Intentionality

In ideas¹ Husserl states that "intentionality having something in mind" (sec 90, p. 217) is characteristic of all consciousness (1, sec 90). Intentionality is the name of a characteristic encompassed by the whole phenomenological act. Intentionality for Husserl names the whole phenomenon of correlation between subjectivity and objectivity. (1, sec 146 p. 349). Italo Calvino in his novel *Invisible Cities* through the phenomenological state of consciousness makes his characters Marco Polo and Kublai Khan intuit the whole phenomenon of the universe with the description of fifty-five cities. Marco Polo perceives the prevalent chaos working in the cosmos and tries to order this chaos through the phenomenological imagination of his mind. In the novel, the imaginary cities do not exist in any of Khan's empires nor is it clear if they ever existed in the past, present, or future because their spatial, locus, and temporal existence are always in Marco Polo's fluid consciousness. JoAnn Cannon observes that the novel's title denotes that the cities do not exist nor can be located. For example, one reached the city of Diomira by "leaving and proceeding for three days toward the east" (7); and one finally comes to Isidora by riding "a long time through the wild region" (8). In the city of Zaira, where streets rise like "stairways, and the arcades, curves and zinc scales cover the roofs; but to know this would seem as knowing nothing" (10). Cannon observes that the cities "do not exist or even pretended to exist in any identifiable dimension" but the indication given "could be applied to any point in space" (83). *Invisible Cities* suggests that Calvino meditates on the possibility of mapping the whole universe by finding "a cognitive code which would organize and interpret the universe" (84). In Marco Polo's tales, there is no character, no events, no plot, but only timeless patterns, the world external to Kublai Khan's court does not exist visible except through the meditation of Kublai Khan that constitutes the text itself (Weiss 146). Polo through his description of the imaginary city intuits the fragmented and chaotic mood of the cosmos. The cities without shape, plot, a precise structure symbolizes the universe without definite structure. Polo through the lens of phenomenological intentionality orders the chaos. The cities are there but with a certain shape. They have their inner geography, order, and underlying structure. They have their charisma, charm, and certain web pattern which ensnares the reader like Kublai Khan. They are chaotic and fragmented but they still exist with their mysterious mood. Each city bears a mood of beautiful

and arcane name, with classical and oriental echoes: Sophronia, Eudonia, Thokla, Olinda, Diomira, Zaira, Isaura, Zenobia, Euphemia, Chloe, and Fedora (146).

The journey of phenomenological intentionality shifts from Polo (writer) to the great Khan (Reader). Kublai Khan perceives this phenomenon of chaotic cities and tries to order it in the shape of a game of chess. For Khan each city is like a game of chess, as he states, the day comes when I have learned the rule, I shall finally possess my empire, even if I shall never succeed on knowing all the cities it contains” (121). The structure of the chessboard signifies the immediate desire of Khan to order the ruin cities. The game of chess involves “the hidden order that sustains the cities. Khan “understands that his empire like the game of chess is reduced to a square of planed wood: nothingness” (123). Calvino in his essay “Exactitude” observes that the game of chess symbolizes a binary opposition, Polo vs. Khan, visible vs. invisible, direct moves vs. diagonal (74). The game of chess works according to its specific pattern but both Khan and Polo are blind to observing those invisible patterns. In *Invisible Cities*, throughout the dialogue, the young Venetian strives to help his master to understand the “invisible order” that regulates human existence (122). Polo wants to teach Khan a new sense of life, “by challenging the evil forces in his realm and by ensuring the safety of whatever is just” (Adler 131). Polo in his phenomenological journey explains to Khan that a basic design exists, but it is so complicated that it cannot be observed by logic alone. The invisible order that rules our existence, as well as cities, is like the logic that gives order to dreams. (148).

The description of fifty-five cities signifies different moods and shapes of the universe. The whole empire of Khan is ruined as Calvino states that the desperate moment which one discovers is that the whole empire “is an endless, formless ruin”(5). Marco Polo intuits that the universe has a labyrinth structure as in the city of Hypatia the library serves as a snare where the people “lost among the shelves, collapse under the vellum binding” (47). Each city has a different phenomenon of structure, one has a spider web pattern, one has a shape like the celestial bodies, one city has a spiral staircase and spiral seashell, and there the perfect telescope and violins are made. In these imaginary cities of Polo, a perfect blend of order and chaos works together. In *Cities and Desire* “moving southward, you come upon Anastasia. The city sometimes called malignantly and sometimes called ensign” (12). In this city, no desire is lost and one enjoys everything one desires. This is a perfect combination of contentment and a treacherous city. The city of Zenobia is a perfect mixture of chaos and order. Although the structure of the city is “set on dry terrain, houses are of bamboo and zinc, balconies are placed on stilts at various heights, crossing one another, linked by ladder and hanging sidewalks, surmounted by cone-roofed belvederes”(35). Here Calvino makes it clear that if one asks the inhabitants of Zenobia to explain the vision of happy life they will describe the city as Zenobia, with its piling and suspended stairway.

Their phenomenological journey ends and both Khan and Polo realize that chaos is an essential element in the phenomenon of nature. First Kublai Khan contains an atlas that has all the characteristics of fifty-five cities, but the atlas proves as chaotic as these cities. The Great Khan imagines the ideal city with perfect form, building by building. Here Calvino states that the ideal cities sound like paradise but ironically they are disjointed and tentative in their appearance. Marco Polo says: I will put together, piece by piece, the perfect city, made of fragments mixed with the rest, of instants separated by intervals . . . If I tell you that the city toward which my journey tends is discontinuous in space and time, now scattered, now more condensed, you must not believe the search for it can stop. (164)

For Khan, cities are like infernos whose currents are drawing man towards them. Here Polo also accepts the world as a living inferno that is full of chaos and man has to bear this chaos. As Polo states, there are two ways to escape suffering. 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, amid the inferno, are not inferno, then make them endure; give them space “ (165)

Conclusion

In Calvino's, the protagonists are always on a quest to find the ultimate means to order this prevalent chaos. The binary tension between order and disorder is a continuous source of preoccupation in Calvino's fiction. His purpose is to write fiction in which his characters are engaged in a search to find some meanings and cosmic order in their lived experience by studying the world and its phenomenological complexities. In his fiction, Calvino makes a conscious effort to embrace the chaos which metaphorically suggests ordering this chaos with phenomenological intentionality. His fiction is in combat with the riddle of phenomenal chaos management of the universe.

The first research question was how phenomenology ordered the chaos and labyrinth of the universe in Italo Calvino's novel 'Invisible Cities'. In the novel, Polo's imagination perceives the chaos lurking in the construction of fifty-five cities. The empire which is ruined, chaotic, and formless serves as a metaphor for the whole universe where fifty-five cities become the object of Polo's intentional analysis. These cities serve as a labyrinth where a man lost himself. Some cities have their entrance but no exit, as cities have a web of spiders.

The second research question was how phenomenological reduction helped characters to move from the general phenomenon to the phenomenon of subjective reality in the novel. In Invisible Cities, Kublai Khan's imagination perceives the order of the universe through the structure of the cities. Both Polo and Khan search for order and the true formation of the universe. These fifty-five cities are the pseudo copy of the universe. Cities are rotting, and crumbling; it symbolizes the whole cosmos in fragmentation. Kublai Khan's imagination perceives the construction of ideal cities on the atlas. The deliberate intentional effort of Great Khan to own an atlas in which the disintegrating cities are formed as a solid foundation and come to life again is an urge to look for a pattern, system, or some sort of order behind the design and description of cities as portrayed by the Marco Polo. In his last journey, Marco Polo understands the phenomenon of the universe, as the whole world is like an inferno. According to Polo, through apprehension and constant vigilance, one can endure this inferno.

The third question of the study was how intentional consciousness worked to perceive the prevailing chaos. Invisible Cities explores the journey of a phenomenologist, Marco Polo. Polo intuits the chaotic construction of those fifty-five cities. His intentional consciousness intuits the city as disorder and without a definite pattern, while Khan's subjective intentionality observes the cities as a paragon of beauty. Kublai Khan imagines an atlas that has the ordered structure of cities.

Italo Calvino maintains that chaos and order are a very complex system of the universe. Chaos gives birth to order, order entails chaos. Italo Calvino explores the phenomenological way to order chaos through the observation of the protagonist. His protagonists are searchers, who search for order, stable meaning, and a complete image of the whole cosmos. They analyze their existence as chaotic, fragmented, and devoid of meaning.

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